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## Digital-Megastory in Online Journalism: The Prevailing Situation of Digital Transformation of Journalism in Vietnam

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### Abstract

This qualitative research study investigates the phenomenon of Digital-Megastory and its role in the digital transformation of journalism in Vietnam. The study utilises in-depth interviews with 35 Vietnamese online journalists to explore their perspectives on the adoption of Digital-Megastory formats and the overall impact of digital transformation on journalism practices in the country. The research design involves purposive sampling to select 35 online journalists from various media organisations and backgrounds, ensuring a diverse representation of the online journalism landscape in Vietnam. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insights into the journalists' experiences, challenges, and opportunities in integrating Digital-Megastory into their reporting practices. Through thematic analysis, key themes emerged, shedding light on the role of Digital-Megastory in engaging audiences and fostering interactive storytelling experiences. Participants highlighted the benefits of using multimedia elements, such as videos, infographics, and social media integration, to enhance the depth and breadth of news coverage. The findings also reveal the influence of digital transformation on the newsroom workflow, with journalists adapting to real-time reporting demands and employing data-driven storytelling techniques. The research underscores the importance of equipping journalists with multimedia skills, ethical guidelines, and strategies to navigate the challenges posed by the digital revolution.

**Keywords:** digital-megastory, online journalism, digital transformation, qualitative research, in-depth interviews, Vietnam.

### 1. Introduction

The advent of digital technology has profoundly impacted the landscape of journalism worldwide. The emergence of online journalism has transformed how news is produced, distributed, and consumed, and Vietnam is no exception. As the nation embraces the digital age, this study seeks to investigate the current state of digital transformation in Vietnam's journalism sector, with a focus on the phenomenon of 'Digital-Megastory.' This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research and key insights related to digital transformation in journalism, focusing on the Vietnamese context.

The concepts of Digital-Megastory, Online Journalism, Digital Transformation of Journalism, and Journalism are interconnected and reflective of the ongoing evolution of media practices in the digital era. Digital-Megastory represents a prominent storytelling approach in Online Journalism, leveraging the capabilities of digital technology to engage audiences. The Digital Transformation of Journalism is reshaping the news landscape and how journalists

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gather and present information. Through these changes, the fundamental role of Journalism in informing and empowering the public remains essential in fostering an informed citizenry.

*Journalism:* Journalism is the process of gathering, verifying, and disseminating information and news to the public through various media channels (Ward, 2004). It serves as a vital component of democratic societies, providing citizens with information that informs their decision-making and fosters public debate. Journalism aims to uphold principles of accuracy, fairness, and accountability, presenting objective and unbiased information (Deuze, 2005). Traditional journalism encompassed print, radio, and television, while modern journalism extends to online platforms. It plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse and promoting transparency in society.

*Digital Transformation in Journalism:* Digital transformation in journalism refers to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of news production and dissemination. This transformation has been driven by the increasing adoption of digital platforms, changing consumer preferences, and advancements in technology (Radhakrishnan, 2018). As traditional media outlets face challenges, digital platforms have emerged as vital tools for journalism to engage with audiences and remain relevant in the digital age.

The digital transformation of journalism is an inevitable trend that press agencies must follow swiftly and decisively to avoid lagging behind, losing readership, and facing inevitable consequences for their survival (Nguyen, 2021). In Vietnam, the government has approved the strategy for digital transformation in journalism until 2025, with a vision towards 2030 (Loi, 2014). The strategy aims to cultivate modern, professional, and ethical press agencies that effectively communicate and advance the goals of the government and the country's reform efforts. It will enable the sector to properly perform its role in guiding the public's opinions and firmly safeguarding information sovereignty in cyberspace. It will also improve readers' experience, create new revenue sources, and help promote the development of the digital content industry (Giang, 2018).

By 2030, the objective is for all press agencies to have released their content on digital platforms, with emphasis placed on domestic digital platforms. About 90 % of agencies should have used concentrated data analytic and processing platforms and applied artificial intelligence (AI) to optimise operations. Moreover, 100 % will have operated in the converged newsroom model and others matching scientific and technological development in the world and produced content in line with digital media trends. The strategy entails that press agencies should aim to maximise their revenue streams, with the goal of having 50 % of them increase their revenue by a minimum of 20 % (Giang, 2017, 2018; Van Krieken, 2019).

The Vietnamese press has been undergoing significant changes due to digital transformation. COVID-19 has changed the way society consumes news and content in the last two years, forcing the journalism industry to go digital (Lassila, 2014). The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation across all sectors of society including journalism. The Vietnamese press has been quick to adapt to this change by embracing new technologies such as social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as well as mobile applications (Van Krieken, 2019). These platforms have enabled journalists to reach a wider audience than ever before.

