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## PAPERS IN ENGLISH

## ECONOMIC SCIENCES

## MATHEMATICAL AND INSTRUMENTAL METHODS OF ECONOMICS

# USING DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS TO OPTIMIZE SALES AND ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN E-COMMERCE

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# ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ЦИФРОВЫХ МАРКЕТИНГОВЫХ ИНСТРУМЕНТОВ ДЛЯ ОПТИМИЗАЦИИ ПРОДАЖ И РОСТА КОНКУРЕНТОСПОСОБНОСТИ МАЛОГО БИЗНЕСА В СФЕРЕ ЭЛЕКТРОННОЙ КОММЕРЦИИ

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**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the use of digital marketing tools to optimize sales and increase the competitiveness of small businesses in the e-commerce sector. The study explores basic technologies such as targeted advertising, search engine optimization, email marketing, chatbots, and user behavior analytics. Special attention is given to their impact on improving customer interactions, increasing brand visibility, and optimizing costs. The paper also analyzes modern trends in digital marketing, including the growing popularity of mobile applications, the use of artificial intelligence, and the increasing significance of video content and live streaming.

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

В данной статье рассматривается использование цифровых маркетинговых инструментов для оптимизации продаж и повышения конкурентоспособности малого бизнеса в сфере электронной коммерции. Исследуются основные технологии, такие как таргетированная реклама, поисковая оптимизация, email-маркетинг, чат-боты и аналитика поведения пользователей. Особое внимание уделяется их влиянию на улучшение взаимодействия с клиентами, увеличение видимости бренда и оптимизацию расходов. Анализируются современные тенденции в цифровом маркетинге, включая рост популярности мобильных приложений, использование искусственного интеллекта, а также возрастание значимости видео-контента и прямых трансляций.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, digital marketing tools, small business, e-commerce, competitiveness.

**Ключевые слова**: цифровой маркетинг, инструменты цифрового маркетинга, малый бизнес, электронная коммерция, конкурентоспособность.

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### Introduction

With the evolution of technology and globalizing markets, e-commerce has emerged as a core business strategy. Small businesses are forced to adopt efficient strategies of promotion to efficiently operate in this sector under highly competitive environments. One of them is the use of digital marketing tools (DMT).

Targeted advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), e-mail marketing, chatbots, and user behavior analytics open up new opportunities. These tools enable

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companies to effectively target customers, reduce marketing expenses, and improve service quality. The goal of this research is to explore the application of DMT in order to boost competitiveness and maximize sales for small companies in the e-commerce market.

**Main part. E-commerce market and small businesses**

The online trade is one of the fastest-growing segments of the economy, directly involving businesses of all sizes. Its growth is driven by globalization, technology, and changing consumer trends, leading to an increasing share of online consumption and services. That's why ever more companies realize the importance of having an online presence, which brings new opportunities and challenges for market participants.

Small businesses in the e-commerce industry have a significant niche, offering online products and services. They cannot afford to invest much in developing and implementing big-ticket initiatives. However, they can compete with larger firms effectively due to their agility [1]. Their greatest strength lies in the fact that they are able to tailor customer strategies, offer niche products, and bring about innovations quickly.

The most typical trait of small companies is the imperative to make minimal marketing, logistics, and development budgets work to their best advantages. Given the constraints of such budgets, DMT are absolutely crucial in as much as they significantly improve operations' efficiency without demanding heavy costs.

**Digital marketing tools**

A set of technologies and platforms that assist in providing products and services through online resources is referred to as DMT. They cover a range of methods of interacting with the target market. Through their utilization, businesses are able to not just increase their web presence but also the effectiveness of advert campaigns by coming up with personalized and interactive marketing approaches.

**Targeted advertising** is one such technique. It is a form of online advertising in which informational messages are directed towards a specific group of users. It works on the basis of using information collected from various online services and platforms, such as social networks, search engines, and websites, to create customized advertising messages [2]. The messages are directly targeted at those users who are most likely to be interested in the product.

Another essential tool is **SEO**. Its core concept is to improve the quality and usability of content in order to enable a website to rank higher on search engine pages for searches that are relevant to the company's services or products. It incorporates technical optimizations such as optimization of the loading speed and responsiveness of websites to mobile devices. As well as optimizing content, for example, creating high-quality and unique material using relevant keywords, optimizing meta tags and the corresponding website structure [3]. In addition, the off-site optimization features are vital in that they serve to complement a website's search engine ranking.

Apart from SEO, **email marketing** is being actively used. The technique relies on regular communication with prospects and current clients through emailing contact. A major application of it is message customization since it increases the chances of receiving email opens, reads, and responses. The most important part of the technique is the utilization of analytics software tracking openers, clicks, and conversions, thereby enabling companies to fine-tune their strategy and make e-mail campaigns more productive over the long haul.

Another important tool is the use of **chatbots** based on artificial intelligence (AI) to communicate with customers in real time. Another worthwhile instrument is the use of AI chatbots to engage customers in real-time. They automatically answer customer queries, supporting operations such as product selection, order processing, and consulting. They can be installed on websites, mobile applications, and social media, which makes them a simple tool to improve customer care and streamline sales processes. Round-the-clock operation allows small businesses to provide quality services across time zones, and automation reduces the burden on staff.

One of the essential elements of DMT is user **behavior analysis**. It refers to the collection and evaluation of data on user activity within an application or on a website. The data informs on pages viewed by users, duration on the website, what they perform, as well as activities leading to users' conversion. An important idea of analytics is to use big data processing tools such as Google* Analytics and Hotjar to track and examine user characteristics in real time.

From these results, companies are not only capable of quantifying the success of their current marketing campaigns, but they can also identify loopholes on their site. Thus, each of these tools represents an independent strategy, which, in combination with others, can significantly increase the competitiveness of small businesses in the field of e-commerce.

