



MEDIA MESSAGES IN *DELTA LIFE* PROGRAM OF VINH LONG RADIO AND TELEVISION STATION, VIETNAM

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Abstract:

The *Delta Life* program of Vinh Long Provincial Radio and Television Station (<https://thvl.vn>) is a program about the Mekong Delta with a relatively large number of broadcasts in both *content* and *form*. More than a decade of broadcasting - a very long time compared to a television program that has been broadcast and is still continuing. This is a program of great value to the history, culture and people of the Mekong Delta region, South Vietnam. This proves that this program is a good one, bringing many values to the public and being loved by the public. Therefore, realizing that there have not been many research projects on this program or its message, the research was chosen based on a survey of 50 broadcast episodes in 2022. Through the research process, the readers are expected to gain new knowledge and have a more thorough understanding of life, culture, and society in the Mekong Delta.

Keywords: media message, *Delta Life* program, Mekong Delta, Vinh Long Radio-Television Station

1. Introduction

Referring to the Mekong Delta region in South Vietnam, people often think of an economic region that is on the rise, bustling, with new infrastructure. However, the image of this region with its endless rice fields, canals, fertile alluvial rivers, fruit-laden orchards, and vast shrimp fields are still close images, memories, and childhoods of many

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people when it comes to the Southwest of Vietnam. Today, with rapid urbanization, economic, cultural, and social development, some cultural features, customs, and architecture of the South have been lost, and the struggle of the land of "*white rice, clear water*" to keep pace with the country's development has lost the rustic, popular look of this place. Many bridges replace wharves and ferries. Many markets and commercial centers have sprung up to replace floating markets. The Mekong Delta region is also facing many challenges, such as saltwater intrusion, poor harvest of agricultural products, devaluation, climate change and so on. To solve the above problems, the Vietnamese Party and Government strive to mobilize resources to preserve those traditional cultural and economic values to avoid being forgotten and lost.

To solve the above problems and honor the traditional values, culture, economic potential, and scenery of the Mekong Delta, television and multimedia stations of many localities actively spread messages and archive the beauty of the culture, people, and scenery of the Mekong Delta region. Among them, the *Delta Life* program of Vinh Long Provincial Radio- Television Station attracts much attention and contributes to propagating the Vietnamese Party's guidelines and policies to the people while raising awareness of the Party's policies as well. With high awareness of the need to preserve good traditions, the *Delta Life* program also plays an important part in introducing and disseminating knowledge to the media about traditional cultural values, helping to raise awareness of each person and update the pace of life of the people in the Mekong Delta region. Through the program, people have more motivation to learn from experience, replicate craft village and agricultural models that apply Science and Technology, and develop regional economies.

In general, it can be seen that there has not been much research on the communication messages of *Delta Life* activities. Research on media messages often focuses on one genre, major newspapers, and a large target group, not to mention the messages of *Delta Life*. Thus, this study is a new topic and does not overlap with other previous topics. This is a necessary topic for theoretical research and practical summary, serving the work of transmitting messages to the television public to be more completely developed, especially the messages about the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, which is from Vinh Long Radio and Television Station, shortly called THVL.

2. Literature review

2.1. Foundations of concepts

2.1.1. Message

With the amount of news from the press and media becoming increasingly diverse and prosperous today, the term "*message*" is also gradually being widely used. Any journalistic work contains a message. It is not only expressed in content but also presented in forms such as images, sounds and so on. The message becomes a bridge between the media and the public. The timelier, valuable and powerful the message is, the more accessible the work will be to the public.

There are many ways to understand the concept of a message. According to many other research sources, a message is understood, namely, a message is content in the form of text or action of the subject, containing meaningful content directed at a specific audience with the desired intention. The subject understands that.

