

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

It can be seen that at any level of government or agency it is necessary to promote the role of communication in the organization. In fact, communication practices not only contribute to be a powerful tool for managing the state system effectively towards democracy and transparency, but also contribute to build good relationships and trust between organizations and the public.

However, while communication practices in Vietnam are gradually becoming mature with the goal of professionalization, communication activities at public agencies in general and at those at central level in particular have not been paid proper attention. There is a lack of planning, strategy and professionalism for the management of the press agencies of state organisations. A number of press agencies operate under a subsidized mechanism, lack of financial autonomy, lack of competitiveness, lack of inspiring and diverse information leading to a lack of attraction to readers. In addition to a number of state organizations that have their own communication department, most government agencies in Vietnam do not have a specialized organization structure and personnel system for communication practices. Communication parts are usually located in the general administration or propaganda department. This leads to the lack of professionalism and clear strategy in the organization's information management, therefore, when a problem or crisis occurs, it is difficult for the organization to provide information quickly, accurately and consistently, and so that causes the pressing of public opinion and loss of public trust.

Because of this, the construction of a communication system in state administration agencies at Central level is an urgent and long-term task, which contributes to the effective management of the state apparatus towards democratic and transparent way.

For all the reasons above, the author decides to carry out the thesis "*Communication Practices of State Administration Agencies at Central level in Vietnam*" (Survey conducted at the Government Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2017)

2. Purpose and duties of research

2.1. Purpose of research

The purpose of the thesis is to re-systemize the theoretical contents, requirements of communication, mass communication, organizational communication and communication activities of state administrative agencies (SAA), the author studies the status of communication practices of central state administrative agencies in Vietnam. On that basis, the author gives major suggestions and solutions to improve the quality of communication practices (CPs) of the state administrative agencies at Central level (SAACL) to meet the information needs of the public.

2.2. Research tasks

Firstly, systematize the basic concepts and set up a theoretical system for communication, mass communication and organizational communication; communication and mass communication model, organizational communication management model; roles, duties, tools of the SAACL in Vietnam. *Secondly*, the study aims at assessing the overall status of the CPs at SAACL in Vietnam, analyzing the characteristics, forms, channels and the factors influencing the communication practices. *Thirdly*, focus on research and survey of the CPs at the Government Office and three central state administration agencies in Vietnam to find out the organizational structure, model and personnel of the communication department and the implementation of the communication tasks of these organizations. *Fourthly*, conduct surveys at the Government Office and ministries to explore media coverage of the press agencies inside and the press information outside the SAACL, communication crisis management, event management and other communication practices. *Fifthly*, recommend and propose a system of solutions to improve the quality of communication activities, including proposing the model of communication practices and specific solutions for media coverage, press information activities and other communication activities of the SAACL in Vietnam.

3. Object and scope of research

Research subjects of the thesis are communication practices of the state administration agencies at Central level in Vietnam.

The research scope of the thesis is to study the CPs of SAACL in Vietnam, surveyed in the period of 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017. The focus of communication practice research are on the study of media coverage and press information activities, media crisis management activities, event organization, and other activities of communication departments in SAACL. The focus is on researching CPs outside the organization.

4. Research question and hypothesis

4.1. Research question

(i) How are the organizational structure and management of communication agencies of the State administrative agencies at Central level in Vietnam?

(ii) How is the current status of communication practices of the State administrative agencies at Central level in Vietnam?

(iii) What are recommendations and solutions to improve the quality of communication practices of the State administrative agencies at Central level in Vietnam?

4.2. Research hypothesis

The CPs of SAAs play an increasingly important role in bringing the Party and State policies to the public. The SAACL have had a communication department, however, the communication department is not professional. The SAACL have organized activities regularly but not yet fully.

Communication department has not yet used the most of media channels and have not effectively exploited the topics to provide information through the media to readers. The SAACL needs to recognize the fairly important role of CPs and needs mechanisms and models to provide information to the public regularly and continuously.

5. Theoretical framework

The research framework of the topic is based on research hypotheses, research objects, scope, goals and tasks as follows:

