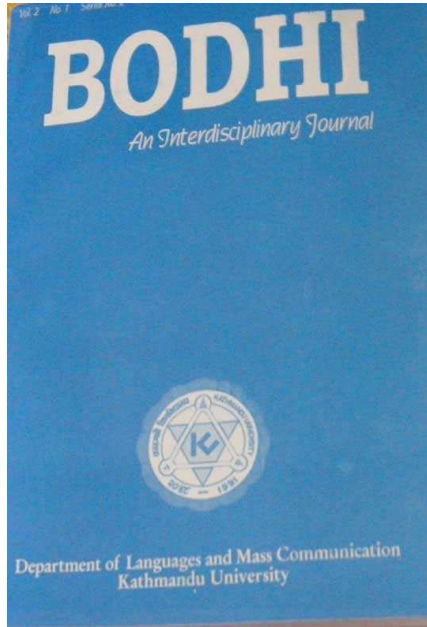


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Representation of Vietnam in 2006: A Comparative Study between Western and Local Media

-- Le Trieu Thanh

But, like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the windows faces a street or a backyard. The unfolding scene also depends upon where one stands, far or near, craning one's neck to the side, or gazing straight ahead, eyes parallel to the wall in which the window is encased" (Gaye Tuchman – Making news: A study in the Construction of Reality, 1978, p.1)

Introduction

The work of writing this article coincided with the annual Vietnamese celebration of the 30 April 1975 Victory. The war more than thirty years ago brought the name Vietnam to the world, but at the same time it made the country "famous" for war and communism. Time has passed, and what newspapers report about Vietnam now is not only war or war - related issues. Stereotypes of the country in media have been changed gradually over the last thirty years. The representation of Vietnam in both Western and local newspapers has become more diversified. However, that does not mean that prejudices have ended. Being a Third World country, and a country which is not following the political patterns of the West, Vietnam has been considered "The Other" in Western politics of representation. Studying the image of Vietnam in Western newspapers will hopefully supplement the knowledge of representing "The Others" in reality. Additionally, and in order to investigate different perspectives in representing the country's image, local media was taken into consideration. Vietnam's media has been changing itself upon the impacts of market economy since 1986. The increasing number of issues and media outlets with now over 500 local newspapers and 200

web sites¹, as well as the renewal in content of newspapers has brought a new public sphere to the people, despite the fact that media is still nominally the spoken organ of the state. Studying local media through the comparison of its contents with foreign newspapers' will be useful in exploring the media's contemporary concerns and understanding how Western and local schools of news production differ from each other.

More concretely, the study presented here aims at answering the following research questions : How was Vietnam described in Western newspapers in 2006? (Which matters are covered most frequently? Which agents do usually appear in the articles? How are their power relations? Which common patterns are used to frame Vietnam? Which are the most common stereotypes of Vietnam? Is the image positive or negative?); and how do Vietnamese newspapers represent the country's development in 2006? (applying similar questions to see the similarities and differences with Western newspapers). The research is based on materials from the year 2006. Thirty years after the war and twenty years after the government launched "Renewal" policies, Vietnam has achieved several important socio-economic progresses. According to one senior editor in Vietnam, the year 1986 and 2006 are two important milestones. Whereas 1986 was marked by the Fourth Congress of the Party which started Doi Moi (or the Renewal program), 2006 can be seen as the start of a new period of development of the country. Joining World Trade Organization, hosting the summit meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, achieving P.N.T.R. (Permanent Normal Trade Relations) with the United States of America among others are some main events that mark this new period characterized by the opening up of the country and its integration within the global market.

¹ Source: Freedom House
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&country=7089&year=2006>

Theoretical Rationale

Research on how the Third World is represented in media with reference to Western literatures is one of the most popular issues in media research. Previous studies in the field propose that Third World countries are usually represented as negative Others in the Western press. The theoretical framework of this study is mainly based on the politics of representation, especially representation of “The Other” and framing of news.

