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Regulating Advertising in the Platform Era: State Management of Advertising in Vietnam under Digital Transformation

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Abstract
Between June 2025 and May 2026, Vietnam rewrote most of the rules that govern advertising. An amended Advertising Law, a new implementing decree, a new sanctions decree and a first E-commerce Law brought influencers, cross-border platforms, livestream selling and on-screen ad formats under explicit obligations. This article asks whether the reform changes what the state can actually do, not only what the law says. Using qualitative document analysis of 16 legal and policy instruments issued between 2012 and 2026, publicly reported enforcement and market data from 2019 to mid-2026, and a structured comparison with the European Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, China and France, the study builds a two-sided framework of digital transformation: It changes the object of regulation and it changes the instruments available to the regulator. The analysis finds that the 2025-2026 reform largely closed the rule gap on influencer disclosure, platform duties and cross-border notification. A capacity gap remains. Reported sanctions stay small relative to a market in which about 80% of online advertising revenue flows to foreign platforms, and enforcement still depends on negotiated cooperation with those platforms. The reform also moves Vietnam toward data-based supervision and platform co-governance, through takedown deadlines, white and black lists and a public register of content creators. The article proposes four conditions under which this shift can raise compliance and sets out a research agenda for measuring it.

Keywords: Advertising Regulation, Digital Transformation, Platform Governance, Influencer Marketing, Responsive Regulation, Vietnam

JEL Codes: K23, L51, M37, O33

1. Introduction

Advertising regulation was built for a world of scarce media. A television slot, a newspaper page or a billboard could be inspected before it reached the public, and the firm that paid for it could be found. Digital advertising removed both conditions. Ads are now auctioned and served in milliseconds, each viewer may see a different version, and a large share of persuasive content is delivered by individuals who blend paid promotion into personal posts (Evans, 2009; Hudders *et al*., 2021) [17, 32]. Regulators everywhere have had to ask whether the tools of the old regime still work.

Vietnam is a revealing case for three reasons. The market is large and concentrated abroad: Citing Statista, the then Minister of Information and Communications reported that online advertising reached about USD 1.3 billion in 2023, roughly half of total advertising spend of USD 2.6 billion, and that about 80% of the online segment went to cross-border platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and TikTok (Thanh Tra, 2024) [59]. Concentration is not new. A government review of the 2013 implementing decree estimated online ad spending at USD 830 million in 2019, with Facebook and Google together holding close to 82%, and found that no foreign provider had completed the notification procedure required since 2013 (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism [MCST], 2020) [39].

The second reason is the speed and scope of recent reform. Law No. 75/2025/QH15, adopted on 16 June 2025 and in force from 1 January 2026, amended the 2012 Advertising Law to set duties for people who carry advertising content, including a specific set for influencers, and to regulate cross-border advertising services (National Assembly, 2025a) [43]. Decree No. 342/2025/ND-CP followed on 26 December 2025, with rules on non-fixed online ads, skip buttons and takedown deadlines (Government, 2025). A new sanctions decree, No. 87/2026/ND-CP, replaced the 2021 decree from 15 May 2026,

and the E-commerce Law took effect on 1 July 2026 with rules on livestream selling and affiliate marketing (Government, 2026; National Assembly, 2025b [44]).

The third reason is that Vietnam regulates from a weak bargaining position. The platforms that carry most ad revenue have no legal entity in the country, and until recently they fell outside the reach of administrative penalties (Thanh Tra, 2024) [59]. The reform therefore tests a question that matters beyond Vietnam: What can a mid-sized, platform-dependent state achieve when it updates its advertising law?

Existing scholarship offers only partial answers. Studies of advertising regulation and influencer disclosure come mainly from law and marketing and focus on the content of ads (Boddewyn, 1992; Campbell & Grimm, 2019) [9, 11]. Work on platform governance analyses the sharing of responsibility between states and intermediaries, usually in large jurisdictions (Gorwa, 2019; Helberger *et al*., 2018) [23, 31]. Research on digital government studies the state's own use of data and technology but rarely enters sector-specific market regulation (Janowski, 2015; Mergel *et al*., 2019) [33, 38]. Vietnamese work on advertising is largely doctrinal and predates the 2025-2026 reform (Truong, 2025) [61].

