



LAHDEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Lahti University of Applied Sciences

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING CHANNEL FOR TRADITIONAL NEWSPAPERS

Case: Tuoi Tre Newspaper

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Nguyen, Thanh Binh

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ABSTRACT

Background. The growth of the Internet has affected traditional newspapers significantly. In Vietnam, the traditional newspapers must face many challenges from the environment of Vietnamese newspaper industry. The problems came to the author's mind when the author had a working period in one of the largest newspapers in Vietnam.

Aims. This thesis studies a case newspaper, Tuoi Tre Newspaper, for its business. The main goal is to find out the current position of Tuoi Tre Newspaper in the Vietnamese newspaper market to determine the way social media application can improve that position.

Methods. The qualitative research method with deductive approach was used in this thesis study. Standardized, open-ended interviews were conducted for gathering experiences and ideas of using social media as a marketing tool in newspaper business. Other sources of data come from the author's own observations and reports from the case newspaper. Content analysis and marketing analyzing tools are utilized as data analysis method.

Results. The results pointed out that the status of Tuoi Tre Newspaper in Vietnamese newspaper market had dropped significantly in recent years. The analysis done by utilizing selective theoretical tools reveals some important findings about solutions for improving the current position of Tuoi Tre Newspaper by social media application.

Conclusions. The authors suggested six strategies to enhance strengths and reduce weaknesses of Tuoi Tre Newspaper in order to optimize the opportunities and lessen threats.

Keywords: Social, media, social media, social media application, marketing, marketing channel, newspaper, traditional newspaper, Vietnam

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Theoretical framework	2
1.3	Obstacles faced	4
1.4	Structure of the study	4
2	METHODOLOGY	7
2.1	Research question and objectives	7
2.2	Research purpose	8
2.3	Research method: qualitative or quantitative?	9
2.4	Research approach	10
2.5	Data collection and data analysis	11
2.6	Validity and reliability	13
3	NEWSPAPERS AS A BUSINESS	14
3.1	History of the newspaper industry	14
3.2	Vietnamese media environment and newspaper industry in Vietnam	16
3.2.1	Vietnamese media environment	16
3.2.2	Newspaper industry in Vietnam	19
3.2.3	Print press in Vietnam	20
3.2.4	Disadvantages of Vietnamese newspapers	21
3.2.5	Online newspapers in Vietnam	22
4	MARKETING RESEARCH AND THE ANALYZING TOOLS	25
4.1	Marketing research	25
4.2	Analyzing tools	26
4.2.1	The Seven P's	26
4.2.2	PEST analysis	30
4.2.3	Porter's five forces	32
4.2.4	SWOT and TOWS analyses	35
5	SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING CHANNEL	38
5.1	Basic knowledge of social media	38
5.2	Crowd-sourcing	41
5.3	Internal social media	43
6	TUOI TRE – DESCRIPTION	44
6.1	Introduction of Tuoi Tre	44

6.2	Organizational structure	46
6.3	Current status of Tuoi Tre Newspaper	48
6.3.1	The print publications of Tuoi Tre	48
6.3.2	The online publications of Tuoi Tre (TTO)	50
7	ENVIRONMENT, INDUSTRY AND MARKETING ANALYSING	53
7.1	Definition of the overall market	53
7.2	PEST analysis	54
7.3	Porter's five forces analysis	56
7.4	SWOT and TOWS analysis	60
8	SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION	66
8.1	Why social media suit the current needs of Tuoi Tre?	66
8.2	The strategies	67
8.2.1	Tuoi Tre's blog for reporters	67
8.2.2	Build a crowd-sourcing platform for the readers to submit and discuss ideas	68
8.2.3	Online events for more readership	68
8.2.4	Launch a new special online edition for to be net citizens	69
8.2.5	Building reading apps for mobile devices	69
8.2.6	Using internal social media	70
9	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	71
9.1	Summary	71
9.2	Research results	72
9.2.1	Research question 1: What is the current position of Tuoi Tre newspaper?	72
9.2.2	Research question 2: How social media approaches can help to improve that situation?	73
9.3	Limitations and further studies	74
	REFERENCES	76
	APPENDICES	82

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Thesis structure	5
FIGURE 2. Research design.....	7
FIGURE 3. Deductive model	11
FIGURE 4. Internet user growth 2000-2009 in selected Asian countries. (Cimigo, 2010, p. 7)	18
FIGURE 5. Seven P's of the marketing mix (Kar 2010).....	27
FIGURE 6. Porter's Five Forces Model (Lee 2009)	32
FIGURE 7. Social feedback cycle (Evans 2012, 44)	39
FIGURE 8. Organizational Chart of Tuoi Tre Newspaper (Tuoi Tre, 2010).....	47
FIGURE 9. Circulation of Tuoi Tre Dailies from 1975 to 2010 (Tuoi Tre, 2010).....	48
FIGURE 10. Ages of Tuoi Tre Dailies' readers (Tuoi Tre, 2006)	50
FIGURE 11. Vietnam online news providers (Yahoo 2009).	51
FIGURE 12. Favourite website for gathering information (Cimigo 2010).....	51
FIGURE 13. TOWS analysis of Tuoi Tre	64

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.	Contents covered by theory and literature chapters	3
TABLE 2.	PEST analysis template (Chapman 2009).....	31
TABLE 3.	SWOT analysis matrix	36
TABLE 4.	TOWS matrix (Mind Tools n.d.).....	36
TABLE 5.	Examples for crowd-sourcing projects (Aitamurto, Leiponen, & Tee, 2011; Ahlroth, 2012).....	42
TABLE 6.	PEST analysis of Vietnam (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; BBC News, 2012; Country Watch, 2012; Transparency International, 2011).....	54
TABLE 7.	Circulations and focus published areas of largest Vietnamese dailies (sources collected by the author from the newspapers' online pages on 21 st of March, 2012).....	57
TABLE 8.	SWOT analysis of Tuoi Tre	61

1 INTRODUCTION

It was summer 2010 that the author started the practical training period at one of the largest newspapers in Vietnam – Tuoi Tre News. It was only six months, but the time the author spent working for Tuoi Tre allowed him to have a close look at how a traditional print newspaper organization operates. It not only implanted important knowledge of how things are done in real life, it also suggested some questions to work on. As the author has become interested in the newspaper and it is struggling to survive the competitions from the online newspapers, the author started to question “Is there a way to improve the situation that the organization has not tried, or not successfully done due to unripe conditions?” Gradually, after collecting information from several sources, the thought that social media could be the correct solution has formed. So in this study, the author would like to evaluate the situation of the newspaper in Vietnam’s media market and introduce social media as the right tool to enhance the situation of the newspaper.

1.1 Background

The object of this study is to find out the current position of the newspaper in the Vietnamese media market and determine in which ways social media can help to improve that position. Due to the author’s own observation when the author was there, the organization was still doing alright but it was on the verge of a quick and painful change. The condition was even worse that with the strict supervision from the government, the newspapers were less accessible from methods needed to satisfy the market needs. The author chooses social media as a solution as it would receive fewer tackles from the government and if used correctly, it would be able to gain and maintain the loyalty of both the readers and the employees, which the author personally consider the most important thing to survive. This paper will discuss the reasons why the author considers social media the right tool and how to use it to overcome the difficulties the newspaper is having at the moment.

The research questions for the thesis are “What is the current position of Tuoi Tre newspaper?” and “How social media approaches can help to improve that situation?”

1.2 Theoretical framework

This study is divided into two different parts: the theory part and the empirical part. The theory part consists of three different theor and one literature chapter. These four chapters, with the exception of the “methodology” chapter, have little information to support each other. However, they all help to give the right understandings and correct research approaches to the case study. The following Table 1 illustrates the functions of each chapter:

TABLE 1. Contents covered by theory and literature chapters

Chapter number	Name of the chapter	Contents
2	Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief theories of the research methods used in this study • Reasons why the uses of these methods are needed • Virtues and shortcomings of these methods
3	Newspaper as a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of the newspaper industry • Factors affecting the newspaper industry of Vietnam • Review of the Vietnamese media industry as a whole and the specific newspaper sector
4	Marketing research and the analyzing tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of the marketing research process • Tools to analyze the industry and the marketing operating process of Tuoi Tre
5	Social media as a marketing channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of social media • New theories and tools for effectively applying social media

The ultimate objective of this thesis is to determine the productive solutions social media offers with which Tuoi Tre can stop its popularity from shrinking and have a stable tool to sustainably improve its revenue generation. Thus the theoretical framework was built to provide information supporting the objective. The author chose to have a wide range of theory as it would give the readers a broad view of the situation and enable the suggestions to fit better to the whole panorama of the industry.

In addition, the literature parts were added with perspectives from some professional personnel. They are experienced employees who have great insights, which enable them to give reliable to this thesis. These primary data were collected by interviewing Mr. Jussi Ahlroth, who is in charge of Helsingin Sanomat's social media activities, and by interviewing Ms. X, officer of Tuoi Tre Newspaper (TTN)

1.3 Obstacles faced

The whole studying process of this thesis had faced some difficulties. As Tuoi Tre itself does not have a marketing department, the data needed to construct this thesis had to be collected from many sources. The government also kept a strict supervision on the newspaper, which makes it harder to ask for specific data. Thus many statistical data used in this paper were collected from outdated sources and had a bad effect on some analysis.

Another obstacle was that to be able to obtain certain information from the newspaper, there is bureaucratic paperwork needed to be done. They took quite a few steps and this became a difficulty for the author as the author has been living in Finland. Facts and reports which may have negative effects are also hidden from the public by the newspaper.

1.4 Structure of the study

The study consists of 9 chapters and they are described in Figure 1 below:

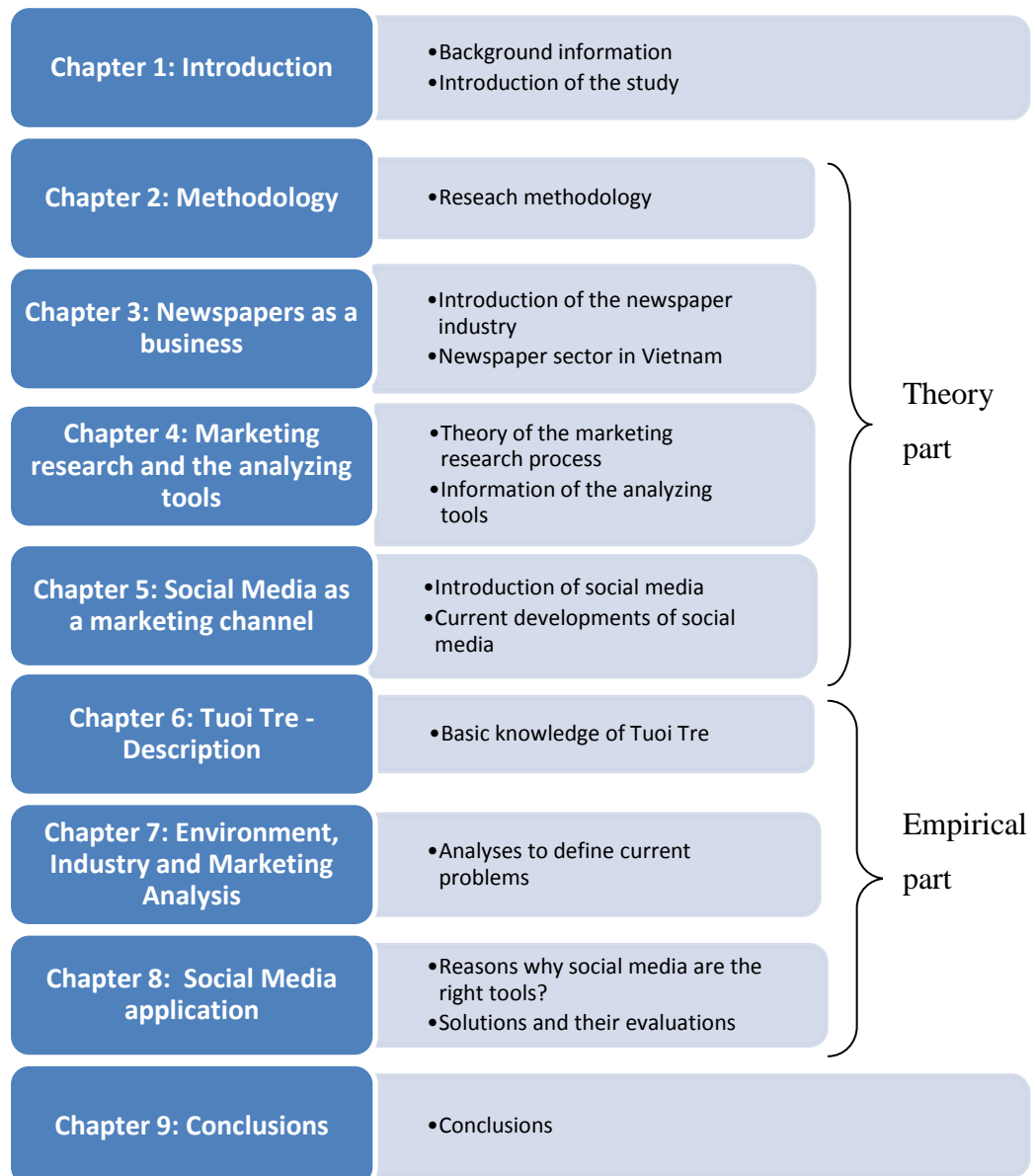


FIGURE 1: Thesis structure

Firstly, the theory part includes four chapters: chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5. They are designed to provide the readers with the background knowledge about different aspects of the problems. The theories were kept on basic levels, but were relevant to help understand processes and tools used in the empirical part. These theories also played a very important part in troubleshooting and solving the problems of the case organization.

Secondly, the empirical part is compiled with the three chapters: 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 focuses on portraying the case organization. Chapter 7 gives a whole

image of the newspapers sector, both printed and online news, by analyzing market factors. Based on the analyses and the understanding of the market, chapter 8 points out of problems the case organization is having with social media and how its competitors are using social media to win the market. Latter sub-chapters introduce solutions suggested to the news and their evaluations.