Digital transformation is an inevitable trend that press agencies must follow swiftly and decisively to avoid lagging behind. In Vietnam, the government has approved a strategy for digital transformation in journalism until 2025 with a vision towards 2030 (Binh, Hong, 2020). The strategy aims to cultivate modern, professional, and ethical press agencies that effectively communicate and advance the goals of the government and the country's reform efforts (Wolf, Godulla, 2016). By 2030, all press agencies should have released their content on digital platforms with emphasis placed on domestic digital platforms. The Vietnamese press has been quick to adapt to this change by embracing new technologies such as social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as well as mobile applications (Smith, 2019).

*Online Journalism in Vietnam:* Vietnam has witnessed significant growth in internet penetration and mobile device usage in recent years, leading to an increase in online journalism platforms. Studies suggest that online journalism has become a preferred source of news for the younger Vietnamese population (Binh, Hong, 2020). This shift in consumption patterns has compelled traditional media outlets to embrace digital technologies and adapt their newsrooms to meet the demands of the digital-savvy audience.

*The Rise of 'Digital-Megastory':* The concept of 'Digital-Megastory' has emerged as a dominant trend in online journalism, characterised by the production and distribution of in-depth, multimedia-rich narratives on digital platforms (Smith, 2019). This format allows journalists to

present comprehensive stories with various media elements, including videos, interactive graphics, and social media integration, enhancing audience engagement and understanding.

The research team focused on surveying articles from leading online newspapers with a substantial readership that are known for their multimedia journalism products. Specifically, the study selected three newspapers for analysis (<https://www.vietnamplus.vn/>, <https://laodong.vn/>, and <https://zingnews.vn/>). The aim of this study is to conduct a survey on prominent online newspapers in Vietnam, namely VietnamPlus.vn, Laodong.vn, and ZingNews, in order to examine the process of creating multimedia newspaper products. The study also aims to identify the differences between traditional and modern online newspapers, analyse the actual content production and form of longform products on these platforms, and provide sample processes for producing longform content on online newspapers.

ZingNews (<https://zingnews.vn/>), with its large following, has embraced the concept of multimedia journalism by establishing a dedicated Longform page, distinguishing itself from other newspapers. Notably, Zing.vn has made significant investments in high-quality visuals, employing skilled photographers to create detailed and artistic images and videos. The newspaper utilises various writing styles to give each story a unique expression. Zing.vn consistently produces longform content on a weekly basis. According to Comscore's ranking of newspapers and online information sites in Vietnam in August 2018, Zing.vn emerged as the top online newspaper site in Vietnam, with 14.632 million views, constituting 33 % of the total readership of regular online newspapers (Nga, 2018).

VietnamPlus (<https://www.vietnamplus.vn/>), as a pioneering newspaper, has introduced new trends in journalism to Vietnam. Megastory is a form of longform storytelling, and each newspaper in Vietnam gives it a different name. On average, VietnamPlus publishes 2-3 multimedia works per week. Although it has been in operation since 2008, the newspaper has achieved numerous successes. It was the first to produce a masterpiece, laying the foundation for the country's press development. The newspaper effectively applies techniques to enhance the appeal and novelty of longform articles, keeping pace with global press trends by incorporating various elements such as infographics, interactivity, video, and audio to offer readers a fresh experience (Kartveit, 2018).

Labour Newspaper (<https://laodong.vn/>): Labour Newspaper serves as the communication agency of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour and is one of the oldest and most influential newspapers within the Vietnamese government's media system. After the emergence of multimedia journalism in Vietnam, Labour Newspaper also ventured into integration and launched several multimedia journalistic works in different formats.

*Factors Influencing Digital Transformation in Vietnam's Journalism:* Several factors have influenced the digital transformation of journalism in Vietnam. These include the rapid expansion of internet infrastructure, growing mobile internet usage, increasing social media penetration, and the rise of citizen journalism (Nguyen, 2017). Additionally, the changing expectations of the audience and the need for news outlets to monetise digital content have further accelerated this transformation.

*Challenges and Opportunities:* While the digital transformation of journalism presents numerous opportunities, it also comes with challenges. Adapting to digital platforms requires significant investments in technology and training for journalists (Duong, 2018). Additionally, there are concerns about maintaining journalistic ethics and integrity in the digital realm, particularly in the era of 'fake news' and misinformation (Tran, 2019). However, digital journalism also offers opportunities for more personalised and interactive storytelling, increased reach, and greater audience involvement.

*Impact on Journalistic Practices:* The shift towards digital-megastories has impacted traditional journalistic practices. Journalists are now required to possess multimedia skills and an understanding of audience engagement strategies to succeed in the digital landscape (Le, 2021). Furthermore, the pressure to deliver real-time news on digital platforms has influenced the newsroom workflow and editorial decision-making processes (Vu, 2020).