Nguyen Van Dung and Do Thi Thu Hang (2012) said that a message is the content of information exchanged from the source to the recipient. The main message is the thoughts, feelings, desires, demands, opinions, understanding, life experiences, and scientific-technical knowledge encoded according to a particular symbol system. This system must be mutually accepted by both the transmitter and receiver and must have the same spelling - that is, be capable of decoding. Voice, writing, sign systems, images, and human expressive gestures are used to convey messages. In the communication process, the role of the message is especially important. The communication process is the transmission of meaningful messages, which can be text, images, or sounds, to convey information, knowledge, or ideas of a person or group of people to the public. Mass media messages are public, meaning that anyone who has access will know that message. The process of transmitting a message must go through the steps of transmission, reception and decoding. Depending on each type of message, there will be different ways of receiving and decoding.

In summary, from the above concepts and statements, people can derive the concept of a message, namely, a message is a content and form containing hidden meanings and values that the communication subject transmits to the recipient.

2.1.2. Television

Television is a later mass media channel; however, it inherits the strengths of previous forms such as print newspapers and radio. Today, television is an essential means for everyone, every family, and every country, and it is a sharp tool on the cultural, ideological front as well as economy - society, security - defense.

There are many viewpoints explaining the concept of television. Among them is the term television, which Duong Xuan Son *et al.* (2007) explains in the Journalism and Television textbook as the term "*television*" originating from Latin and Greek. According to Greek, the word "*tele*" means far away and "*videre*" means to see, and the Latin is viewed from afar. Duong Xuan Son (2007) also pointed out that each media has a certain strength, complementing and supporting each other in the common cause. However, among the three types of oral, written, and visual newspapers, visual newspapers can be much better than the other two types because, in addition to commenting and explaining phenomena and events, television also has vivid images to help viewers witness ongoing events.

2.1.3. Vinh Long Radio -Television Station and the *Delta Life* Program

Vinh Long Radio -Television Station (THVL) was established in 1977 and officially broadcast in 1992. Through the journey of 40 years of radio and 30 years of television, THVL has overcome initial difficulties and obstacles to successfully complete the task of

being both a Radio Station, a Television Station, and a mouthpiece of the Vietnamese State in Vinh Long Province, in the Mekong Delta, South Vietnam. As the local framework, THVL rose to become one of the most popular television stations in the Mekong Delta, always having a high and stable audience index ranking among the top in the country. Vinh Long Radio-Television Station constantly innovates and develops, launching 4 television channels and 1 radio channel with separate content, broadcasting 24 hours a day.

The *Delta Life* program is one of the topics conducted by THVL—broadcast in 2011. Up to now, the program has remained stable and has developed. Having broadcast for more than a decade to date, it is one of the programs with a long and sustainable history. As a living witness to the changes and innovations of the Mekong Delta, I believe that the program has very valuable historical and cultural value and is a document for many people who want to learn about the Mekong Delta region. It fixes with stable broadcast time: one episode per week at 7:45 p.m. every Saturday on THVL2 and 9:50 a.m. every Sunday on THVL1. The program is also posted on THVL General's YouTube so that viewers can easily watch it again when needed.

In terms of *content*, the *Delta Life* program often focuses on presenting issues such as: idyllic images of the countryside in the Mekong Delta, images of hard-working Western people, seasonal fruits, craft villages with bold Southern characteristics, rustic dishes, preserved traditional customs, rural beauties that few people know about, promoting new tourist destinations to the audience, often updating the region's development situation is known to a national audience.

Regarding the *form* of expression, the program has the following format: the beginning of each broadcast episode will be opened with an introduction to the program's soundtrack. A reporter will lead viewers into the story of today's owner, and the person will read comments and interviews. The structure is also divided into four parts: logo, opening greeting and introduction, main content and closing words. Thus, the program is organised to help preserve and promote the culture, scenery, and people of the Mekong Delta to help encourage people here to maintain and develop those good cultures and traditions and bring images of the most beautiful and prosperous land of the Mekong Delta to the whole country and the world as well.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research objectives

The study aimed to synthesize the broadcast episodes (50 from January 1, 2022, to December 1, 2022) of the *Delta Life* program of THVL to deeply understand the media message that the program conveys through two aspects of *content and form*. From there, readers can see the advantages and limitations of the program. Through this, they can learn more and have some recommendations and solutions to help the program become more and more perfect and better serve the needs of the public.