Finally, chapter 9 concludes the study with summarized and important findings of the study as well as some recommendations.

2 METHODOLOGY

Figure 2 demonstrates the research design of this thesis.

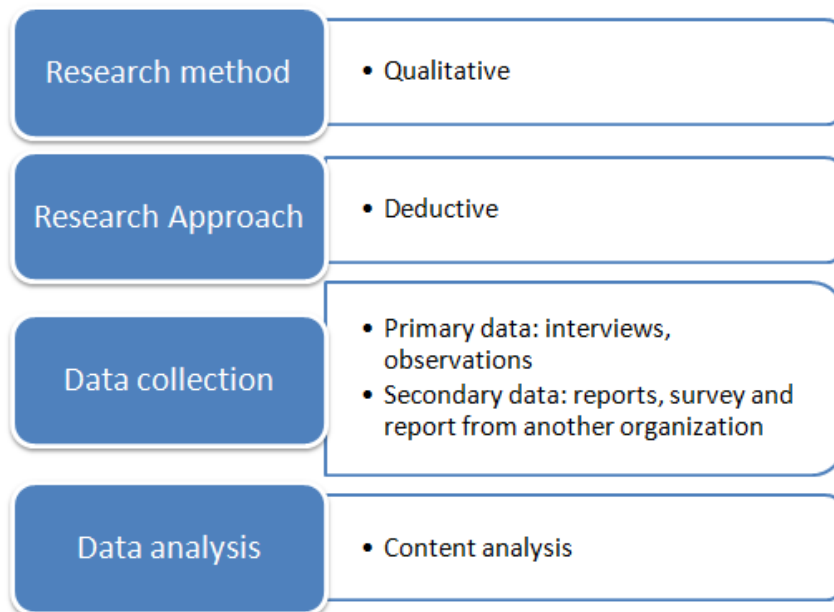


FIGURE 2. Research design

2.1 Research question and objectives

According to Yin (2003), one of the most important steps of a research study is to define the research questions. The research questions can be used as a way to bring out the research problem from the very start, especially when the author has a clear set of issues. The two research questions for this thesis are:

Research Question 1: What is the current position of Tuoi Tre Newspaper?

Research Question 2: How social media approaches can help to improve that situation?

The main goal of this thesis is to provide the case Newspaper, which is Tuoi Tre, relevant information required for applying social media tools as a solution to its current situation. In order to achieve that goal, the objectives of this thesis are to find out the following information:

- Newspaper as a business in Vietnam
- Social media as a marketing channel
- The current position of Tuoi Tre in Vietnamese newspaper sector
- Social media adoption approaches
- Possible approaches to adopt social media tools for Tuoi Tre newspaper

The procedures which will be done to accomplish those objectives are:

- Conducting an in-depth literature review and developing theories.
- Collecting empirical data from interviews with Tuoi Tre Newspaper officer, other newspaper and the author's own observation.
- Collecting secondary data from other report and surveys.
- Analyzing Tuoi Tre Newspaper by utilizing marketing analyzing tools.
- Comparing different social media approaches and drawing suggested approaches for Tuoi Tre Newspaper.

2.2 Research purpose

Regarding research purpose, there are three types which are most often used: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. A research can have more than one purpose and the purpose may change over time. (Robson 2002, according to Saunders et al. 2009, 139).

An exploratory research's aim is to find out "what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light" (Robson 2002). This type of research is particularly useful to clarify the understanding of a problem (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Babbie (1989) also emphasized the flexibility of exploratory research because it can address all types of research questions.

A descriptive research is used to describe accurately a phenomenon. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009, 140). The descriptive study attempts to "portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations" according to Robson (2002). The use of descriptive study can precede an exploratory or explanatory research (Babbie 1989). Descriptive research is also known as statistical research which

cannot create causal relationship between variables (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009).

An explanatory study tries to form causal relationships between variables. It focuses on studying a problem or a situation so as to explain the relationships. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009)

Regarding this thesis, the research purposes are explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory. This thesis describes social media tools and current position of Tuoi Tre Newspaper. It also explains why Tuoi Tre Newspaper should apply social media tools as well as exploring factors and approaches for Tuoi Tre to apply social media tools.

2.3 Research method: qualitative or quantitative?

There are two broad categories of research methods: qualitative and quantitative. Choosing the right method is very important for end-result of the study. Research method will determine the data collection method as well as data analysis.

Quantitative method requires numerical data and processes data into statistical presentations to answer specific questions (Wholey Joseph S. 2004). The quantitative method relies of large and random group of participants. Its purposes are to test hypotheses, find out cause and effect and make predictions. Descriptive statistics are data processed into numbers, charts, tables, graphs to describe a group of items. Inferential statistics are calculated from sample of a large population to make generalization of the whole population (Wholey Joseph S. 2004). Data are often collected by structured interviews and surveys. The final report of a quantitative study is often a statistical report with comparisons of means, statistical significance of finding, correlations of variables. (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 34; Lichtman, 2006, pp. 7-8)

Oppositely, qualitative research tries to understand and interpret social interactions on smaller and not randomly selected groups. The most common objectives are to explore, discover and construct phenomena. (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 34; Lichtman, 2006, pp. 7-8). Researchers use qualitative method to capture personal feelings and experiences of participants. Data are

usually acquired through open-ended interviews, observations, documents review and focus groups. Such data are often analyzed by defining themes and patterns. Normally, quantitative study requires a lot of reading to explore the data. In addition, the final results of a qualitative study contains contextual description and quotations from research participants. (Maxwell, 1996; Wholey Joseph S., 2004; Patton, 2002).

As this thesis is dedicated to analysis of Tuoi Tre Newspaper business and the application of social media tool in newspaper business, qualitative study is the more appropriate method. Qualitative method enables the author to gain in-depth knowledge of the current business practice.

2.4 Research approach

Burney (2008) stated that there are two main research approaches which are induction and deduction. Researcher may utilize both approaches based on the nature the research.

In the process of induction, the research begins with some data and then looks into the data to find what general conclusion can be concluded from those data logically. In other words, inductive approach defines what theory could explain the data. (Copi Irving M. 2004).

In contrast, deduction is the process that begins with some premises and then the researcher determines what else he can do if those premises are true. Deduction approach goes from general to more specific. (Burney (2008).

In this thesis, deductive approach will be applied. Figure 3 demonstrated the approach of deduction.

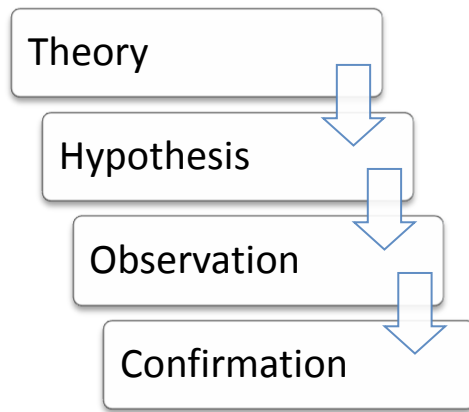


FIGURE 3. Deductive model

2.5 Data collection and data analysis

Qualitative research method decides the data collection method. Qualitative data collection methods includes: documents review, open-ended interview, and observation.

Yin (2003) emphasized the necessity of multiple sources that “those case studies using multiple sources of evidence are rated more highly, in terms of their overall quality, than those that rely on only single source of information”. The use of multiple sources enhances the reliability and validity of evidence as well as strengthens the author’s arguments. Besides a variety of published sources and electronic sources for the theoretical part, the data is collected from the following sources: internal Tuoi Tre Newspaper reports, open-ended interviews, author’s own observations, survey conducted for Tuoi Tre Newspaper and foreign organizations’ reports on Vietnam newspaper. In other words, data was collected by interviews, documents review and observation.

Document review is a procedure of examining documents systematically to develop knowledge and evidence that can support the study (Corbin 2008). Documents forms are varied from books, newspaper, letters, meeting memos, radio and TV transcripts, reports of organization, surveys, advertisements, agenda etc. Document analysis consists of examining, selecting, clarifying and synthesizing data. (Bowen 2009). Documents for analyzing as data in this thesis

are internal Tuoi Tre Newspaper report, foreign organizations' report, and survey conducted for Tuoi Tre Newspaper.

Interviews are probably the most common data collection method of qualitative study. It provides the researcher different personal view points, problems, experiences, solutions concerning a specific topic from the interviewees.

Interviews can be categorized into several types which are: informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach, standardized open-ended interview, closed fixed response interview. (Valenzuela and Shrivastava n.d.). In this thesis, standardized, open-ended interview was conducted to gain the participants' experiences that are relevant to the research objectives. The questions were open-ended which means that participants can describe or provide more information and the author may ask further questions to clarify the issues. The questionnaire was standardized means that the same questions were used for all the interviewees. Interviewees are Tuoi Tre Newspaper officer and an officer in charge of social media of another newspaper. The list of interviewees and interview questions are in the Appendix. For confidential reason, the fullname of the Tuoi Tre officer will not be stated. The author will refer to that person as Ms. X.

Observation came from the author's own experience while working in the marketing department for Tuoi Tre. The author had discovered the some issues in the marketing of Tuoi Tre. The working period in Tuoi Tre also helped the author to get some reports for this thesis.

The data analysis chosen in this study is content analysis. It helps the author to evaluate textual or textual transcript-able data. Content analysis is applied to analyze the current position and marketing activities of Tuoi Tre and the use of social media in newspaper business.

2.6 Validity and reliability

Researchers must take into account validity and reliability when conducting a research. Validity reflects how accurate a study is and how well the research method measures what it claims to do. Reliability is the consistence of the research finding. It means that the data results should be the same if the same data collection, analysis and method were done on repeated trials. (Yin, 2003; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

The validity and reliability of this thesis are based on:

- All the interviewees were involved in the newspaper marketing and application of social media in newspaper.
- The interviews were designed based on social media theories and crowd sourcing adopted from literature.
- The interviews were organized according to the interviews' schedule and places so that they felt comfortable to express their view points and experiences on application of social media in newspaper business
- The use of multiple sources for both theoretical part and empirical part.
- List of references and documents as done to store all sources from which data was collected.

3 NEWSPAPERS AS A BUSINESS

3.1 History of the newspaper industry

A newspaper is defined as a “publication that appears regularly and frequently and carries news about a wide variety of current events” (Stephens 2012). Newspapers help readers to learn about what are happening worldwide, domestically, or locally. They also provide essential information such as weather forecasts, television schedules, advertising campaigns, and even entertaining pieces. Historically, publications which carried out the same purposes appeared a long time ago.

Exchanging news is a very important function of human society. Before human beings could write, people had spread news by word of mouth. Soldier ran back from battlefields to report victories or defeats. Criers walked through villages, towns, cities to announce local news. These activities helped people to receive essential information for their living. (Hamilton 2005, 4).

Later, in advanced civilization such as ancient Rome and China, with the use of writing and literacy, news reports became formal. In the Roman Forum, The Roman government everyday posted a news sheet of political happenings, trialsmilitary campaigns and executions. These precursors of newspapers were called Acta Diurna and had been posted from the year 58 B.C. to at least A.D. 222. In China, precursors of newspapers are believed to appear even earlier. During the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. to A.D. 221) officials had passed from hand to hand the “tipao” – news sheets which were produced by the government. However, these news sheets which appeared both in Rome and China, cannot be called newspaper as these sheets were unique and had no identity separate from the stories they told. (Stephens 2012).

The first direct ancestors of today’s newspaper existed in the sixteenth century in Venice. They are known as avisi or gazette and were filled with information on politics and wars in Europe and Italy. They were hand-written, distributed weekly and widely. They were seen as far away as London. The reason for the occurrence

of the avisi is that Venice, at that time, was a center for trade, and therefore, for information. (Stephens 2012).

Before the avisi, in the 1450s, Johannes Gutenberg had developed a press. This German printer use movable type for this press, which made printing easier. His invention then was used only to print pamphlets, newsletters and fly sheets until the first two newspapers were published in Germany. They were weekly newspapers and were started in 1609 with specified names “Relations: Aller Furnemmen” and “Aviso Relations”. These brands are critical factors which made them the first newspapers in the world. (Stephens 2012).

Later England had its first newspaper: the Oxford Gazette in 1665. In 1690 were published the first one in America: Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick (Hamilton 2005, 8).

In the early periods of newspapers, most of the governments controlled the released news. Even in the United States of America, it was not until 1791 that the Freedom of Press was guaranteed in the US Constitution.

Since the seventeenth century, newspapers have developed and covered more and more readership. However, the turning point happened at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was the beginning of penny papers in major countries such as the United States, France and England. Before these penny papers were founded, the price for a newspaper were considered expensive for an average person. For example, in the United States, the price for a daily newspaper was around six pennies. After the foundations of James Gordon Bennett’s “the Herald” in 1835 and Benjamin Day’s the “Sun”, people could buy their newspapers at a significantly lower price. However, in England, the penny papers had to live outside the law until 1855 due to expensive stamp tax. (Stephens 2012).

The most noteworthy effect of these penny papers was they made newspapers into big business. The low prices help them gained higher circulation. In 1849, after 14 years since Bennett founded his Herald with 500 dollars, he sold it for 250.000 dollars (Stephens 2012). The industry of newspapers flourished during the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1914, there were 15.000 newspapers in the

United States. After world-war II, many newspapers had to close or merge with each other. (Hamilton 2005, 9).

For the last century, along with the developments of radio, television networks and the internet, newspapers have faced major challenges. In the 1920s, newspaper publishers had to re-evaluate as the biggest news providers. Later in the 1950s, television became the major medium in the United States. When Internet was brought into the world, the variety of information media had enhanced the fragmentation of audiences into smaller segments. (OECD Publishing 2010).

The first online newspaper was born in January 1994 by the Palo Alto Weekly California, United States. Since then the online news media has grown tremendously. Right after the Palo Alto, in 1995 Le Monde's online site debuted and the New York Times did in 1996. (OECD Publishing 2010).