The original concept of “The Others” comes from French poststructuralist theory. The ‘Other’ position is constructed when one culture subordinates another, or when the power of normalizing or formation of knowledge reinforces exclusion. Mass media have been seen as crucial elements in the process of “Othering” by representing other cultures or marginalized groups. In representation, “the mediation may be presented as reflection with the implication that the original is relatively unchanged; or there may be questions of bias, distortion, and re-framing so that the purity of the original is lost” (Curran and Gurevitch, 2005, p. 46). Clifford (1998) expressed concern about the possibility of how one can ultimately escape procedures of dichotomizing, restructuring, and textualizing in the making of interpretive statements about foreign cultures (p. 261).

Mentioning a more concrete “Other”, for instance Third World or communist countries, Yu Huang and Christine Chi Mei Leung (2005, p.304) argued that mainstream media contribute to the marginalization and denigration of others, constructing negative images of many developing countries or post – communist nations to support Western superiority. Similar propositions are put forward by Riggins (1997), and Said (1979, 1993). The representation of the Others’ politics was also discussed in Roosvall’s research on Swedish newspapers. She wrote that the creation of otherness is determined by capital and control, but capitalist systems themselves are never discussed and thereby naturalized in discourse, while communist

countries are often displayed (and blamed) for their systems (2005, p.337).

This study builds on Tuchman (1978) and Hall (1997) on the representation of reality in media texts. The formation of knowledge about a country can be pulled in various directions through a trans-coding process with different input and output elements. Reality is unique, but as Hall argued, the process of encoding and decoding are “taking an existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meanings” (1997, p. 270). His argument that meanings can never be fixed might explain differences in the two pictures of Vietnam depicted by the two schools of journalists. And the research was definitely inspired by what Tuchman (1978) talked about the framing of news:

Like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the windows face a street or a backyard. (p. 1)

If news is a social construction as Tuchman argued, then the representation of the Others is one of the most problematic issues of that construction. Also in this book, her discussion about factuality by the use of quotation marks is relevant to the research’s finding of quoting and agents.

Besides theories of representation, discussing about the representation of Vietnam in the contemporary period, the author can not help agreeing that the turn-out image has been a result of market economy and globalization. Bauman’s judgment, “Being local in a globalized world is a sign of deprivation and degradation” (1997, p. 2), is appropriate to explain the country’s willingness of integration to the global market recently.

As Fairclough (1995), Van Dijk (1998) and Gillespie and Toynebee (2006) pointed out, media texts have the power to influence individuals and societies by representing the world

according to the interests of dominant groups. Therefore research on media texts scientifically helps reveal power relations in society.

This research was not based much on non-Western theories about representation of “Us” and “The Others”. This was because of the limitations of non-Western theories and perspectives on this matter. Basically, the idea about “Us” and “the Others” is rooted in the Western ideology and has been explored in the West much more than in the non-West, especially in Vietnam. Studying the binary positions in media representation is a fresh direction for local researchers to think about. This is also the reason why I was inspired to work with this issue.

Methods and Materials

The two research methods mainly applied in the study are content analysis and discourse analysis. The combination of these helps understanding patterns of media portrayals, and at the same time contributing to assessing the representation of a certain group in society.

This study mainly uses quantitative content analysis. It is done to define frequent topics and attitudes to bring an overview of how newspapers cover Vietnam’s progress in 2006. Besides, discourse analysis was applied as the secondary tool. The part worked with discourse analysis was inspired by Norman Fairclough’s argument “...any part of any text... will be simultaneously representing [the world], setting up identities, and setting up relations” (1995, p.5). The importance of analyzing the language of media texts is also discussed in Van Dijk’s article of ideology and opinion of newspaper. According to him, social functions of ideology contribute to the reproduction and legitimating of class dominance (as well as basis for the resistance of dominated groups). And critical linguistics is “...able to document a close relationship between the linguistics details of the media texts and the production of

ideology and, by implication, to substantiate that media ideology contributes to the reproduction of a social order founded on inequality and oppression” (Schroder, 2002, p.104). Van Dijk looked very closely and precisely through the language of media texts to understand the latent meaning of representing the Others, through which stereotypes and social hierarchy are consolidated. In Dijk’s framework, lexical items and rhetoric of speech have particular meanings in constructing ideologies.