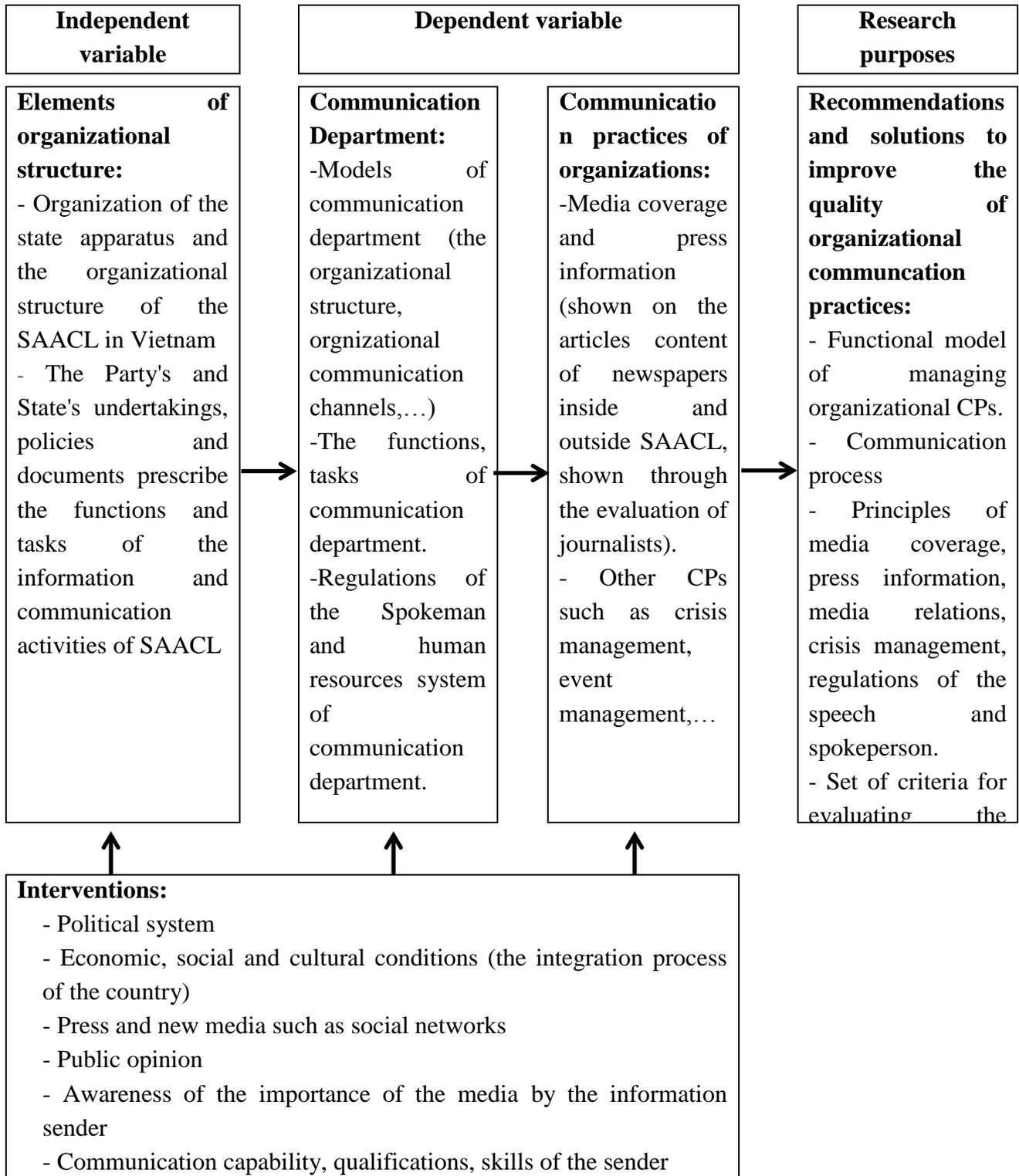


Diagram 1: Theoretical framework

6. Research methods

6.1. Theoretical basis

Theoretical basis of the thesis is Marxism Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought about the media and communication. The theoretical basis of the project is also the views and guidelines of the Party and the State on the organizational communication, the current legal system, legal documents which regulate and manage CPs. Theoretical systems, models of communication and organizational communication are also scientific content as the basis for the thesis.

6.2. Specific research methods

- *Documentary study methodology*: It is used to study the scientific works, books and monographs related to the topic as the basis for the construction of theoretical system of communication, mass communication, organizational communication and at the same time inherit the results of available research; as a basis for the comparison, evaluation of the results of the survey, finding out the scientific solution to problems of the study. This method contributes as a theoretical basis to answering research questions and research hypotheses of the thesis.

- *Field survey methodology*: It is used for the purpose of understanding the current status of CPs in surveyed organizations, through which providing an overview of the current status of CPs of SAACL in Vietnam. This method contributes to answering research questions about the situation, helping to clarify the research hypothesis that the SAACL has had the communication department but has not yet operated professionally, and has not exploited the effectiveness of CPs, from that proposing solutions for the thesis. The subjects of field survey are 4 agencies including Government Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD).

- *Content analysis methodology*: The author uses the content analysis method conducted in two of newspapers (4 newspapers under the management of the SAACL – industry newspapers and 5 newspapers outside the SAACL- out-of-industry newspapers). The aim is to understand the current situation of media coverage and press information of SAACL in Vietnam. The four industry newspapers are: Government Newspaper, Vietnam Financial Times, Vietnam Agriculture, Health and Life belonging to: the Office of Government, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, respectively. Survey purposes (from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2017) are to explore media coverage activities of SAACL. The survey of five newspapers out of the industry, including three major newspapers published in Vietnam including Nhan Dan, Labor, Youth, and two electronic newspapers with high traffic including Vietnamnet.vn and VnExpress.net in the period from 1/1/2014-31/12/2016. The purpose is to find out newspapers' contents reporting 3 ministries (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

- *In-depth interview methodology*: Conducting 20 in-depth interviews with the media and press groups (leaders of media management organizations, leaders of media houses, journalists, reporters) and communication managers and staff of surveyed organizations. The purpose is to obtain their evaluations of information and communication activities and the provision of information to the media at the SAACL. The information collected is also the basis for comparison with the results that the author collected during the field survey in the four agencies mentioned above.

- *Case study methodology*: It is used to study the SAAs in Austria and Korea, the purpose is to consult the foreign experience in CPs of SAAs. The reason is that, during the process of doing the thesis, the author has an opportunity to study and research at the SAAs in Austria and Korea. The author takes an advantage of this opportunity to study how the CPs, the model of the communication department, and the information management mechanism of the SAAs in the two countries operate.

In addition, the author uses other methods such as observation methods and statistical methods. The aim is also to study in order to answer research questions and clarify issues in research hypotheses.

7. Theoretical and practical significance of the thesis

The project is meaningful not only for research and training activities in the communication and PR industry, but also for proposing solutions to improve the quality of CPs in SAACL in Vietnam.

8. Structure of the thesis

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, Reference Lists and Appendix, the dissertation consists of 4 chapters, 14 periods and 173 pages.

Chapter 1

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1. Research situation on communication and mass communication

1.1.1. Research overview on communication and mass communication

Studies of the world mass communication theory began to draw attention from the late 30s and early 40s of the 20th century. Along with the influence of political, economic and social issues according to historical process, the focus of communication theory research goes in different directions. The focus of research went from the definition of mass communication (Laswell, 1927) as well as understanding the role and importance of mass communication on the society, the impact of communication on public awareness, attitude, behavior ("hypodermic needles" or "magic bullet") (Laswell, 1927, Hovland et. Al, 1953), to the consideration of media and communication as powerful tools to serve the needs of leaders to influence public opinion ("two-step flow") (Lazasfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948), ("Agenda Setting") (Mc Combs & Shaw, 1972). Also in the 1970s, the focus on communication theory

research emphasized the role of the public in deciding the communication effect ("Uses & Gratifications") (Blumer, Brown, 1972). There has been a shift of communication theory from relying on other industries to independent autonomy from industries. These theories are the theoretical basis for the author's thesis.

1.1.2. Studies on communication and mass communication

The research materials on communication are quite rich, showing that the field attracted the attention of scholars and researchers. The results of this study have important implications for the communication research activities, as well as become the references in the training content of this industry, and contribute to the reshaping of the practically organizational communication practices and promote the development of the communications industry in the current period.

Mass communication research papers mainly discuss the history of mass communication, traditional and modern theories of communication and mass communication, relationship of media and society, communication in relation to the culture, history and knowledge, impact of media as well as impact factors such as political institutions, state regulations and management and the development of information technology on communication. The above studies have discussed issues of press information management, journalism management, management and leadership in mass communication and journalism activities, PR activities of newspapers or relationships between the journalism and PR. However, as mentioned above, this work mainly focuses on the state management perspective on communication and mass communication in relation to leadership and management, not to mention what the agencies in the state apparatus should do to manage information on media channels and other media channels of the organization.

1.2. Research situation on organizational communication

1.2.1. Research overview on organizational communication

Redding and Thompkins (1988) identified three phases in organizational development. In the Preparatory Era (1900-1940), scholars emphasized the importance of communication in the organization. The main focus of this time is public speaking, business writing, management communication, and persuasion. The era of Identity and Unification (1940-1970) witnessed the beginning of industrial business and communication, with certain groups and organizational relationships, which are considered to be important. During the Era of Maturity and Innovation (1970-present), empirical research increases, "accompanied by creative efforts to develop concepts, theoretical hypotheses, and critical philosophical analysis." (Redding & Thompkins, 1988, p.7).

Putnam and Cheney (1985) summarized the study of modern organizational communication theory by identifying four main areas of the discipline: 1) Communication channels, 2) Communication climate (communication climate - possibly understand

communication environment), 3) Network analysis, and 4) Upper-level communication. In a recent analysis of 23 textbooks introducing TTTC (Aust, Limon, & Lippert, 2002), the nine most frequently appearing topics include: 1) leadership, 2) conflict and conflict management, 3) communication network, 4) policy-making and problem-solving process, 5) ethics, or value, 6) communication technology, 7) human resource perspective, 8) perspective Human relationship, 9) Classical management theory.