This article brings the three strands together. It asks three questions. How does digital transformation change both the object and the instruments of state advertising management? How far does Vietnam's 2025-2026 reform respond to those changes? Which gaps between the law and the capacity to enforce it remain, and what would it take to close them?

The contribution is threefold. Conceptually, the article proposes a two-sided framework that separates the digitalisation of the regulated activity from the digitalisation of regulation itself. Empirically, it gives the first systematic account in English of Vietnam's new regime, set against publicly reported enforcement data. For policy, it identifies conditions under which a shift to data-based supervision and platform co-governance could raise compliance in a market dominated by foreign intermediaries.

Section 2 reviews the literature and develops the framework. Section 3 describes the method. Section 4 presents findings, Section 5 discusses them against international practice, and Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature review and analytical framework

2.1 Why states regulate advertising

The economic case rests on information asymmetry. When buyers cannot tell good products from bad, low-quality sellers can crowd out the rest (Akerlof, 1970) [2]. Nelson (1974) [48] showed that for experience goods, whose quality is known only after use, advertising works mostly as a signal rather than as verifiable information. Bagwell's (2007) [5] review finds that advertising can lower search costs and intensify competition, yet it can also raise entry barriers and exploit consumer biases. These results explain why advertising law concentrates on truthfulness and substantiation, and why it is strictest for medicines, food supplements, cosmetics and financial products.

Regulation theory adds a view of how the state should act. Stigler (1971) [56] warned that regulators can be captured by the industries they oversee. Baldwin *et al*. (2012) [6] catalogue the instruments available, from command and control and licensing to disclosure and self-regulation. Ayres and Braithwaite (1992) [4] proposed a pyramid of responsive regulation: The regulator starts with persuasion and escalates to heavier sanctions only when firms do not cooperate. Black (2001) [8] described a decentred world in which the state shares regulatory work with industry bodies and private actors. Advertising has a long tradition of such sharing. Boddewyn (1992) [9] documented self-regulatory systems in 38 countries, and Harker (2003) [30] identified the components that make them effective, including independence, sanctions and public reporting.

Compliance research completes the picture. In Becker's (1968) [7] model, violation is a rational choice driven by the probability of detection and the size of the penalty. Winter and May (2001) [66] showed that firms also comply for normative and social reasons, and only when they understand the rules. Tyler (2006) [62] stressed legitimacy: People obey rules they see as fair and fairly applied. For digital advertising these points carry weight, because many of those who now carry ads are individuals or small sellers with little legal training, and their chance of being detected depends on the regulator's technical reach.

2.2 What digitalisation changes in the regulated activity

Online advertising runs on a different market structure. Evans (2009) [17] traced how ad networks, exchanges and behavioural targeting reorganised the value chain. Two-sided market theory explains why platforms give services away and earn from advertisers, a logic that favours concentration (Rochet & Tirole, 2003) [54]. Lower costs of tracking and verification, central to what Goldfarb and Tucker (2019) [22] call digital economics, made targeting possible. Privacy rules then constrain it: Goldfarb and Tucker (2011) [21] found that European privacy regulation reduced the effectiveness of display ads, and Acquisti *et al*. (2016) [1] argued that the gains and losses of data sharing are unevenly spread between firms and consumers.

Recognition is a second problem. Under the persuasion knowledge model, consumers defend themselves only when they know they are being persuaded (Friestad & Wright, 1994) [19]. Experiments show that the position and wording of disclosure labels shape whether readers recognise native ads at all (Wojdynski & Evans, 2016) [67], and that sponsorship disclosure on social media raises recognition but can reduce sharing (Boerman *et al*., 2017) [10]. Influencer credibility rests on follower counts, perceived expertise and message value (De Veirman *et al*., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019) [15, 35], and Hudders *et al*. (2021) [32] map a fast-growing literature on the commercialisation of social media stars. Interface design adds a further layer: Mathur *et al*. (2019) [37] found deceptive design patterns across a large share of 11,000 shopping sites, and the OECD (2019, 2022) [49, 51] has asked governments to treat both hidden advertising and dark patterns as consumer-protection issues.