**The impact of DMT on the competitiveness of small businesses**

One of the best things about any company is that it is unique from the crowd and owns its market. Small e-commerce companies have very competitive businesses, and then they have the hurdle of gaining great visibility in a pool with much larger players. With the use of DMT, they are **able to facilitate brand visibility for their users at low promotion costs.** Targeted marketing allows businesses to deliver their promotional messages to prospects most likely to be interested in their products or services, and this is done with the utmost return for every investment in marketing [4]. Effective SEO practices increase the online presence of the brand in search results by generating organic web traffic to the business website. By content and technical improvement, an optimized website with keywords positions companies higher in search and accesses more people. Thus, DMT not only contributes to better brand positioning, but also allows for a significant increase in recognition among major market players [5].

Another real advantage is the **ability to significantly reduce marketing costs**. Traditional marketing media - such as television, radio, or print - typically entail humongous monetary expenses, which are beyond

the means of small businesses. Online marketing platforms, however, offer less expensive options for accomplishing objectives, and therefore are an important instrument for growth and survival in the e-commerce era.

Targeted advertisement reduces the amount of money that has to be spent on ads by presenting the ad to those users who have a high possibility of being interested in a service or product. This lowers unwanted impressions and thus advertising expenditure. At the same time, SEO allows businesses to attract organic traffic without having to invest heavily in paid advertising campaigns. Such a method provides small enterprises with the opportunity to optimize their advertising budgets and put money into things that will give them the maximum return for minimum funds.

One of the areas to enhance the competitiveness of small businesses is **customer contact**. Unlike the traditional model, under which contact existed at a few discrete points, DMT permitted the creation of a multichannel configuration. Such technologies provide more insight into the customer, so that companies can adjust their strategy and products accordingly. The use of chatbots and user behavior analysis further increases the level of customer service quality through the provision of instant feedback to questions and personalized recommendations. As a result, businesses discover more about their audience, simplify their products, and increase customer loyalty. Increased customer interaction not only powers revenue from sales but also strengthens a company's market position, eventually determining its competitiveness in the e-commerce market. The marketing trends report of 2024 shows that there is a sustained increase in the use of DMT by small enterprises (fig. 1).

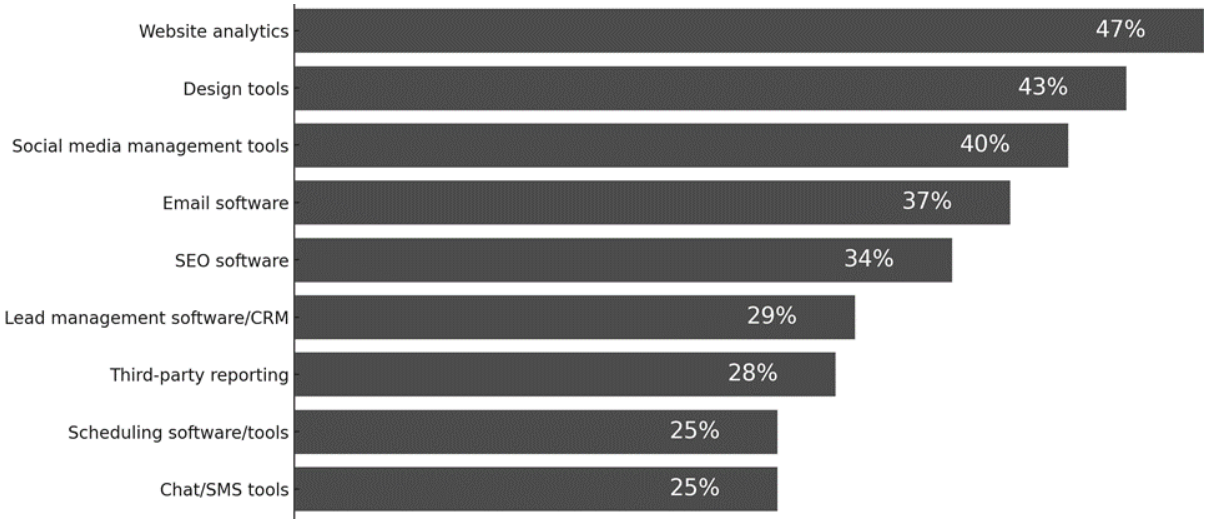


***Figure 1. Preference for using DMT by small businesses [6]***

Thus, statistics show that DMT are becoming an integral part of the growth and development strategy. Thanks to them, it becomes possible to effectively manage advertising campaigns, interact with customers, and optimize marketing expenses.

**Trends in digital marketing for small businesses in e-commerce**

Technological change and consumer patterns necessitate the need for businesses to continuously evolve and incorporate new technology in a bid to remain competitive. The last couple of years has seen some of the most important trends become more prominent, trends that small businesses use actively to improve marketing efficiency and customer interaction (table 1).

***Table 1.***

**Trends in digital marketing [7, 8]**

| The trend | Description | Impact on small business |
|---|---|---|
| Mobile applications | Software products designed to work on mobile devices. They provide users with functionality that allows them to easily interact with products and services through interfaces optimized for mobile screens. | They provide customers with convenient access to products and services, improve their engagement, and increase repeat purchases. |
| AI | A system capable of performing tasks that require human intelligence, such as speech recognition, decision making, problem solving, and language comprehension | Accurate targeting of advertising campaigns, increasing their effectiveness and reducing the cost of attracting customers. |
| Video content and live broadcasts | Popularization of videos as a means of promotion, including product demonstrations through live broadcasts and videos. | Actively engage customers, create an emotional connection, and increase conversions |

Hence, the growth and competitiveness driven by new technologies have become the focal point. They provide obvious potential to simplify customer interaction, render marketing efforts more impactful, and enhance user experience. All such enhancements, however, demand flexibility and openness to innovation, enabling small businesses to favorably compete with larger rivals and adapt to rapidly changing market conditions.