1.2.2. Studies on organizational communication

Through the synthesis and selection of research materials, it can be seen that the research on communication and organizational communication is influenced by political, economic, social, cultural and scientific factors. Research points of view approach many different angles from concept, history, theory, to the interactions between communication with political, cultural, historical and intellectual institutions and information technology. An important view is that communication, though has its interdisciplinary origins, is developing its own theories rather than relying on other related industries. Views of organizational communication include both internal and external organizations, communication is not only a process of organization but also a structure of organization; communication not only has execution function but also has management and forecast function.

1.3. Research situation on CPs of SAACL in Vietnam

1.3.1. Studies on state administrative agencies (SAAs)

There are many research materials on SAAs, however, there are not many systematic documents on communication of the organization, especially of SAAs in Vietnam. This is also a research gap that urges authors to implement this topic.

1.3.2. Studies on journalism and communication activities of SAACL in Vietnam

From systematizing resources of communication, organizational communication and communication of SAAs, it can be seen that communication is an important activity for the management of the world and Vietnamese organizations in general and SAAs in Vietnam in particular. Therefore, there are many documents and books discussed about this issue. In Vietnam, even though CPs in SAAs have appeared for a long time, there are still no worthy evaluations and adequate views on the role of this activity in SAAs until now.

Regarding the viewpoints of organizational communication, it can be seen that the CPs is still understood as the propaganda activities of SAAs. Even when thinking about the activity of these agencies, many people consider this as merely a media-relation activity. In particular, the books and documents refer to the communication activity of a general organization or focus on a specific type of communication in a specific unit, but give a general picture or propose an effective management model of CPs in SAACL in Vietnam.

Summary of chapter 1

Research materials on communication, mass communication and organizational communication are fairly rich, which indicates that this area attracts the attention of scholars and researchers. Through the synthesis and selection of research materials, the author found that the studies on communication, mass communication and organizational communication are influenced by political, economic, social, cultural and technological science factors. Research views approach many different angles from concept, history, theory, to interactions between communication with political, cultural, historical, intellectual institutions and information technology. There are many research materials on communication, mass communication and organizational communication, however, there are not yet many systematic documents on the research works on communication of SAAs in Vietnam. This is also a research gap that urges authors to implement this topic.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BASIS OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AGENCIES IN VIETNAM

2.1. Some basic concepts

2.1.1. Communication

Communication is a process of transmitting, receiving and exchanging ideas and messages through emotions and behaviors in order to establish relationships between people and people to achieve common understanding, awareness and attitude formation and behavior change.

2.1.2. Mass communication

Mass communication is to a process of wide information transmission through media channels using technology to a large number of receivers. It is possible to identify types of mass communication that people use in their personal, academic and practical activities. Mass communication includes print, radio, television, interactive media and various types of social media.

2.1.3. Organizational communication

Organizational communication is the sending and receiving of messages between individuals in relation to each other in a specific environment, space, organization, through intermediate channels, to achieve personal and organizational goals. Mainly focused on building relationships, or repeated interactions between individuals, with members inside and the interested public outside the organization.

2.1.4. Communication practices

Communication practices are understood as information and communication activities, sharing and exchanging messages, promoting the image and brand of individuals or organizations to public groups in order to maintain good relationships with the public as well as affect their awareness, attitudes and behaviors about the individuals or organizations.

With such an understanding, organizational communication practices include: (i) Media coverage and press information activities; (ii) Issue and crisis management; (iii) Event organization; (iv) Internal communication; (v) Community relations; (vi) Government relations; (v) Public services; (vi) Fundraising; (vii) Sponsorship...

2.1.5. State administration agencies at Central level

SAACL refers to the administrative management agencies whose authority is effective nationwide, including the general and separate authority, including the Government, ministries and ministerial-level agencies, governmental agencies. The apparatus of the Central administration agencies is based at the capital, the political center of the country.

2.2. Theoretical basis of organizational communication

2.2.1. Theoretical basis of communication and mass communication

2.2.1.1. Theories of communication and mass communication

Including theory of innovation diffusion by Everett Rogers, elaboration-likelihood theory - theory of thorough thinking by sociologists Richard Petty and John Cacippo, theory of agenda setting, theory of uses and gratifications initiated in the Research of Payne Foundation and discussed by scholars Blumer, Berger.

2.2.1.3. Models of communication and mass communication

Models including communication model of Harold D.Lasswell, communication model of Shanon and Weaver, two-step flow model of Lazarsfeld.

These theories and models are the theoretical basis for the thesis to help the author explain and illuminate CPs of SAAs, thereby assessing the situation and proposing solutions for the thesis.

2.2.2. Theoretical basis of organizational communication

2.2.2.1. Some basic theories of organizational communication

Scholars Max Weber, Philip Tompkins, and George Cheney, along with Stanley Deetz, are pioneers in the research field of organizational communication. It is possible to summarize a number of important theories of scholars on organizational communication related to three aspects including: structure, control and management. Grunig and Hung, Cutlip and Theaker later proposed system theory when discussing the CPs of organization. This is also important theory which is used as the basis for the thesis.

2.2.2.2. Models of organizational communication

Models including model of organizational communication by Gerald M. Goldshaber, model of strategic communication management by James E.Grunig.

2.2.2.3. Model of CPs' effect evaluation

Including model of performance evaluation: Preparation, Implementation, Impact.

The above theories and models help the author explain the mechanism and process of organizational communication management, and compare them with the efficiency scales of the SAAs to make suggestions to help improve or adjust the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of CPs of these agencies.

2.2.3. Role, responsibility of CPs of SAAs

The organizational communication plays a role on: Create and maintain relationships with the public and local community, provide information on mass media, build and protect the image of the organization, forecast crises and minimize risks.

2.2.4. Tools of CPs of SAAs

Philip Kotler (2003) when studying of integrated marketing communication divided the industry's tools into 7 tools: Publications, Events, News, Community involvement, Identify tools, Lobby, Social Investment.

Located in the state administrative system of Vietnam, SAAs have their own characteristics when having functions and tasks of managing and implementing industrial journalism activities; therefore, CPs of SAAs have both similarities and differences with SAAs in the world because the main CPs are the media coverage and press information and other activities. Specifically, tools of CPs of SAAs in Vietnam include: *Media coverage and press information (Industrial press, Press monitoring, Press conference, Information provision, media relations...)*, *Crisis Management, Event Organization and other communication activities.*

2.3. Practical basis of communication activities

2.3.1. Views of the Party and State leaders on the importance of CPs

Party and State leaders expressed the importance of communication through guiding documents and real actions. Leaders of SAACL have always directed the strengthening of information and communication. However, leaders of SAACL are not fairly aware of communication role. Therefore, Party and State leaders also emphasized the openness and initiative to provide information to media.

2.3.2. Characteristics of CPs in SAACL in Vietnam

CPs of SAACL in Vietnam have different characteristics from the activities of enterprises, as follows: CPs have the characteristics of propaganda and order. CPs must ensure democracy and wide-ranging to all social classes. CPs are implemented for non-profit purposes but for the purpose of providing information, contributing to an effective tool for managing, building and maintaining the relationship between agencies and public groups. CPs have many advantages because of easy access to media because it is a binding relationship with responsibility and mutual benefits.