2.3 What digitalisation changes in the instruments of regulation

The intermediary has become a regulator in its own right. Gillespie (2018) [20] describes platforms as custodians that moderate content at scale through algorithms and human review. Helberger *et al*. (2018) [31] propose cooperative responsibility shared among states, platforms and users, and Gorwa (2019) [23] distinguishes self-governance, external governance and co-governance. Cusumano *et al*. (2021) [14] show that platforms tend to self-regulate when they face a credible threat of state action. The European Union's Digital Services Act turns co-governance into law: Platforms must

tell users why they see an ad, and very large platforms must keep public ad repositories (European Union, 2022) [16].

The state's own toolkit is changing as well. Digital government has moved from putting procedures online toward data-driven and platform-like administration (Janowski, 2015; Mergel *et al*., 2019; OECD, 2020) [33, 38, 50]. In finance, regulatory and supervisory technology allows near real-time monitoring in place of periodic reports (Arner *et al*., 2017) [3]. Vial (2019) [64] warns that technology produces change only when organisations also adapt structures, processes and skills. These insights have rarely been applied to advertising, although regulators such as China's market regulator now require platforms to keep advertising records available for inspection (State Administration for Market Regulation [SAMR], 2023) [55].

2.4 Analytical framework

The literature suggests that digital transformation acts on state advertising management through two channels that are usually studied apart. On the object side, it multiplies and personalises ads, blurs the line between content and promotion, and shifts gatekeeping to foreign intermediaries. On the instrument side, it gives the state new means of observation and intervention: Online procedures, data and registers, automated monitoring and negotiated or mandated cooperation with platforms. The framework crosses these two sides with six functions of state management, adapted from Vietnam's Advertising Law and the regulation literature (Table 1).

Table 1: Functions of state advertising management under digital transformation

Function	Change on the object side	Change on the instrument side	Key references
Rule-making	New actors (influencers, platforms), new formats (livestream, AI-generated ads)	Rules addressed to intermediaries; platform design duties	Baldwin *et al*. (2012) [6]; European Union (2022) [16]
Administrative procedures	Ad volume too large for pre-approval	Online notification and registration	OECD (2020) [50]
Monitoring	Personalised ads not visible to the regulator	Data-based scanning, registers, white and black lists	Arner *et al*. (2017) [3]
Enforcement	Small, dispersed, often anonymous violators	Takedown deadlines, technical blocking, account verification	Becker (1968) [7]; Ayres & Braithwaite (1992) [4]
Compliance support	Many actors without legal training	Guidance, codes of conduct, industry self-regulation	Harker (2003) [30]; Winter & May (2001) [66]
Cross-border coordination	Revenue held by foreign platforms	Local contact points, tax registration, negotiated cooperation	Cusumano *et al*. (2021) [14]; Gorwa (2019) [23]

The framework leads to an evaluative distinction used throughout the article. A rule gap exists when the law does not address a feature of the digital market. A capacity gap exists when the law addresses it but the state lacks the data, tools, coordination or leverage to apply it. Responsive regulation implies that closing the rule gap is necessary but not sufficient: Compliance depends on a credible probability of detection and on rules that actors understand and accept.

3. Methodology

The study uses qualitative policy analysis based on documents, a design suited to a reform whose main instruments took effect only in 2026, before any systematic outcome data could exist. It combines three sources.

The first is a corpus of 16 legal and policy instruments issued between 2012 and 2026, listed in Table 2. Each was read in full in its official Vietnamese text and coded against the six functions of Table 1, recording the obligated actor, the obligation, the deadline or threshold, the sanction and the agency responsible. The coding separated provisions that address the object of regulation from those that create new instruments for the state.