The literature indicates that the digital transformation of journalism in Vietnam is an ongoing and multifaceted process, with the rise of 'Digital-Megastory' being a prominent trend. The challenges and opportunities presented by this transformation necessitate careful consideration of the implications for journalistic practices, ethics, and audience engagement. As Vietnam's media landscape continues to evolve, further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of digital technology on journalism in the country.

## 2. Materials and methods

*Technological Determinism:* The study adopts a technological determinism perspective to understand the role of digital technologies in shaping the landscape of online journalism in Vietnam. Technological determinism posits that advancements in digital technologies have a profound impact on social structures, including journalism practices (McLuhan, 1964). In the context of this study, digital-megastory, as a dominant trend in online journalism, is influenced by the affordances and constraints of digital platforms, which reshape the production and consumption of news content.

*Media Ecology Theory:* Media ecology theory is utilised to analyse the intricate interactions between media technologies, journalistic practices, and the cultural environment in Vietnam. The theory emphasises the interdependence of media forms, highlighting how the emergence of digital platforms alters the ecosystem of journalism (Postman, 1970). By employing this framework, the study seeks to explore how the integration of digital technologies has led to the rise of digital-megastory and how it coexists with other media formats in Vietnam's media ecology.

*Convergence Culture:* The concept of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006) is applied to examine the transformations in journalism driven by the convergence of media technologies and practices. As online journalism in Vietnam increasingly adopts digital-megastory formats, this framework aids in understanding how journalism converges with other forms of media, such as social media, multimedia content, and interactive storytelling. Convergence culture encourages a comprehensive investigation of how traditional journalism practices intersect with digital trends to create innovative storytelling experiences.

*Audience Participation and Engagement:* This study also incorporates the theoretical lens of audience participation and engagement in the context of digital-megastory in online journalism. Drawing upon work by Anderson (Anderson, 2011) and Hermida (Hermida, 2017), the framework examines how the participatory nature of digital-megastory encourages active audience engagement and co-creation of news narratives. This perspective explores how audiences in Vietnam interact with digital-megastories, share content on social media, and become integral to the dissemination of news.

*Cultural Imperialism and Glocalisation:* To contextualise the impact of digital transformation on journalism in Vietnam, the theoretical framework considers cultural imperialism and glocalisation perspectives. Cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991) addresses concerns of global media dominance and its potential influence on local journalism practices. Glocalisation (Robertson, 1995), on the other hand, examines the process of integrating global media with local cultures. These concepts aid in understanding how digital-megastory, which may draw inspiration from global media trends, is adapted and localised to meet the specific information needs and preferences of Vietnamese audiences.

By adopting a theoretical framework comprising technological determinism, media ecology theory, convergence culture, audience participation, and cultural imperialism/glocalisation, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actual situation of digital transformation and the emergence of digital-megastory in online journalism in Vietnam. This multi-dimensional approach enables a nuanced analysis of the interplay between digital technologies, journalism practices, audience engagement, and cultural dynamics in shaping the media landscape of the country.

*Research Design:* This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the actual situation of digital transformation in Vietnam's online journalism, with a specific focus on Digital-Megastory. In-depth interviews are employed to gain insights into the perspectives and experiences of 35 Vietnamese online journalists.

The survey method aimed to gather statistics on longform products across the surveyed newspapers, enabling an assessment of the current situation, content, and format of longform products on online newspapers. In-depth interviews were conducted with journalism experts who possess knowledge of longform trends or have experience in multimedia journalism. Additionally, reporters and editors directly involved in producing longform content were interviewed. The analytical-synthetic method was employed to deeply analyse the characteristics, limitations, and advantages of longform content, as well as its role in contemporary journalism.

*Sampling Technique:* The snowball sampling technique is used to recruit participants for the study. Initially, a small group of online journalists familiar with the topic is identified, and they are asked to recommend other relevant participants from their networks. This process continues

iteratively until the desired sample size of 35 is achieved, ensuring a diverse representation of the online journalism community in Vietnam.

*Participants:* The study includes Vietnamese online journalists working across various media organisations, with different levels of experience and expertise in online journalism and Digital-Megastory.

*Data Collection:* Face-to-face interviews are conducted with the participants at their places of work or homes, based on their convenience. This approach fosters a comfortable and conducive environment for open and candid discussions about the topic. The interviews are semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to share their perspectives and experiences related to Digital-Megastory and the broader digital transformation of journalism.