Content analysis and discourse analysis are applied over a selection of materials. *The Economist* and *TIME* (Asia Magazine edition) were chosen in order to analyze how Vietnam is depicted in Western newspapers in the year 2006. These two are elitist and prestigious newspapers in their own country, and globally. Although both of them are published once a week, they consider themselves as newsmagazines. They have a good market in the West and Asia. Their coverage builds a picture of the country reported not only among their people, but also among people around the world. Since not all the newspapers have influences at a global level, the information and images that *The Economist* and *TIME* bring to their international readers would be meaningful to explore. There are six articles in *The Economist* and six in *TIME* Asia Magazine about Vietnam in 2006 (the low frequency of news items may explain why there are still lots of people around the world who wonder if the Vietnam war has ended).

To make a comparison between Western newspapers and local newspapers, the Vietnamese website www.tiepthihinhhanhvietnam.org.vn (“**Tiep thi hinh anh Vietnam**” means: **Promoting Vietnam’s Image**) was selected. The website came from a contest for Vietnamese people to think of ways of branding the nation on the global stage. It is the product of a collaboration among Tuoi Tre newspaper (the most circulated newspaper in Vietnam), Vietnam Marcom (a private branding company) and Future One (a motor – cycle company). Besides being the official website of the contest, it played the role of a news site with updated reports drawn from

local main newspapers like Tuoi Tre, Thanh Nien, Vietnam Net, VnExpress, Vietnam Agency, etc. In the column called “Vietnam in Foreign’s Eyes”, there are thirty five articles about Vietnam’s progress in 2006, Vietnam - Foreign relations, Vietnam’s new opportunities and so on. It targeted the Vietnamese readers, especially the young ones in the country and abroad.

These articles were chosen for analysis because they are a prestige “selection” of the same style of coverage from different newspapers. All these articles were written by the journalists from big newspapers in Vietnam as stated above. Besides, the selection of articles to put in the section “Vietnam in foreign Eyes” suggested some frames or patterns the Vietnamese would like to see and to use them as propaganda for creating national pride.

Objectivity has been a chief concern when conducting the research. However, it is hard to say the analysis is absolutely free from subjective points of view. Besides, the number of articles covering news from Vietnam is quite small. On the one hand, it reflected that Western newspapers do not give adequate information to cover the full pictures of the Third World countries. On the other hand, it is a challenge for the author to draw conclusion about the patterns and stereotypes.

In addition, a qualitative interview with a vice – chief editor of one of the biggest newspapers in Vietnam was conducted via email. His opinions supplement knowledge about a so-called “mixed” journalism (Curran and Myung – Jin Park, 2000, p. 6) in the time of globalization.

Vietnam: Good Morning at Last² ?

Vietnam was exposed with high frequency in international newspapers at the time of Vietnam-America war. As the opponent of the USA, the communist country was portrayed

² Title of the article in The Economist in 5th August, 2006

with “feminized weakness, vulnerability, primitiveness, emotionality and restricted tradition, as well as with pain, humiliation and death” (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2000). It has been negatively framed as the Other in the war and after the war because of the political alienation. For the last thirty years, stereotypes of the country which have been carved by international media were so strong that the word Vietnam itself implied “war”.

After the war ended, Vietnam got less international media exposure even though during the last thirty years, great changes have happened in the country. It still has been led by communist party, but the fall of Soviet Union and the failure of state – control economy has had a major impact on Vietnam government’s policies. The party launched Doi Moi (Renewal) policies in 1986 to reform almost all the socio-economic sectors. Like the big neighbor China, Vietnam has been following the policies of combination of authoritarian communism and support for the market. After twenty years of applying the market economic structure instead of state-determined mechanism, some main achievements should be noticed: poverty rate decreased from 50 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2003³; human development index (HDI) increased from 0.161 in 1995 (ranking 120/162) to 0.682 in 2001 (ranking 101/162)⁴, the average of economic growth in 2001 – 2005 is over 7.5%; the country becomes one of the biggest rice and coffee exporters in the world⁵; etc. Vietnam now got attention firstly because of its participation in world trading. It is no longer the country of the war and political conflicts, but a country on its process of economic development and has to confront with common issues of a developing country.