3.2 Vietnamese media environment and newspaper industry in Vietnam

3.2.1 Vietnamese media environment

To understand how Vietnamese media works, it is necessary to understand the controlling factor of the Vietnamese media. In Vietnam, political issues greatly impact media characteristics. The Vietnamese Communist Party holds the power to decide what can be published. (Thuy, REDD+ politics in the media: A case study from Vietnam 2011, 2). Therefore, this sub-chapter starts by giving a brief introduction of the Vietnamese political system.

The Vietnamese political system

Vietnam is a mono-party state and the only political party allowed in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Communist Party. All of the legislative, executive and juridical functions of the government are placed under the control of the Politburo, a committee of the top fifteen most powerful members of the Party. Within the Politburo, the top five positions are held by the Party General Secretary, the Standing member of the Secretariat, the State President, the Prime Minister and

the Chairman of the National Assembly. The president is elected by the member of the National Assembly. The President holds the power to appoint the Prime Minister and heads of the twenty two ministries. (Government of Vietnam 2012).

Vietnamese media environment

1986 is a very important year in the history of Vietnamese media industry. Until the year 1986, everything was under the subsidization of the government. In this year the party introduced a new economic plan, which is called “Doi Moi”. The vision of the plan was to gradually change the economy from a centrally-planned to a market economy. The most common news providing media in Vietnam at that time, the newspapers had been fed by government until then. Production costs and revenue had been covered by the government. However, there had been little space for innovation and development under the control of the Party. After “Doi Moi”, the government discontinued their support and let the newspapers control their own financial states, which also encouraged the newspapers to improve themselves to survive. The strict regulations on media loosened. However, the newspaper remained state-owned. (Heng 2002, 233)

While the economic reform gave the newspaper space to grow, they still had to operate in an environment full of contradictory regulations. The Constitution of Vietnam states that the freedom of speech is allowed; it also places the Communist Party of Vietnam higher than the law and dictates criticism of the party to be offensive. (McKinley 2008). To keep controls of the media, the government appoints key employees of the newspapers and requires the editors to follow guidances from the Party’s cultural and information committee. (Johnson and Yarwood 2008).

Although the environment stays complex with contradictory guidances and reactions from the government, the media in Vietnam has developed quickly since 1986. Today in Vietnam, media consists of newspapers, magazines, radio and television, news agency and electronic communications. According to the Vietnam Journalism Association, in August 2010 Vietnam has a total of 178 print newspapers, 37 online newspapers and 528 magazines; one national radio broadcaster, one national television broadcaster; and 64 local radio and television

stations (Viet Nam News 2010). The largest of them are all state-run. (Thuy, REDD+ politics in the media: A case study from Vietnam 2011, 3).

The internet also plays a very important role in Vietnamese media activities. Figure 2 demonstrates how significant the number of internet users had grown during a period of nine years:

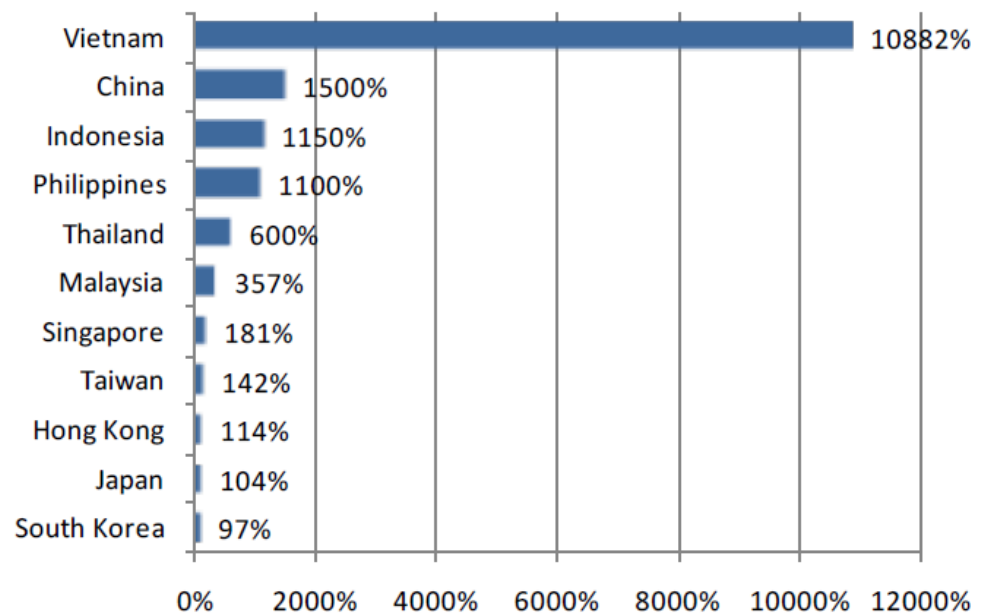


FIGURE 4. Internet user growth 2000-2009 in selected Asian countries. (Cimigo, 2010, p. 7)

During the period of 9 years from 2000 to 2009 the number of internet users in Vietnam had increased approximately a hundred times and growth was more than seven times higher than that of China. By the end of 2009, the total of Vietnamese netcitizens reached 22,5 million. However, 2009 is the only year during this period in which the growth rate was under 10 per cent. (Cimigo 2010, 7). Despite of the great growth rate, the internet penetration rate in Vietnam was still low. By the end of 2009 this rate reach 26 per cent. (Cimigo 2010, 6).

With the number of internet users growing fast, the government maintains a close look on the online communications. There have been “cyber

dissidents” who were imprisoned. An example is Mr. Pham Hong Son, who had been given a five-year sentence for activities such as downloading an internet document named “what is democracy?” and spread it on the internet. Amnesty International claimed that the Party is “using online informers to monitor the activities of web users.” (Johnson and Yarwood 2008).

3.2.2 Newspaper industry in Vietnam

This sub-chapter discusses the operations and characteristics of the two forms of news agencies in Vietnam: print newspapers and online news sites. They both share some characteristics with the global newspapers industries. However, due to geopolitical reasons, they have specific features when compared to most of the Western countries’ media.

In Vietnam, the press industry is under the Press Law, which means the Press Law dictates how should printed press, online communication agencies, radio and television broadcasters work. The aim of the Press Law is to safeguard the citizens’ right to freedom of speech and freedom of speech in the press while conforming the benefits of the Government and the People. The duty of the press is to contribute to the construction and defence of the country as well as the Vietnamese Communist Party. The responsibilities of the press according to the Press Law (Ministry of Culture and Information 1999) are to:

- Provide the people true and honest news on domestic and global matters with interests of the country and the people
- Propagandize and disseminate, contribute to the construction and defense of Vietnamese Communist Party’s policies and guidance as well as the Law
- Contribute to the stabilization of the country political state, as well as the law and order
- Function as a forum to reflect and guide the public opinions
- Fight against social problems and corruptions

- Contribute to the understandings between Vietnam and other countries in the world

Activities of the press are directly controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Information. Any ties with international press are also managed by the Ministry itself. No news agencies with the exceptions of entertainment press are privately-owned. The heads of the major presses are appointed by the government and can be discontinued and fired by the government at anytime if they commit wrongdoings or allow the newspaper to publish content encourage people to mistrust the government and the party.

An example of the close control and suppression of the government on the press is the case of Project Management Unit 18. It is a bureau of the Ministry of Transport. This high-profile case involved a big corruption and gambling scandal in 2005. After the case was brought in to light by the investigative newspaper “Thanh Nien” and “Tuoi Tre”, the outcry of the society caused the resign of the Minister and the arrest of his deputy and a high executive officer of the Unit. However, in the aftermath of the scandal, the reporters working on the case were also arrested, accused for “abusing the freedom of press” along with two police officers, accused for “exposing state secrets”. Chief Editors of four newspapers and magazines were fired. (Jeffries 2011, 10-33)

3.2.3 Print press in Vietnam

According to the Vietnam Journalism Association, in August 2010 there were 178 print newspapers in Vietnam (Viet Nam News 2010).

Due to the differences in publishing periods and information contents, print press in Vietnam is divided into several types (Dinh 2007, 12-25) which are daily papers, weekly newspaper, other periodical newspaper, and magazines.

Daily papers: newspaper issued daily. They can be published every day, in the morning or in the afternoon. Sunday and Saturday editions may exist and be larger with special modification. The contents of these newspapers are current happenings of domestic and international matters. The circulations of daily newspapers are considered largest among printed publications due to the fact that

it can meet the need for information of the people. The most important dailies of Vietnam are “Nhan Dan”, “Tuoi Tre”, “Thanh Nien”, “Sai Gon Giai Phong”.

Weekly newspapers are papers issued one time a week, usually on a specific weekday. They are newspapers providing specific information of ministries, professional organizations, social organizations and business organizations.

Other periodical newspapers can be published every 2, 3, 4, 5 days or every week, half a month or monthly. They can be newspapers of different Communist Party Units or of social, economic, political organizations.

Magazines are periodical publications specializing in some aspects of the society or in some fields of science and technology.

3.2.4 Disadvantages of Vietnamese newspapers

When compared to other kind of media and to the print newspaper of other countries, the Vietnamese newspapers have many disadvantages.

Firstly, newspapers are published at fixed dates and they provide specific information which had happened before. Information of event happening after the publication has to wait until the next one. When compared to other kind of news agencies such as radio, television and especially online newspapers, print newspapers' shortcoming is the delay of the news. The results are newspapers being less updated. To deal with this problem, newspapers publish afternoon tabloids. However, this form of newspapers is not widely used in Vietnam. On the other hand, the newspapers have the advantages of being more specific. They can analyze event and information at a much deeper level as a result of having more space and time. (Truong Phat Corp. 2009).

The second disadvantage of a newspaper is that it is monotonous. It means that information is provided only by text and pictures, and this appeals less to the readers. It also limits the approach with which the readers absorb information to reading. Other kind of media has the absolute advantage in this aspect by using voice, videos, applications, etc to interest readers. (Truong Phat Corp. 2009).

The third drawback of print papers is that they have to be delivered to the hands of the readers. This nature of print papers affects more clearly in under-developed areas, where distribution channels are not developed enough. In third-world countries, the majority of newspapers are published in urban areas, where transports are developed. In rural areas, newspapers arrive can be days after the publishing date, which make information become outdated. The effects of news from print papers in these areas are very limited. (Truong Phat Corp. 2009)

When comparing the print newspapers specifically with online news, they have one deadly disadvantage. The author has noticed while researching for the current trend of media in Vietnam a problem of newspapers. The biggest print papers in Vietnam are socially prestigious. To maintain their situation and to avoid more negative changes from the government, they have to keep their contents mainstream with focuses on politics, economics, and important international and domestic news. Moreover, the space for increasing contents of a publication is not available due to the limited pages of the papers. Thus their contents become insipid. While several online news agencies develop their contents quantitatively, the contents of the print ones are limited by space, by government's restrictions, by their own reputation and by junk news of online newspapers, which young people desired.

According to Tran (Tran 2011, 13), because of the shortcomings when comparing to radios and television, print press was foretold to be replaced at the end of the twentieth century. However, reality has proved the prediction to be wrong. The roles of print press have not yet become replaceable, at least when readers still require precise and profound information.

3.2.5 Online newspapers in Vietnam

Online newspapers are news agencies built and developed, and published on the internet. At the moment online news play a very important role in providing quick and updated news to the readers. (Ta 2004, 52). According to Tran (Tran 2011, 13-15), online news agencies hold many important characteristics helping this type of media becoming more and more irreplaceable in this age of digital communication.

Online news sites allow news to be updated simultaneously and without or with very small delays. The internet enabled reporters to collect information, work and send their pieces to editors right when they are finished. The articles can be published immediately without waiting for being in print. The article then can be updated continuously. This characteristic of online news sources is called “non-periodical”. This is one main reason why readers use online news sources. It reassures the readers with fast-updated, large-in-quantity, hot and convenient news pieces. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

Online news allows high interactions. The interactions can be between readers and the publishers, or between individuals such as the readers, the reporters, the main characters of articles, etc. These processes of interaction are built in many forms: feedbacks, comments, votes, emails, forums, etc. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

An online article may contain many kinds of media (multimedia). It can consist of text, photos, audio clips, video clips. With the help of various means of media, online articles become more lively and attractive, especially when compared with the traditional paper news pieces. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

Internet connection lets readers expand their read with only a click. Through hyperlinks, readers can have even a broader view of the matters issued in an article. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

Internet and information technology make information storage much easier. Huge amount of data can be searched, archived and looked up easily and scientifically. If the readers do not want to read data immediately, it is possible for them to save them for later. Television, newspapers and radios can also be stored by an average user, but it requires investing more in expenditure and labor. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

The last characteristic of an online news provider is their ability to have “high socialization and good individualization”. Unlike print newspapers, the coverage of an online news site is not limited by geographical issues. Anyone has an access to the internet, which spreads extremely widely at the moment, can read news online. The readers can also choose what, where, and for how long they read. (Truyen Hinh K26 2008).

Along with the advantages of online news, online publishers also have their strong points. Online news pieces do not require expensive printing process. They can be published directly without costing resources. Facilities for online news are also much cost-effective to invest. However, online news sites have one deadly drawback: due to the low advertising revenue, publishers operating only online cannot invest enough for quality personnel. The reporters and editors of online news have to work for lower wage, thus the publishers may not able to hire high-quality employees. It is common in Vietnam to spot unreliable data, plagiarized sources and even spelling mistakes.

4 MARKETING RESEARCH AND THE ANALYZING TOOLS

4.1 Marketing research

Marketing research is a method which is used by companies to learn about the environment outside of their organizations. In order to be profitable or effectively do business, companies have to understand the needs of the market. Moreover, in today's global economy, there are many factors which simultaneously affect the outer environment of a company, including the market needs. That is why marketing research is essential to the surviving and development of a organization. By doing marketing research, companies can find the way to meet their customers' requirements, or adapt to changes of the market, or cop with its competitors' new strategies.