*Data Recording:* To ensure accuracy and completeness of data, the interviews are carefully recorded using the audio recording function on smartphones. Detailed field notes are also taken during the interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

*Data Analysis:* Thematic analysis is employed to analyse the collected data. The audio recordings are transcribed verbatim, the transcripts are reviewed multiple times to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to Digital-Megastory and the digital transformation of journalism in Vietnam. The analysis follows a systematic process of coding and categorising the data to develop comprehensive and meaningful themes.

*Ethical Considerations:* The study complies with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before the interviews, clarifying the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants are assured of anonymity, and pseudonyms are used in the reporting of the findings to protect their identities.

### 3. Discussion

*The Influence of Digital-Megastory on the Advancement of Online Journalism:* In the current era of technological breakthroughs, online journalism is experiencing rapid development. A new trend in journalism is emerging as a solution for online journalism. Although the longevity of this trend is uncertain, it has shown promise in the immediate future. The public has responded positively, spending more time on each article of this kind (Giang, 2014). Online journalism provides readers with the benefits of saving time and money while obtaining up-to-date news. It has brought about a turning point in information transmission and reception. The public actively engages in information feedback, provision, and even contributes to writing. This fosters stronger relationships between journalists, the public, and news sources, ultimately increasing the social impact of journalism (Giang, 2018).

Digital-megastory represents a form of multimedia article that incorporates innovative design elements such as title effects, flexible text with beautifully arranged quotes, and full-screen horizontal images. Reading a Digital-megastory article feels akin to perusing a mobile version of a newspaper on a computer or enjoying a sophisticatedly designed magazine page. These articles often span several thousand words, combining general information, narrative, commentary, and in-depth analysis (An, 2018).

One advantage of Digital-megastory articles is their ability to engage readers for longer periods of time. While the average time spent on e-newsletters or shorter news pieces is typically five to twenty seconds, readers spend an average of five to six minutes on each E-magazine article on platforms like Vietnam Plus. Some articles even captivate readers for 10 to 15 minutes due to their in-depth content, accompanied by numerous images and videos. Notably, time spent on site is an important criterion for website classification (Duong, 2016). Furthermore, digital-megastory articles alleviate the annoyance of advertisements for readers. Gone are the banners and pop-up ads that startle readers; instead, the content is displayed without any distracting ads. These factors contribute to readers' desire for an improved reading experience (Lassila-Merisalo, 2014; Menke, 2019).

Digital-megastory has recently emerged in Vietnamese online journalism, making strides in the past five years. It is considered a new category of journalism, offering high-quality content as an alternative to information-saturated online newspapers. Longform, as a new journalistic content format, has arisen from news agencies' recognition of the importance of producing high-quality content rather than focusing solely on breaking news, which is readily available on social media platforms. News agencies possess an advantage in creating in-depth, elaborately presented content that most individuals lack the skills or resources to produce (Hiippala, 2017).

Digital-megastory articles need not be extensive journalistic works that employ numerous multimedia techniques or encompass all aspects of a global event or crisis. Unlike traditional journalism, digital-megastory articles can be created from stories anywhere, delivering the essence of the message through a new style of writing and presentation techniques. This approach allows the story to resonate with readers personally, enabling them to interpret and contemplate the topic in their own way (Lassila-Merisalo, 2014). Digital-megastory sets itself apart from conventional media stories through its focus and its impact on readers' thoughts. This aspect facilitates a deeper connection between readers and the story, inspiring curiosity, and encouraging readers to discuss the story with others, leading to its contagious spread.

The emergence of Digital-megastory, a trend in multimedia journalism, has opened new doors for the field of journalism in the country. In contrast to what is commonly referred to as "regular articles" on online newspapers today, longform represents a high-quality journalistic product that embraces multimedia technology. Unlike conventional journalistic works that rely on text and still images, Longform incorporates various media elements, such as images, videos, and graphics, to make the information more captivating and vivid. This combination enhances truthfulness, objectivity, and reader comprehension.

Digital-megastory offers two key advantages (Nga, 2017).

Firstly, it excels in the visual aspect. As newspapers are visual mediums, visually appealing articles are effective and well received by readers. Special articles can be likened to visual feasts, with designers meticulously selecting and arranging images, coordinating title colors, and carefully designing layouts. Once the visual aspect is ensured, viewers begin to engage with the content more attentively. Secondly, digital-megastory seamlessly synthesises multiple media types into a single article. Sophisticated longform articles may incorporate videos, infographics, drawings, and stylised text. This approach enables statistical information to be easily understood and compared, while stylised text emphasises specific messages or focal points that the article aims to highlight. Although future journalism formats may emerge, digital-megastory is highly regarded and appreciated by readers.