2.3.3. Communication channels of SAACL in Vietnam

Firstly, industrial newspapers - magazines. Each administrative agency, each ministry currently has a industrial newspaper – magazine system. *Secondly*, the official portal / website of these agencies. *Thirdly*, information from the spokesperson including formal statements to the public. *Fourthly*, documents, directives, documents such as press releases, announcements ... *Fifthly*, press conferences, seminars, conferences. *Sixthly*, the internal bulletin of SAAs. *Seventh*, mass media including press systems belonging to political and social agencies. *Eighthly*, social media.

2.3.4. Factors influencing CPs of SAACL in Vietnam

Guidelines and guidelines of the Party and State, the system of legal principles of socialism, the renovation and reform of the administrative system, the State management of

the journalism and communication, management mechanism, regulations of functions and tasks of the SAAs, the explosion of information technology are factors influencing CPs

Summary of Chapter 2

In media theory, it is possible to evaluate communication theories that are becoming increasingly diverse and based on different schools of thought and approach. Laswell's theory of communication, theory of "two-step flow", "agenda setting", "uses and satisfactions" are important theories which are the theoretical basis for the thesis for the thesis. About the theory of organizational communication, it can be said that scholars Max Weber, Philip Tompkins and George Cheney, along with Stanley Deetz, are pioneers in the field of organizational communication. Essential theories of organizational communication include: Weber's classic institutional theory of fixed structures, organizational management theory by Tompkins and Cheney, management theory by Deetz, system theory discussed by Grunig and Hung, Cutlip and Theaker. These are also important theories as the basis for the thesis.

Model of organizational communication by Gerald M. Goldhaber emphasizes the organization's status in the organization, the core of which is the process of communication that takes place between people and people, between superiors and subordinates and between colleagues. James E Grunig's strategic communications management model emphasizes the role of communication and PR as a strategic management function rather than a message-driven activity and emphasizes the process of managing external communication.

These theories and models have an important role as a theoretical basis for the thesis, a scientific basis for the author to conduct surveys and assess the situation, and contribute as a basis that the author can propose suggestions and solutions to improve the quality of CPs of SAACL.

With its own characteristics, CPs play an important role on SAACL in Vietnam. The main CPs of SAACL include: media coverage and press information, event organization, crisis management and other activities. However, to implement the above activities, the size, nature, characteristics, forms and effectiveness of communication in specific organizations also depend on many factors such as: policies, guidelines, systems of legal principles of socialism, regulations on functions and duties of organizations ...

Chapter 3

SITUATION OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF STATE ADMINISTRATION AGENCIES AT CENTRAL LEVEL IN VIETNAM

3.1. Introduction of surveyed agencies

3.1.1. Government Office

The Government is responsible for advising and assisting the Government and the Prime Minister, acting as a coordinator and a bridge between the Government, the Prime Minister with the legislative, judicial bodies and with political systems including the Party, association fronts, as a stage of connecting from Central to local levels.

3.1.2. Ministry of Finance

The Ministry of Finance is the governmental agency, performing the function of State management in: Finance (including: State budget, taxes, charges, fees and other revenues of the State budget and national reserves,...); customs; accounting; independent audit; price; stock; insurance; financial services and other services within the Ministry's State management scope; to act as the representative of the owner of State capital in enterprises according to the provisions of law.

3.1.3. Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is a governmental agency, performing the function of State management of health, including the following areas: Preventive medicine; medical examination and treatment, functional rehabilitation; medical examination, forensic medicine, psychiatric forensic medicine; traditional medicine; reproductive health; medical equipments; pharmacy; cosmetics; food safety; health insurance; population - family planning; state management of public services in the field of state management of the Ministry.

3.1.4. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Area

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is a governmental agency that performs the function of state management in the fields of agriculture, forestry, salt production, fisheries, irrigation and rural development throughout the country; State management of public services in sectors and fields under the Ministry's management.

3.2. Model of CPs in surveyed agencies

3.2.1. Models of communication department

Basically, the organizational communication department in State agencies is structured in such models as: (1) placed at the e-Portal or the Information - Communication Center; (2) located at the ministerial office; (3) located at the functional department. Specifically:

Firstly, the Government e-Portal is the unit being responsible for the CPs of the Government Office. This is a typical model focusing on the functions and communication activities of a state agency into an independent department - Government e-portal, showing the focus of responsibility, the unity of the ministry organization and empowerment of communication in managing the entire organizational communication activities, including management of press information and other activities. Secondly, the communication department is located in the ministry's Administrative Office (Ministry of Finance and MARD) with the advantages of information on the management activities of the ministry provided and updated regularly, since this is the advisory, synthesizing, logistic body for ministry leaders. However, this is a unit that performs many functions from advising, synthesizing to logistics, reception, etc., and communication is only a part of the Office, so the role and function of this part is very limited compared to when standing out as an independent unit. Thirdly, the communication department is outside the ministry's Administrative Office, located at a functional department of the ministry (Department of

Communication and Emulation and Reward, Ministry of Health). The functional department is the unit that performs the sector/field management function of the ministry, which is very convenient in advising the ministry's leaders in developing and promulgating regulations on communication. However, the department of communication located at the functional department has not yet shown the position and size of a unit of the industrial communication management, including the management of industrial press information activities.

3.2.2. Functions, tasks of communication departments

All surveyed agencies have e-Portals. The e-Portal has the function of organizing, managing and publishing the governance agency's information, integrating information of governance agencies' online public services, as a channel for information exchange among units of managing agencies with related organizations and individuals to best serve the functions and tasks of SAACL. The communication department also includes media agencies under SAACL, including industry newspapers and magazines. All agencies have rooms in charge of media, communication. Depending on the characteristics of each agency, the functions and tasks of these rooms are different, so unit naming is different.

3.2.3. Regulations on Spokesperson and human resource of communication department

Recently, the Government has issued Decree No.09/2017/NĐ-CP dated February 9, 2017 regulating the speaking and providing information to the media by the State administrative agencies. Based on this document and directive of the Government, SAACL have recently revised and updated the regulations on speech and information provision for the media.

According to the survey, the number of staff of the communication bureaus at the agencies in the survey area is mainly about 5-7 people, including 1 manager, 1 deputy manager and employees. Characteristics of personnels in these units are: the percentage of women is higher; the age ranges from 25-55; most of them gained bachelor to master degree; many young officials are trained in journalism; communication and regular tasks are monitoring, providing information to the media, the number of personnels is not much while the workload is large.

3.3. CPs of surveyed agencies

3.3.1. Media coverage activities (Through the survey of newspapers)

3.3.1.1. Communication in the industry newspaper

Analyzing the contents of 4 industry newspapers including: Government Online Newspaper, Vietnam Financial Times, Health and Life Newspaper, Vietnam Agriculture Newspaper during 1/1/2015-31/12/ 2017.