The two terms "marketing research" and "market research" are usually used incorrectly. They stand for different meanings. Market research is defined as "study of the requirements of various markets, the acceptability of products and methods of developing or exploiting new markets" (Britannica Encyclopedia 2012). According to the Business Dictionary Online, market research is just a small part of the whole marketing research process. While market research is focusing onto a specific market, marketing research analyzes all factors which influence the marketing process of a company. Kotler defined marketing research as "the systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation" (Kotler 1967, 99). Besides market research, marketing research consists of product research, consumer research as well. Marketing research is very important to marketing decision making as it defines best way to understand and fulfill the market needs in a cost-effective and timely manner. (Britannica Encyclopedia 2012).

A successful marketing research requires valuable and precise outcome. To obtain correct analysis results the research needs to be well-organized. These are basic steps of a marketing research: defining the problem and objectives of the research, developing a research plan, collecting data, analyzing them and presenting them. (Kurtz and Boone 1987, 259-262).

Defining the problems and objectives of the research

During this step, the research conductors have to clearly define their objectives and how these objectives can be obtained. The goals have to stay within a reasonable reach or else it will use more resources of the conductors than necessary. Then the researchers have to define in which category their study lies. There are generally three categories for researches: exploratory, descriptive and causal. In exploratory researches, data are collected, studied and concluded to define the problem and help to determine theories as well as solutions. In descriptive researches, statistical data involving the problems are studied and in causal researches the cause-and-effect relationship of factors are examined. (Kotler 1967, 103-104) (Kurtz and Boone 1987, 263-265).

4.2 Analyzing tools

4.2.1 The Seven P's

The marketing mix is a tool which is widely-used by marketers to evaluate different facets of a company's marketing process. As the case organization in this study (Tuoi Tre Newspapers) provides the public with both products and services, it is necessary to expand the traditional marketing mix Four P's to the marketing mix Seven P's for professional services operators. In 1982, Booms and Bitner (Booms and Bitner, *Marketing Strategies and Organizational Structures for Services Firms* 1981, 47-51) introduced a modification and expansion of the existing Four P's. It is the marketing mix Seven P's, which is considered to be more appropriate for professional service marketers. (Crane 1993, 15). Figure 5 illustrates this model.



FIGURE 5. Seven P's of the marketing mix (Kar 2010).

The Seven P's of the marketing mix, as illustrated in Figure 5, consists of seven factors and is used for deciding and evaluating a company's marketing strategy. The seven deciding factors are: product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence.

Product

The market needs for a certain kind of product are not always the same. As different aspects of the market such as products, customers, needs, etc. change rapidly, it is essential for a company to look at its products or services and objectively re-evaluate if it is still going to sell? The Product factor of the Seven

Ps contains many aspects to evaluate what you are offering the market: design, technology, usefulness, quality, packaging, etc. (Tracy 2004).

Price

Price is one of the most basic matters in doing business. It has a lot of impact on customers' buying behaviors. On one hand, prices are considered to be a proxy for quality and vice-versa (Kar 2010). On the other hand, overpriced products become inappropriate to the realities of the market. It is recommended for a company to find the balance at which they can gain most profits. Prices policies also concerns sales terms and conditions, offers and promotions. There are various types of strategies in pricing products or services: skimming, penetration, cost-plus, etc. (Tracy 2004).

Promotion

Promotion includes processes in which a company introduces, markets, and sells its products or services to the customers (Tracy 2004). Many factors, methods and strategies can be used to improve customers' perceptions of a product: special offers, advertising products, user trials, etc.

Place

The last P of the traditional marketing mix is Place. It is of great important to review a company's sites where consumers find and buy their product (Tracy 2004). The concept is not limited to physical locations only; it is also about by which ways products reach the market. There are many options for a company with a specific product. The company can use retailers, wholesalers, telemarketing, and mail-orders to sell. In a rapidly changing industry, it is vital to continuously review how a product should be delivered to the hands of the consumers.

Process

This new P was added to the marketing mix in 1981 (Crane 1993, 15) by Booms and Bitner (Booms and Bitner, Marketing Strategies and Organizational Structures for Services Firms 1981, 47-51). To a service provider, the process is

important to delivering high-quality service. While the services provided are intangible, process is one factor which can be evaluated to grading services. By definition, included in this P are “procedures, mechanisms and flow of activities why which services are consumed.” (Booms and Bitner, Value Based Management n.d.).

People

People factor is a very important one in the process of delivering services and products to customers. The staffs who interact with customers are the ones who can add value to services and products (Clarity Marketing Ltd. 2005). The factor requires human resources staff to plan intensive training for staff on how to handle customers and contingencies in order to meet high requirements for customer satisfaction (Kar 2010).

Physical Evidence

This is the only implicit factor among the three newly-added factors of the new marketing mix. The physical evidence is defined as: “all the tangible, visible touch points that your customer encounter before they buy, from your reception area and signage, to your staff’s clothing and the images you include in you corporate brochure.” (Clarity Marketing Ltd. 2005).

The seven P’s marketing mix is essential for a company to review their own situation and adapt with changes of the market. However, the 7Ps model is more appropriate for service provider companies as they have to interact more with customers. To manufacturers and organization who attend only in producing and distributing tangible products, it is important to balance between the 4Ps and the 7Ps.

In the empirical part, the marketing mix is not presented as one whole, but is divided and placed into different components of chapters and sub-chapters to allow support from other factors. This part of theory only serves as the core knowledge to investigate aspects of the case organization – Tuoi Tre Newspapers later.

4.2.2 PEST analysis

The PEST Analysis is the reduced term of “political, economic, social and technology analysis” (Chaturvedy and Chaturvedy 2011). The analysis is widely-used by marketers to scan the general environment of the business. It can also help to detect trends, which can ultimately change the competitive situation of the market. PEST analysis usually takes the form of a four-square matrix with each one contains one factor. One noteworthy point is that although the readers look at each factor in turn, the interrelationships between the factors exist. (Henry 2008, 51). Table 4 below demonstrates an example of PEST analysis.

TABLE 2. PEST analysis template (Chapman 2009)

<p><i>Political</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future legislation • International legislation • Regulatory bodies and processes • Government policies • Government term and change • Home market lobbying/pressure groups • International pressure groups • Wars and conflict 	<p><i>Economic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home economy situation • Home economy trends • Overseas economies and trends • General taxation issues • Taxation specific to product/services • Specific industry factors • Market routes and distribution trends • Customer/end-user drivers
<p><i>Social</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifestyle trends • Demographics • Consumer attitudes and opinions • Media views • Consumer buying patterns • Fashion and role models • Buying access and trends • Advertising and publicity • Ethical issues 	<p><i>Technological</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing technology development • Replacement technology/solutions • Information and communications • Consumer buying mechanisms/technology • Innovation potential • Technology access, licensing, patents • Intellectual property issues • Global communications

The Pest Analysis template introduced by table 4 has been modified by the author of this thesis. Factors considered to have little or no relation to the business of TTN have been deleted.

4.2.3 Porter's five forces

Porter's five forces is an analysis model which helps marketers to define and gain better understandings of competition in an industry by examining the five main structural elements in every industry. This model helps marketer to expand their view of competition. Instead of determining the competition of an industry just by looking at competitors' competitive success, the method allows marketers to look at how new entrants, substitutes, buyers, suppliers and rivalry influence the industry's competition. (Bamford and West 2010). Figure 6 illustrates the five elements of Porter's Five Forces Model:

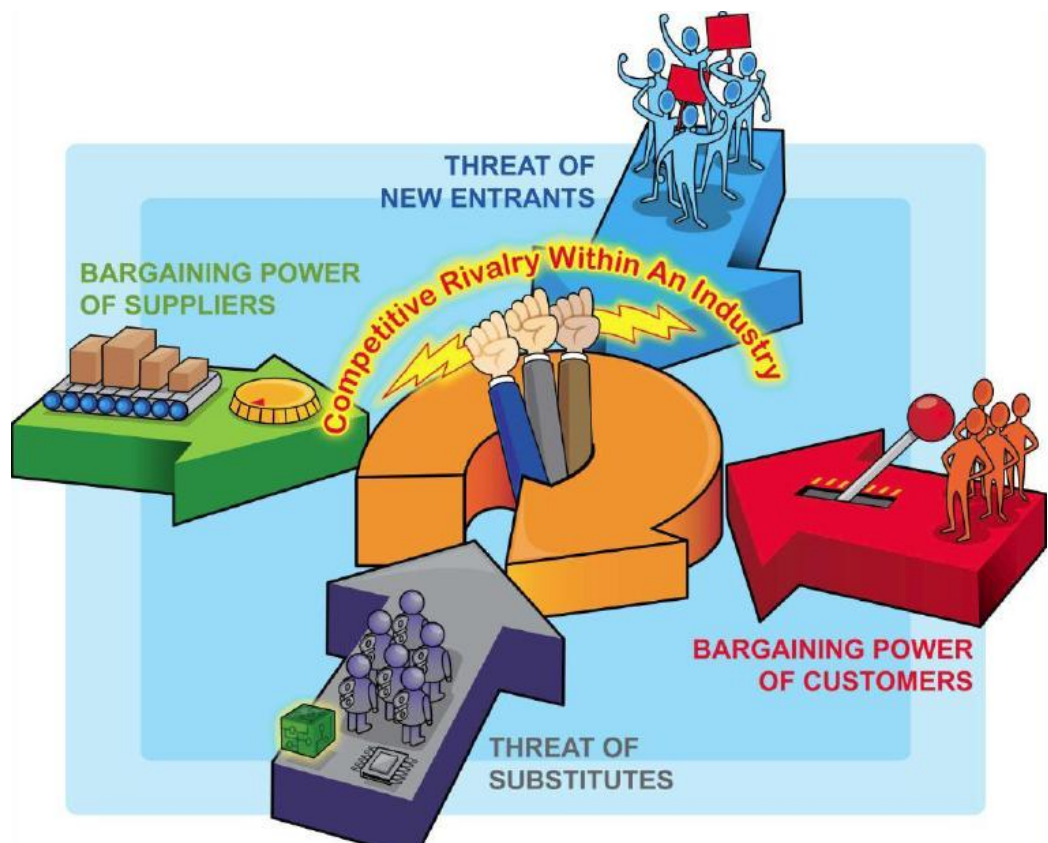


FIGURE 6. Porter's Five Forces Model (Lee 2009)

Industry Rivalry

This element is assessed by the degree of competition between the existing companies in the market. If the industry rivalry is high, then the difficulty for a company to generate high profit is also high. (Oxford University Press 2007). The criteria used by Porter to assess the industry rivalry are:

- Number of similar-sized firms: the higher the number is, the fiercer competitions are.
- The amount of capital invested: the higher the amount is, the harder competitors fight to survive the market
- The level of market capacity utilization: the lower the level is, the bigger the underutilized portion of the market is. Firms will compete harder to be in this portion.
- The growth rate of the market: if the market has low growth rate or is shrinking, the firms compete harder to keep their shares of the market.
- The similarity of products. The more similar the products are, the more likely that companies have similar strategies and objectives. This drives up the rivalry.

(Oxford University Press 2007)

Threat of New Entrants

New competitors entering the market can change the competition of the market drastically. Generally, the harsher the competitions within a market are, the easier it is for a new competitor to successfully enter the market. These new entrants can be new companies or new products developed by existing competitor. However, there are barriers limiting the amount and quality of an industry's new entrants. (Porter 1980). Some of the barriers to entry are listed below:

- Capital requirements: the cost of starting up a new business
- Economies of scale: price advantage by mass production or bulk purchasing
- Absolute cost advantages: advantages gain by having been in the market for a while. One example of this advantage is known as “experience curve”, which refers to cost-reduction methods gained by experience.

- Access to inputs: raw materials and inputs may be limited to new entrants.
- Access to distribution channels: the difficulty for the new entrants to find distribution channels
- Need for product differentiation: existing competitors in the market possesses patent of the products.
- Government regulation: existing and newly-put into force law can limit the new entrants.

(Bamford and West 2010, 104-106) (Porter 1980, 7-17)

Threat of substitutes

This element deals with the products and services which have the possibilities to substitute the company's products. The threat of substitutes is formed by different types of products outside the industry; and threatens to replace one company's products. This factor is determined by the following factors:

- Brand loyalty of customers
- Strength of customer relationships
- The cost of switching products for customers
- The relative price and performance of the substitute products

If the above four factors are high, then the threat of substitutes of that company's products is low and vice-versa. (Porter 1980, 23-24).

Bargaining power of suppliers

This element of the Porter's Five Forces determines the ability of suppliers to decide the terms and conditions when a company purchases from them. The main factors influence the bargaining powers of suppliers are:

- The number of alternative suppliers in the market
- The difficulty and cost when switching to another supplier.
- The possibility of the supplier to integrate forward to become competitor of the company

- The rate of fragmentation between the customers companies

If the answers for the above factors are high, then the suppliers are more powerful. (Porter 1980, 27-29) (Oxford University Press 2007).

Bargaining power of buyers

This element of the model shows the ability of buyers to force down prices and reduce profits of companies in a specific industry. Some of the factors influencing the power of buyers are:

- The number of buyers in the market and the number of buyers associated with a company: the fewer customers there are, the stronger bargaining power those customers have.
- The cost and difficulty for buyers to switch to another supplier: if a buyer can easily switch to another seller, the company needs to provide higher quality products or services to maintain loyalty of that buyer.
- The vitality of the product to the buyer: if the product is not vital to a buyer, that buyer will be easier for them to be attracted by another seller. (Oxford University Press 2007) (Porter 1980, 24-26)

In the empirical part, the Porter's Five Forces analysis is used to measure the current attractiveness and competition in Vietnamese print newspapers and online news industries. The results of the analysis are used as foundations for developing social media tools to gain more market shares and profitability.