**Conclusion**

The application of DMT in e-commerce is now a fundamental element of small business development strategies and sales maximization. Leveraging mediums such as targeted advertisements, SEO, email marketing, chatbots, and user behavior analysis allows companies to maximize brand exposure, customer interaction, and advertisement spending optimization.

Digital transformation has been impacting marketing strategies significantly as well. Adapting to emerging trends in the shape of mobile applications, AI-powered marketing, and enhanced relevance of video content along with live streaming, small businesses can interact more effectively with their potential customers and gain their loyalty. Adoption of all these technologies results in the creation of personalized marketing strategies, in addition to enhanced customer engagement and sales boosts.

**(At the request of Roskomnadzor, we inform you that a foreign person who owns Google information resources is a violator of the legislation of the Russian Federation - ed. note)*

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## ECONOMY AND MANAGEMENT OF A NATIONAL ECONOMY

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# FUNAN TECHO CANAL AND ITS RISKS FOR VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

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# КАНАЛ ФУНАН ТЕЧО И ЕГО РИСКИ ДЛЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ ВЬЕТНАМА

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**ABSTRACT**

The Funan Techo Canal is a major irrigation project on the Mekong River, with construction officially set to begin in 2024 by the Cambodian government. This ambitious initiative aims to strengthen Cambodia's self-reliance in waterway transportation and provide fresh water for the agricultural region in the country's southwest. While Vietnam supports Cambodia's legitimate development goals, it must proactively assess the economic and environmental implications of this large-scale project. This article introduces the project, analyzes the risks to Vietnam's economic security, and provides several policy recommendations.

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

Канал Фунан Течо - это крупный ирригационный проект на реке Меконг, строительство которого официально начнётся в 2024 году по инициативе правительства Камбоджи. Этот амбициозный проект направлен на усиление транспортной независимости Камбоджи по внутренним водным путям, а также на обеспечение пресной водой сельскохозяйственных районов на юго-западе страны. Вьетнам, поддерживая законные цели развития Камбоджи, в то же время должен проактивно оценить экономические и экологические последствия этого масштабного проекта. В данной статье представлен обзор проекта, проведён анализ рисков для экономической безопасности Вьетнама и предложены некоторые рекомендации по политике.

**Keywords:** Funan Techo; canal; risks; economic security; Vietnam.
**Ключевые слова:** Фунан Течо; канал; риски; экономическая безопасность; Вьетнам.

### I. The Funan Techo Canal Project

The Funan Techo Canal Project is an ambitious infrastructure initiative by the Cambodian government, expected to transform the nation's economy, trade, and transportation landscape. Officially launched on August 5, 2024, in Kandal Province, the project spans a massive 180 km, directly linking Phnom Penh to the Gulf of Thailand. With an estimated investment of USD 1.7 billion, the project is being implemented under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) contract with China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), a strategic partner. Cambodia holds 51% of the shares, while CRBC holds 49%, reflecting close bilateral cooperation [1].

Technically, the canal stretches 180 km from the Mekong River in the Takeo region, traversing four provinces: Kandal, Takeo, Kampot, and Kep, with approximately 1.6 million residents living along its banks. It is designed to be 100 meters wide and 5.4 meters deep, allowing safe passage for 3,000-ton vessels [2]. The project includes the construction of 3 sluice gates, 11 bridges, a 208-km coastal road, and support infrastructure along the canal.

Cambodia's primary objective is to establish a strategic inland waterway connecting Phnom Penh directly to the sea, creating a new corridor for the movement of goods. Presently, most of Cambodia's imports and exports transit through Vietnam's seaports, including Cai Mep–Thi Vai (Ba Ria–Vung Tau) and ports in Ho Chi Minh City [3]. The new canal will reduce reliance on Vietnam by enabling more direct maritime access, cutting up to 70% of goods currently transiting via Vietnamese territory [4].

Additionally, Cambodia intends to develop satellite ports, economic zones, logistics hubs, and processing in-

Библиографическое описание: Nguyen V.T. FUNAN TECHO CANAL AND ITS RISKS FOR VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC SECURITY // Universum: экономика и юриспруденция : электрон. научн. журн. 2025. 5(127). URL: *https://7universum.com/ru/economy/archive/item/19954*

dustries along the canal route to optimize economic benefits. The canal also plays a crucial role in ensuring irrigation and water regulation for agriculture and aquaculture in the region. The project is expected to generate over 10,000 jobs, reducing poverty and fostering sustainable socio-economic development [5].

However, despite its benefits, the project has drawn criticism. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) has voiced serious concerns about its potential ecological and hydrological impact on the Mekong Delta [6]. Environmentalists warn of adverse effects on flood patterns, sediment distribution, and biodiversity, which could harm millions in the lower Mekong basin [7].

In response, the Cambodian government has pledged to cooperate with neighboring countries and the international community to assess environmental risks and mitigate negative impacts.

**II. Risks to Vietnam's Economic Security**

The Funan Techo Canal poses several risks to Vietnam's economic security:

**1. Risk of Losing Transit and Logistics Roles**

Vietnam currently plays a pivotal role as a transit hub for Cambodian imports and exports, particularly through major international ports such as Cai Mep–Thi Vai in Ba Ria–Vung Tau, the Cat Lai terminal in Ho Chi Minh City, and key border crossings like Moc Bai (Tay Ninh), Vinh Xuong (An Giang), and Ha Tien (Kien Giang). These logistics gateways have historically supported Cambodia's trade flow by providing access to deep-water ports, well-developed storage systems, and customs clearance services, making Vietnam a critical partner in regional supply chains.