The form of reporting news is various but mainly focuses on the type of media coverage with two popular categories: news and reflection articles. With the pressing issues of the industry, information can be covered in more forms, with more diverse perspectives. However, the media coverage in these newspapers is still mostly one-way, with little interaction with readers. Authors' writings are also primarily intended to

provide information to the public, or simply inform the relevant people of policies, guidelines, documents, decrees and circulars, instructions, activities that Government, ministries and public sectors have been implemented. The authors of the articles themselves also show little of their views and opinions in the articles. Among the industry's problems, it seems that these newspapers avoid bringing negative incidents that are detrimental to the industry. The main issues reported in the industry newspapers mainly fall into the wrongdoings in the field that the industry manages, violations of the subjects that the sector policy is directed at and often directed by the Government, ministries, branches as well as handling mistakes. There is almost no mention of inadequacies in the public sector's policies, the mistakes of the officials themselves, especially those of the senior leaders of the industry. If there are any problems mentioned above, it is mainly information in the direction of superiors to subordinates as well as the slogan-like statements requiring what that need to be done and how.

3.3.1.2. *Communication on newspapers outside the industry*

- *Throuh content analysis of newspapers*

The author analyzed the content of stories in 5 newspapers (3 printed newspapers including Nhan Dan, Lao Dong, Tuoi Tre and 2 online newspapers including Vietnamnet and VnExpress) from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016 by searching for news and stories by the set of keyword level 1 with keywords related to ministries ("Ministry of Finance", "Ministry of Health", "Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development") on Google Advanced Search Engine. After finding these stories, the author continues to survey and search for stories according to the set of keywords combining "ministry names" and "outstanding topics / issues of the ministry".

Survey results show that: *Firstly*, the number of news articles on ministries has increased significantly in each year, one of the reasons is that the ministries increasingly focus on providing information to the media. *Secondly*, the articles number of Health Ministry accounts for a higher proportion than the Finance Ministry and the MARD. Due to the characteristics of the Ministry of Health's management field, there are people's issues related to people's life, so the information of the Ministry of Health is always the focus of the media and also attracted the attention of the public. *Thirdly*, comparing newspapers, the online newspaper VnExpress accounted for the highest proportion in the number of stories in 3 years as well as in 2016. The next order is Vietnamnet, Tuoi Tre, Lao Dong and Nhan Dan. *Fourthly*, the outstanding issues in newspapers when reporting on ministries are very diverse and rich. Most newspapers have a large percentage of news articles on health, food safety, taxes, prices, and fees, because these newspapers have their own Health or Business sections.

- *Through in-depth interviews with journalists*

The results of in-depth interviews show that the media is very important to ministries and sectors, when they provide the media with necessary information, the information will

be disseminated to the public. However, despite the fact that ministries have been interested in and facilitated the media in exploiting information and promoting the ministry's communication activities, the communication departments of many ministries still lack professionalism, professional training therefore they are not able to give advice for the ministry leaders in effective communication strategy when providing information to the media.

3.3.2. Press information activities (Through the survey of communication departments)

SAACL performs press information activities such as: managing industry and non-industry press. The communication department plays a role on advising the ministry's leaders in coordinating with State management agencies in the management of press outside the industry. The Ministry of Health is the unit that has cooperated closely with the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education, Ministry of Information and Communication in press management activities. However, this activity is influenced by many objective factors so in many cases, State agencies still have not controlled the information in the press. There was a situation that the information is faster covered on media, and the leaders' direction of putting information on newspapers was always behind and often reactive and passive.

Many agencies attach great importance to monitoring information in the press for timely processing. However, this work is still stopping at summarizing information but not forecasting and analyzing. In general, there was a positive change in the provision of information to the press in the surveyed agencies, although not many units still experienced delays or passages in the provision of information. news for the press. SAACL considers press relations as an important activity. The forms of relations with the press include information exchange, cooperation and cooperation with media agencies, meeting media agencies ...

3.3.3. Other communication practices (Through the survey of communication departments)

Other IPs of the State administrative agencies include the handling of crisis, event organization, etc. It can be seen that the crisis is concentrated in sensitive fields and issues, causing pressing issues in public opinion. Crisis often burst from newspapers and social networks and spread very quickly. The agency often reacts slowly and passively to threaten the image of the organization and the leader. Ministries focus on relations with the press to prevent and handle crisis. Diverse event organizing activities include organizing competitions, industry events, seminars, training ...

3.4. Evaluation of survey results

3.4.1. Achievements

The CPs complies with the legal regulations governing communication. The role of the Marketing Council is being properly perceived. Communication department

has been set up at all ministries. The management of press industry is gradually being reformed. Industry press shows the role of informal, direct and topical information. The organization provides information to the press more often through regular press conferences and through many other channels. The Government has issued a decree contributing to unified regulations on speech and information provision for the press. The authority to provide information of the regulated units helps to enhance the role and responsibility of the Spokesperson.

3.4.2. Shortcomings

Information in the newspaper also dodges negative issues, has not promoted social criticism. Activities of providing information to newspapers and the public are still passive. Usually when there is an incident happening, the agencies are not proactive and open in information, reflecting wrong or negative issues. It is only when the media enter the cases and broadly circulated the issues on the media that these agencies provide information, answering questions of the media and the people. Not many agencies consider the use of communication as a management tool with capability of advising management levels. Activities of media relations are still countermeasures, many management leaders also avoid answering the media. The ministries are still confused in forecasting and handling crisis.

Summary of chapter 3

The results of the field survey contribute to providing a complete picture and overview of the functions and tasks of the organization, organizational structure, model of communication department, human resources, spokesperson, e-Portal, industry media houses of the organization. Specifically: *Firstly*, SAACL has the communication department, regulating specific functions and tasks. *Secondly*, the structure of communication departments of SAACL is very different, not yet consistent and there is no standard and unified communication department model in all agencies. Basically, the structure of the communication department of the ministries is as follows, the communications department: (i) located in an independent unit such as the Government e-Portal, Government Office or Information - Communication Center; (ii) located at the Ministry Office as in Ministry of Finance, MARD; (iii) located in the department of functional management such as the Department of Communication and Emulation and Reward, Ministry of Health. The results of this survey have an important meaning to help the author propose to build a model of CPs for SAACL in Chapter 4.

The survey also show the views of the leaders of SAACL about the importance of the CPs, how information process, management of industry press, press relations, problem solving and crisis handling are implemented. However, CPs still reveal many inadequacies in management, human resources, and mechanisms for coordination of information among communication agencies, factors affecting the management of communication activities of the agencies. There is still a situation where newspapers are having trouble exploiting information, especially for sensitive events, which are attracting public opinion.

The above survey results are important suggestions to help those who implement the information system of the ministry to soon overcome and find solutions to improve the quality of CPs of their organizations.

Chapter 4

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AGENCIES AT CENTRAL LEVEL IN VIETNAM

4.1. Reference to foreign experiences

Firstly, CPs of SAAcl comply with a clear, methodical and professional process due to the development of communication in these countries and due to the appreciation of the CPs of these agencies. The Government Office and the ministries of Austria and South Korea all have a specialized communication department called the Public Relations Department or the Press Information Division that is fully responsible for the organization's communication activities. This department is the focal point to receive input information, process and broadcast output messages to the public and the press. Heads of these departments are Spokespersons, responsible for all activities related to the CPs and PR of the ministry. In the event of a crisis, the Prime Minister's spokesman or ministries will be responsible for answering or working with the press.