4.2.4 SWOT and TOWS analyses

SWOT Analysis is the abbreviated form of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis. This analysis method is widely used to briefly describe the situation of a company. In real business life, the SWOT Analysis is supposed to be done regularly to keep the executive personnel updated with market and organizational changes. Table 3 shows in which manner a SWOT Analysis is presented:

TABLE 3. SWOT analysis matrix

Strength 1. 2. 3. 4.	Opportunities 1. 2. 3. 4.
Weaknesses 1. 2. 3. 4.	Threats 1. 2. 3. 4.

The four factors of the SWOT Analysis can be cross-combined to decide strategies used in marketing plans, which can exploit the positive aspects of the company and at the same time, minimize the negative ones. Table 5 demonstrates how a TOWS Matrix is formed.

TABLE 4. TOWS matrix (Mind Tools n.d.)

	External Opportunities 1. 2.	External Threats 1. 2.
Internal Strengths 1. 2.	Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities	Strategies that use strengths o minimize threats
Internal Weaknesses 1. 2.	Strategies that minimizing weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities	Strategies that minimize weaknesses to avoid threats

In the empirical part, SWOT and TOWS Analyses are used in the process of finding the right social media strategies to enhance the benefits of positive factors

of TTN and to reduce the influence of negative ones on the profitability of the newspapers.

5 SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING CHANNEL

5.1 Basic knowledge of social media

Although the first form of social media can be dated back to 1978, after 30 years of developments, it is still hard for social media to be defined. While the fast-paced changing of social media developments affects the majority of us, the quick evolution of social media prevents a definition of it to stay true for a long time. Recently Evans (Evans 2012, 33) recommended the definition available on Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com) to be an updated and correct one: “the term Social Media refers to the used of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue” (Wikipedia - The Free Encyclopedia 2012). Also according to the same article, one relevant definition of social media made by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein is: “social media is a group of internet-based applications that built on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Wikipedia - The Free Encyclopedia 2012).

The history of social media started in February 1987, when the first dial-up bulletin board system was launched. Through the 1980s, the bulletin board systems continue to grow in term of technologies and popularity. In 1997, an early social media service was launched. The website was SixDegrees.com and at its peak, it claimed to have one million users.

In August 1999, the renowned blogging service Blogger launched. Later in 2003 it was bought by Google. During the period of 2002 to 2006, several social media services and networks launched such as LinkedIn (2003), MySpace (2003), Facebook (2004), and Twitter (2006). 2 years from its debut, in 2006, Yahoo offered to buy Facebook at the price of one billion dollars. However, Facebook ultimately refused the acquisition. (Morrison Foerster 2011).

Since then, the number of users as well as the number of media tools and applications on social media networks has been rapidly increased. By December, 2011, Facebook has a total of 845 million users, increased by 39% compared to 1

year before and gained a profit of 1 billion dollars in the year 2011. (Cheredar 2012).

Twitter celebrated its fifth birthday in July, 2011. Everyday there are 350 billion tweets posted on the network. (Morrison Foerster 2011)

According to Evans (Evans 2012), the fundamental elements of social media are:

- Social Media consists of many different social channels, and especially online social channels.
- Social media changes rapidly.
- The most important element of Social media is being participative: the “audience” is assumed to be a part of the content-generating process.

In the marketing perspective, social media is not a single tool. It is a collaborative process. During this process, information is created, shared, altered and destroyed. (Evans 2012). Information created can be used to influence the crowd effectively. If a company can control its customer’s opinions, it can create a significant and defensible market position based on solid social acceptance. Moreover, the influence, regardless of being positive or negative, will spread itself. (Evans 2012, 37). Figure 7 illustrate an example how social media help to enhance sales of a product:

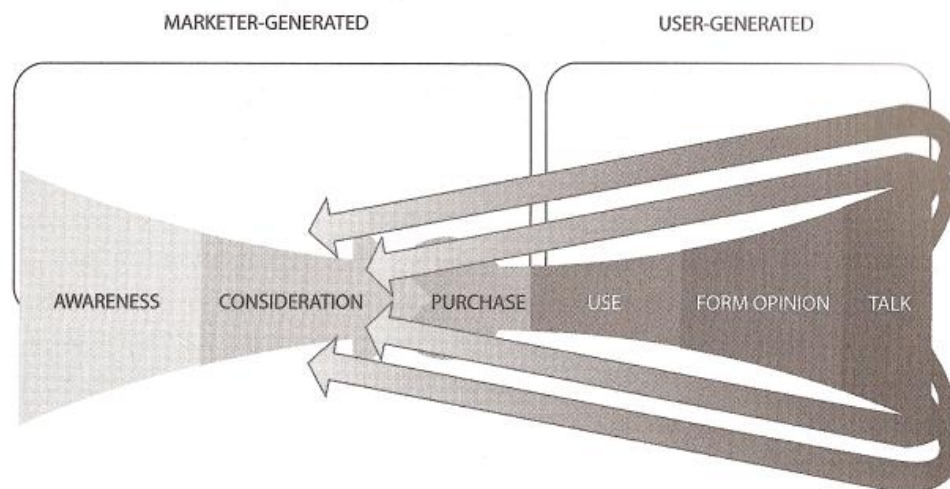


FIGURE 7. Social feedback cycle (Evans 2012, 44)

From a marketer's point of view, the major use of media is to attract awareness, which later drives demand. However, until recently, many professionals had underutilized the consideration process through which customers evaluate purchase options. Within this consideration process, conversations and personal opinions of consumers based on their own experiences can carry further and with greater trust than methods of traditional media. It is the interactive process between the customers in which buyers learn about their future purchases. During this learning process, people interact with friends, experienced users of the products. This process is the only one among the three marketer-generated phases which cannot be affected by marketers. (Satyam 2010).

By using social media tools, marketers can connect the post-purchase experiences with potential customers progressing from awareness to purchase. (Satyam 2010).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 59-68), Social Media can be classified into six different types:

- Collaborative projects such as wikis and text-based websites which allow the users to add, to remove and to change the content. Another mean of collaborative projects are social-bookmarking applications which enable individuals to rate internet links and media contents. An example of this is plug-ins for Facebook "like" and "share" buttons.
- Blogs, which are among the earliest forms of Social Media. They are websites allowing users to display their date-stamped entries. Micro-blogs such as twitter are also included in this type of media.
- Content communities: the existing of these communities (Youtube, Flickr, Slideshare, etc.) is to allow the users to share their digital contents. To media content producer, these communities carry the risk of illegally using and sharing copyrighted contents. However, the popularity of these sharing channels makes them the attractive channel for firm's marketing process.

- Social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc. are applications allowing users to have their own personal profiles, invite friends, sharing links and information between each other.
- Virtual worlds: “Virtual worlds are platforms that replicate a three-dimensional environment in which users can appear in the form of personalized avatars and interact with each other as they would in real life” (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 64).

These five types of media together form the online world of social media.

However, the usage of each type can be for various purposes and not all of them are appropriate for business. The next subchapters will briefly introduce some new concepts which can be applied for business purposes.

5.2 Crowd-sourcing

Crowd-sourcing is a term mentioned in the theory of collective intelligence (Lévy 1999). The theory suggested that the most reliable sources were coming from inputs of a distributed population. The collective intelligence concept is also sometimes called wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki 2004). The concept means tools to gather collective intelligence for certain tasks. (Aitamurto, Leiponen and Tee 2011).

Crowd-sourcing is one particular form of participatory social media. Other types of participatory social media are open-source production, blogging, video and photo-sharing. Crowd-sourcing distinguishes itself from the other types by having an active interaction between the organization and the participants. It is a top-down process managed by the organization to seek bottom-up, open input by users in an online community. Brabham identifies four types of crowd-sourcing (Brabham, forthcoming; Aitamurto, Leiponen, & Tee, 2011):

- Knowledge discovery and management
- Broadcast search
- Peer-vetted creative production
- Distributed human intelligence tasking

Some examples for crowd-sourcing projects are listed in table 5:

TABLE 5. Examples for crowd-sourcing projects (Aitamurto, Leiponen, & Tee, 2011; Ahlroth, 2012)

Case	Purpose	Launch	Remuneration
OpenStreetMap	Geographic contents	University College London, 2004	None
ReCaptcha	Digitize archives	Carnegie Mellon University, 2008	None
Mechanical Turk (MTurk)	Content analysis and artificial intelligence	Amazon, 2005	Micro-payments (<1\$)
InnoCentive	Problem solving and innovation projects	Eli Lilly, 2001	Remunerated (1,000 – 1,000,000\$)
Helsingin Sanomat	Collect potential contents and ideas for articles	Helsingin Sanomat, forthcoming	Special status

Table 5 shows that crowd-sourcing can be used for a wide range of purposes, with or without payments or rewards from the organization. It is also said that for firms, using crowd-sourcing can turn consumers into brand supporter and defenders. People who participate in a firm's process have more ties to the firms and higher loyalty to the brand. (Spiegel 2011).

5.3 Internal social media

Internal social media refers to the using of social media means to communicate between the personnel of an organization. There are many advantage internal social media networks can offer:

- Understandings between personnel
- Promote new products, news, events
- Build relationships between employers
- Increase the internal brand awareness
- Resolve customer service issues
- Fast communication with employees during crisis
- Allow corporate communicators to justify time spent on outer social networks during the workday.

(CNW Group 2010)

Due to the fact that the benefits internal social media networks offer are not tangible, companies may hesitate to apply online media into their internal communication. Many prejudices do not allow the leaders of firms to apply internal social media lightly. However, to certain kinds of organizations, advantages of internal social media can be important improvements contributing to the performance. Later the author will discuss the application of this form of media to the case organization- TTN.

6 TUOI TRE – DESCRIPTION

This chapter provides an overview of Tuoi Tre Newspaper, the history of the newspaper, its mission and functions. Next, the chapter also presents current status of Tuoi Tre Online, the electronic version of Tuoi Tre. The information provided in this chapter is mainly taken from report for Tuoi Tre by Tran (2010) and some other organizations' reports on Internet usage of Vietnamese.

6.1 Introduction of Tuoi Tre

History of Tuoi Tre Newspaper

Tuoi Tre Newspaper is the official publication of HCMC's Communist Youth Union. It was officially established on September 2, 1975. In the early time, Tuoi Tre was published in low number due to the allocation of paper of Ministry of Communication at that time. In April, 2006, Tuoi Tre became a daily newspaper with a Sunday edition. Regardless of being a publication of a city's Youth Communist Union, Tuoi Tre has grown to be the largest newspaper in Vietnam with its daily circulation is 450,000 according to 2007 statistics.

Besides print newspaper, Tuoi Tre published an online version called Tuoi Tre Online (TTO) in December, 2003. The online version is now available in Vietnamese and English. In about two years, the number of TTO's visitors has reached rank 3 of all Vietnamese websites in the world. TTO can be accessed at <http://tuoitre.vn> with about four million visitors per day.

Tuoi Tre is one of the first newspapers doing business in Vietnam. In the 80s, all the newspapers in Vietnam were under the subsidy of the government; however, Tuoi Tre decided to be financially independent from the state and lived on income from readers buying the newspaper.

Mission

As an official publication of the Communist Youth Union in HCMC, the first mission of Tuoi Tre Newspaper is to propagate for the Communist Party and state government which include ideas, knowledge of communism and education of patriotism to the youth union members. Therefore, Tuoi Tre must have news on

activities of HCMC Communist Youth Union, people with good deeds to impose an example for young readers.

As a newspaper, Tuoi Tre provides information on all aspects inside Vietnam as well as outside. Tuoi Tre's publications contain news of current events, articles, feature as well as advertisings for all people regardless of ages and genders although the newspaper focuses on young readers.

Tuoi Tre is also a forum where readers may send their ideas and comments or matters. It is considered a channel to get feedback of people for the Party and the Communist Youth Union in order to guide the public opinion according to the Party.

Vision

“Safeguarding the public's right to know. The paper is a broad tribune gathering creative ideas to foster the cause of reconstructing Vietnam, to protect the truth, and to build a fair and just society” (Thuy, Cifo.cigar.org 2011).

Products of Tuoi Tre

Besides the two main products which are daily print newspaper and TTO, Tuoi Tre also has the following publications:

- Tuoi Tre Cuoi: the satirical magazine bi-monthly.
- Tuoi Tre weekend: the weekly publication of Tuoi Tre.
- Ao Trang Journal: A special journal focuses on literature and arts for the youth, especially for students and pupils.
- Tuoi Tre Media Online: Provide radio, music, video, audio, and broadcast for TTO as well as some Vietnamese TV channels.
- Tuoi Tre News: The English page of TTO, can be accessed at <http://tuoitrenews.vn>
- Tuoi Tre Mobile (TTM): provide application for people access TTO through mobile phones and other handheld devices.