However, the completion of the Funan Techo Canal, which will offer Cambodia direct maritime access to the Gulf of Thailand, may significantly reduce its reliance on Vietnamese logistics infrastructure. This shift will not only result in the loss of cargo throughput and transshipment volume through Vietnamese ports but also diminish Vietnam's role as a strategic logistical corridor in the Greater Mekong Subregion. The long-term consequence may include underutilization of existing logistics assets, declining investment interest in logistics parks and industrial zones in border provinces, and decreased revenue for service providers in warehousing, forwarding, and customs brokerage. The Mekong Delta - already vulnerable to structural economic shifts - may bear the brunt of this transition, with adverse effects on employment, regional GDP, and public infrastructure development.

**2. Risk of Reduced Competitiveness of Vietnamese Ports**

Vietnamese seaports have long benefited from the geographic advantage of serving as an outlet to the sea for Cambodia. The strategic location of ports such as Cai Mep–Thi Vai has allowed Vietnam to dominate Cambodia-bound international shipping routes, especially for bulk commodities and containerized goods. However, the development of a dedicated inland waterway from Phnom Penh to the Gulf of Thailand through the Funan Techo Canal poses a direct threat to this advantage.

The availability of a shorter, sovereign-controlled route for Cambodia will likely lead to a diversion of cargo traffic, significantly reducing the volume of Cambodian goods transiting through Vietnamese ports. This will result in a drop in seaport-related revenues, including port fees, handling charges, storage fees, and inland haulage income. Moreover, the strategic leverage that Vietnam currently holds in terms of regional maritime logistics could be weakened, especially if Cambodia succeeds in building modern satellite ports along the canal to capture new freight flows. In the long term, Vietnam's competitive edge in Southeast Asia's maritime trade landscape could be compromised, prompting the need for costly infrastructure upgrades and service optimization to maintain relevance.

**3. Adverse Impacts on Agriculture and Water Resources**

The Funan Techo Canal has the potential to significantly disrupt the natural hydrological flow of the Mekong River, particularly during the dry season when freshwater resources are already scarce in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta. The redirection or partial isolation of watercourses and tributaries could diminish the volume of freshwater reaching downstream areas, which are highly dependent on the seasonal flood-pulse regime for agriculture, aquaculture, and replenishment of alluvial nutrients.

A reduction in sediment flow could accelerate riverbank erosion, diminish soil fertility, and lead to the collapse of traditional farming systems. Moreover, reduced water volume will exacerbate the problem of saltwater intrusion, especially in coastal provinces such as Ben Tre, Tra Vinh, and Soc Trang - regions already severely affected by climate change and sea level rise [9]. This combination of factors threatens to lower agricultural yields, degrade arable land, and destabilize local food supply chains, putting national food security at risk. The economic fallout from these changes would be profound, affecting millions of farmers, disrupting rural livelihoods, and creating additional pressure on the government to provide social assistance and economic restructuring support.

**4. Environmental Risks Leading to Economic Losses**

Beyond logistical and agricultural concerns, the environmental consequences of the Funan Techo Canal may lead to far-reaching economic repercussions. The Mekong Delta is one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in Asia, home to hundreds of aquatic species and a key spawning ground for regional fisheries. The alteration of water flow and sedimentation patterns caused by the canal could threaten critical habitats, reduce fish migration, and disrupt breeding cycles, leading to a decline in fish stocks and aquatic biodiversity.

This ecological degradation would directly affect local economies that rely on fishing and aquaculture as their primary source of income. In provinces such as An Giang, Dong Thap, and Bac Lieu, thousands of households depend on the river for daily subsistence, food production, and export-oriented fish farming. A drop in aquatic yields would not only reduce household income but also strain the supply chain for seafood

processors and exporters, diminishing Vietnam's competitiveness in the global seafood market [10]. In the longer term, ecological decline could trigger mass migration from affected areas, increase rural unemployment, and amplify social instability, thus compounding the economic risks posed by the project.

In short, the Funan Techo Canal presents complex, intertwined risks that Vietnam must proactively manage through multi-faceted policy responses.

**III. Recommendations**

To mitigate risks associated with the Funan Techo Canal, Vietnam should implement the following strategies:

**1. Proactive Diplomacy and Negotiations**

Vietnam should pursue a proactive and strategic diplomatic approach by engaging in both multilateral and bilateral dialogues with Cambodia. These efforts must emphasize transparency in project planning and execution, particularly concerning the canal's potential environmental, economic, and hydrological impacts on downstream countries. Vietnam should advocate for the application of principles under the 1995 Mekong Agreement, especially the "prior notification and consultation" mechanism. Through diplomatic channels, Vietnam should push for comprehensive and participatory Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), conducted with oversight from international bodies such as the Mekong River Commission (MRC). At the same time, diplomacy should be used to mitigate the risk of bilateral tensions and to maintain long-term cooperation on sustainable water resource governance in the region.

**2. Strengthening Logistics and Seaport Competitiveness**

Facing the risk of losing transit advantages, Vietnam must act decisively to modernize and upgrade critical infrastructure at key logistics hubs, including Cai Mep–Thi Vai, Cat Lai, Can Tho, and other Mekong Delta ports. Investment should focus on deepening berths, improving road and rail connectivity to hinterlands, and enhancing the capacity of logistics parks and bonded warehouses. In parallel, customs procedures need to be streamlined through digital transformation to reduce clearance time and lower operational costs for import-export businesses. Vietnam should also promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) in port development to attract capital and technology, helping maintain its competitive edge in regional freight transport.

**3. Promoting International and Regional Cooperation**

Given the transboundary nature of the Mekong River, Vietnam should intensify its participation in regional mechanisms, particularly within the framework of the MRC. Cooperation with Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia should be deepened through joint monitoring programs, technical exchanges, and coordinated water management plans. Vietnam should also advocate for stronger enforcement of international conventions on shared water resource governance, including those related to biodiversity, climate adaptation, and ecological resilience. At the global level, Vietnam should seek technical and financial support from international donors such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UNDP, and other development partners to improve its adaptive capacity to hydrological and environmental changes.