Secondly, to improve the effectiveness of policy, the public communications department must conduct public opinion analysis, develop communication strategies, conduct communication activities on the media, eventually is the opinion manager after speaking.

Thirdly, communication activities must have a strategic plan and a central message. The departments that manage functions must make a communication plan including the compilation of news materials and make a latter communication plan.

Fourthly, in Austria, there is a trend of developing from e-Government to Smart Government, which means social media has allowed new forms of information between the State and the public, opening up ways of quick information provision, immediate feedback and allowing feedback from all stakeholders. The Austrian Prime Minister Werner Faymann, while in office, also started social media activities in October 2011. His Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/bundeskanzlerfaymann> has become the most important communication channel.

Fifthly, in Korea, the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism is the state management agency for CPs, so the Public Communication Department of this Ministry has an important role in managing and coordinating activities of SAAcl or other ministries. Every week, the Ministry's Department of Public Information regularly organizes Spokesperson meetings of 44 SAAcl, organizes the Online Spokesperson's Council.

4.2. Issues raised

CPs still lack professionalism and methodicalness. CPs are mainly understood as a propaganda activity with one-way information. There is a lack of dialogue, favoring

press relations rather than focusing on public relations and communication activities. Believing in the media and the public is passive, the relationship with the press being still reactive, management of the industry press still having many shortcomings, revealing limitations in the implementation of the Regulation of Spokesman, ministries being still confused in forecasting and handling crisis, communication process at the SAACL being unclear, there is no standard communication model for the SAACL, functions and tasks of communication practitioners being not clear. There are no criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of communication. Communication staff still lacks skills and have not been properly trained, the information channels of SAACL have not bring into play the ability to attract readers.

4.3. Solutions to improve the quality of CPs of SAACL in Vietnam

4.3.1. General solutions

Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen the advisory and management functions for the communication department, not just the execution function. *Secondly*, it is necessary to strengthen the management of the industry press and vigorously innovate the industry press in the direction of reporting news objectively, critically. *Thirdly*, SAACL needs to create open and transparent communication space, enhance information dialogue. *Fourthly*, SAACL needs to focus and have strategies in building up the image of the organization and managing the image of leaders. *Fifthly*, to fulfil the system of documents, legal regulations on management and administration of the CPs in SAACL. *Sixthly*, to complete the regime of communication organization. *Seventhly*, to conduct research activities on CPs. *Eighthly*, to develop a strategic plan to develop communication content and form. *Ninthly*, to promote the available resources to promote the CPs including human factors, technical factors, technology and budget sources.

4.3.2. Specific solutions

4.3.2.1. Re-arrange and re-plan the system of industry media agencies

SAACL should arrange the system of printed agencies in association with solutions to renovate the organization and management model in the direction of reducing the number of print agencies (each print agency may have many publications) and reduce the number of newspapers and magazines of the industry in order to be streamlined and consistent with the principle, purpose, political tasks assigned.

4.3.2.2. Develop sets of criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of CPs

SAACL should build sets of criteria to assess the effectiveness of CPs of officials and managers of communication department. In the communication activities, the author proposed the *Criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of media monitoring and press information activities* of communication officers of SAACL based on each communication period, for example: Evaluation of providing information or distributing messages through media channels and direct channels to the public by the following criteria: Frequency and number of messages/information disseminated; Attitudes and behavior in working with the media and providing information to the media? Speed of problem solving which is counted in the daytime frame? The level of professionalism and thoroughness in handling problems? ...

4.3.2.3. *Develop training programs for journalists and communication practitioners*

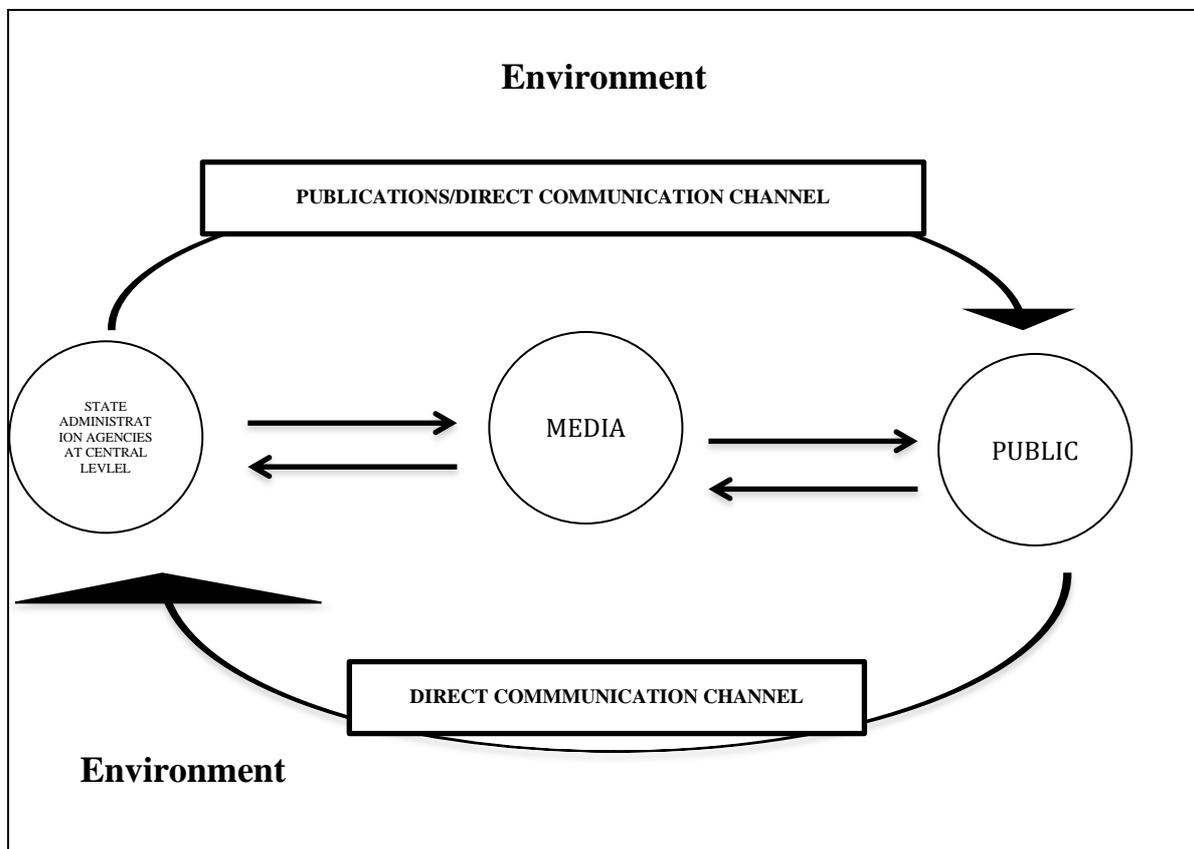
SAACL needs to build models of training of communication skills. Training activities of communication and public relations skills and skills should be managed by a focal point of the functional management agency. The Ministry of Information and Communication is the state management agency in charge of the media and communication, so the Ministry is the focal point for building a curriculum framework. Ministries can develop training programs or plans according to the actual requirements of each unit. Communication trainings for Spokeperson of ministries should be organized to update regulations and requests in information provision to the media...