3.2. Research instruments

When researching this topic, the researchers used a combination of the following research tools.

3.2.1. Collecting documents approach

This method was used in researching books and newspapers and studying the system of the Vietnamese Party and State directive documents related to the theoretical basis of television to serve as a basis for the problem.

3.2.2. Statistical - classification approach

For this method, the researchers conducted a real survey of 50 broadcast episodes of television programs within the range from January 1022 to the end of December 2022. After that, they began to select *content* and classify and arrange them into a topic in terms of content exploited by the program. These statistical and classification results would be an important basis to have basis for the assessment, reasoning, and interpretation of the message and meaning that the *Delta Life* program conveys.

3.2.3. Analysis - synthesis approach

This method was used in the survey process and in the evaluation of the program's messages in terms of both content and form. Also, this way was specifically analyzed with each characteristic, evaluating the current situation, advantages and limitations of the message of the *Delta Life* Program and then summarizing the message of the program. The rhythm of delta life activities was reflected in the scope of the survey in terms of both the content and form of the program, as mentioned earlier and throughout the study.

4. Findings and discussions

Through the survey results from the research questions, the authors found that in 50 broadcast episodes of television programs within the range from January 1022 to the end of December 2022, the findings are posted below.

4.1. Messages of *Delta Life* Program in its content

4.1.1. Messages about the cultural beauty of the Mekong Delta

From the political tasks of cultural propaganda in accordance with the Vietnamese Party's guidelines and policies, TV stations and media units in general have adequately implemented the principles and goals of the Vietnamese Party and State. With the task of ensuring high combativeness, deep human values, and a substantial impact on both reason and emotion of the public, thereby orienting public opinion and strengthening firm belief in the Party and State, current television stations and newspapers have performed the above tasks well, including the task of cultural communication, increasingly meeting the public's need to receive information. Vinh Long Radio-Television Station is one of the television stations that does a good job of promoting

culture. The *Delta Life* Program has been implementing this content well. As its name suggests, this program carries a priority message and focuses on the object of reflection, which is human life in the Mekong Delta, including aspects of the traditional customs and traditions of this place.

Although the *Delta Life* program only reports on the domestic and local framework, it has done a very good job of promoting the beauty of customs and practices in the Mekong Delta region. With each episode broadcast, the program goes to communes, districts, and provinces to introduce stories and beauties that not many people know about. Therefore, the program has provided the audience with footage and images of the familiar West for those who do not know and for those who are far away from home to remember.

In particular, the program wants to convey messages about customs and traditions that also have educational significance, authentically showing activities in customs and traditions to help the public understand more about regional culture. It can be seen that television journalism contributes to building a beautiful image and promoting cultural values, customs, and traditions, where people have the opportunity to come closer together economically during holidays. This has also increased, so society has also improved.

For *local food*, there are some typical examples of the Mekong Delta culinary culture. Promoting communication about speciality brands in the Mekong Delta, contributes to promoting the development of the rural economy, encouraging small-scale production establishments, and developing tourism through specialties. However, there are still some shortcomings, such as some dishes that still overlap with each other and tourism models and services in the Mekong Delta that have not been introduced in 2022.

The program is one of the television programs that transmit messages promoting *craft villages* to the public. Develop and provide information related to craft villages, such as the production process, development history, and the advantages and difficulties that crafters encounter. In fact, today, many members of the public and tourists want to know how ancient people produced and made products. Through the media, the public partly learns more about the production process and partly wants to create those products with their own hands. Through that, the program conveys the message of preserving and promoting the values of the craft villages, maintaining the traditional beauty of the homeland. At the same time, it disseminates the approaches to technical and technological information so they can be applied quickly and effectively.

One of the craft villages with the largest and most famous system in the Mekong Delta introduced is Sa Dec Flower Village in Dong Thap Province, about 20km from Vinh Long City, where THVL is stationed. The program emphasizes the measures people take to cope with the downtime due to the COVID-19 pandemic and solutions to promote and enhance tourism and create a stable source of income from buying and selling ornamental flowers during Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. The program's message is also the way garden owners in the flower village constantly explore and innovate new flower plants to introduce to everyone, in addition to traditional plants and flowers such as

chrysanthemums, roses, and hanging baskets. The constant innovation of ornamental flower varieties has created high efficiency by catching up with consumer trends that like new and rare things.