Table 2: Documentary corpus

Year	Instrument	Relevance
2026	Decree 87/2026/ND-CP on administrative sanctions in culture and advertising	Penalties, including for influencers
2025	Decree 342/2025/ND-CP detailing the Advertising Law	Online ad formats, takedown, cross-border notification
2025	Law 75/2025/QH15 amending the Advertising Law	Carriers, influencers, platforms, cross-border services
2025	E-commerce Law 122/2025/QH15	Livestream selling, affiliate marketing
2025	Personal Data Protection Law 91/2025/QH15	Limits on data-based targeting
2025	Digital Transformation Law 148/2025/QH15	Digital government framework
2025	Press Law 126/2025/QH15	Advertising in press, online press
2024	Resolution 57-NQ/TW of the Politburo	Political mandate for digital transformation
2024	Decree 147/2024/ND-CP on internet services	Account verification, platform duties
2023	Consumer Protection Law 19/2023/QH15	First legal definition of influencers
2021	Decree 70/2021/ND-CP amending Decree 181/2013	First cross-border advertising rules
2021	Decree 38/2021/ND-CP on sanctions	Penalty regime before 2026
2020	Decision 749/QD-TTg on the National Digital Transformation Programme	Policy context
2018	Cybersecurity Law 24/2018/QH14	Content removal, data localisation context
2013	Decree 181/2013/ND-CP	Original implementing rules
2012	Advertising Law 16/2012/QH13	Base law

The second source is publicly reported data on the market and on enforcement from 2019 to mid-2026: A government review of Decree 181/2013, ministerial reports to the National Assembly as covered in the press, and the mid-2026 report of the Authority of Broadcasting and Electronic Information under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Press reports were used only when they attributed figures to a named official source, and each figure is cited to

the document actually consulted.

The third source is a structured comparison with five jurisdictions that have recently legislated on digital advertising: The European Union (Digital Services Act), the United Kingdom (co-regulation of advertising and the Online Safety Act 2023), the United States (the Federal Trade Commission's 2023 Endorsement Guides), China (the 2023 Measures for the Administration of Internet Advertising) and France (the 2023 law on commercial influence). The comparison uses the same six functions so that differences are traced to specific instruments rather than to overall regime labels.

Two limits follow from the design. The study describes the legal capacity created by the reform and the enforcement activity that agencies chose to report; it cannot measure actual compliance among advertisers, carriers or platforms. Reported figures also reflect what agencies publish, which may understate activity at provincial level. Section 6 proposes a design for measuring compliance directly.

4. Findings

4.1 The rule gap before 2026

Until 2025, Vietnam's advertising regime was organised around the advertiser, the advertising service firm and the publisher, defined largely by the media they controlled. Online advertising appeared in the 2012 law and in Decree 181/2013, but cross-border services were handled mainly through a notification duty and a requirement to work through a Vietnamese service provider. The government's own review found that this duty had not been met by any foreign provider in five years, while cross-border ad revenue grew almost fivefold over the same period (MCST, 2020) [39]. Decree 70/2021 tightened the rules by requiring foreign providers to avoid placing ads next to unlawful content, but enforcement remained weak: In late 2024 the minister told the National Assembly that platforms without a legal entity in Vietnam could not be fined under the Law on Handling Administrative Violations (Thanh Tra, 2024) [59].

The individual who promotes products on social media was the second blind spot. The Consumer Protection Law of 2023 defined influencers and required them to disclose paid promotion, but the Advertising Law did not give carriers of advertising clear duties of verification or disclosure (National Assembly, 2023) [42]. The cost of that gap became visible in 2025, when several well-known influencers were prosecuted over livestream sales of dietary supplements with claims not supported by product documentation (Tap chi Toa an nhan dan, 2026) [58].

4.2 What the 2025-2026 reform added

The reform closed most of these rule gaps, and it did so mainly by writing duties for intermediaries and individuals rather than by expanding pre-approval. Table 3 summarises the main provisions.

