
Preface

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Biographical notes: Minh-Tri Ha is currently serving in the School of Business at the International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as its Dean. He earned his PhD from University of Antwerp, Belgium. His teaching focuses on marketing research, business strategy and business ethics. His research interests are (green) social capital, (green) intellectual capital, (green) marketing, corporate social responsibilities, knowledge management, innovation, green washing, and firm performance. His work has appeared in Sage Open, Cogent Business & Management, Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility, PLOS ONE, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, *Journal for International Business and Entrepreneurship Development*, and *Journal for Global Business Advancement*. He has also published several book chapters at SAGE Research Methods: Doing Research Online and SAGE Research Methods: Business, Springer Nature, and Palgrave Macmillan.

The six studies that constitute this special issue capture the essence of how various sectors in Vietnam, from banking and human resources to education, technology, and marketing, are adopting innovative approaches and technologies. These include the use of data analytics in understanding banking dynamics, personality assessments for employee engagement, embracing digital transformations in education through e-learning, leveraging Industry 4.0 and circular economy models for business sustainability, and implementing green CSR practices for competitive advantage. Collectively, these studies underscore a shift towards more sustainable, efficient, and technologically integrated practices in business and education, reflecting global trends in innovation and sustainability.

The first paper, entitled ‘Determinants of interest rate spread and the moderating role of income diversity: the case of Vietnamese commercial banks’, by Vo Thi Quy and Pham Dang Tuan, both affiliated with the International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, discusses the critical role of the banking industry in the economy, focusing on the interest rate spread (IRS) in Vietnam’s commercial banks from 2008 to 2020. IRS, the difference between lending and deposit rates, indicates the cost of intermediation in the banking sector. The study analyses how bank characteristics and macroeconomic factors influence the IRS in 25 Vietnamese banks, using the system generalised method of moments. It particularly examines the effect of income diversity on IRS and other banking aspects, such as cost efficiency, bank size, non-performing loans, and liquidity risk. The findings reveal that income diversity

significantly and positively affects the IRS, enhances the impact of cost efficiency and non-performance loans, and lessens the impact of liquidity risk. This research provides valuable insights into the efficiency of Vietnam's commercial banking system.

The second paper, entitled 'Personality traits as the explaining factors of employee engagement: a study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam', by Duong Trong Nhan and Vo Thi Quy, both affiliated with the International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, addresses the challenge that human resource managers face in recruiting engaged employees, whose engagement significantly boosts business productivity. The study explores the connection between personality traits and employee engagement, particularly in a Vietnamese context. Using a survey of 255 respondents from business organisations in Ho Chi Minh City and analysing the data with PLS-SEM software and predictive power score calculation, the research aims to determine how the five factors of personality traits influence employee engagement at work. The results show that conscientiousness, extraversion, and intellect have a significant and positive impact on employee engagement, accounting for 20.9% of its variance in Vietnam. Conscientiousness emerges as the strongest predictor of employee engagement. These findings suggest that personality testing can be an effective tool for identifying potential engaged employees.

The third paper, entitled 'Value co-creation and e-learning acceptance in Vietnamese universities', by Xuan-Nhi Nguyen, Cam-Tu Tran Hoang, and Vo Vuong Bach, affiliated with Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, explores students' perceptions and acceptance of e-learning applications in Vietnam by employing a mixed-methods approach. Initially, qualitative group discussions helped to refine a questionnaire, which was later used in a quantitative analysis with 457 students from Vietnam's distance bachelor programs. The framework, based on the extended technology acceptance model, indicated that both the outcome quality of service transactions and the physical environment (encompassing system quality and communication means) have a positive impact on students' perceived value and acceptance of e-learning. This acceptance, in turn, contributes to value co-creation. The findings highlight the importance of infrastructure investment and trained personnel for the success of online programs, providing educational and cost benefits. The study suggests that future research could expand on these findings by exploring different methodologies and incorporating more variables.