6.2 Organizational structure

Figure 8 illustrates the organizational structure of Tuoi Tre Newspaper

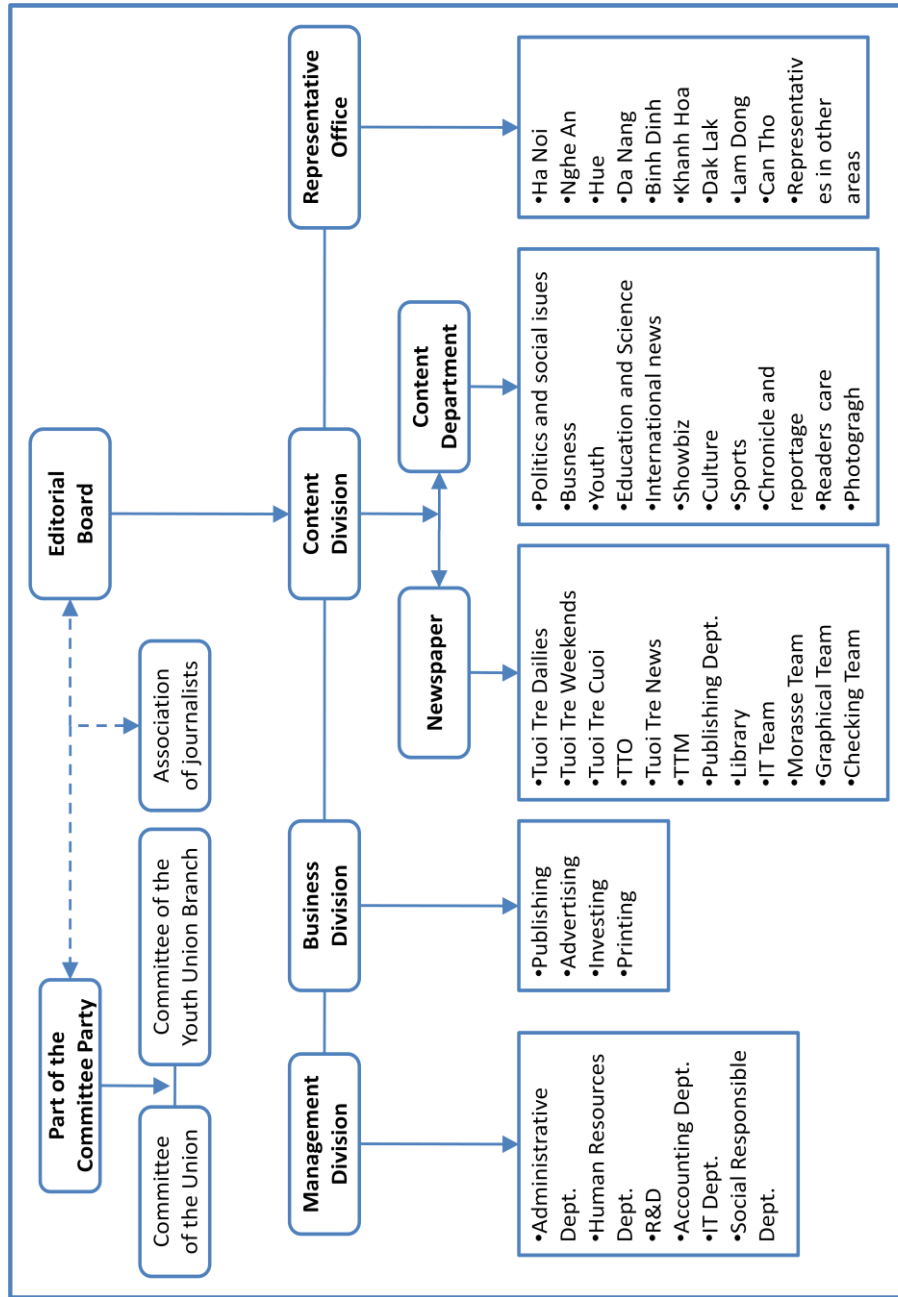


FIGURE 8. Organizational Chart of Tuoi Tre Newspaper (Tuoi Tre, 2010)

6.3 Current status of Tuoi Tre Newspaper

6.3.1 The print publications of Tuoi Tre

Print newspaper of Tuoi Tre is not considered a high class newspaper according to newspaper license in Vietnam. The reason is that it is the publication of the Communist Youth Union in HCMC area. However, according to report of Tran (2010), organizations special in this business are i.e. TNS; ACNielsen etc. evaluated Tuoi Tre Dailies as one of the leaders in Vietnamese newspaper. Tuoi Tre can be considered as the leader newspaper in HCMC, the most dynamic market for advertising in Vietnam.

Figure 9 demonstrates the circulation of Tuoi Tre Dailies over time, from 1975 until 2010. In the Figure 9, the circulation of Tuoi Tre Dailies dropped from 465,000 in 2008 to 400,000 in 2009 and stayed the same in 2010.

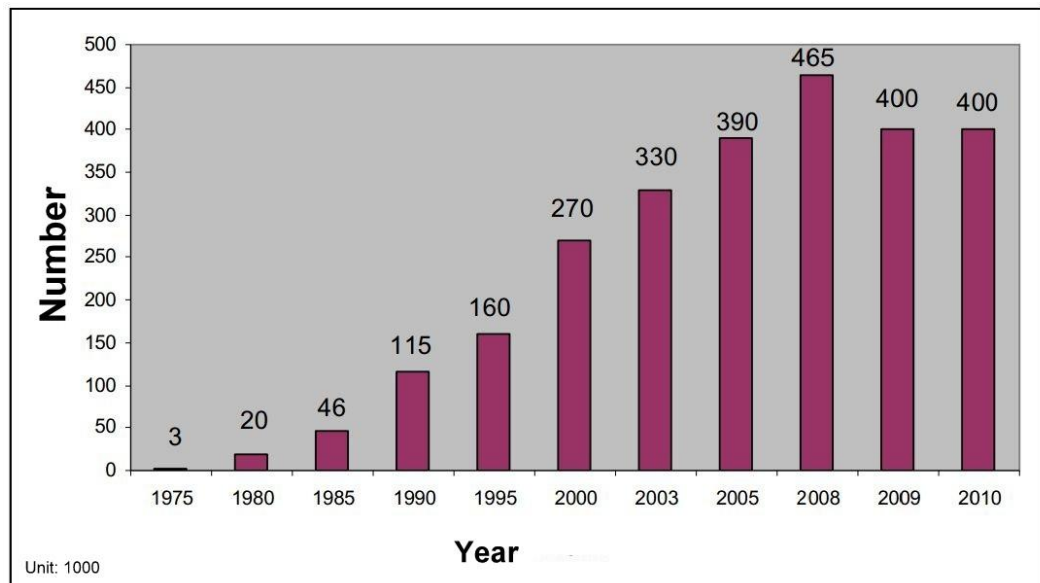


FIGURE 9. Circulation of Tuoi Tre Dailies from 1975 to 2010 (Tuoi Tre, 2010)

Tuoi Tre has more than 6234 retail agents in the whole country. Tuoi Tre Dailies are printed at the same time in 7 towns for faster delivery to readers. HCMC's areas consume 64 % of all Tuoi Tre Daily, and HCMC's surrounding areas make up 29%. It means that Tuoi Tre is not so popular in the North.

Tuoi Tre print publication contents

Tuoi Tre Newspaper satisfies the need for fast and correct information to readers. The content varies from all topics and events in Vietnam to international information. For example, Tuoi Tre provides information on politics, social issues, business, economics, education, science, culture, sport etc. Since Tuoi Tre Newspaper is under the management of HCMC's Communist Youth Union, it must allocate a certain space in the newspaper for activities of the Union daily.

In Vietnam, Tuoi Tre is famous for its investigations, reportages that expose the corruption of state officers and police. However, it is still a publication of the Communist Youth Union, which means that the overall voice of the newspaper must follow the Party' opinion. Therefore, the newspaper had trouble with communist authorities several times. An editor in chief of Tuoi Tre was sacked in 1991 when he allowed some articles that the Party didn't want to publish. In 2008, two reporters of Tuoi Tre and the chief editors were sued for a series of articles investigating a big corruption in Vietnam. In addition, many other reporters and editor got into trouble for publishing negative information about the government. The consequences of reporting the truth are the state's censorship in the content of Tuoi Tre recently.

The dropping in the circulation of Tuoi Tre newspaper began after its reporters were fired or penalized by the state in 2008.

Tuoi Tre print publication readers

According to Tran (2010), 74.7 % of Tuoi Tre Dailies readers are male. It can be explained that the newspaper focuses so much on political, economic, social issues.

The readers' ages are presented in Figure 10 below. We can infer from Figure 10 that, the number of readers in middle age accounts more than 50% of the total

while the youth hold about 10 %. Although Tuoi Tre should aim at the youth, it turned out that the readers are mainly middle age people.

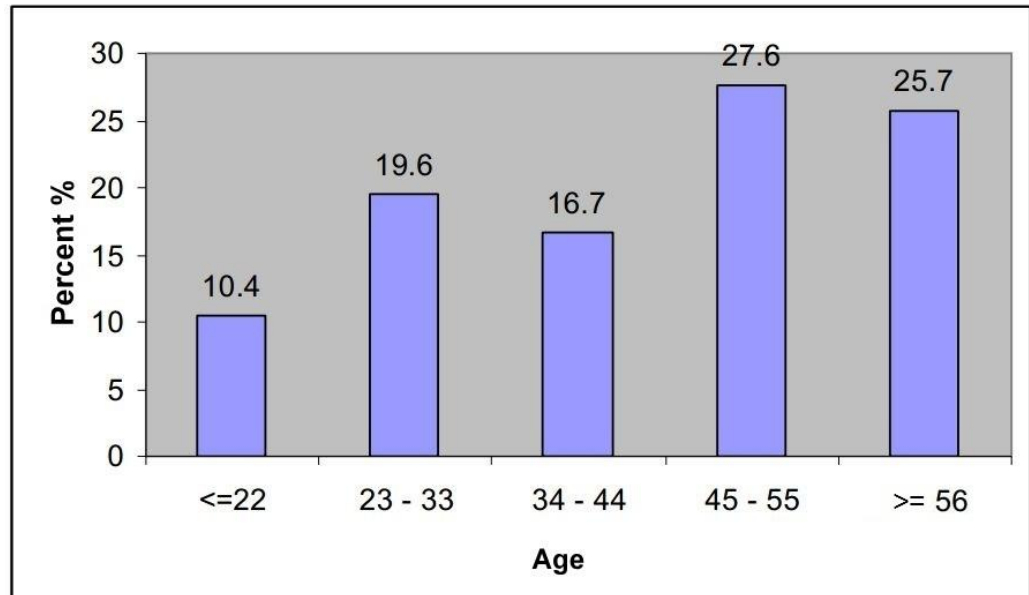


FIGURE 10. Ages of Tuoi Tre Dailies' readers (Tuoi Tre, 2006)

6.3.2 The online publications of Tuoi Tre (TTO)

According to Yahoo-TNS (2008), Tuoi Tre Online is the most visited news website in Vietnam with 52% percent.

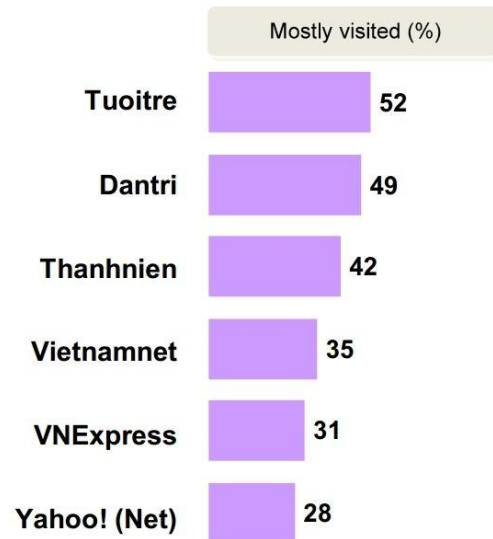


FIGURE 11. Vietnam online news providers (Yahoo 2009).

According to the latest report of Cimigo (2010), the position of Tuoi Tre has decreased significantly since 2008. Figure 12 below from Cimigo indicates that Tuoi Tre was ranked lower than 2 competitors' online sites.

News	
Vnexpress.net	16%
Dantri.com.vn	15%
Tuoitre.com.vn	8%

FIGURE 12. Favourite website for gathering information (Cimigo 2010)

The advantage of online news is the fast updating speed. However, Tuoi Tre has the same editorial board for TTO and Tuoi Tre Dailies. To keep the readers of the print newspaper as well as TTO, they must decide which pieces of news or articles spared for the print newspaper or posted to TTO. It makes TTO update news not as fast as competitors like VnExpress or Dantri.

TTO has the same overall themes as Tuoi Tre Dailies. It covers information in all aspects and topics, inside as well as outside Vietnam. TTO still spends spaces for news on Communist Youth Union activities in Vietnam. As an online news provider, TTO has an advantage compared to traditional newspaper, which is the online media. Tuoi Tre Media Online has been creating a lot of products including radio, audio, video, music, and broadcast for users.

However, the readers of TTO are more likely to be younger people than print newspaper. In Vietnam, middle age people lack computer skills, therefore, the Internet users tend to be young people.

7 ENVIRONMENT, INDUSTRY AND MARKETING ANALYSING

7.1 Definition of the overall market

The conventional name of Vietnam is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It is a mono-party country, which is ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Although Vietnam has joined the WTO in January 2007 after a decade-long negotiation process, the economy of Vietnam is still dominated by state-owned enterprises with about 40% of GDP coming from this sector. The biggest share of GDP comes from exporting oil and fossil minerals. (US Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

Being a developing country, the share of agriculture in the economy is high, approximately 22%. However, the share of industry sector in GDP has risen from 36% to 40% during the last decade. Deep poverty has been reduced significantly. Despite developments in economics, the country still has to struggle to restrain trade and budget deficits. At the beginning of 2010, the inflation rate reached 10% and by the end of 2011, it approached 20%. (US Central Intelligence Agency 2012) (BBC News 2012).

The population of Vietnam is estimated to be over 90 million by July 2012 and is ranked 14th in the world. 30% of the total population is living in urban areas. The biggest cities of the country are Ho Chi Minh City (population is about 6 million), Ha Noi (over 2.5 million), Hai Phong (nearly 2 million). (US Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

Ho Chi Minh City is the largest city in Vietnam. The city is also the economic, cultural, social central of the Southern part of Vietnam. Cultural and Social activities in Ho Chi Minh City are considered to be diverse with the participation of many trends and ethnic groups. The surrounding areas of Vietnam are also highly developed when compared to the average of Vietnamese provinces. Together Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Nai and Binh Duong form the pioneering triangle for Southern Vietnam's economy.

7.2 PEST analysis

In this subchapter the author introduces the PEST analysis of Vietnam. The analysis is used to give readers a panorama of surrounding factors which affect the newspaper industry of Vietnam. General factors which have little or no influence on the industry have been removed.