Table 3: Main provisions of the 2025-2026 reform, by function

Function	Provision	Instrument
Rule-making	Carriers of ad content must comply with consumer-protection rules, pay tax on ad income, supply documents on request and bear liability for unlawful content; influencers must verify the advertiser, check product documentation, not promote what they have not used or understood, and announce the ad before and during it	Law 75/2025, Art. 15a
Rule-making	Online ads must carry clear identifying marks; non-fixed ads need a close function, a reporting icon and an opt-out	Law 75/2025, Art. 23
Rule-making	Video ads can force at most 5 seconds of viewing before the close button works; static ads none; fake or hard-to-find close icons are banned	Decree 342/2025, Art. 17
Enforcement	Advertisers, service firms, carriers and publishers must remove unlawful ads within 24 hours of a written or electronic request	Decree 342/2025, Art. 18
Cross-border	Foreign providers must notify the MCST before operating, avoid partners publicly named as violators, avoid placing ads next to unlawful content, register and pay tax, and remove ads within 24 hours, failing which technical blocking may apply	Law 75/2025, Art. 23(6)-(7); Decree 342/2025, Art. 19
Rule-making	Livestream sellers must be identity-verified by the platform; affiliate marketing regulated	E-commerce Law 2025
Enforcement	New penalty regime replacing Decree 38/2021, with sanctions aimed at influencers and fines up to VND 60 million for general online advertising violations	Decree 87/2026

Sources: LuatVietnam (2025) [36]; Lawyers of Vietnam (2026) [34]; Cong Thuong (2026) [12]; National Assembly (2025a, 2025b) [43, 44]

Decree 342/2025 also lists 11 groups of special products whose ads face extra conditions, from cosmetics, food and infant formula to medical devices, medicines and alcoholic drinks (Lawyers of Vietnam, 2026) [34]. Foreign providers can file their notification online, and the ministry must confirm it within four working days (Lawyers of Vietnam, 2026) [34]. Under the sanctions decree, fines for organisations are twice those for individuals for the same act (Thu Vien Phap Luat, 2026) [60].

4.3 A shift in instruments

The reform does more than add duties. It changes how the state intends to see and act. Three features of the new texts show this.

Removal on a deadline is the clearest. The 24-hour rule converts enforcement from a sanction after the fact into an operational obligation on intermediaries, and the ministry becomes the default point of contact when the person who posted an ad cannot be identified (Lawyers of Vietnam, 2026) [34]. Design regulation is another. Rules on skip timing, close icons and reporting buttons regulate the interface rather than the message, an approach close to the EU's focus on platform design. Registers and lists complete the picture. In the first half of 2026 the authority maintained public white and black lists of sites for ad placement and piloted a portal and database on digital content creators at kol.gov.vn (Cong Thuong, 2026) [12]. Combined with the identity verification of social media accounts under Decree 147/2024 and of livestream sellers under the E-commerce Law, these registers give the state a way to identify actors that previously stayed anonymous (Government, 2024; National Assembly, 2025b [44]).

4.4 The capacity gap

Reported enforcement remains small relative to the market. Table 4 brings together the figures that agencies have made public.

Table 4: Publicly reported market and enforcement indicators, 2019 to mid-2026

Period	Indicator	Value	Source
H1 2026	Fines on advertising via social media (with the National Competition Commission)	1 firm and 3 influencers, VND 105 million in total	Cong Thuong (2026) [12]
H1 2026	Domains blocked with the cybersecurity police	494	Cong Thuong (2026) [12]
H1 2026	Working sessions with Google, Meta and TikTok	5	Cong Thuong (2026) [12]
H1 2026	Links removed by Meta for wildlife advertising and trade	50	Cong Thuong (2026) [12]
2023 to Nov 2024	Organisations and individuals fined	23, VND 258 million in total	Thanh Tra (2024) [59]
2023	Online advertising revenue; share of total ad spend	USD 1.3 billion; about 50% of USD 2.6 billion	Thanh Tra (2024) [59], citing Statista
2023	Share of online ad revenue to cross-border platforms	About 80%	Thanh Tra (2024) [59]
2019	Online ad spend; Facebook and Google share	USD 830 million; close to 82%	MCST (2020) [39]
2013-2019	Foreign providers that completed notification	None	MCST (2020) [39]

The asymmetry is plain. Total fines reported for 2023 to late 2024 amount to roughly USD 10,000 at current exchange rates, against an online market of over a billion dollars a year. Survey evidence cited in the press suggests that about 77% of Vietnamese online shoppers have bought products on the recommendation of influencers (VnEconomy, 2025) [65], which means that the population of carriers now subject to Article 15a is very large. Under Becker's (1968) [7] logic, the deterrent value of a rule depends on the probability of detection; with case-by-case enforcement and five meetings a half-year with the main platforms, that probability is low for most actors.