The fourth paper, entitled 'The adoption of Industry 4.0 technology and the circular economy: a solution for the sustainable development of enterprises', by Minh-Tri Ha and Tien-Khoa Tran, affiliated with the International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Son-Tung Mai and Truong-Son Nguyen, affiliated with the Eastern International University, Binh Duong province, Vietnam, investigates how the adoption of Industry 4.0 (I4) technologies and circular economy (CE) practices affect the performance of firms in Vietnam, a developing country catching up with the I4 technology revolution and green economy criteria. The research involved a questionnaire-based survey with 260 senior managers in Vietnamese firms and employed PLS-SEM for data analysis. The results show that the implementation of I4 and CE significantly impacts firm performance in four areas: economic, environmental, operational, and social. The study provides valuable insights for managers and policymakers, emphasising the importance of sustainable development for organisations and at a national level, particularly in developing countries. It suggests that managers and policymakers should focus on prioritising research and development investments,

fostering collaborative ecosystems, and developing policy frameworks that support the early adoption of new technologies and adherence to CE standards.

The fifth paper entitled ‘The Vietnamese context: the effects of brand personality and social media on purchase intentions of authentic agricultural products’, by Tuong-Vi Thi Tran, Quang Nhut Ho, Tho Alang and Nhu-Ty Nguyen affiliated with International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam introduces a new conceptual model based on Social Identity Theory, aiming to address gaps in marketing literature, particularly concerning genuine agricultural products. It investigates how social identity concepts influence purchase intentions and provides a theoretical distinction between several constructs: brand personality, social identity, brand equity, brand authenticity, and consumer preference. Additionally, the study examines the moderating effects of social media. A quantitative approach using SPSS and AMOS tools was employed to operationalise the model. Data were collected through a survey of over 600 users from Vietnam’s Northern, Central, and Southern regions, leading to empirical validation of the model. The findings corroborate existing research on the effectiveness of authentic and unique brand marketing, as well as social identity marketing. Ultimately, this research contributes significant insights to the fields of marketing and international business management.

The sixth and final paper, entitled ‘Green CSR’s role in retail competitive advantage: mediation by marketing and moderation by reputation’, by Nguyen Xuan-Nhi and Le Ngoc-Tien, affiliated with Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, explores the impact of green corporate social responsibility (CSR) on green competitive advantage in the retail sector, focusing on the roles of green marketing strategy and corporate reputation. Using qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis and focus group discussions, the study finds that green marketing strategy fully mediates the relationship between green CSR and competitive advantage. Additionally, corporate reputation moderates this relationship. The research highlights the importance of integrating eco-friendly values into marketing strategies and maintaining a commitment to green CSR to enhance competitive advantage. It contributes to understanding the interplay between CSR, marketing, and competitive positioning in the context of environmental sustainability.

The collection of six studies from diverse business fields provides a comprehensive picture of contemporary business and economic challenges in Vietnam. In banking, the emphasis is placed on the significant role of income diversity in shaping interest rate spreads, reflecting broader macroeconomic impacts. In human resources, the focus shifts to the importance of personality traits, particularly conscientiousness, in predicting employee engagement, a crucial factor for business productivity. Meanwhile, the adoption of e-learning in educational settings underlines the importance of service quality and a supportive physical environment in enhancing student acceptance and engagement. The realm of technology and sustainable development is explored through the lens of Industry 4.0 and circular economy practices, highlighting their significant impact on various aspects of firm performance, including economic and environmental factors. In marketing, the studies reveal the influence of social identity and brand authenticity on consumer preferences, especially in the context of authentic agricultural products. Lastly, the role of green corporate social responsibility in retail sectors demonstrates how eco-friendly practices and a strong corporate reputation can mediate and enhance a

company's competitive advantage. Together, these studies underscore the interplay of technology, sustainability, consumer behaviour, and corporate strategies in driving business success and economic development in a rapidly evolving global landscape.