



PROBLEMS OF DISTRIBUTION AND READERS' TASTE TO ECONOMIC MAGAZINES

by Prof. Dr. ĐÀO VĂN TÀI

First of all, on behalf of the Editorial Staff and personnel of the EDR, I want to thank the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Central Committee of Culture and Ideology and the Vietnamese Association of Journalists for assigning the EDR and the Saigon Times the task of organizing the third national conference of economic press discussing "The Press and the task of popularizing economic information and realizing resolutions of the 8th Party Congress"; I also thank Mr. Nguyễn Khoa Diệm, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information, for assigning the EDR the task of presenting our opinions about problems of distribution and readers' taste to economic magazines.

To speak the truth, this task makes our Editorial Staff worry a lot, because as we know, for an economic magazine, there are three main issues: contents of the magazine, distribution and financing. Readers' taste certainly has great effects on the contents of the magazine. So to speak of distribution and readers' taste is to discuss two of the three main issues

of the press of all kinds, including economic magazines. Moreover, the readers' taste we discuss here isn't the one that is formed subjectively by readers, but it is a taste, or demand, we create for readers in an effort to popularize economic policies and realize the Party's resolutions as stated clearly in the EDR's policy "to popularize Party and Government's policies on economic development, study economic problems appropriate to Vietnam conditions, supply information about techno-scientific achievements, modern technology and managerial experience realized inside and outside the country".

We think that we haven't got enough experience and knowledge to present such profound and overall problems satisfactorily, so in this speech, please let me present our opinions about problems of distribution and readers' taste to economic magazines to the extent of knowledge and experience we gained in the past 6 years of operation in a hope of supplying you some data and receiving from you in return opinions which could help us improve our business in

the future.

Distribution, in my opinion, is the task of supplying the magazine to readers. The magazine could be either given as a gift or sold as a commodity. The number of complimentary copies will be of large percentage in the early period when the magazine starts to go into business, but gradually, the amount of copies sold will be larger. Each magazine has its own readers who constitute the market share of the magazine. Each magazine has to define its market share and tries its best to expand this share. The distribution network will be developed and made appropriate to characteristics of the market share.

The magazine could be distributed through wholesalers (Central Press Distributing Company, Ministry of Trade's Information Center, or private distributing companies), send by post to individual readers, delivered by couriers to governmental offices, schools or factories, or sold by newsagents. Today, with modern technological facilities and expanding market share, magazines could be distributed through the internet to

foreign readers.

The EDR, English edition of the *Phát triển kinh tế*, has been bought, and made on-line since October 1995, by German CWN which was merged into British FTI in September 1996.

It's worth noting that the magazine has to try its best to bring its products to customers instead of taking the "wait-and-see" attitude. Measures could be taken to send copies to potential customers, to contributors, sponsors or to attendance at scientific and economic workshops. Taking the initiative in distributing will help the magazine attract new readers and shape new taste for readers.

Readers' taste could be regarded as their interest in the magazine. Although this interest is based on personal opinions but it is also provoked by external things. One can't like something he didn't know, but he could interest himself in what he has seen, learned about or heard of. So, to attract readers and build their taste, the first thing to do is to take initiative in distributing the magazine. After that, we could know whether readers like it or not, and what articles or stories they like most. One of the most important functions of the press (including economic journals) in the socialist regime is to supply up-to-date information and knowledge and help readers develop right tastes and philosophy of life. This is also the best way for the press to take part in popularizing the Party and Government's economic policies.

As we know, a human is both a human being and a living thing. The human evolution is the process of developing from a living thing to a human being. A good taste will help the human to improve him self, and to develop his mind, ability and morals with a view to becoming useful to his family and the society as a whole.

A reader interests in an economic magazine, it's just because he, or she, likes contents of the magazine. By publishing economic magazine for years, we saw that readers enjoy articles having the following features:

- Doing research into both theoretical and practical aspects of the problem.

- Supplying full information, up-to-date and systematic data or statistics.

- Making profound estimation and drawing valuable lessons from foreign and local realities.

- Making good suggestions on how to solve present problems in our economy.

Certainly, not all articles in a magazine have the said qualities, but

in an issue, articles must be made into a perfect set which could meet readers' requirements.

This view has given us the idea of discussing a topic in each issue. These topics usually are problems in the Party and Government's economic policies which need to be clarified theoretically or problems to be solved practically. We have discussed a wide range of topics since 1993 with a view to clarifying the economic policy put forward by the 7th Party Congress, and then, by the recent 8th Party Congress. The following are topics discussed before and after the 8th Party Congress on the EDR:

Issue number	Topic
20 (April 1996)	Developing Service Sector
21 (May)	Developing Agricultural Economy in the Mekong Delta
22 (June)	Economic Cooperation of ASEAN
23 (July)	Economic Efficiency and Social Equality
24 (August)	Public Expenditure
25 (September)	Social Policy in Economic Development
26 (October)	Tax Reform and Its Effects
27 (November)	Relation Between Economic Reform and Administrative Reform
28 (December)	Financial And Monetary View on Measures to Renovate State Enterprises.

In each issue, there are seven or eight articles, within some 20 pages, discussing the topic. Besides this department, there are articles, carried in other departments, which are regarded as additional opinions about topics discussed in last issues, or about other current economic problems needed to be discussed, and suited to the EDR policy.

Some people are afraid that the magazine will run short of topics. In our opinion, we can at first discuss major topics, and then come to minor ones or discuss again certain topics in more details with new information and arguments. So we think that we can keep on discussing one topic on each issue. Our magazine has attracted numerous contributors inside and outside the College of Economics. Contributions from them enable us to carry the best of them or suggest contributors to improve their articles.

Articles having good scientific bases and appropriate to the magazine's policy are always appreciated by readers as was seen through the following facts:

- According to rules set by the Ministry of Education, for each article, contributors to professional journals will get one mark in their thesis submitted for a higher university degrees (PhD or Master for example).

- Famous contributors are invited by research institutes, local governments or other magazines to contribute or make researches for them.

- Most readers of the EDR are seniors at schools of economics, or postgraduates who are working in universities, research institutes, governmental bodies or companies. Their knowledge levels contributed remarkably to the magazine's prestige.

In summary, we want to put stress on the following matters:

- + The EDR always tries its best to carry out its policy stated in the licence granted by the Ministry of Culture and Information.

- + The EDR always tries to make its contents appropriate to the Party and Government's economic policy.

- + The EDR is active in distributing copies and expanding its share in both local and foreign markets.

- + The EDR tries to form healthy tastes in readers and contributors. It never pays attention to unhealthy tastes, or lowers its scientific standards and tries to make money at any price. We think that it's necessary to secure funds in order to make good magazines, instead of making magazines for money.

- + The EDR pays proper attention to the task of doing researches and helping researchers and managers in their businesses. It tries its best to be equal to the role of a forum for the College of Economics of HCMC National University.

We are trying our best to make the EDR a forum which is politically firm, scientifically trustworthy and really helpful to theoretical researches and practical activities as instructed by Trần Hồng Quân, Minister of Education and Training on the occasion of the EDR's fifth anniversary in October 1995.

(Speech delivered at the 3rd national conference of economic press held in HCMC from Oct. 3 to 5, 1996)