4.5 Dependence on platform cooperation

The cross-border provisions rely on two levers: Technical blocking as a last resort and the requirement to register and pay tax. Neither fully solves the jurisdiction problem identified in 2024. In practice, the reported results of 2026 come from negotiated cooperation: Requests sent to platforms, removals carried out by them and joint action with the cybersecurity police (Cong Thuong, 2026) [12]. This places Vietnam in the co-governance model described by Gorwa (2019) [23], but without the transparency duties that give the EU leverage, such as public ad repositories and independent audits (European Union, 2022) [16]. Earlier reporting showed that platforms do act on requests, for example the removal of hundreds of accounts, groups and pages by Facebook since 2018 (Thanh Tra, 2024) [59], yet the timing and scope of action remain at their discretion.

4.6 Fragmentation across laws and agencies

The same promotional act may now fall under four laws. A livestream promoting a food supplement is an advertisement under the Advertising Law, a matter of influencer disclosure under the Consumer Protection Law, a livestream sale under the E-commerce Law and a food-safety question under sector rules. The agencies differ accordingly: The culture ministry for advertising, the industry and trade ministry and the National Competition Commission for e-commerce and consumer protection, the health ministry for food and medicines, and the police for cybersecurity. The joint sanction of one firm and three influencers in 2026 shows that cooperation is possible (Cong Thuong, 2026) [12], but the corpus contains no single coordination mechanism or shared case database. Doctrinal work had already pointed to overlaps between the Commercial Law and the Advertising Law and to advertising rules scattered across sector statutes (Truong, 2025) [61]. The reform added new duties without consolidating these overlaps.

5. Discussion

5.1 Vietnam in comparative perspective

On paper, Vietnam's new regime is close to international practice and in some respects stricter. Table 5 places it beside the five comparison jurisdictions.

Table 5: Selected instruments for digital advertising in six jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Influencer duties	Platform duties	Transparency to the public	Cross-border lever
Vietnam (2026)	Verify advertiser and product, use or understand the product, announce ad before and during	Identification marks, close and report functions, 24-hour removal	White and black lists; creator portal (pilot)	Notification, tax registration, technical blocking
European Union	Mainly under consumer law of member states	Explain why an ad is shown; ad repositories for very large platforms; audits	Public ad repositories	Legal representative in the EU; fines tied to turnover
United Kingdom	Industry code enforced by a self-regulatory body	Duties on fraudulent advertising for large services	Published rulings	Market access and Ofcom powers under the Online Safety Act
United States	Disclose material connections; liability can reach brands and intermediaries	Limited, case-based	Enforcement actions	Market access
China	Liability traced to agencies managing accounts; limits on minors and on medical and cosmetic claims	Keep ad records; assist supervisors	Administrative publication	Licensing of domestic platforms
France	Clear labelling; bans on some product groups	Cooperation duties	Public enforcement	Foreign influencers targeting France must appoint a representative

Sources: European Union (2022) [16]; FTC (2023) [18]; SAMR (2023) [55]; République Française (2023) [53]; UK Parliament (2023) [63]; Tap chi Cong Thuong (2026) [57]; Table 3

Two differences matter more than the formal similarities. The first is transparency. The EU combines duties with public ad repositories and independent audits, which let regulators, researchers and civil society observe what platforms do. Vietnam's lists and creator portal point in the same direction, but they record the state's own judgments about sites and people rather than the stream of ads itself. The second is leverage. The EU and the United Kingdom can impose large penalties on services that want access to big markets, and France obliges foreign influencers to appoint a representative. Vietnam's ultimate lever, technical blocking, is blunt and politically costly, so in practice it supports negotiation rather than replacing it.