³ Source: Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ official website www.mofa.org.vn

⁴ Source: United Nations Development Programme (U.N.D.P.) in 2001 http://hdr.undp.org/docs/reports/national/VIE_Vietnam/Vietnam_2001_en.pdf

⁵ Sources: World Bank

The tables below show the most frequent topics about Vietnam over six articles in *The Economist*, six articles in *TIME Asia* in 2006 and thirty five reports at “Promoting Vietnam’s image”:

Table 1:

Magazine * topic crosstabulation of The Economist, *TIME Asia* and Promoting Vietnam’s Image

Publications	Topic						Total
	Economic development	Sociopolitical issues	culture	Natural disaster	Environment	Science	
<i>The Economist</i>	4	1	0	1	0	0	6
<i>TIME</i>	3	2	0	0	1	0	6
Promoting...	19	6	9	0	0	1	35
Total	26	9	9	1	1	1	47

The tables show that the most covered topic in all three newspapers is related to economic issues. More than half of the articles deal with the economic development of the country. Social and political issues ranked secondly. Even in the case of *TIME Asia* magazine which has special interest in blaming political issues, the quantity of economic coverage of Vietnam in 2006 proved its recognition of economic progress. Economic concerns now are more emphasized than political or ideological ones. Titles of these articles are starting point expressing the concerns: “Vietnam and the W.T.O. – Marketmaker” (*The Economist*), “Trouble at the mill” (*The Economist*), “Vietnam – Good morning at last” (*The Economist*), “Vietnam and America: what war?” (*The Economist*); “Waking up the North” (*TIME Asia*), “Vietnam Trades Up” (*TIME Asia*); “The Vietnam Bush will see” (*TIME Asia*). Vietnam, in spite of its position as the Other since the Cold War frame, has recently come back to Western media’s interests as a destination for

investors and profits, regardless to its political difference. Articles on economy in *The Economist* and *TIME* present advantages and disadvantages for investors when they pour money to exploit the cheap working force of the country. The picture was built up in the perspectives of Western, Japanese, Taiwanese, (and so on) businessmen and global economic organizations like World Bank, Asian Development Bank among others whose concerns are about finding new market and claiming for a better business environment.

Economy was not only in foreign newspapers' preference. The domestic newspapers also shared a similar interest. Making the country richer is the most important concern of the country in this period; therefore local newspapers focus most on that matter. There were 19/35 articles mentioning business affairs, business environment, business competition, etc. in the website "Promoting Vietnam's Image." They made an emphasis on the overall picture of the country, trying to promote market activities which once were considered inappropriate by the communist regime (for example: Vietnam – a fascinating, trustworthy and long-term destination; Bringing Vietnam to Wall Street; Vietnam first leg into WTO; Vietnam – new competitor of Thailand; Japanese investors: "Vietnam is the first choice"; etc...). Among these economic articles, efforts to integrate into global trading are another emphasized parts. In the time of globalization which has affected every side of human life, being isolated and standing outside international business means losing trading opportunities. Thus, as the speaking organ of the government, local newspapers express the aims of the leading party to push the country to join the global economy.

The result shows that even though western newspapers and local ones are based on different perspectives and the reasons why they pay attention to economic development are different from each other, they share similar concerns at least in the panorama picture. Does the fact that newspapers change their favorite topics about Vietnam only reflect that reality has been

changing? Or does it also bring a positive sign of depicting the other? The first question is easy to answer, but the second one is more complicated. It can just be said that once political oppositions give way to economic concerns in newspapers, the politics of representing Us-ness and They-ness also has changed. This section takes its name from the title “Vietnam – Good morning at last” of the article in *The Economist* which describes the economic progress in Vietnam. However, the fact that recent changes in Vietnam have been for the better does not automatically lead to positive changing of the representation of the country in newspapers. The following part contributes on that matter.

Framing the Others

Coverages, reports, news stories and other genres of mass media frame the real world. Tuchman’s argument as referred before has still inspired us to investigate how the world is seen through the window of news. Starting from this viewpoint, findings of how Vietnam was framed in newspapers in 2006 could be divided into three categories: the selection of topic to report, the attitude of the articles toward the country and the phrase repetition.