4.3.2.4. *Set up a specialized department to handle communication crisis*

It is necessary to establish a combat team to handle communication crisis and minimize the risks of crisis. This combat team should have core members including the highest level executors (Minister), the highest manager of communication, the ministry's leaders in charge of media and communication affairs, and the leaders of media agencies of the Ministry, the Head of department in charge of legal affairs, leaders of functional management units in charge of issues directly related to the problem of crisis, and depending on each case, some leaders will be added when crisis occurs.

4.4. Proposals to improve the quality of CPs of SAACL in Vietnam

- *External communication model of SAACL*

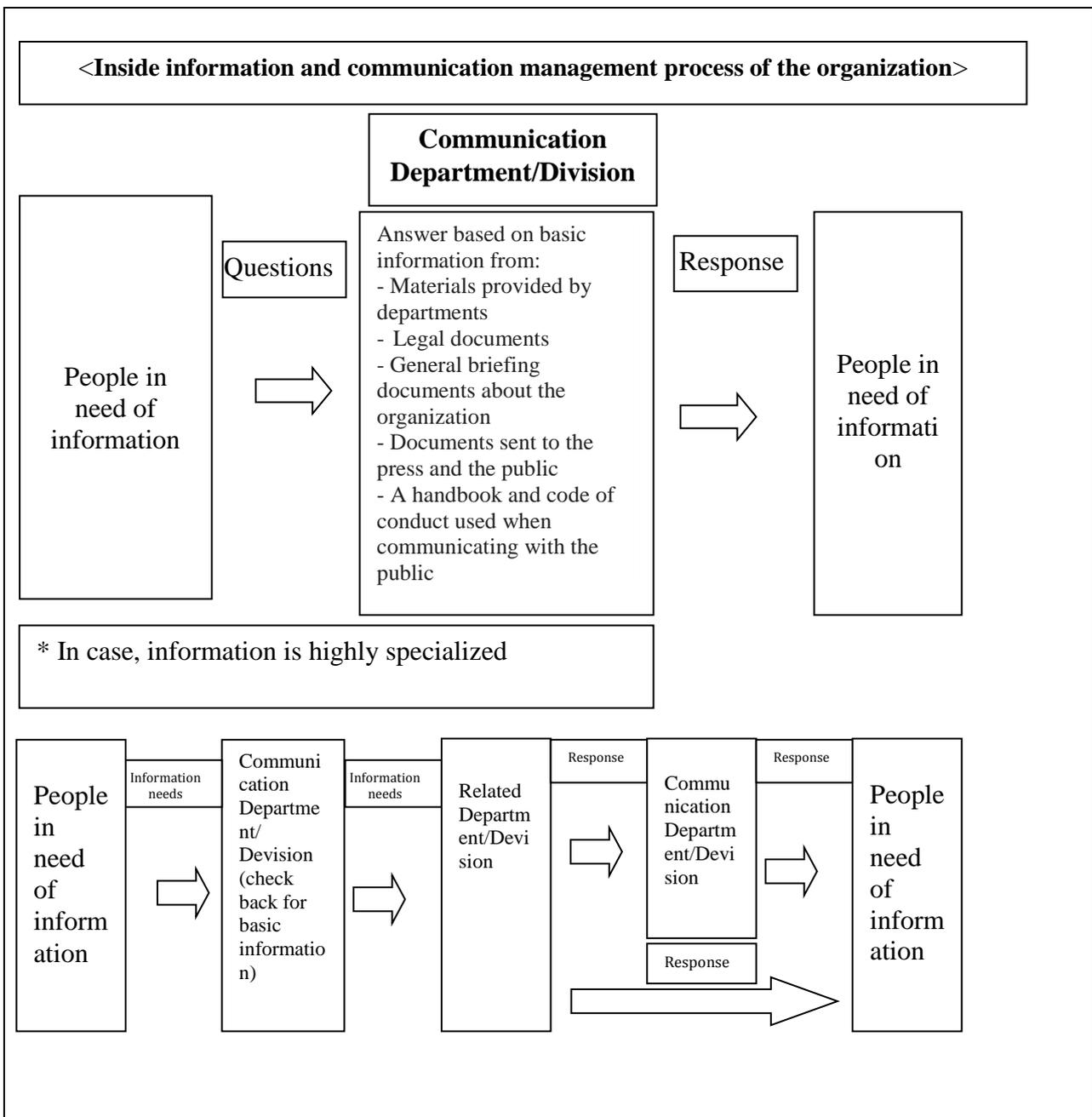


Model 4.7: External communication model of SAACL

The author proposes a external communication model of SAACL in Vietnam. The model shows that communication process from SAACL in Vietnam to the public is a closed and two-way process.

• **Internal information and communication management model of SAACL**

This is the model when SAACL receives the comments/ opinions of different public groups. The process of receiving and processing and then answering the questions, opinions of people will be expressed in the model (See Model 4.8). In the process of processing the information, the communication division/department may be the unit directly answering the people/public or may be referred to the relevant departments responsible for the response. However, the communication division still plays the role of coordinating and controlling all these activities

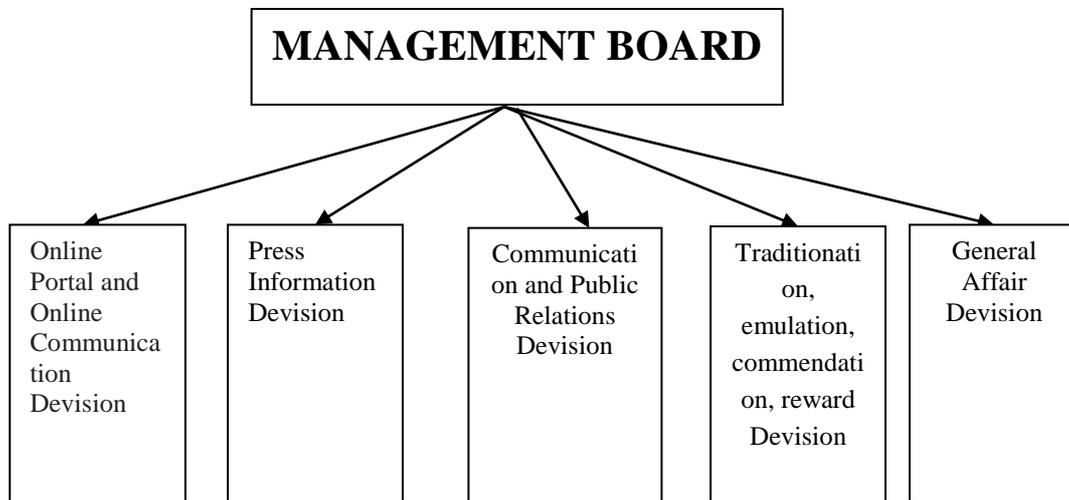


Model 4.8: Internal information and communication management model of SAACL

• ***Organizational structure model of communication department in SAACL***

To meet the requirements, ministries need to set up a media center under the ministry on the basis of consolidation of the communication department at the Ministry Office, functional departments and other sections (website, electronic Portal, newspapers, magazines, publications ...) of ministries. The communication center becomes an administrative unit with revenues, which is assigned to carry out the communication practices of the ministry, having the role of directing, coordinating and supporting communication across the sector.