Since the introduction of digital-megastory, online journalism has found its unique way to compete with social networks in terms of authenticity and the visual appeal of information. This innovative approach has opened new possibilities for the development of national journalism. Readers can now engage with stories on a deeper level, piquing their curiosity and prompting them to share and discuss these stories with others.

*Characteristics of Content in Digital-Megastory Articles:* To create a successful digital-megastory article, it is crucial to meet the criteria of a high-quality article. The news must possess significant value, timeliness, and discoverability. Typically, articles in the digital-megastory format need to offer something unique or organise data in a systematic manner. Therefore, articles featuring profiles of notable individuals or summarising annual events or information on trending topics are often chosen for presentation in a magazine-like format.

Furthermore, digital-megastory serves as a means to capture and retain readers' attention and loyalty towards articles and newspapers in various newsrooms. It is crucial for "longform" journalism to clearly convey the intentions and purposes of articles to readers, going beyond mere information provision. While Digital-megastory requires substantial effort, considering it as a modern form of journalism necessitates a systematic approach to understanding and mastering it. This poses significant challenges for modern online journalists.

Despite some drawbacks, such as being impractical at times, requiring substantial time and effort, and employing various presentation techniques, Digital-megastory has emerged as a new genre of journalism that attracts a large and interactive audience, contributing to a vibrant global journalistic environment. Producing a Digital-megastory can be likened to creating a magazine, demanding meticulous attention to both form and content depth, surpassing the scope of daily newspapers. Hence, the cost of production, including content creation and display technology, poses an initial challenge. A comprehensive Digital-megastory article entails meticulous research and captivating accompanying visuals, often taking weeks or even months to complete, involving stages such as photography, video editing, graphic design, and interactive graphics for complex articles.

However, it cannot be denied that this form of journalism paves the way for realigning the field with its mission of guiding readers and delivering core journalistic values, instead of solely chasing after news in the realm of social networks. The era of journalism where readers consume

whatever is provided has passed, as they now yearn for valuable information amidst an abundance of sensational content.

Moreover, amidst countless newspapers and websites, it has become challenging to readers to remember specific publications or authors due to the confusion and uniformity among them or their adherence to prevailing news trends. In the social media environment, information constantly evolves, with subsequent waves superseding previous ones. Consequently, traditional reporting methods have become tedious. Differentiation is crucial in leaving a lasting impression. Delving deeper into the underlying issues behind new events is an essential function of contemporary journalism.

Creating a digital-megastory is comparable to designing a magazine, requiring meticulous attention to both form and content depth, surpassing the scope of daily newspapers. Hence, the cost of production, including content creation and display technology, poses an initial challenge. A comprehensive Digital-megastory article entails meticulous research and captivating accompanying visuals, often taking weeks or even months to complete, involving stages such as photography, video editing, graphic design, and interactive graphics for complex articles. The technological aspect also incurs substantial costs. While conventional articles can be managed through a content management system (CMS), a complex Mega Story necessitates dedicated design and coding processes involving multiple individuals. Time consumption remains a significant hurdle, as meticulous and thorough work requires considerable effort. Even for simple articles, utilising online tools takes several hours.

Despite the challenges, the rewards are significant in an era where information becomes outdated within seconds. VietnamPlus stands as a prime example of success in implementing special products within its newspaper through Megastory. The newspaper has achieved considerable success in recent years and has received numerous prestigious press awards, with many of their works adopting this style. While other newsrooms are also embracing the Digital-megastory format, VietnamPlus remains the pioneer in this regard. Journalists aspire to be recognised by readers and peers, earning accolades and making positive contributions to society. These achievements cannot be measured solely by the number of page views.

Digital-megastory caters to a distinct audience within the realm of online journalism. In addition to the common characteristics shared by online journalism readers, such as having qualifications, curiosity, and an eagerness for exploration, Digital-megastory readers possess modern technology skills and the ability to comprehend and process information. Their information needs are high, but their time is limited.

Digital transformation within journalism presents specific requirements for journalists. In online journalism, the primary objective is to disseminate information to the public as swiftly as possible. However, Digital-megastory products contradict this objective, as they cannot be rapidly consumed. Organising a longform product is a costly endeavour. Prior to creating a Digital-megastory product, newsrooms need to consider inherent contradictions. Firstly, there is the conflict between speed and quality. Producing high-quality products is time-consuming. Secondly, there is a contradiction between efficiency and cost. The production cost for a Digital-megastory product starts at 2.5 million VND (with 1.2 million VND allocated for the writer and 1.3 million VND for the designer), which is 5-8 times higher than conventional products, while the average number of views after 24 hours is only around 50,000 to 60,000.