Firstly, the selection of topics depends on favors of the newspapers and limitation of newspapers’ area, especially in printed ones. Both these subjective and objective reasons frame the reality which is chosen to be reflected. Selection is the continuous process of articulation by which the media depicts the world that surrounds us. Thussu and Freedman (2003) wrote that not only the present part has meanings to readers, but the absent one also has meanings and influences (p.23). The results of content analysis above (table 1) show the selections of what could be presented are different in Western and local newspapers. Only the local had an interest in covering other matters besides economic and political issues like culture, science or social life. There is a fact that news from developed world can be about culture or lifestyle, but news from

developing world mainly deals with “stressing crises, strikes, street demonstrations, or even holding them to ridicule” (Masmoudi, 1984, p. 14), and rarely Western newspapers supposed that people in the poor countries also have a social life or scientific interests and activities as people in the rich world do. This lack of information resulted in the unilateral gaze about other cultures or countries. Selections of fields to reports are different in the two categories of newspapers. Therefore pictures have different frames, although there is only one reality to depict.

Secondly, framing of the Other is also shaped by the attitudes which the journalists or editors express through articles. The attitudes of news articles, especially in foreign newspapers towards Vietnam were assessed by conducting a content analysis based on expressions of praising or complaining⁶ in each article. The results are shown in table 2, 3, 4 and 5 below:

Table 2

Magazines and Attitude Cross-tabulation of *The Economist*, *TIME* Asia and Promoting Vietnam’s image

Publications	Attitude					Total
	Extremely positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Extremely Negative	
<i>The Economist</i>	0	2	1	3	0	6
<i>TIME</i>	0	2	2	0	2	6
Promoting ...	1	28	3	3	0	35
Total	1	32	6	6	2	47

⁶ See Code Book in appendix 1

Table 3Topic and attitude cross-tabulation in *The Economist*

Topic	Attitude			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Economic Development	2	1	1	4
Socio-Political issues	0	0	1	1
Natural disasters	0	0	1	1
Total	2	1	3	6

Table 4Topic and attitude cross-tabulation in *TIME Asia*

Topics	Attitude			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Extremely negative	
Economic development	2	1	0	3
Socio-political issues	0	0	2	2
Environment	0	1	0	1
Total	2	2	2	6

Table 5:**Topic and Attitude cross-tabulation in Promoting Vietnam's Image**

Topic	Attitude				Total
	Extremely positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Economic Development	1	14	3	1	19
Socio-Political issues	0	5	0	1	6
Culture	0	9	0	0	9
Science	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1	28	3	3	35

Economic achievements as results of twenty years operating Renewal policies are basically praised. However, *The Economist* and *TIME* were prone to neutral and negative attitudes. Only four articles out of twelve in both *The Economist* and *TIME* are positive while the number of positive articles in the local website is overwhelming (28/35). And while the local one's tone is very optimistic about the achievements of the country, it seems that the foreign newspapers are more careful. Local newspapers aim at branding the nation, at least among their people, thus their tone is somehow over-optimistic. The Western newspapers are in the opposite stance by discussing both advantages and disadvantages; they give an impression that the balance is maintained. Thus they are more objective. However, when either the positive or negative attitude is pushed further, reality is reconstructed, and frames are formed.

Besides, the correlation between topics and attitudes also suggested another frame. In *The Economist* and *TIME*, whereas most of the articles about economic issues express positive attitudes, those in socio-political category are negative or even extremely negative. Economic strategy, when it follows the market pattern as the West, it is naturalized, but when it comes to politics or social issues (for instance: criteria for democracy or freedom of speech, etc.), which are quite different with Western system (and used to be the opposite compared to the West since the Cold War time), it is treated in the opposite way. News stories base on what happens in reality, and the frame of the Other sponsored by multiple social actors, including politicians, organizations, and social movement, . . . and the (foreign) country being reported. However, in the case that communism used to be considered as the "pre-eminent" threat to the Western interest (Thussu and Freedman, 2003), I wonder whether the reality is reported as bad as it is or even worse than what happened in the unfavorable light of prejudices.