Communication center carries out the following functions and tasks: To advise and formulate strategies and plans for communication of the ministry (annual, extraordinary and specialized plans); To manage the media and publishing activities of the ministry; ...



Model 4.9: Organizational structure model of communication department in SAACL

Summary of chapter 4

CPs of SAACL are posing a lot of problems for organizations, leaders and managers of the organization. In fact, CPs of these organizations are still unprofessional and methodical. In the meantime, CPs are mainly understood as a propaganda activity with one-way information and lack of dialogue. CPs are more inclined to media activities than to public relation activities. Activities of providing information to the media and the public are passive. There are still situations of avoidance or refusal to answer the media. Industry press is still ineffective, leading to a surplus in the number of newspapers but there is still a shortage of highly qualified personnel and lack of critical information. Crisis handling is still embarrassing, mainly reactive and passive. Not many ministries have department to deal with crisis, many have not built up a code of conduct when a crisis occurs. The communication process at SAACL is unclear because there is no standard communication model for these agencies. The functions and duties of

communication officials are not clear. There are no criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities. The communication staff is lacking skills and has not been properly trained. Media channels of a number of SAACL have not yet promoted their ability to attract readers.

CPs of SAACL is posing a lot of problems for organizations, leaders and managers of the organization. Looking at the number of countries in the world such as Austria, Korea and Japan, it can be seen that: The communication department of these countries is independently arranged with specific and clear functions. CPs need to collect, synthesize, study, analyze the opinions of the people and the public opinion to contribute to improving the effectiveness of communication and policy communication. Strategic planning and key messages need to be developed. It is necessary to build an e-Government in association with the trend of using social networks for communication activities of the Government. Spokesman meetings need to be conducted.

Regarding solutions, in addition to general solutions such as the communication department needs to be enhanced with advisory and management functions, SAACL needs to create an open, transparent, dialogue, ... communication space, the author also offers specific solutions for SAACL about reorganizing and re-planning the system of industry media agencies; develop training programs for journalists and communication officials; build sets of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of CPs; set up a specialized department to handle communication crisis. The author also proposes to build a model of CPs for SAACL in Vietnam. Recommendations and solutions will contribute to improving the quality and efficiency of CPs in SAACL.

CONCLUSION

In comparison with research hypothesis, conclusions can be drawn:

CPs play an important role on SAACL in Vietnam because it contributes to: create and maintain relationships with the public, provide information in the media, build a democratic environment, build credibility and reputation management for leaders and organizations, give advice to strategic planning and promote management's effectiveness, forecast and minimise risks.

CPs of SAACL in Vietnam has special characteristics of propaganda and order. CPs for public groups including local people and community must ensure democracy and wideness to all social classes. CPs are affected by many factors including elements of guidelines, guidelines, regulations, policies and state management in media and communication, cultural and social factors, impacts from domestic and foreign economic and political situation. The communication department has been set up at all ministries, CPs of SAACL still reveal many inadequacies, CPs of these organizations are still unprofessional and not methodical. The organization of providing information to the

media has been more frequent, however media channels of SAACL have not been effectively exploited and promoted the ability to attract readers.

The thesis has answered the following research questions:

Firstly, the study of organizational structure of communication and information management department shows that most of the communication departments of SAACL are currently located in the Ministry Office. Some agencies place this part in the e-Portal, the functional department or the information and communication center. CPs have built and completed the legal regulations on managing CPs, leaders of SAACL properly understand the importance of CPs, the industry press represents the role of information that is orthodox, direct and topical.

Secondly, activities of providing information to the media and the public are passive, there is still a situation of evading or refusing to answer the media. Crisis handling is still embarrassing, mainly reactive and passive. Main CPs are only understood as propaganda with one-way information and lack of dialogue. CPs are more inclined to media relation activities than to public relation activities. Industry journalism is still ineffective, leading to a surplus in the number of newspapers while there is still a shortage of highly qualified personnel and lack of critical information. Not many ministries have a department to deal with crisis, many ministry have not built up a code of conduct when a crisis occurs. Communication process of SAACL is unclear because there is no standard communication model for these agencies. The functions and duties of communication officials are not clear. There are no criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities. Communication staff is lacking skills and has not been properly trained. However, SAACL have begun to focus on CPs and are currently applying models and ways to operate the communication department. There are many organizational models of CPs currently being implemented by the communication department in Vietnam. Each model has its own advantages and limitations. Selection or recommendation of an effective model depends on organizational structure as well as communication objectives of each unit with the highest goal of enhancing the image of the agency in the public's mind, making the society understand, empathize and act together with every policy that the agency offers.

CPs contribute an important part in advising high-level management to help solve urgent problems and is vital for ensuring the reputation and image of the organization. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the function of advising and managing of CPs. It is necessary to create an open, transparent communication space with a dialogue with people to listen to people's feedback and evaluation. Thus, CPs ensures dialectics, contributes to the change of ideology, strategies/policies and information management process of leaders and managers of SAACL in Vietnam.

Thirdly, a number of solutions and proposals to improve the quality of CPs of SAACL in Vietnam, namely:

(i) Re-arranging and re-planning the system of industry media agencies. SAACL should arrange the system of print agencies in association with solutions to renovate the organization and management model in the direction of reducing the number of media agencies. (ii) Develop sets of criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of CPs. Specifically, the author proposes *Criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of media monitoring and press information activities* in which the author divides the periods including: (1) Monitoring and collecting information from the media and public opinion (feedbacks from the public), (2) Prepare messages and write content to the media and the public, (3) Provide information or broadcast messages through media and direct channels to the public, (4) Media receive information and reflect to the public, (5) Impact on the media and public. For each of these periods, the author presents criteria such as "Frequency and quantity of information collected everyday" Or "Information content draws the attention of the media and public opinion, satisfies the interest of public groups. (iii) Develop training programs for journalists and communication officials. Training activities of communication and public relations skills must be considered an important task, which is required in the periodic plan of the organization to develop human resources for the next generation of the organization. (iv) Set up a specialized department to handle communication crises with the name as the communication crisis management team (v) Propose to build a model of the communication center under the ministry with clear functions and tasks, which is a communications management unit of the whole industry with scientific, compact and maximizngly effective arrangement.

With the enthusiasm and efforts of the author, the thesis is only the first step in the theoretical and experimental field for communication practices of SAACL in Vietnam. Therefore, if possible, the author wishes to continue further research. For example, the study on the need to train personnel in charge of communication in media agencies, study the principles of press pronouncements for state leaders, the study on the principles of handling crisis for SAAs are urgent issues but have not been effectively implemented at SAACL in Vietnam.