

SINO-VIETNAMESE PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN DISTRICTS 5, 6, AND 11 OF HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM (1996-2016)

Ha Trieu Huy^{a*}

^aDepartment of Liberal Education, University of Management and Technology, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: Email: huy.hatrieu@umt.edu.vn

Article history

Received: July 2nd, 2021

Received in revised form (1st): August 6th, 2021 | Received in revised form (2nd): September 29th, 2021

Accepted: October 1st, 2021

Available online: August 12th, 2022

Abstract

This article clarifies the involvement of the Sino-Vietnamese people in Ho Chi Minh City's economy from 1996 to 2016. Vietnam has accelerated the process of industrialization and modernization since 1996, and Ho Chi Minh City now has a thriving local economy. As with other ethnic groups, the Sino-Vietnamese people have made a considerable contribution to boosting the local economy. Based on the theory of functionalism, culture-economy relationships, and primary anthropological research methods, this article assesses the economic contributions of the Sino-Vietnamese in industry and handicrafts, commerce and services, and finance and credit. However, there are many obstacles for the Sino-Vietnamese economy. The quality of goods is insufficient to meet consumer satisfaction. The harshly competitive market confronts their businesses with numerous challenges. The abandonment of traditional professions by the young Sino-Vietnamese generation poses a threat to traditional businesses, and COVID-19 is a pressing issue for their economy. This article proposes realistic solutions to encourage the Sino-Vietnamese people to overcome disadvantages and contribute to the economy of Ho Chi Minh City in the future.

Keywords: Doi Moi; Economy; Ho Chi Minh City; Industrialization; Modernization; Sino-Vietnamese people; Vietnam.

DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.37569/DalatUniversity.12.4.922\(2022\)](http://dx.doi.org/10.37569/DalatUniversity.12.4.922(2022))

Article type: (peer-reviewed) Full-length research article

Copyright © 2022 The author(s).

Licensing: This article is published under a CC BY-NC 4.0 license.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group has played a part in the growth and socioeconomic development of the southern region of Vietnam from ancient times to the present. The concept of “Sino-Vietnamese people” differs from “Chinese people,” but the term, “Hoa people,” will be used throughout this paper to refer to this ethnic group. The Hoa or Sino-Vietnamese people were naturalized under the administration of Ngo Dinh Diem in the former Republic of Vietnam, and these groups have kept Vietnamese citizenship under the Vietnamese legal system (Trinh & Hoang, 2021, pp. 1289-1298). The long-term residence of the Hoa people in Ho Chi Minh City helped this ethnic group preserve their business culture, which is built on the moral values of Confucianism and Taoism. The strength of the outward-looking mercantile orientation of the Hoa people has contributed to the economic renovation of Ho Chi Minh City during industrialization and modernization since 1996. Researching the economic contribution of the Hoa people is crucial to acknowledge their dedication to municipal development over the course of industrialization and modernization. This article focuses on a case study of Districts 5, 6, and 11, which form a population center of the Hoa people in Ho Chi Minh City.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Vietnam, the economic role of the Sino-Vietnamese community has been the subject of a growing body of literature since Doi Moi. *Sino-Vietnamese People in District 6 of Ho Chi Minh City*, written in 1991 by the Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee of District 6 and the Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City, paved the way for further academic research on the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group (Ủy ban Mặt trận Tổ quốc Việt Nam Quận 6, 1991). Later, Trần (2005) conducted a large-scale research project on this group: *Quan hệ Kinh tế giữa người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh với người Hoa ở Đông Nam Á [The Relationship between the Sino-Vietnamese Community in Ho Chi Minh City and the Chinese Community in Southeast Asia]*. This topic was sponsored by the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Sciences and Technology and Ho Chi Minh City Economic Institute in 2008. It provided an overview of the economic activities of Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. The authors proposed some optimal solutions to stimulate the economic contributions of the ethnic Chinese communities to the nation. Their report also broadened the scope of our understanding with accurate data on the economic activities of the ethnic Chinese group.

Trần (2016) in *Đời sống kinh tế người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh [Economic Life of Sino-Vietnamese People in Ho Chi Minh City]* outlines the economic activities of the Sino-Vietnamese people in the period 2009-2014, thereby providing us with the most realistic summary of their economic activities. Trần (2016) focused on the participation of the Sino-Vietnamese in the private sector of Ho Chi Minh City. He included a large amount of accurate, objective data provided by the county statistical office, and he conducted surveys of Sino-Vietnamese private enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City, thereby creating a comprehensive overview of fundamental aspects of the Hoa people’s commitment to the city’s economy. The author partially draws on the research results that Trần (2016) achieved earlier on this topic.