4.1.2. Messages on agricultural economic orientation of the Mekong Delta

The Mekong Delta is a region with alluvial land and the densest system of rivers and canals in the country, favorable for agricultural development. Because of such conditions, Mekong Delta agriculture has continuously grown at a high speed. Thanks to exploiting the potential and advantages of the region, this place has become a strategic economic and agricultural region of Vietnam. Through the Vietnamese Government's investment and strategies, the Mekong Delta has been able to respond to natural disasters or adverse conditions, applying scientific and technical advances such as mechanization, helping Mekong Delta agriculture with the best results, outstanding achievements, carrying out the mission of ensuring national food security and export.

Specifically, in the episode "On the Shrimp and Rice Fields", broadcast on April 11, 2022, the program introduced a very interesting model of shrimp farming in rice fields of the people of Hoa Minh island - Tra Vinh Province. Typically, the farming practice of farmers here, as in many other places, is to grow rice by crop, from one to two crops per year. However, due to the coastal island and climate change, the land here is also subject to saline water, making rice cultivation difficult.

Take an example: in one episode, Ms. Vo Thi Phuong is also a role model in her career with "Durian Season on Cu Lao Dai (Dai island)". As a female farmer, Ms. Phuong had to do heavy work such as watering plants, fertilizing, climbing branches, and pruning flowers, but she still happily accepted that work without thinking about women with "*weak arms and legs.*" She is also very knowledgeable about this plant, which is why her durian garden grows and sticks to Cu Lao Dai.

Thanks to those messages, the audience can understand that there is no job that does not require research and study to lead to success. From there, the program creates motivation and encourages each person to learn and be creative to help work become more effective.

4.1.3. Messages about scenic spots in the Mekong Delta

Through rolls of films the program has transmitted, the public can see the peaceful, rustic, simple, yet prosperous and warm rhythm of life in the region, where the trees are luxuriant and fruitful, where the people are kind, honest, and likeable, where the water is unstable, but people still cling to it as a part of life. The Mekong Delta, through the lens of the program, is perfect not only in terms of images but also in terms of the deep meanings that the program wants to convey.

Through stories about lands and people, the program partly brings images of the landscape of the Western homeland, conveying a message to those who once wanted to visit fruit orchards, float on the river, enjoy rustic dishes, admire peaceful countryside surrounded by fields and listen to stories. Full of emotions, the people here, or those

living far away from the West, can watch the movies as if they were taken back to their homeland, a place that is closely linked to the childhood of the children here.

In brief, the messages of the program revolve around the rhythm of life and career stories of farmers in the Mekong Delta. Vinh Long Station-Television Station (THVL) constantly propagates good culture, customs, traditional cuisine, and promotes craft villages and hamlets in the region. From there, the messages about the above *content* aim to educate, propagate, and adjust the public's behavior to have an objective view of the landscape and people here. The program also promotes the brand or image in the Mekong Delta, helping to promote more service industries, encourage agricultural economic development, and exploit tourism potential here. Thanks to the program's communication work, the Mekong Delta has many new aspects. Many delicious dishes and strange scenes are introduced to the public while preserving images of a peaceful homeland, which encourages young people to know how to maintain the good things here and constantly learn and create to help the Mekong Delta grow and become more and more prosperous.

4.2. Messages of *Delta Life* Program and its forms

The effect of the message lies not only in the *content* expressed but also in *the form* to express that content, as well as the language. For each media viewer, television creators need to study the issues carefully. The topic of choosing an appropriate form of expression. Especially for programs that carry many messages, it is necessary to pay attention and refine the images and sounds to make the message appear clearly and with the most value.