5.2 Rule gap closed, capacity gap open

The findings support the distinction drawn in Section 2.4. The 2025-2026 reform responded to the object side of digital transformation with unusual completeness: It named new actors, regulated new formats and set duties for intermediaries. On the instrument side the response is partial. The law creates the legal basis for removal deadlines and registers, but the reported activity of 2026 still looks like case-based enforcement, carried out through a few joint actions and periodic meetings with platforms.

Responsive regulation predicts the consequence. A regulatory pyramid works when the top of it is credible and the base is used widely (Ayres & Braithwaite, 1992) [4]. In Vietnam the top, heavy fines and criminal prosecution, has been used in a handful of visible cases. The base, guidance and support for compliance, is thin for the very large group of individual carriers who are now legally responsible. Winter and May (2001) [66] found that small actors often fail to comply because they do not understand the rules. Article 15a asks influencers to verify advertisers and check product documentation, tasks that require access to information many of them do not have.

5.3 Four conditions for the instrument shift to work

The analysis suggests four conditions under which Vietnam's move toward data-based supervision and co-governance could raise compliance. They are offered as propositions for future testing.

Observability comes first. Supervision based on data needs data the state can see. A requirement for large platforms to give the regulator access to their ad libraries, or to keep searchable records for Vietnam as China's measures require, would make monitoring systematic rather than complaint-driven.

Coordination is the next requirement. A shared case register across the culture, trade, health and police authorities, linked to the creator portal and to the sanctions database, would reduce duplication and allow repeat violators to be identified across legal regimes.

Support for compliance must also reach the base of the pyramid. Model contracts for influencer campaigns, product-documentation checklists for the 11 special product groups and a code of conduct approved under the amended law would make the duties of Article 15a feasible for individuals. Harker's (2003) [30] components of effective self-regulation offer a template for the role of the Vietnam Advertising Association.

Enforcement, finally, should be graduated and public. Publishing decisions in a consistent format, with the actor type, channel, product group and penalty, would raise the perceived probability of detection at little cost and create the data needed to evaluate the reform. Tyler's (2006) [62] work suggests that visible and consistent enforcement also strengthens the legitimacy on which voluntary compliance rests.

5.4 Implications beyond Vietnam

Many middle-income countries face the same configuration: A fast-growing ad market, most of it captured by foreign platforms, and a regulator whose tools were built for domestic media. Vietnam's experience suggests that rewriting the rules is the easier half of the task. The harder half is building the data access, coordination and support that make the rules observable and usable. For such countries, the EU model is instructive less for its specific duties than for its insistence on transparency infrastructure, which turns platform cooperation from a favour into an obligation that can be audited.

6. Conclusion

Vietnam's 2025-2026 reform answers the question of who is responsible for digital advertising more clearly than the previous regime did. Carriers and influencers now have duties of verification and disclosure, platforms must label and remove unlawful ads within 24 hours, interface practices such as unskippable video ads are limited, and foreign providers must notify, register and pay tax. In the terms of this article's framework, the rule gap created by the digitalisation of advertising has largely been closed.

The capacity gap has not. Publicly reported enforcement in the first half of 2026 amounted to fines on one firm and three influencers, the blocking of 494 domains and five working sessions with the main platforms, in a market where most online ad revenue goes abroad. Enforcement still relies on cooperation that platforms grant on their own terms, and responsibility is spread across four laws and several agencies without a shared coordination mechanism.

The main policy implication is that the next stage of reform should invest less in new prohibitions and more in the instruments that make existing ones observable and usable: Access to platform ad data, a shared case register, practical support for individual carriers and consistent publication of enforcement decisions.

7. Limitations and future research

This study relies on legal texts and on enforcement figures that agencies chose to publish. It does not measure compliance. Three designs could do so. A content analysis of sponsored posts by influencers before and after January 2026, coded for disclosure labels and unsupported claims, would show whether behaviour changed when the law did. A survey of advertisers, agencies and content creators could test whether perceived detection risk and the clarity of rules explain compliance, as responsive regulation predicts. A database of published sanction decisions would reveal where enforcement resources actually go. Each of these would also help the regulator evaluate the reform it has just made.

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