

ABSTRACT

Women's participation in politics, as a vital part of women empowerment, cannot be shown through mere percentages. The actual performance and influence that women can deliver are what matter. This could be partially discovered via media portrayal of them, which has been research topic of various studies worldwide. In this study titled "Media representation of senior women political leaders at senior level in Vietnam", the researcher investigates the situation in the context of Vietnamese media. Different from the approach of previous research, this paper narrowed the scope to look more closely at 8 top women leaders in 3 top-rated online newspapers in Vietnam during a period of one and a half years serving in their positions.

Content analysis and thematic analysis were combined to scan for main themes and key words that make up the picture of senior women leaders in Vietnam, both visually and politically. The analyses revealed a lack of proper and insightful coverage of women leaders and a generic format in reporting their work. The leaders were mainly portrayed as goodwill ambassadors in international relations missions, tacklers of social issues and supporters of Vietnamese women. They were seen in the traditional feminine ao dai, acting on behalf of the nation and always busy working for the people. The identity they bear was not their own, but one of the nations and the people. The overwhelming majority of articles put these leaders under overly positive lights, making them almost flawless humans. Last but not least, in terms of political themes, they were associated the most with "role model" and "equality advocates". The peculiarities of the state-owned media sphere of Vietnam, as well as traditional expectations, might account for these results.