Major online journalism players cannot overlook the production of Digital-megastory products and can approach it in two ways. Firstly, they can target niche audiences, particularly those with a deep interest in and reading habits aligned with longform content, primarily entrepreneurs. Secondly, they can popularise Digital-megastory by designing separate templates for each topic, allowing for the swift creation of products by pouring information into the template and formatting it accordingly. Digital-megastory represents modern journalism, demanding suitable methods, skills, and styles.

Creating updated longform products with a modern writing style will attract significant reader attention. In a society where living standards are improving, the public's demand for information is increasing. Information knows no national boundaries in a globalised world. Therefore, journalists must possess a multidimensional perspective and adhere to professional ethics. Professional ethics exist not only in journalists' consciousness and their work but also in practical activities and relationships.

Proficiency in foreign languages strengthens journalists' capabilities. With access to foreign sources, they can acquire more information and better understand global journalism practices,

thereby enhancing their design skills. Designers with experience contribute to creativity, refreshing articles to be unique and captivating to the public. Therefore, designers must continuously learn and enhance their knowledge to contribute effectively to the production of multimedia journalistic works.

Negotiation skills are essential for Corporate PR topics. Enterprises aim to present their issues in a longform format, targeting a broad public audience rather than a niche market for their products (such as cars, cosmetics, dietary supplements, health protection devices, etc.). Thus, creators of longform content must negotiate with enterprises. Effective longform production occurs when online newspapers engage in prior negotiations with enterprises regarding relevant topics.

#### 4. Results

*The Influence of Digital-Megastory on the Advancement of Online Journalism: Characteristics of Content in Digital-Megastory Articles:* In the current era of technological breakthroughs, online journalism is experiencing rapid development. A new trend in journalism is emerging as a solution for online journalism. Although the longevity of this trend is uncertain, it has shown promise in the immediate future. While content is a necessary element, it is not sufficient for a successful Digital-megastory article. Eye-catching design is also essential, and this is achieved through close collaboration and specific exchange between the content and design teams as shown in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Ratio of information in online journalism

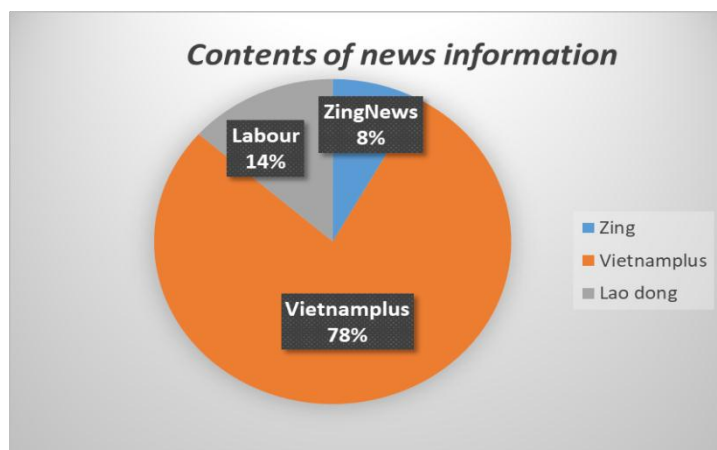
S/No	Topic	ZingNews	Vietnamplus	Labour Newspaper	Total
1	News	8,11	78,38	13,51	100
2	Corporate PR	18,7	71,4	9,9	100
3	Spreading lifestyle	16,3	55,8	27,9	100

*Regarding News Content:* Digital-megastory articles are content-intensive, with a strong emphasis on investing in images and graphics. They are presented in a distinct interface style, prioritising the readers' reading experience. One advantage of Digital-megastory articles is that they increase the amount of time readers spend on a website. For instance, readers typically spend five to ten seconds on an e-newsletter or 15 to 20 seconds on longer news pieces. However, when it comes to E-magazines articles on platforms like Vietnam Plus, the average viewing time is 5 to 6 minutes, and some articles even captivate readers for 10 to 15 minutes. This is due to the in-depth information provided alongside numerous images and videos. It is worth noting that the time spent on a website is an important criterion for website classification.

In this type of article, newspapers worldwide employ diverse font styles and sizes. Some articles feature font sizes as large as 18 points, ensuring legibility. As a result, both serif and sans serif fonts are popular choices. Notable quotes are dispersed throughout the article and can be inserted within full-screen images (see [Figure 1](#)).