Chinese people have large communities in most Southeast Asian countries, which is the historical outcome of a long-term diaspora. Consequently, Chinese people have a profound dedication to the thriving economies in this region. Armstrong et al. (2001) pointed to their increased literacy and ability in economic management, which play a vital role in boosting trading activities in Southeast Asia. The authors also stressed the ethnic Chinese business culture and skills that help the Chinese succeed in their careers (Armstrong et al., 2001). Chen (2003), in *Inside Chinese Business: A Guide for Managers Worldwide*, evaluated the business robustness of Chinese people in relation to their history and cultural environment. These groups respect virtue and prestige, which are passed down to their posterity. They consistently pay veneration to their kinship relations in their own countries and abroad and focus on keeping in touch with these groups to form domestic and international business webs. Chen also underscored their disadvantages in the context of a very modern market economy and globalization (Chen, 2003).

Weidenbaum and Hughes (1996) analyzed the consistent linkage among the Chinese in Southeast Asia in depth. In this commercial web, the ethnic Chinese became pioneers in their businesses (Weidenbaum & Hughes, 1996). In fact, the number of Chinese-based business centers in Southeast Asia has been increasing to date, and this ethnic group has dominated the market and given the country an economic well-being. However, books describing the role of people of Chinese origin in Vietnam are rare in the international literature compared to papers and books inside Vietnam. It is crucial to shed light on the role of the Sino-Vietnamese people and the factors for their success in the regional economy.

Cross-disciplinary books and articles elucidate some aspects of the Sino-Vietnamese people in Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces of southern Vietnam. For example, Đào (2017) depicted their economic activities in Cochinchina in the early 20th century in *Thế lực khách trú và vấn đề di dân vào Nam Kỳ [Hakka force and the problem of immigration to Cochinchina]*. This group soon established subgroups, associations, and bonds with Vietnamese people as mutual residents in this region. Being opposed to Sinicization, Đào (2017) proposed some critical solutions to curb the predominance of the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group in the national economy. Nguyễn (2008), in *Tổ chức xã hội của người Hoa ở Nam Bộ [Social Organization of Sino-Vietnamese People in Southern Vietnam]*, mentioned key affairs of the Sino-Vietnamese in various fields, including their economic activities, culture, customs, social organizations, and their role in Chinese communities. Trần (1998), in *Hoạt động Kinh tế của Người Hoa từ Sài Gòn đến Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh [Economic Activities of Sino-Vietnamese People from Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City]*, and Vương (2007), in *Văn hoá Kinh doanh của người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh [Sino-Vietnamese People's Business Culture in Ho Chi Minh City]*, contributed to clarifying the economic transformation as well as the main characteristics of Sino-Vietnamese business culture and its influence on their businesses in Ho Chi Minh City nowadays.

In short, the literature review built an academic foundation of valuable sources for this article. However, it is necessary that some further papers on the economic contributions of the Sino-Vietnamese people to Ho Chi Minh city be considered to

recognize the role of these groups in the economic rise of the city. This paper addresses two research questions:

- What did the Hoa people do to enrich their revenue and contribute to the city budget after the implementation of the policy of industrialization and modernization in some specific fields of the economy?
- What can we see from such economic activities and what solutions should be proposed to encourage the dynamic development of Ho Chi Minh City's economy through the key role of the Sino-Vietnamese people?

3. METHODOLOGY

This article employs the functionalism theory of Malinowski (1921, as cited in Firth, 1972, p. 467) in which social institutions are likened to body organs. In the case of the Sino-Vietnamese people, traditional institutions play a vital role in “reproducing” the traditional culture of this ethnic group. Malinowski also underscored the public economy of the tribe as his central theme. He paid attention to the role of the chief as an accumulator of a high proportion of the tribal agricultural produce through customary channels of obligation, which gave him status and the power of social control in organizing tribal enterprises (Firth, 1972, p. 467). This theory is consistent with the hypothesis of this article. The leading role of chief in the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic groups contributed to establishing their social institutions. In addition, they appreciate the role of the family as the smallest unit of that social institution and so preserve their culture and rituals. In their business culture, Sino-Vietnamese people benefit from the market and earn their income by the traditional profession of their family. As a result, cultural behavior and the critical role of social institutions determine their economic activities.