**4. Developing Risk Scenarios and Water Management Systems**

Vietnam must formulate and institutionalize detailed hydrological risk scenarios based on multiple development trajectories in the Mekong basin. These scenarios should account for changes in water volume, sediment load, seasonal variability, and cross-border infrastructure projects. Early warning systems must be expanded and made more accurate to alert local communities to drought, flooding, and salinity intrusion. Simultaneously, investment in smart irrigation systems, regulating sluices, water storage reservoirs, and intra-field canals should be prioritized. Agricultural policies must support the transition to drought- and salinity-tolerant crop varieties, promote rotational cropping, and apply precision farming techniques to enhance resilience.

**5. Restructuring the Mekong Delta Economy**

The Mekong Delta economy, currently over-dependent on traditional agriculture and low-value logistics, must undergo structural transformation. Vietnam should accelerate the development of high-value-added sectors such as agro-processing, bio-economy, eco-tourism, and digital agriculture. Value chain integration for rice, seafood, and fruit products should be enhanced through improved quality control, branding, and certification for export markets. Support for start-ups and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in clean technologies and service industries should also be a priority. Furthermore, promoting labor re-skilling and vocational training for rural populations can help shift the workforce toward more sustainable and adaptive livelihoods.

**6. Investing in Science and Research**

Vietnam must invest significantly in building domestic research capacity in environmental science, hydrology, climate change, and regional development. National research institutes and universities should be empowered to carry out long-term, interdisciplinary studies on the Mekong River's ecological dynamics and the cumulative impacts of transboundary infrastructure. The government should also establish data-sharing mechanisms and promote open-access platforms to support evidence-based policymaking. By doing so, Vietnam will be better equipped to provide scientific evidence in international forums and negotiations, as well as to formulate sound strategies for sustainable development and resource management.

**7. Raising Public Awareness and Communication**

Public communication strategies must be implemented to raise awareness about the potential risks posed by transboundary projects such as the Funan Techo Canal. The government, through mass media, educational programs, and civil society engagement, should foster a deeper understanding of the Mekong's ecological importance and the urgency of protecting its water resources. Transparent communication can mobilize public opinion in support of government actions, create a culture of environmental stewardship, and en-

hance community participation in monitoring and advocating for sustainable development. Additionally, involving local stakeholders in decision-making processes can lead to more socially inclusive and environmentally just outcomes.

**Conclusion**

The Funan Techo Canal is a bold strategic project reflecting Cambodia's ambitions for economic autonomy and global integration. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, Cambodia must balance development with environmental responsibility and regional cooperation.

For Vietnam, mitigating the economic and environmental risks posed by this canal requires a comprehensive, proactive, and collaborative approach. Only through diplomatic engagement, infrastructure enhancement, international coordination, and adaptive development strategies can Vietnam secure its economic security and ensure the resilience of the Mekong Delta and beyond.

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## LEGAL SCIENCES

## CRIMINAL LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY; CRIMINAL-EXECUTIVE LAW

# CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING CRIMES IN VIETNAM TODAY

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# ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ЖЕРТВ ТОРГОВЛИ ЛЮДЬМИ ВО ВЬЕТНАМЕ

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**ABSTRACT**

Human trafficking is a highly hidden crime that can occur in many different areas of Vietnam, especially in mountainous provinces, remote areas, and areas sharing borders with other countries, with favorable conditions for human trafficking crimes to operate. Methods and tricks of human trafficking crimes are increasingly sophisticated, many cases of organized crime, forming inter-provincial and transnational crime rings. In particular, one of the reasons leading to difficulties in preventing human trafficking crimes by authorities comes from the victims of this type of crime. This article analyzes the characteristics of victims of this type of crime in order to improve the effectiveness of preventing human trafficking crimes in Vietnam today.

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

Торговля людьми — это в высшей степени скрытое преступление, которое может происходить во многих различных районах Вьетнама, особенно в горных провинциях, отдаленных районах и районах, имеющих общие границы с другими странами, где существуют благоприятные условия для совершения преступлений, связанных с торговлей людьми. Методы и уловки преступлений, связанных с торговлей людьми, становятся все более изощренными, многие случаи организованной преступности формируют межпровинциальные и транснациональные преступные сети. В частности, одной из причин, приводящих к трудностям в предотвращении преступлений, связанных с торговлей людьми, властями, являются жертвы этого вида преступлений. В данной статье анализируются характеристики жертв этого вида преступлений с целью повышения эффективности предотвращения преступлений, связанных с торговлей людьми, во Вьетнаме в настоящее время.

**Keywords:** Human trafficking, victims, person under 16 years old, Penal Code, Vietnam.
**Ключевые слова:** торговля людьми, жертвы, лицо в возрасте до 16 лет, Уголовный кодекс, Вьетнам.

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Article 2 of the 2024 Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking defines human trafficking as acts involving the recruitment, transportation, harboring, transfer, or receipt of individuals with the intention of obtaining money, property, or other material benefits; for sexual exploitation; forced labor; organ removal; or other inhumane purposes. These acts are carried out through the use of force, threats, deception, or other manipulative means. Additionally, the same acts committed against individuals under the age of 18 for similar purposes—except as otherwise provided by law—are still classified as human trafficking, even if no force, threats, or fraudulent methods are employed.

Article 2 of Resolution No. 02/2019/NQ-HDTP, which guides the application of Articles 150 and 151 of the current Penal Code concerning the crimes of human trafficking and trafficking of persons under 16, stipulates that human trafficking includes the following behaviors:

Transferring individuals in exchange for money, property, or other material benefits; Receiving individuals for such compensation; Transferring individuals for

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others to exploit sexually, force into labor, harvest organs, or for other inhumane purposes; Receiving individuals for those exploitative purposes; Recruiting, transporting, or sheltering people in order to perform the transfer.