4.2.1. Images

Conveying messages through images is one of the characteristics of television. Images are maximised to enhance information and describe the pace of life, people, and scenery in the Mekong Delta that no words can fully describe. The *Delta Life* program took advantage of filming techniques to bring quality rolls of films, clear images, and clear highlights of the characters. Using expensive frames or pictures can increase the public's level of information reception. The message becomes more impressive, not dependent on words that bore the public. The public just needs to "*sit in one place*" with a screen to know specifically about the lives of people in the Mekong Delta without having to go there directly.

The team behind the program did a great job in exploiting the frames that highlighted the characters and themes of the program. The filming angles are carefully invested to capture the entire moment from panoramic, mid-range and close-up angles. With these frame sizes, viewers of the program get a comprehensive view of the issues happening. On the other hand, it also shows the psychology and attitudes of people in that context. For example, for scenes that briefly introduce a location, the camera angle will be a panoramic angle to fully see the field or river, making the scene not cramped but showing off beautifully drawn characteristics of the location being filmed. As for

close-up scenes, the program uses it to focus on the character and the character's actions to clearly see the character's attitude, emotions or the action the character is performing.

Regarding language, moving images are a characteristic of television, so when appearing in television works, they act as the main information element of television works, in addition to sound. Of all the types that use images, perhaps television uses images for information purposes the most. That information element is the synthesis of details that make up the object and event available to inform the public. As a result, the public can easily recognize and determine what is going on in the immediate life of the person holding the camera.

In short, images taken from real-life materials of the Mekong Delta region have blended together to create the most beautiful picture, bearing a profound impression of the Mekong Delta gardens. It will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark in the hearts of the audience.

4.2.2. Sounds

Along with commentary and images, sound is an important element in sending communication messages to the audience. Thanks to the support of sound, the program becomes more vivid, with more expressive nuances, without dry words and images. The strength of a memoir is that it is based on real-life material, not fabricated or fictional like a feature film. And, thanks to sound, what viewers see on the screen is more realistic, as if they were present directly at the recording location.

The *commentary* of the program is a description of a problem, a process of an object or event recorded to provide more information to the audience. In addition, affection, respect, and admiration for the people, the pace of life, and the land are expressed through comments with gentle, emotional, and literary language to touch the audience's emotions. Since then, the message has been conveyed more honestly: "*Today, the rhythm of production in the craft village is still smooth, with love and determination that have been tested over time. The diligent and skillful hands of the craftsmen are continuing, extending and beautifying the beauty of Tra Vinh's homeland.*" (Episode: *Handicrafts of Giong land*).

Regarding interviews, Duong Xuan Son *et al.* (2007) stated that an *interview* is an exchange and conversation between a reporter (representing a television agency) and a representative who answers the interview through the main form of question and answer is intended to provide information about a certain field that the press agency wants to provide to the audience. Interviews are a form widely used in television, especially reports, memoirs, and documentaries. The *Delta Life* program belongs to the memoir genre with the purpose of going in-depth and exploiting aspects of the lives of people in the Mekong Delta, so the interview format is indispensable. Interviews in the program are mainly discussions to listen to people's sharing about experiences, advantages, difficulties or the process of implementing products. For example, the episode "Vinh Long Candy Industry" had a discussion with Ms. Le Thi Tan and other candy makers about how to make cakes for Tet, and tips during the making process. The interview took

place naturally, like the daily exchange of people in the Mekong Delta, and was both intimate and sincere.

For *music and scene sounds*, the program's opening music, also known as Introduction, is a piece of music without lyrics, with a cheerful rhythm and is very typical of the South. As for the background music, it is still instrumental music and has a gentler tempo, often appearing in passages with profound comments and passages of music that express joy and enthusiasm. Background music not only makes the work more complete but also helps increase viewers' emotions towards the show.

The sound of the scene also appears a lot in the program. Because it is a memoir genre, the program makes use of a lot of sounds and noises at the scene to create authenticity and is incorporated appropriately alongside commentary or music. In the program, the sounds of the scene can be the sounds of machinery, birds singing, roosters crowing, the sounds of people talking loudly, the sounds of boats and trains running, the sound of running water, natural and biological sounds, which contribute to making the program more intimate and attractive.