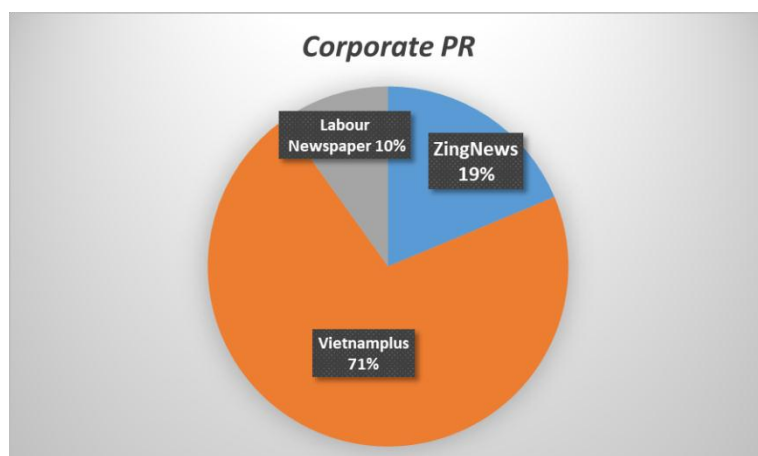
Observing the usage level of news topics, VietnamPlus.vn newspaper prominently features Digital-megastory content, accounting for 78 % of its offerings. Labour Newspapers follows with a share of 14 %, and ZingNews concludes the list. Digital-megastory content caters to a selective group of readers, with potentially less than 10 % out of 100 readers expressing a preference for this type of content. However, these readers generally fall into the category of "quality readers" who engage in extensive and in-depth reading. Thus, this type of content holds significant value for this particular audience. A key advantage of Digital-megastory lies in its ability to extend the time readers spend on a website. While conventional news pieces are often read briefly within 10-20 seconds, the average time spent on VietnamPlus' Digital-megastory articles ranges from five to six minutes, and some articles even surpass 10 minutes. Reader engagement and time on site have become more important evaluation criteria than mere page views.





**Fig. 1.** The chart shows the level of content on news topics in digital products – megastory

Digital-megastory differs from traditional news categories. Many people mistakenly associate it with sensational and groundbreaking news, but in reality, Digital-megastory represents a new style of journalistic work, both in terms of content and presentation, aimed at generating widespread interest and rapid dissemination. It features engaging content and compelling stories that captivate the public. The writing style is flexible and attractive, skilfully connecting and delving into the depths of the narrative.

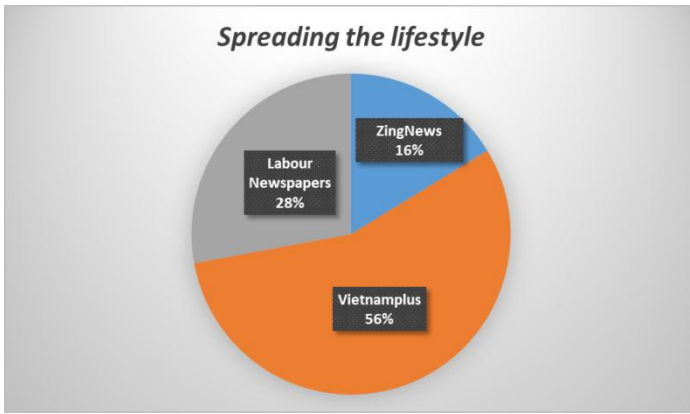


**Fig. 2.** The chart shows the level of use of the Corporate PR topic

*Analysis of Corporate Public Relations Content with a Focus on Public Benefit:* Looking at the chart provided, it is evident that VietnamPlus.com remains the leader in the field of Public Relations (PR), comprising 71 % of the share. Public Relations has become a prominent area within journalism today, as it involves promoting specific individuals or enterprises to the public (see [Figure 2](#)). Given the trust that the public places in journalism, the content published is assumed reputable. Thus, Public Relations plays a significant role in the continued development of journalism. Notably, Public Relations articles are often presented in an eye-catching longform format that captivates readers, making them less likely to find the content monotonous or dull.

*Promoting Lifestyle, Philosophy, and Perspectives through Content:* Digital-megastory content caters to individuals with a profound interest in life and philosophical perspectives ([Le, 2021](#)) (see [Figure 3](#) and [Table 2](#)).

[Table 2](#) presents the ratio of image and title usage in Digital-Megastory products. A survey on the use of subtitles reveals VietnamPlus.vn newspaper's significant investment in this area. Each journalism product is allowed to incorporate a minimum of two titles or more. The use of multiple titles enhances the depth of Digital-megastory products, sparking curiosity among readers.