Similarly, in the case of individuals under 16, the acts are defined as: Transferring a child under 16 in exchange for money, property, or other material gain (excluding humanitarian purposes);Receiving such a child under similar terms; Transferring the child for sexual exploitation, forced labor, organ removal, or other inhumane motives; Receiving them for the same purposes; Recruiting, transporting, or sheltering such a child to carry out the act of transfer.

Therefore, human trafficking is considered a dangerous social crime regulated under Articles 150 and 151 of the Penal Code. It is a deliberate act committed by a person with criminal liability, aimed at transferring or receiving another person to obtain or give money, property, or other material benefits; or to allow others to exploit the victim sexually, through forced labor, organ harvesting, or for other inhumane reasons. The act of recruiting, transporting, or harboring people to serve the transfer for such purposes also constitutes the crime and must be prosecuted according to criminal law.

Clause 7 of Article 2 of the 2024 Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking indicates: "A victim is someone subjected to the acts listed in Clause 1 of this Article and has been confirmed by a competent authority." Accordingly, Clause 1 of Article 2 outlines various forms of human trafficking, including: recruitment, transportation, harboring, transfer, or reception of persons for the purpose of gaining money, property, other material interests, sexual exploitation, forced labor, organ removal, or other inhumane purposes using force, threats, fraud, or other tricks. Similarly, conducting these acts toward persons under 18 years old for the same purposes - even without coercion or deceit - is still considered human trafficking, except where the law states otherwise.

From this, a victim of human trafficking may be defined as someone who is transferred or received for the exchange of money, property, or material benefit; subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labor, organ removal, or other inhumane objectives; or is recruited, transported, or sheltered to commit any of those acts, regardless of whether force, threats, or deceit were used.

Children under the age of 16 are recognized as trafficking victims when they are transferred or received for money or material gain (excluding humanitarian exceptions), or subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labor, or organ harvesting. They may also be recruited, transported, or harbored for those purposes. Article 151 of the Penal Code 2015 (amended in 2017) makes clear that, in the case of individuals under 16, even if the child consents at any stage of the trafficking process, and regardless of whether coercion or deceit was used, they are still considered victims under the law. Thus, Clause 1, Article 2 reiterates that victims include those harmed by the acts of recruiting, transporting, harboring, transferring, or receiving people for the abovementioned exploitative purposes - whether or not coercion or fraud was involved.

Characteristics of Human Trafficking Victims

Victim as an Individual: The victim in human trafficking cases must be an individual - either a single person or a group - who is alive at the time of the act. Unlike other crimes where the victim can be an organization or legal entity, human trafficking exclusively targets individuals. The Penal Code allows anyone, regardless of gender or occupation, to be a perpetrator. The victim's age determines the applicable legal provisions: those under 16 fall under Article 151, while older individuals are addressed under Article 150.

Various Forms of Harm: Victims of human trafficking often suffer multiple forms of harm:

- Physical harm relates to injury or endangerment to life and health. Even if not the primary aim, violence is frequently used to carry out the crime.
- Psychological harm manifests through emotional trauma, which may arise at the onset (due to deception or threats) or later, during exploitation.
- Economic harm includes ransoms or other expenses incurred by the victim or their family (e.g., treatment, travel).

Confirmation as Victim:

Clause 7, Article 2 of the 2024 Law defines a victim as someone abused under Clause 1 and recognized by an authorized body. Thus, two conditions must be met: the person must have suffered from trafficking acts and be formally identified. However, from a criminological point of view, the actual abuse alone suffices to qualify someone as a victim. Legal recognition is for ensuring entitlement to rights under the law. The 1985 UN Declaration affirms this by stating that a person is considered a victim even if the perpetrator is not caught or prosecuted, and regardless of any relationship between them.

Victims' Backgrounds: Most trafficking victims come from disadvantaged socio-economic conditions: poor, unemployed, seasonal workers, or women in vulnerable jobs like waitressing or prostitution. They are often targeted due to traits such as low education, youth, limited social protection, and being easily manipulated. Some victims are students lured with false promises of jobs or support, or children from orphanages or hospitals. Victims tend to lack access to information, particularly in remote rural areas, making them more susceptible.

Vulnerability of Specific Groups: Most trafficking victims belong to vulnerable demographics—especially women and children. They are typically of working age or still developing, making them targets for labor and sexual exploitation. Many are trafficked to serve as illegal wives abroad, particularly in China. Some are sold to infertile families as adoptive children. Older male victims are trafficked to labor-intensive sites like kilns or mines. Younger children (newborn to age 8) are typically bought for adoption; those between 8–12 for household labor; and 12–16-year-olds, particularly girls, are targeted for prostitution or heavy labor.

The phenomenon of human trafficking remains one of the most serious violations of human rights globally

and continues to manifest in complex and increasingly sophisticated forms. The legal frameworks established under the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking 2024, along with relevant provisions in the Penal Code and guiding resolutions, have provided a comprehensive legal basis for the identification, prevention, and prosecution of human trafficking crimes. Particularly, the clear categorization of trafficking acts, the strong protection granted to minors regardless of coercion, and the recognition of victimhood based on both factual abuse and legal confirmation demonstrate the Vietnamese legislature's commitment to addressing this issue.

Despite the existing legal foundation, challenges remain in the identification and protection of victims—especially those in marginalized or hard-to-reach communities. In practice, many victims are not officially recognized due to administrative delays, limited access to legal resources, or fear of stigma and retaliation. Moreover, while the law clearly stipulates protections and definitions, the implementation across different localities may vary due to resource constraints or inconsistent awareness among law enforcement and local authorities. The reality that victims come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds - including children, women, and workers in informal sectors - requires nuanced and context-sensitive approaches from policymakers, legal practitioners, and support organizations.