4.2.3. Interactive activities

Interaction is the development trend of modern television, and the information technology revolution is exploding today. Interactivity is an important form of television. A television product that loses interactivity will significantly lose its communicative nature as well as its closeness, dynamism, and closeness to the needs of the television product. In the development path of broadcasting, getting opinions, evaluation and feedback from the viewing public is one of the necessary things to improve and develop further. Therefore, currently, television stations have updated that trend to expand the public's reach to television and increase interaction to attract more television viewers.

4.3. Successful program

For its *advantages*, along with the content, form is an equally important factor in the success of the *Delta Life* program. First, the formal success is the image and sound of the program. Obviously, with the expensive and beautiful images and inspirational sound, the program has succeeded in attracting the audience both visually and aurally. Brand image and graphics are also used relatively effectively, making the program impressive and easily engraved in the viewer's mind like a slice full of messages.

Vinh Long Radio-Television Station (THVL) has a team of good editors and reporters. Operational techniques, along with the support of modern technological equipment, have helped the program's formal quality become an advantage and will continue to develop further. And besides broadcasting during prime time, the duration is neither too long nor too short to convey all the messages. This is also a factor contributing to the success of the program. Notably, the program uses many interviews. Each episode has at least three opinions from people, which helps the show get closer to everyday life, exploiting the psychological aspects of the characters.

4.4. Limitation and its solutions

Today, newspapers in general and television in particular are gradually becoming an industry in which television products are a commodity. Like other industries, the buyer is the one who decides to choose the type of goods that is suitable and useful for them. The media public is the same. They have the right to select their favorite television channels and television programs. Currently, entertainment programs and game shows are the highlights of popular programs. Programs with distinct audiences, such as the *Delta Life* program on THVL, are less attractive and lacklustre than other entertainment programs. That's because nowadays, the public is interested primarily in and loves programs that bring new, modern, and more dynamic content, such as game shows and reality shows.

The reason the *Delta Life* program cannot compete with other programs in the current era of multimedia development is that the program still maintains a rut in its form and structure. It has not been innovated too much yet. The more modern the next generation becomes, the more developed it is with the previous generation. The program is no longer really suitable for the majority of the audience's tastes today, especially young people who need to absorb new knowledge.

Therefore, the *solution* proposed is to change the program's structure to suit the public's tastes better. Television program producers can change the shooting angles to get these results with cinematic frames, or instead of leading into the story with the MC's narration (Master of Ceremonies) like the old motif, the program can be led indirectly to create curiosity for the audience before starting the program's story.

5. Conclusion

The *Delta Life* program has brought messages of humanitarian and social values to the television audience. From the program, the Mekong Delta region in South Vietnam is deeply described in terms of scenery, local people, and the rhythm of life that goes on every day. To help future generations as well as those interested in seeking the rich cultural values of the Southwest region in the "Nine Dragons land" with fascinating river culture, vast fruit gardens, shrimp and fish ponds, where traditional craft villages are still being developed. That is a beauty the *Delta Life* program on THVL has been exploring, and it is also a message for all locals. Vinh Long Radio - Television also does its job well in communicating policies of the Vietnamese Party and State about the agricultural situation, raising public awareness in maintaining and preserving the good cultural values of their ancestors.

Consequently, the *Delta Life* program organised by Vinh Long Radio - Television Station (THVL) has helped preserve and promote the culture, scenery, and people of the Mekong Delta to everyone, also encouraged people here to maintain and develop those good cultures and traditions, bringing the images of the most beautiful and prosperous land of the Mekong Delta to the whole Vietnam and the world as well.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Both authors strongly agreed on the publication of this paper, and there was no contention or rivalry during the work's finishing. In other words, the authors declare no conflicts of interest in this article. Both authors are fully and equally responsible for the benefits and harms after this article is published. The authors, moreover, declare that the material presented by us in this paper is our original work and does not contain any materials taken from other copyrighted sources. Wherever such materials have been included, they have been clearly indented or/and identified by quotation marks and due and proper acknowledgements given by citing the source at appropriate places.

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