Thirdly, the repetition of phrases in news stories is another factor enforcing the frame on the depicted country. News

frames are embodied not in overt evaluative statements, but rather in “key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images emphasized in a news narrative” (Entman, 1991, p.7). This article did not go through all the categories that Entman suggested, or through the more complex ways as Van Dijk argued: “headlines, story structures, semantic structures of coherence, or overall topics, and so on” (Bell and Garrett, 1998, p. 31). It focused on what is considered as “problematic repeated words”. As Van Dijk argued, although the level of analyzing words are quite simple, “words may be chosen that generally or contextually express values or norms, and that are used to express a value judgment” (*ibid*). And the words found most problematic in *The Economist* and *TIME* are “communist” or “communism”.

“Communism” seems to have a very bad connotation since the Cold War era. Vietnam unfortunately has been famous for the war, and later on, for the communist political system. After the collapse of Soviet Union, there are only four communist countries left in the world: China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam. What is really meant by the word “communism” at this moment is different from its meanings decades ago, but the bad impression it conveys still being emphasized in Western newspapers.

Over twelve articles in *The Economist* and *TIME* about Vietnam in 2006, the word “communism” is stressed many times as listed below:

...Communist government; Communist party; Communist Vietnam (but in Communist Vietnam where authorities have effectively blocked access to pro-democracy blogs and websites...); Communist state (where seniority counts and youthful feistiness isn't necessary prized...); Communist – ruled country; Vietnam's communist north; Vietnam's ruling Communist Party; ... the social republic of Vietnam flirted with real communism and came close to famine...; Ruling Communist Party; The communist

government continuing acceptance by ordinary Vietnamese...; Vietnam's communist government ; Communist monopoly

The repetition gives an impression that the country can not be represented without words like “communist” or “communism”. With the high intensity of appearance of these words in twelve articles, the frame is not only shaped, it is fixed.

The difference in this issue between local newspapers and foreign newspapers is quite interesting. Local newspapers do not repeat the word “communist” too often even though they are the mouthpiece of the government. The leader role of the party is taken for granted, thereby it does not need to be repeated, or the local newspapers know quite well that political difference is a barrier for integration, and would prefer to blur what builds it up. On the contrary, Western newspapers found that characteristic is one of the most special features about Vietnam, thereby trying to expose the politic regime as much as possible. Capitalist systems are naturalized by never being discussed, so, in the opposite way, with too much emphasis (even if the form of emphasis is simply the repetition), the matter will be made more problematic. And the frame which separates Them and Us is more enforced than ever.

Can the Subaltern Speak?⁷

As has been discussed above, economic matters have become a new concern in the Western media coverage of Vietnam. When the globalized market plays an important role in deciding media content, it also affects the representation of “Us” and “The Others”. These binary positions are no longer formed by two parts which are absolutely opposed to each other. However, the division has turned to be more implicit and sophisticated.

⁷ Title of Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty's article in Nelson and Grossberg (eds)'s *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (1988:271)

In the representation of Vietnam in *The Economist* and *TIME*, the appearance of agents (as people or as organization) reflects positions and power relations between “Us” and “The Other”. The fact that someone is represented or can have voice in newspapers (not others) says something more political than just the writing techniques of the reporters. To illustrate this argument, a quantitative research of the agents who give speech (or are quoted) both directly and indirectly in *The Economist*, *TIME*, and the website “Promoting Vietnam’s Image” is conducted. Studying the correlations of the agents’ nationalities and their positions as well as the interrelation between their nationalities and the content of speech helps understand other aspects of representation.