Recommendations:

Enhance Inter-agency Coordination: Strengthen collaboration among law enforcement, judicial bodies, social service agencies, and civil society organizations to ensure timely identification, support, and protection of victims.

Increase Awareness and Education: Launch nationwide awareness campaigns - especially in rural, remote, and disadvantaged areas - on the risks and signs of human trafficking. Educational programs should also target vulnerable populations, including students, seasonal workers, and migrants.

Expand Victim Support Services: Establish or reinforce shelters, counseling centers, legal aid programs, and reintegration services tailored to the needs of trafficking victims. Special attention should be paid to minors and women.

Training for Law Enforcement and Judicial Officers: Conduct regular and specialized training for police, prosecutors, and judges to improve their capacity to handle trafficking cases with a victim-centered and rights-based approach.

Strengthen Legal Enforcement and Monitoring: Ensure consistent application of trafficking laws nationwide. Introduce stronger monitoring mechanisms and penalties for authorities who fail to act upon reports of trafficking or who mishandle cases.

International Cooperation: As many trafficking cases involve cross-border elements, Vietnam should continue to cooperate with neighboring countries and international organizations to exchange information, repatriate victims, and dismantle trafficking networks.

By reinforcing these measures, Vietnam can not only improve the implementation of its existing legal framework but also foster a society in which human dignity is protected and upheld. The fight against human trafficking requires a comprehensive, inclusive, and persistent approach—rooted in law, strengthened by community engagement, and guided by a shared sense of justice and humanity.

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# PREVENTING SEXUAL ABUSE OF PEOPLE UNDER 16 YEARS OLD THROUGH THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN VIETNAM

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# ПРЕДОТВРАЩЕНИЕ СЕКСУАЛЬНЫХ НАСИЛИЙ В ОТНОШЕНИИ ЛИЦ МЛАДШЕ 16 ЛЕТ С ПОМОЩЬЮ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ ВО ВЬЕТНАМЕ

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**ABSTRACT**

In recent times, Vietnam has issued many legal documents to internalize the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and create a legal corridor to handle acts of violation of children's rights. In particular, the activity of building sanctions to handle crimes against children in general and child sexual abuse in particular has received special attention. The article studies the current situation of crimes using social networks to sexually abuse people under 16 years old in Vietnam.

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

В последнее время Вьетнам издал множество правовых документов с целью включения положений Конвенции ООН о правах ребенка в свое законодательство и создания правового коридора для рассмотрения случаев нарушения прав детей. В частности, особое внимание уделяется деятельности по разработке санкций за преступления против детей в целом и сексуальное насилие над детьми в частности. Исследовательская статья о текущей ситуации с преступниками, использующими социальные сети для сексуального насилия над лицами младше 16 лет во Вьетнаме.

**Keywords:** Rights of the Child, crimes, social networks, people under 16 years old, Vietnam.
**Ключевые слова:** права ребенка, преступления, социальные сети, лица, недостигшие 16 лет, Вьетнам.

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Protecting children's rights is always a top concern of the international community in general and Vietnam in particular. According to the 1989 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is any person under the age of 18. Children, *"due to their physical and mental immaturity, need special care and protection, including appropriate legal protection before and after birth"*. Vietnam is the first country in Asia and the second country in the world to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In recent times, Vietnam has issued many legal documents to internalize the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and create a legal corridor to handle acts of violation of children's rights. In particular, the activity of building sanctions to handle crimes against children in general and child sexual abuse in particular has received special attention.

According to the report at the Conference to review 2 years of implementing the Plan to prevent and combat crimes against children and prevent crimes and violations of the law related to people under 18 years old in the period of 2021-2025 of the Ministry of Public Security, 3,748 cases of child abuse crimes were detected nationwide, with 4,354 subjects, abusing 3,907 children. Compared to the same period in 2019 - 2020, there was a decrease of 220 cases = 5.5%, 218 children = 5.3%. Of which, child rape: 1,193 cases/1,260 subjects/abuse of 1,218 children; child rape: 29 cases/30 subjects/abuse of 29 children; sexual intercourse with children: 1,362 cases/1,369 subjects/abuse of 1,364 children.

Crimes of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old are understood as a group of socially dangerous acts prescribed in criminal law, committed by people with criminal responsibility, intentionally violating the inviolable rights to sex, honor, dignity; the normal physical and psychological development of people under 16 years old, affecting social order and safety. Article 1 of the Law on Children passed by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on April 5, 2016: *"Children are people under 16 years old"*. Sexual abuse in general is the sexual activity of an object against the will of the abused person. Sexual abuse of people under

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16 years old is the use of people under 16 years old for sexual activity.

From the perspective of criminological research, the act of using social networks to sexually abuse people under 16 years old can be understood from two perspectives: First, the subject uses social networks as a place of operation, considering social networks as a field to carry out acts such as: producing, buying, selling, storing, using pornographic images of people under 16 years old; using social networks to entice, force people under 16 years old to take photos, film for the purpose of distributing, buying and selling online or the subject uses social networks to broker, invite others to participate in prostitution activities including using people under 16 years old. Second, the subject uses social networks as a means to approach, get acquainted, then force, deceive, in order to commit acts of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old. Based on the awareness of social networks and crimes of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old, it is possible to perceive the crime of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks as follows: The crime of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks is an act committed by a person with criminal responsibility by using a service connecting members on the internet to approach, get acquainted, seduce, deceive, control children and commit acts of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old, violating the inviolability of the body, sexuality, spirit, honor, dignity and normal development of children and must be criminally prosecuted.