TABLE 6. PEST analysis of Vietnam (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2012; BBC News, 2012; Country Watch, 2012; Transparency International, 2011)

<p><i>Political</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vietnam is a mono-party state. - The political stability of Vietnam is indexed average (scored 4.5/10) - Legislation is incomplete. Changes happen fast. - Vietnamese regulatory sometimes does not match the legislation. - Government controls media and official organs. - Competitions in media are influenced by government's policies. - Freedom of press and freedom of speech are placed under the benefits of the party. - Censorship is practiced but quality-control is not by the government. - The country has low transparency and high bureaucracy. Corruption perceptions index of Vietnam in 2011 was 2.9. 	<p><i>Economic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inflation rate at the beginning of 2010 was about 10% and by December 2011 18.6%. - GDP growth rate is 5.8% in 2011. - GDP was estimated to be \$300 billion in 2011. GDP per capita \$3,300. - Unemployment in 2011 (estimated) was 2.9% - Population below poverty line in 2010 was 14.5% - Labor costs are low. - Public debt is about 57.3% of GDP. - Central bank discount and prime lending rates are high (13% and 18%) - The Vietnamese depends heavily on exporting fossil fuels, minerals.
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<p><i>Social</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literacy is relatively high with 94% of the aged-above-15 population. - Education is appreciated among the population, despite of outdated and uninspiring educational systems. - There is no private media sector. - Labor force is getting higher qualifications. However, knowledge is not practical. - Ranking low (113th/169th) in the Human Development Index (Finland is ranked 16th) - Living condition gap in different areas and income levels are huge. - Income gap between rural and urban area is high. - The degree of health risk in Vietnam is high. 	<p><i>Technological (communication focus)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telecommunication systems have been modernized. - High rate of mobile cellular possession (154 million phones/ 90 million people) - Provincial exchanges are digitalized by fiber-optic cable and microwave radio relay networks. - Number of internet users: 29 million - Logistic developments are low in rural areas. - Modern payment systems are initiated and being developed. Payments by text messages and mobile phones are common.
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From the PEST Analysis of Vietnam, we can conclude some of the aspects of the general environment in Vietnam worth mentioning. These conclusions serve to help identify the problems TTN is having, and help determine the solutions in the perspective of Social Media.

In Vietnam the legislation may conflict with the law. Although there are disputes about Communist Party and Government's reform, the superiority of the Party above the people seems to last.

There are no private media in Vietnam. Therefore, the freedom of press and freedom of speech are inferior to the benefits of the Party. The media will have to continue to serve as an organ for the Communist Party of Vietnam(CPV).

The censorship of the government on media and publishing products reduced the quality and diversity of the market.

The competition between newspapers is not recommended by the government. The government in each area tries to maintain a counterpoise one of the largest newspaper.

The characteristics of the CPV's governance at the moment are bureaucratic, non-transparent and easy to lead to corruption.

The labor market in Vietnam lacks highly proficient workers.

Infrastructures for communication are being developed while being ready for basic communication application.

7.3 Porter's five forces analysis

In this sub-chapter the author used the Porter's five forces framework to analyze the situation of the newspaper industry. The analysis is based on the situation in HCMC in 2011. Each of the elements will be analyzed to give the readers the overall picture of the industry in which TTN operates. The analysis is based on information the author collected when working for the newspaper, data given in the previous parts of this study, data collected by interviewed Ms. X of TTN and Mr. Jussi Ahlroth of Helsingin Sanomat. Other sources will be mentioned in the analysis.

Industry rivalry

In HCMC there are major dailies which act as news providing agencies for HCMC and the surrounding provinces: TTN, Thanh Nien, Sai Gon Giai Phong, Nhan dan, Lao Dong. Table 6 shows circulations of the major dailies in HCMC.

TABLE 7. Circulations and focus published areas of largest Vietnamese dailies (sources collected by the author from the newspapers' online pages on 21st of March, 2012)

Daily	Circulation	Focused published areas	Sources
Tuoi Tre Daily	400,000	Ho Chi Minh city	www.tuoitre.vn
Thanh Nien Daily	300,000	Ho Chi Minh city	www.thanhvien.com.vn
Sai Gon Giai Phong	130,000	Ho Chi Minh city	www.sggp.org.vn
Nhan Dan	220,000	National-wise	www.nhandan.com.vn

Being the leader in the market, the competition TTN has to face is high only against Thanh Nien as other competitors all have their own share of the market. While Nhan Dan is a national newspaper and do not put enough concentration on the market of South Vietnam, Sai Gon Giai Phong aims to the middle-aged and elder civil servants. It is only Thanh Nien which shares the same missions with Tuoi Tre. The Vietnamese meaning of Thanh Nien is “Youth”, which is the same as that of Tuoi Tre. Both newspapers aim at young and middle-aged readers with the same missions.

The level of market utilization is low. HCMC has a population of 9 million people. Tuoi Tre's circulation in its best time did not exceed half a million which is only under 6% of the population. When comparing to Helsingin Sanomat, the author can clearly see the difference. The circulation of Helsingin Sanomat is around 400,000 and the population of Greater Helsinki area is around 1.3 million. The number of copies Helsingin Sanomat published a day covers up 30% of the

total population in the segmented area. Comparing between the two newspapers, the author inferred that the market utilization of HCMC's newspapers industry is still low. Although economic and social factors do not allow higher circulation for Tuoi Tre and the other dailies, the situation can change as media is changing rapidly and give more space for the newspapers to fight for new market share.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the industry rivalry is high because of the severe competition between similar newspapers in the market. However, the extent of competition is limited as the policy of the government encourages a counterpoise of the market leader.

Threats of New Entrants

The threats of New Entrants come from two main sources: new publishers and/or new products from the existing players. In Vietnam, all media activities are owned by the government. Thus there is no barrier for a new organization as long as it is permitted by the government. Therefore newspapers can only prepare to cope with new products launched by the existing newspapers. However, barriers to new entry of a product do not apply to existing players in the market due to the fact that every newspaper owns relevant qualifications to launch a new product. Considered the impractical barriers, the threats of New Entrants in HCMC newspaper market is very high.

Threats of Substitutions

The threat of substitutions of the print newspaper market in HCMC is very high as the availability of factors enhancing the threat is great:

Poor strength of customer relationships: Except for the case of relationships between advertising agencies and the newspapers, newspapers usually do not have strong customer relationships as the products they delivered are one-time and do not require interactions with customers.

The cost of switching product for customers is low because the products mentioned in this case are inexpensive.

The relative price and “difficulty to obtain” of the substitute product is low. In this case, online media usually cost customers nothing to enjoy the products while print paper, although relatively cheap, still require customers a process of purchasing and paying.

Brand loyalty is the one factor which can help to reduce the threat of substitutions. Said Ms. X: “During the preparations for celebrating the 35th anniversary of Tuoi Tre in 2010, Tuoi Tre had conducted a study of loyal readers, in which TTN had found many.” Even when the quality of the newspaper dropped, they still believed in and loved the ambience of Tuoi Tre.

Another factor which can help to reduce the threat of substitution is the relative performance of the substitute products. As the leader in the market, Tuoi Tre has the financial ability to invest in high-quality personnel. According to Ms. X: “Tuoi Tre can lose to the online news only in the diversity of topics offered, but still and is going to keep quality higher than that of the online news.”

All in all, we can conclude that the threat of substitutions in HCMC print newspaper market is partially high. While readers who are concerned more about the cost-effectiveness aspect of the purchasing process can turn to free or cheaper news, readers who have been accustomed to the quality of the print newspapers will not be tempted.

Bargaining power of suppliers

With the product being publications, the materials are divided into “intellectual materials” and “physical materials.” As intellectual materials are collected from within the newspapers, we need only to consider “physical materials”.

The author concludes the bargaining power of suppliers in the market to be weak because:

- State-owned media have supports from the government to conduct ordinary work, which includes material purchasing.
- The number of alternative suppliers in the market is high as printing is a basic industry of Vietnam.
- The cost for switching supplier is low

Bargaining power of buyers

The customers (buyers) of the print newspaper industries are divided into two types: “readers” who buy newspapers and “advertisers” who buy advertising spaces to promote their products or services. The bargaining power of the advertisers is relatively low because each newspaper has a price policy suited to their position in the market, which is unique. If an advertiser stops advertising in one newspaper, it is very hard for him/her to find another newspaper with the same geographical coverage area, circulation and price. The bargaining power of readers is high because it is easy and inexpensive for readers to switch to another newspaper with similar functions.

7.4 SWOT and TOWS analysis

In this subchapter, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Tuoi Tre will be presented firstly. The SWOT Analysis is essential to carry out the TOWS analysis later. The aim of the TOWS analysis is to find new strategy for Tuoi Tre to deal with the difficulties they are having at the moment. The information presented in this part includes the author’s own observation, data given in previous parts of the study, data collected by interviewing Mr. Ahlroth and Ms. X. Other sources if presented in the analyses will be stated.

TABLE 8. SWOT analysis of Tuoi Tre

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good brand-awareness among readers 2. Large number of proficient reporter 3. Good employment of basic social media 4. Producing diverse media 5. Owning the biggest share of the market 6. Good online edition of the newspaper 7. Good distribution channels 8. Being trademarked as a reforming and progressive newspapers 9. Large number of advertisements 	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fast-paced changes in online media 2. Increasing number of internet users in Vietnam 3. Emerging use of mobile devices
<p><i>Weakness</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weakened and unmotivated staff 2. Contents limited to half-hearted political commentary 3. Censorship forced by the government 4. Being classified as third-rate publication and owned by local Communist Youth Union. 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competitions from strong newspapers 2. Being substituted by online news agencies 3. Inflation may raised production cost 4. New forms of media 5. The continuous decline of newspapers readership

Strength

TTN is currently the publisher of the biggest daily in Vietnam. The newspaper has a long history of being one of the progressive forces among media in Vietnam, which gained it the awareness and love from the people. Since the “Doi moi”, Tuoi Tre has always been the pioneer applying new methods of doing business and worthily earned its reward: the ability of producing a wide range of media, the possession of the most talented and professional reporters, owning the biggest market share of print newspaper and a good online edition. As a result of having

good reputation and market share, TTN appears to be attractive in the eyes of advertisers. Great circulation and attractiveness to advertisers allow Tuoi Tre gain good profitability, which help the newspaper to be one of the best financial-backed in the industry.

Weaknesses

Originally, Tuoi Tre is an official organ under the Ho Chi Minh City Communist Youth Union, which is a local political organization. The origin caused Tuoi Tre to be classified as third-rate local newspaper. This classification affects strongly on the contents of Tuoi Tre. The newspaper has to receive guidance from the Union, which forced the contents of Tuoi Tre to partially focus on aspects of the youth's activities.

Being the most progressive newspaper in the market has its drawbacks. After previous reports on corruption and social problems, TTN has to suffer tremendous censorship from the government as the freedom of press, the freedom of speech, the right to know and the benefits of the people are all placed under the stability of the CPV. Recently, in 2008 and 2009, there were 2 reporters arrested, 2 personnel whose press cards were reclaimed. The chief editor of the TTN was fired. The suppression caused the personnel of the newspaper to be unmotivated. The censorship also limits the content of the newspaper to half-hearted political commentary.

Opportunities

Being limited in print newspapers by contents required by the governments, the opportunities for Tuoi Tre to develop its media comes with the fast-paced changes in online media. The accessibility to the internet and contents generated online has been widened in recent years. The communication infrastructures and information technology allow the newspaper to use several non-traditional media tools. Another factor which brings opportunities to TTN is the use of mobile devices such as laptops, smart phones, tablets, etc.

Threats

Along with opportunities, the coming of new technology also brings changes to the business environments, thus gives threats to the newspaper. New forms of media, if successfully exploited by competitors before TTN can reacted, can steal away the brand awareness and loyalty. Being challenged by strong competitors in the market with their newly-developed strategies, the print newspaper, which remained the major source of income for TTN, has to face the online news agencies, whose having many strengths comparing to the traditional newspapers. Together with the natural decline in readerships, the Tuoi Tre Daily stands before the threat of losing readers, brand awareness and revenue from both sales and advertising.

TOWS analysis of Tuoi Tre

	External Opportunities	External Threats
<p>Internal Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good brand-awareness among readers 2. Large number of proficient reporter 3. Good employment of basic social media 4. Producing diverse media 5. Owning the biggest share of the market 6. Good online edition of the newspaper 7. Good distribution channels 8. Being trademarked as a reforming and progressive newspapers 9. Large number of advertisements 	<p>External Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fast-paced changes in online media 2. Increasing number of internet users in Vietnam 3. Emerging use of mobile devices <p>- Launch a new online edition which focuses in young net citizens' interests to gain online readerships from new internet users</p> <p>- Building reading apps for mobile devices to improve mobile usability and add more advertising channels</p>	<p>External Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competitions from strong newspapers 2. Being substituted by online news agencies 3. Inflation may raised production cost 4. New forms of media 5. The continuous decline of newspapers readership <p>- Create more online events to attract more readerships from other online agencies. Use events as a channel to connect TIO with the print newspapers and create brand loyalty</p>
<p>Internal Weakness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weakened and unmotivated staff 2. Contents limited to half-hearted political commentary 3. Censorship forced by the government 4. Being classified as third-rate publication and owned by local Communist Youth Union. 	<p>- Use internal social media for motivating and raising internal brand awareness of reporters.</p>	<p>- Launch a blog for stories of reporters to help increasing attractive contents and building emotional relationships with readers</p> <p>-Launch a crowd sourcing database to built relationships with readers and at the same time, get more interesting and social needs-driven stories.</p>

FIGURE 13. TOWS analysis of Tuoi Tre

The strategies recommended by using the TOWS analysis are actually the ultimate objective of this study. They are strategies employing social media to maximize the sustainable benefits of the newspapers and to minimize or to dodge the negative effects from the internal weaknesses of the TTN or from the external threats of environment. More details about these strategies are discussed in the next chapter.

8 SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION

8.1 Why social media suit the current needs of Tuoi Tre?

After applying the analyzing tools presented in previous chapters, the author concluded that it was impractical for Tuoi Tre to focus its improvement efforts on the print newspapers. Tuoi Tre would have to face many obstacles if the newspaper wants to push the publishing of the print newspaper ahead.