Table 6

Nationality and Job Cross-tabulation of agents in *The Economist* and *TIME*

Nationality	Job						Total
	Political/ official	Business	Aid worker	Worker farmer	Dissident	Intellectual	
Vietnamese	5	1	0	2	6	2	16
Foreign	5	10	4	0	0	0	19
Total	10	11	4	2	6	2	35

Table 7

Nationality and Content Crosstabulation of agents The *Economist* and *TIME*

Nationality	Content					Total
	Praises	Evaluation/ Approval	Requests	Complaints	Other comments	
Vietnamese	0	5	1	1	9	16
Foreign	1	16	0	1	1	19
Total	1	21	1	2	10	35

Among thirty five agents which were quoted in *The Economist* and *TIME*, nineteen were foreigners compared to sixteen local. The high number of quotes from foreign agents in news articles about the local might be because foreign newspapers found ideas from the non-Vietnamese more familiar than ideas of “the Others.” Moreover, the Westerners’ experiences in the country would benefit the ones who have never been there, especially in economic field. However, if we investigate the relation between where people come from and what their positions are, we can see that a power scheme is enforced. Local people have voice mostly in cases related to politics. People from the government’s offices were asked for opinions in political situations or policy issues (of course these matters can not be approved by other organs). *TIME* particularly had intention to let the dissidents speak. This is also the political perspective of the US, which always complains about the Vietnam government’s disrespect for freedom of speech. While the voice of the local people is usually less important or focuses on something exotic, voice of almost all foreign people comes from formal representatives of big corporations or aid organizations. They are represented as more “elite” than the local people (and once again, the high frequency of presentation of businessmen or entrepreneurs approve that Vietnam is in the interest of Western’s trading to earn profits).

From another standpoint, the correlation among nationality of the people who are quoted with the content of their speeches is investigated. Sixteen quotes (16/21) about formal evaluation and approval of the development of Vietnam or judgments about special events come from the “elite” foreigners while the rest with only five quotes (5/21) from the local people. Quoting is a tactic of objectivity, and as Tuchman (1978) said, it must be attribution to very credible or positively verified sources. In this case, when newspapers need references, their credible sources most of the time are direct or indirect quotes from foreign elites or foreign organizations.

Table 8
Nationality and Job Crosstabulation of agents in Promoting
Vietnam's Image

Nationality	Job					Total
	Political /official	Business	Aid worker	Artist	Researcher	
Vietnamese	14	1	0	1	3	19
Foreign	11	24	2	3	12	52
Unknown	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	25	26	2	4	15	72

In the website Promoting Vietnam' Image, differences and similarities in comparison with *The Economist* and *TIME* indicate the pattern of depicting the country itself. Because it focused on the image of Vietnamese in foreigner's eyes and Vietnam-foreign relations, the number of foreigners is reasonably larger than the Vietnamese agents in all categories (52 compared to 19). Patterns of quoting are quite similar in the categories of "politician/official" and "businessman" comparing with Western newspapers. Foreign businessmen have overall become more and more important, while domestic entrepreneurs still have a long distance to go if they want their voice expressed more significantly.

The most obvious difference between the local newspapers and the Western is in the appearance of dissidents: they never have their voice recognized in official local newspapers. Another difference is expressed through the way local newspapers pay attention to the foreign researchers and artistes who are called "cultural ambassadors"⁸. Foreigners' interests in Vietnamese culture is considered as a bridge to bring Vietnam culture to the

⁸ "Cultural ambassadors" are foreigners who are interested in Vietnamese culture, introducing Vietnam culture to the world. This phrase was used by a local senior editor in an interview in May 12, 2007 (see interview in appendix 2)

world, and at the same time, are seen as exotic features at least for Vietnamese readers.

Table 9
Nationality and Content Crosstabulation of agents in Promoting Vietnam’s Image

Nationality	Content						Total
	Evaluation /approval	Advice/ consults	Requests	Praises	Complaints	Other ideas	
Vietnamese	16	2	0	0	1	0	19
Foreign	27	2	1	6	2	14	52
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	44	4	1	6	3	14	52

The cross- tabulation between nationalities and the content of quotes gives similar results as in the case of *The Economist* and *TIME*. Evaluation or approval of economic development was taken from the foreign source much more than from the Vietnamese ones. Although the articles in this website are written for Vietnamese readers, they also reflect a fact that local people need foreign evaluations. It can be seen as a tactic to enforce objectivity (judgments from people outside the country are more objective than someone inside?). At the same time, it also speaks for the truth that evaluation of researcher, businessmen, etc. from the stronger economies are more trustworthy.