*The methods of using social networks to sexually abuse people under 16 years old are identified as follows:*

- Using social networks to get to know and form friendships with children, many subjects use images that are approachable and friendly, educated, thoughtful, experienced, sympathetic to people under 16 years old, they even play on the psychology and interests of people under 16 years old to create opportunities to get to know them.
- Many subjects use social networks to collect private personal information of people under 16 years old: to be able to easily approach, grasp the psychology and weaknesses of people under 16 years old. Forming a unique close friendship with people under 16 years old: grasping the weaknesses of people under 16 years old, with their experience, the subjects will make children trust, depend on them, consider them as a confidant to share the most intimate things in life. Many people also take advantage of the child's existing acquaintances to create familiarity with the child, such as through Facebook *(a social network banned on the territory of the Russian Federation, as a product of the Meta organization, recognized as extremist - ed.)* friends, and groups of people under 16 years old. - Using social networks to direct online conversations to sexual topics: after becoming close to the child, the scammer directs the topic of conversations with people under 16 years old from daily life, study, family to issues related to sex.
- Using social networks to show people under 16 years old images of people under 16 years old being sexually abused so that they consider it normal and then entice people under 16 years old to participate in some sexual activities online such as sex chat. - Using connection services on social networks, luring people under 16 years old to meet in person to sexually abuse: this is a situation that is very easy to encounter in reality and is often the ultimate goal of the subject sexually abusing people under 16 years old online.

*Prevention and control of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks*

Decision No. 523/QD-TTg dated April 14, 2016 of the Prime Minister of Vietnam approving the National Strategy for Crime Prevention, in Clause c, Point 1, Article 1 stipulates: Concentrating forces, using a combination of measures, proactively preventing, actively fighting and preventing crimes, in which prevention is the main focus; closely combining social prevention with professional prevention; promptly overcoming existing limitations, clarifying the causes and conditions for crime; attaching importance to social prevention from the community, family and right from the grassroots; propagating, educating, and disseminating laws to raise vigilance, sense of responsibility for law enforcement, actively and voluntarily participating in the fight against crime. Proactively attacking and suppressing crimes, promptly detecting. Investigate and strictly handle all criminal acts, associated with strengthening inspection and examination of law enforcement, not allowing injustice, mistakes, or criminals to escape, strictly prohibiting forced confessions and torture. In particular, crime prevention is a system of measures of the State and society to overcome the causes and conditions of crime, reducing crime. Crime prevention is the guiding ideology in the fight against crime, including forms and measures taken to prevent crime from occurring. If a crime occurs, the consequences and harm must be minimized.

The prevention and combat of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks is also a specific content of the prevention and combat of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old in general, which belongs to the combat function of the police force. However, for this type of crime, the prevention and combat activities of the police force have their own specific characteristics, stemming from the specific characteristics of crimes of sexual abuse, which are that the subjects use social networks in the process of committing the crime. Therefore, in addition to the common characteristics, the prevention and combat of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks according to the function of the police force also has the following outstanding characteristics: - The prevention and combat of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks is carried out in both real space and cyberspace. In which, propaganda and education to raise awareness for people under 16 years old on social networking environment is a very important content.

Like other types of crimes, the subjects who commit sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks are always real people. Therefore, in the

process of committing crimes, the subjects always have specific activities in daily life, reflecting in the real world that the authorities can perceive. However, unlike other forms of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old, the subjects who commit sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks use social networks as the main area for criminal activities. The activities of these subjects mainly take place on the Internet environment. Therefore, the work of preventing and combating crimes of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks must be carried out on the basis of closely combining crime prevention and combat activities in real life and prevention and combat activities on the Internet to ensure comprehensiveness and completeness. - Activities to prevent and combat crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old using social networks are independent of administrative boundaries and geography and must be coordinated with many relevant forces.

Although sexual abuse of people under 16 years old is strongly and fiercely fought by most countries in the world. However, different countries have different levels of development and social management, especially underdeveloped and developing countries. For these countries, including Vietnam, social management in general and management of Internet use in particular still have many shortcomings and limitations. Criminals who use high technology in general and commit crimes of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks often take advantage of these loopholes in the process of committing crimes. Because the Internet is an electronic space without borders, subjects can completely commit acts of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks from abroad. Because they are not affected by spatial conditions and geographical barriers, the activities of criminals who sexually abuse people under 16 years old using social networks are not limited to a region or a country. They can commit crimes in all provinces and cities in a country, even abroad. Therefore, the police force's activities to prevent and combat this type of crime must also be considered and carried out not only on an administrative geographical scale but also on a national and international scale.

- The process of preventing and combating crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks requires the police force to have knowledge of social networks and information technology.

The subjects of sexual abuse of people under 16 years old by using social networks are often carried out on the Internet environment. Information and documents reflecting the process of committing crimes by the subjects are often stored in the form of "electronic data". Detecting, collecting, evaluating and using this information and documents is often very difficult because the existence of electronic data depends on the time, the process of setting up storage, storage devices... At the same time, this data is also very easy to be changed by the subjects, hidden, encrypted, deleted or lost, leading to very difficult collection and recovery if not exploited properly and promptly.

Therefore, in order to collect information and documents to serve the prevention and combat of crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks, the police force needs to use scientific and technical measures, through specialized equipment and must have certain knowledge of information technology.

- The work of preventing and combating crimes of sexual abuse against people under 16 years old by using social networks is associated with the management of companies providing social network services and Internet business locations.

To access social networks, criminals who sexually abuse people under 16 years old using social networks must register, install and download apps from service providers. Service providers can completely manage and control the use of information on these accounts. Therefore, the police force needs to coordinate with companies that do business and provide social network services to promptly detect subjects who show signs and behaviors of sexual stimulation towards people under 16 years old.

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