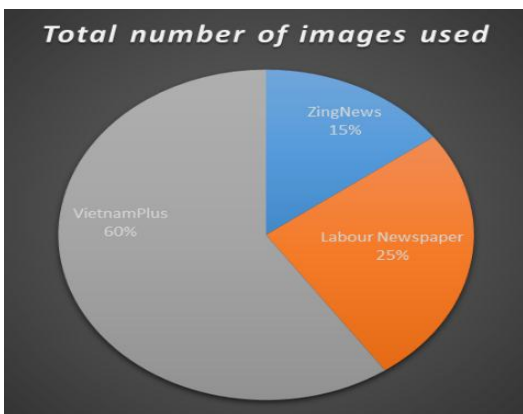
**Fig. 3.** The chart shows the level of use of the Spreading Lifestyle topic

**Table 2.** Utilisation rate of images and titles in digital-megastory products

S/N		ZingNews	Labour Newspapers	Vietnamplus	Ratio
1	From four titles or more	24,17	20,87	54,96	100
2	Number of images to insert text	30	24	46	100
3	Total number of images used	14,9	25,4	59,7	100

In traditional journalism products like printed newspapers, the use of images is relatively limited. However, online newspapers have the advantage of incorporating numerous images to provide deeper illustrations and captivate readers’ attention. The inclusion of more images clarifies information about the products, provides visual relief, and increases overall product appeal (see [Figure 4](#)). In terms of the number of images inserted alongside text, VietnamPlus newspaper ranks first among the three newspapers compared. This indicates the newspaper’s strong emphasis on image design for their products.

The inclusion of images is crucial in Digital-megastory, as it signifies the emphasis on using visual elements as a foundation for designing text in multimedia journalism products. Digital-megastory does not necessarily have to be a long-form journalistic work, nor does it require an excessive application of multimedia techniques or cover all topics and information related to global crises or events. For instance, news topics such as the ISIS crisis, the Ebola outbreak, and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic have often been mistakenly considered as examples of Longform. However, in reality, longform is not limited to “hot” events or issues but can encompass any story commonly found on the internet or other media platforms.



**Fig. 4.** Comparison chart between newspapers in terms of total number of images used

Currently, digital-megastory articles may incorporate various media elements such as audio, video, images, and data to highlight the subject matter. Another distinctive feature often observed is the presence of non-linear storylines in longform journalism. Digital-megastory also encompasses special reports and slow journalism presented in a captivating and innovative style that aligns with the latest trends in global journalism. Our reporters, who possess diverse skills, are capable of working on multiple fronts, including writing articles, capturing footage, taking images, conducting data analysis, design, coding, and more. They adapt to new forms of journalism such as data journalism and visual journalism.

Diverging from traditional journalism, digital-Megastory can emerge from any story and continues to help the public grasp the essence of the conveyed message, akin to traditional journalism but with new writing and presentation techniques. This approach significantly personalises the story for readers, allowing them to engage in their own unique way and form their thoughts more clearly on the topic at hand.

## 5. Conclusion

The research results presented here offer valuable insights for researchers, journalism students, and practitioners. It enhances understanding of multimedia journalism, enriches the knowledge base of press agencies, and contributes to the improvement and advancement of the country's press industry. Readers gain an overview of this new genre, fulfilling their information needs and providing valuable data for researchers. Developing Digital-megastory within the journalism field is the right path, as it fosters critical thinking and delivers slow journalism combined with multimedia elements. Technological advancements have empowered journalism and communication activities, meeting diverse and complex public needs by providing highly visual and interactive information.

Thanks to technology, journalists can promptly and conveniently deliver creative products that satisfy various societal interests. However, technological advancements require journalists and reporters to possess multidisciplinary skills, expanding beyond traditional roles such as photojournalism or news reporting. Photojournalists, for example, not only provide visual documentation but also conduct interviews, record audio and video, edit multimedia content, and even engage in graphic design. Technological progress presents unprecedented opportunities to enhance individuals' creative potential. Those actively engaged in the press and media during this multimedia era possess general skills derived from creatively applying information technology achievements.

Additionally, the study uncovers challenges faced by journalists in maintaining ethical standards, addressing misinformation, and managing audience feedback in the digital landscape. Furthermore, the research examines the cultural adaptation of Digital-Megastory, as journalists strive to strike a balance between global trends and the preferences of Vietnamese audiences. Glocalisation emerges as a significant theme, emphasising how Digital-Megastory formats are localised to align with Vietnamese culture and values. The study concludes that Digital-Megastory has become a prominent trend in Vietnam's online journalism, representing a significant aspect of the ongoing digital transformation in the country's media landscape. Online journalists are navigating a dynamic and rapidly evolving digital environment, integrating multimedia storytelling, audience engagement, and ethical considerations into their reporting practices. The implications of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the actual situation of digital transformation in Vietnamese journalism, with digital-Megastory serving as a critical element in enhancing audience engagement and information dissemination.

**Limitations:** It is important to acknowledge potential limitations of the study. The snowball sampling technique may introduce some degree of bias, and the findings may not be generalisable to all Vietnamese online journalists. Additionally, the use of audio recordings may have an impact on participants' responses, as they may modify their communication due to being recorded.

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