Generally, the result of the content analysis shows that the common pattern is letting locals have voice in the case of political issues, and letting foreigners have voice in business matters. Both Western newspapers and local newspapers tend to be based on Western evaluation more than local’s evaluation of the economic situation of the country. For the Western newspapers, those sources are more credible. For Vietnamese newspapers, these are not only more reliable and objective than

local's source but also express the fact that the country has gradually become a part of global economy – or what the Vietnamese called “global integration” (which also explains the representation of other agents like artists/artistes or researchers in local newspapers). So, the purpose of using quotes from agents between Western and domestic newspapers might have some similarities in common pattern but, their in-depth reasons are slightly different. Foreign people in news stories appeared as positive agents (reliable, elite, important), while local people are not always treated the same way.

There are writing techniques to explain why quotes are used and how they are used, and usually the matter is decided by the journalists. They need quoting from people as a tactics of objectivity and factuality (as mentioned above). Instead of saying we [journalists] think/assess/evaluate/blame that [...], they use someone else to give the speech, because “adding more names and quotations as mutually determining facts, the news workers may achieve distance from the stories by getting others to express desired opinions” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 95). Quoting, on the one hand is the tactics of objectivity, but on the other hand, it is also resulting in creating different pictures of “The Others,” and setting up power relations. Depending on the different agents involved in quoting, the representation of “Us” and “The Others” is framed. It is likely that if *The Economist* and *TIME*, and even local newspapers had more articles about Vietnam in 2006, they would take quotes from similar agents with similar schemes. Even if it is just the matter of routine, nothing is as effective as routine to create pattern.

The concern so far is to find an answer for the question “Can the subaltern speak?” This is borrowed from Spivak’s article which discussed the role of intellectuals in representing subaltern’s voice (1988). If Third World countries, in this case Vietnam, are put into the position of the subalterns, it is easy to realize that the voices of the local people are weaker. Inferring that the subalterns are not allowed to have voice in Western newspapers such as *The Economist* and *TIME* is forced;

however the study shows that their voice is less considered than the voice of the foreigners in both quantity and decisive roles. The power (or hegemony?) of the First World over the Third World is made naturalized and transparent by the essential presence of aid organizations, big corporations, elite Western people, etc. in local news stories due to the process of globalization. Being governed by superior powers of the rich world in form of economic influences is not a pleasant idea for developing countries to think about. But it is an undeniable fact.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the content analysis in combination with discourse analysis of news articles in *The Economist*, *TIME* and the website “Promoting Vietnam’s Image,” research questions raised in the beginning are discussed in the following themes. First of all, economy is the most popular topic of Vietnam in 2006 which is reported in newspapers. Newspapers’ interest in the country has been changed to a new direction. War or post-war issues which used to be seen as a strong stereotype of the country, are no longer the first concern. Interestingly, this applies to both foreign and local newspapers. Secondly, since the country belongs to the Third World and is still run by the communist party, its picture is framed by the selection of news, the newspapers’ attitudes and the repetition of the word “communist”. Thirdly, the pattern of letting someone have voice in an article through direct or indirect quotes reflects the power scheme of the period of globalization, and of unequal power relations between the rich and Third World countries, in this case Vietnam.

As Hall argued, there is no fixed meaning of representation. The process of transcoding and interpretation can happen in multiple ways. Thus the decoding of the chosen materials, even though it is based on objective analysis, might be just one of various ways of understanding the representation. The picture of the Others is usually affected by Us-ness and Them-ness, and it is quite possible that the work of researching that picture is

affected by these same factors. Anyway, the findings from the research will hopefully contribute to understanding the politics of representation of newspapers nowadays, and instead of engraving the binary position of “us” and “the others,” the results might be fruitful in pushing for the demand of blurring this barrier in media representation.

The research so far is like a mosaic picture I have built up from scattered pieces about what “the Others” said about my country, comparing with what local newspapers depicted. However, it has not yet gone through all the items of an article -- for instance, the visual, the structural or other lexical and rhetorical ones -- to result in a fully comprehensive view about the politics of representation of the country’s image. Further studies might elaborate these foibles, or discuss more profoundly about each subject with broadening materials in different periods.

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