Firstly, the quality of TT daily has become harder to raise. The main functions of the dailies are defined by its classification. It is assigned that TTN has to operate towards the purpose of the Ho Chi Minh City Communist Youth Union. The visions of the Union are limited and thus, limit the space for improvements of the newspapers. Even the TTO has to compromise with these purposes. However, there are unlimited spaces online where reporters can add interesting articles, unlike the pages of dailies.

Another factor which limits the attractiveness of the dailies is the censorship of the governments. The restrictions dispossessed the trademarked characteristics of the newspaper: “the most reforming and progressive newspapers”. Thus the newspaper lost its selling points. Also with these restrictions, it is difficult for TTN to find another one.

New media on the internet are also taking away portions of the readers. The same things happened when radio and television were taking their first steps on the market. It is the nature of the media industry. However, it does not mean that all the readers will gradually turn to online contents. Print newspapers still have their own advantages.

Despite many factors pulling the circulation of dailies down, it is extremely difficult for newspapers to abandon print newspapers as they are the main source of revenue. Without income from sales and advertising, papers no longer have the ability to maintain their high quality, wise and professional reporters. It is the need for deep and professional articles which keep serious readers supporting print newspapers and it is also to keep the customers that newspapers have to maintain their budget for high quality staff.

It is the balancing situation of the print newspapers which lead the author to the questions of finding effective ways to improve the performance of TTN generally and specifically online. By interviewing Ms. X, the author has been able to identify the problems of the print newspapers. By interviewing Mr. Jussi Ahlroth, the author has been given general ideas how to meet the objective. Together with the introduction to the problems from the two professionals, the analyzing tools have helped the author to have the exact ideas how the strategies should be. Social media are the chosen tools because the booming of internet and social media techniques does not allow the latecomer to survive in the market. If TTN reacts later than its competitors, it will not only lose the opportunity to improve its performance, but also let the competitors use the weapons, which it's supposed to have, to damage TTN. In the next subchapter, more details of the strategies from the last chapter are discussed.

8.2 The strategies

8.2.1 Tuoi Tre's blog for reporters

Tuoi Tre is a mainstream newspaper. The main purpose of TTN is to report news. Rare does it have personal relationships or emotional ties with its readers. This fact makes sense because it is required for a newspaper to stay objective and serious when reporting news. However social media offer ways to interact and built personal ties between the staff and the readers. One of those ways is to use blogs.

When being interviewed, Mr. Ahlroth referred to the fact that reporters usually have too many things to talk about. It is the job of the editorial board to limit what they can and cannot talk about in mainstream newspapers. According to Ms. X, the reporters of TTN also have interesting story, which contents are too small or not mainstream enough to be put in an article. However, it is the small stories including the emotions and individual viewpoints of reporters that attract emotions and understandings from readers. A blog linked to the front page of TTN can add these interesting small pieces to the newspapers. It is not directly included in the newspaper, so there can be no complains about the newspaper

becoming “less-mainstream”. Moreover, it can diversify the content of the website, build personal ties with readers through commenting and discussing, and increase the brand-awareness of the newspaper on the internet.

8.2.2 Build a crowd-sourcing platform for the readers to submit and discuss ideas

The crowd-sourcing has been long used on the internet. There are many types of methods can be used for crowd-sourcing. According to Mr. Ahlroth, the Sanoma Group has been using multimedia messaging service for collecting picture, news, events from citizens of Helsinki. The messages can be sent to a hotline number and then processed to determine if it can be used for the next publication of newspaper.

The Helsingin Sanomat is also developing a platform where registered and motivated users discuss and give ideas about topics given out by the newspaper. The newspaper later can collect information they provided and in exchange, give them some rewards.

The idea of Mr. Ahlroth was that it is not only about new ideas for reporters. It is also the way they treat their valued customers. Their opinions should be listened to and respected. The newspaper needs to build ties with the readers, make them a part of the process.

A similar platform is recommended to Tuoi Tre by the author.

8.2.3 Online events for more readership

Print newspapers have one distinction when comparing to online newspapers. That is the dailies they publishe every day. By employing social media methods, Tuoi Tre can attract more readers from the internet to read its online edition by using the dailies as rewards or resources. For example quizzes can be set up on TTO or on Tuoi Tre’s Facebook fan page. Rewards can be one week of free dailies and will be given to people who answer precisely and fastest through the comment system. Resources for quiz can be from one of the previous day’s print

articles. These kinds of activities have the power to connect the online edition to the print TT dailies, encourage more readership from the internet, give them chances to actually read the newspapers and build brand awareness or the foundation for brand loyalty.

8.2.4 Launch a new special online edition for to be net citizens

In 2011, the number of internet users in Vietnam reached 29 million (Cimigo, 2011). The total population of Vietnam is 90 million. That means there's roughly one third of the population using the internet. However, the popularization of internet in Vietnam is predicted to continue strongly. Many of the to-be users are the young. Many online news agencies in Vietnam have developed special online editions focusing on the interest topics for the young.

The author recommends Tuoi Tre to catch the trend of the market and create one. TTN has the absolute advantage of reputation and quality, which due to my own observation, are hard for organizations operating only in online news agencies to keep pace with. The objective of this strategy is to make use of these advantages and share a portion of future online internet users. It is also easier to build brand-awareness before the users become accustomed to online news and free, shallow reports.

8.2.5 Building reading apps for mobile devices

Reading apps are specifically designed for use with a news provider. While mobile devices are becoming so common nowadays, it is necessary for Tuoi Tre to wait for the trend in front. The author learned about the potential of this sector when doing the interview with Mr. Ahlroth. Helsingin Sanomat is developing an app for reading articles as well as for mobile advertising. The advertisements are not attached on the reading screen, which may annoy the readers, but serves as a small invitation card for added value when the readers slide between pages. If the method succeeds, it will greatly increase the value of mobile advertising and open a new channel for earning advertising revenue. Newspapers can be less dependent on their print papers for income. The method can also be used to connect the

mobile contents of the newspapers to the print contents, which may somehow attract customer interests to the print papers.

8.2.6 Using internal social media

Internal media are social networks connecting the staff of a organization. A platform can be used to increase the flow of information within Tuoi Tre. For employees it will be easier to build their ties to the newspaper and thus, work with higher motivation. The internal social media can also be used to raise awareness of employees toward the newspaper in real-time without having to plan for periodical seminars.

9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Summary

The objectives of this thesis are to analyze the current position of the case newspaper: Tuoi Tre News and to suggest possible ways in which Social Media can be used as a tool to effectively improve the situation. To be able to achieve these goals, the author has used a variety of theories, analyzing tools and research approaches.

Firstly in the second chapter, the author has introduced the research methodology, which forms the core of the study. The author used the qualitative research method and both secondary and primary data were collected through interviews, documents review, and the author's own observation. Regarding research purposes, it can be said that this thesis is exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

In the third chapter, the business of media publishing and newspapers has been introduced, both internationally and in Vietnam. Generally, the industry of print newspapers in Vietnam used the same technologies, but is different from that of the world in freedom. The freedom of press in Vietnam is limited and is not really practiced by the government.

In the fourth chapter, information on marketing research and analyzing tools has been gone through. The author introduced the concept of the 7P's marketing mix, the Porter's Five Forces model, and analyses such as PEST, SWOT, and TOWS.

In the next chapter, some basic knowledge about Social Media is briefed, along with an introduction of two important usages of Social Media: crowd-sourcing and internal social media.

Starting from chapter 6 is the empirical part. First is the description of the case organization – Tuoi Tre news. Chapter 6 is for this use only, and aims to give the readers a clear view on the current situation of the newspaper. Chapter 7 is where the author carries out deeper analyses, which help to determine the solutions the author suggests in chapter 8. The solutions can be listed out as: a blog for

reporters, a crowd-sourcing platform, online events, online special editions for chosen segments, apps for mobile devices, and using internal social media.

In the final chapter, which is numbered 9, the author gives a summary of the study as well as a conclusion and suggestions for further studies.

9.2 Research results

In this part, the results from this research and recommendations of the author for improving the Tuoi Tre Newspaper's current status will be presented.

9.2.1 Research question 1: What is the current position of Tuoi Tre newspaper?

From the studying of reports on Tuoi Tre Newspaper and the interview with a Tuoi Tre Newspaper officer, the author has found out the current situation of Tuoi Tre Newspaper.

The circulation of Tuoi Tre Dailies had been increasing and reached a peak in 2008. Since 2008, the circulation has been going down over recent years. Tuoi Tre Online version was the most visited news website in Vietnam in 2008. However, the number of visitors had also decreased since 2008. In 2010 Tuoi Tre Online has lost its first position to VnExpress and Dantri. Tuoi Tre Online was the third most visited news website in 2010.

Tuoi Tre newspapers must allocate a certain space for reporting about the Communist Youth Union. Actually, this kind of news is not interesting to read and cannot attract young readers. On the other hand, other online competitors always update really fast all kinds of the latest news. Tuoi Tre, VnExpress and Dantri all have a commenting function under each article allowing readers to express their own opinions. However, Tuoi Tre Online was under strict supervision of the government recently; hence it must use the method called pre-moderation to limit and control the discussions of readers. On the other hand, the

competitors are mostly mainstream newspapers; they allow their readers more freedom of speech than Tuoi Tre.

Overall, due to the competition from other online news providers and social networks, the censorship of the government on the content and the loss of key reporters, Tuoi Tre is losing the readership and the leader position in Vietnamese Newspaper business. The consequences resulted in the decrease of advertising revenue.

However, it is really difficult for Tuoi Tre Newspaper to change its organizational structure or content. This is because Tuoi Tre is under the management and supervision of HCMC's Communist Youth Union. Therefore, Tuoi Tre Newspaper needs new solutions which are social media applications as recommended in this thesis.

9.2.2 Research question 2: How social media approaches can help to improve that situation?

This thesis utilized tools such as PEST and Porter's Five Forces to analyze the situation of newspaper industry in Vietnam. The author has used SWOT to address strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and TOWS to define strategies that can optimize opportunities as well as reduce influences of the threats. After the analyzing phases, the author recommends the following solutions for Tuoi Tre:

- Open a special blog where reporters can posts topics, stories, pieces of news that they find interesting or they are concerned about. This kind of information may be fascinating for readers but not mainstream enough to be published on Tuoi Tre Dailies or TTO. Therefore, the blog is a right place to put those pieces of news.
- Open a new online page which is special for young readers.
- Establish an internal social media for enhancing the internal organizational culture, storing as well as managing the knowledge of internal staffs to increase quality of business.

- Utilize crowd-sourcing by applying multimedia messaging service and special forums. This tool is used to get ideas of the readers, what they want the newspaper to write about. It also helps create a personal relation between readers and the newspaper.
- Create online events to attract readers
- Apply special applications for tablet news reading and other mobile devices. The applications should make readers comfortable and better advertisement display on handheld devices.

9.3 Limitations and further studies

The scope of the thesis is to analyze Vietnamese newspaper industry and the case newspaper Tuoi Tre. In this thesis, the analyzing phases resulted in six solutions for traditional newspapers. The implementations of the solutions are not focused on. Although the case is one of the largest and most popular newspapers in Vietnam, the analysis of Vietnam newspaper business environment still may be beneficial for smaller newspapers. The case newspaper is a general news provider. The analysis in this study may not reflect the situation of special issues magazines. In addition, it is necessary to noticed that the reports, numbers used in this thesis are not the latest statistics due to the lack of information and documentations.

Due to the above limitations, there are a lot of topics and ideas for further studies on this area.

- Firstly, a large-scale survey can be conducted to get more precise general results.
- A study on the small newspapers and the solutions can also be a good topic.
- Another possible study is to study the challenges of special issues (special monthly magazines on movies, food and cooking, sports, automobile, health...) with the increasing of special forum and websites.

- Besides, it may be necessary to find out the reading habits, and reading taste of Vietnamese in order to increase newspaper circulation for more advertising benefits.
- Finally, there has been no afternoon tabloid in Vietnam yet. Therefore, a research which studies whether an afternoon tabloid can enter the Vietnamese newspaper business.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Interview Questions

1. When did the newspaper start to interact online with its readers?
2. Does the newspaper allow free comments on your online articles or the newspaper need to check/edit first?
3. What kind of off-line activities does the newspaper have to interact with readers?
4. Does your newspaper have specific strategy/activities to attract more readerships?
5. What kind of online-social media does the newspaper take part in?
6. Does the newspaper have different edition for each local/ as their interest stay locally?
7. What's your strategy to attract people from outside area?
8. Do you have any strategy to fight competitors/ or leave it to the content of the newspaper?
9. In some years, how do you think the way newspaper interacts with readers will change?
10. How many % of the printed content goes online? How about the delay?
11. New York Times and some other newspaper are restricting their online content to a small number to non-subscriber. Does the news have any intention to do that?
12. I notice there's a decline of about 3% in readerships within 3 months. Decreasing in readerships, to the extent that I know, means decreased income from sales and advertising. How are you gonna fight that situation? (Honesly I don't see a lot of ads on Helsingin Sanomat webpage).
13. How many people you have on social media team? Does what kind of expenditures needed for social media?
14. Can you evaluate the result of your social media activity?

15. Do the reporters complain about the lack of interesting contents nowadays?
16. What is the situation of applying crowd-sourcing in your newspaper?

The following questions were used specially for Helsigin Sanomat

17. How many percents of 900,000 readerships come from Halsinki, Vantaa, and Espoo?
18. Your online news' interfaces are very different from Ita.lehti.
Ita.lehti is very colorful while yours look like an electronic version of the print newspaper. Are you keeping it because of your middle-age segmentation (very simple to use interface)?
19. While Ita seems to be aiming at younger readers, do you fear one day, when they grow older, they will still keep the habit of reading Ita and you will lose some of your middle-age portion while still cannot attract the youth?

APPENDIX 2. List of interviewees

Mr. Jussi Ahlroth

Helsingin Sanomat - Journalist

Responsible for social media application of Helsingin Sanomat

Ms. X

Officer of Tuoi Tre Newspaper