Based on the theory of the relationship between culture and economy in researching economic activities in a community, both Marx and Max Weber reached a consensus on the role of human activity in reproducing their society. Thanks to economic activities, people can shape their outlook through economic activities and ultimately what people believe (Carrier, 2005). Durkheim (1951, as cited in Carrier, 2005, p. 307) also supported the opinion that economies are likely to reproduce society. Thus, the powerful norms demanding social cohesion governed and gave direction to economies (Carrier, 2005, p. 307). This point of view is very conducive to researching this topic. It is evident that the economic activities of the Sino-Vietnamese people are mainly based on their business culture and their tradition in which the descendants inherit the traditional profession of the family. Hence, Sino-Vietnamese people have a link between the economy and their culture. Business cultural values are also shaped by economic activities.

The Sino-Vietnamese social institution is a solid organization. Kinship relationships play a leading role in preserving their traditional professions. As a result, the traditional family is likely to function in their economic activities. Based on this theory, the Sino-Vietnamese people are committed to boosting the economy of Ho Chi Minh City because they benefit in business. The correlation between inherited professions

and the economic role of Ho Chi Minh City helps the Sino-Vietnamese contribute to the general progress. Thus, economic anthropology makes this topic more transparent. It also plays a critical role in proposing some business solutions for the Sino-Vietnamese people.

Fundamental research methods in anthropology play a vital role in transparently clarifying the hypothesis of this article. Besides, this paper is congruent with qualitative design, which includes data collection methods and approaches with the purpose of responding to research questions. This method is instrumental in seeking the relationship between their business culture and the outcome of economic activities.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Industrial and handicraft production

Industrial and handicraft production is the most developed profession in the Sino-Vietnamese economy in Ho Chi Minh City. Manufacturers and wholesalers abound in number, and they dexterously create brilliant products by their adept ability, which benefits from their family tradition. In addition, members of the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group usually link or cooperate in business due to their notion of family and kinship relationships. Chen (2004) identified four types of governance: family orientation, the breadwinner, family members' roles and responsibilities, and financial family, and it is evident that these patterns are also applicable for the Sino-Vietnamese people in Vietnam. According to the statistics, Chinese-based cooperatives accounted for 59 of 76 cooperatives in District 5 in 1997, and this number increased by 35% by 1984 (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). In Ho Chi Minh City, there were 384 cooperatives citywide in 1997, of which the Hoa people owned 358 groups, an increase of approximately 49% compared to 1984.

Similarly, the data reveal that there were 42 cooperatives in District 6 in 1997, including 27 Chinese-based cooperatives. This number rose by 68% by 1984 in District 6. Additionally, there were 340 cooperatives and 52 groups of Sino-Vietnamese people in District 11 in 1997. This figure went up by 57% by 1984 (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). The majority of cooperatives were operated in a new paradigm adapted to Doi Moi economic policies, allowing the potential of the household economy. This figure reflects an encouraging trend in the Sino-Vietnamese people's economic activities. Nowadays, the pattern of these cooperatives has been transformed, and these groups translated them into private enterprises to manage their professions effectively. Such household cooperatives have become more prevalent in Ho Chi Minh City in recent years.

The output of Sino-Vietnamese handicrafts in Ho Chi Minh City increased greatly in the late 20th century. Companies used mass production techniques and simultaneously increased their use of capital equipment. Various innovative technologies were adopted due to the healthy market economy. For instance, the city gained 2,240 large-scale non-state enterprises with a capital of tens of billions VND, of which 880 were Sino-Vietnamese enterprises (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). The businesses specialized in the mass production of shoes, leather, food, and plastic (Trần, 1998, p. 114).

This development created a massive labor market for Ho Chi Minh City. The achievements of mass production satisfied the demands of Vietnam's consumers. For instance, Bitis's shoe production is a shining illustration of the fruitful economic accomplishments of Sino-Vietnamese businesses in Ho Chi Minh City. This firm has expanded beyond Vietnam and is now located in 20 countries around the world. In addition, the products of some Sino-Vietnamese companies were introduced to various localities in the Mekong Delta, which engendered considerable consumption there. Thus, the labor market has been expanded to neighboring areas, which stimulated the dynamic regional development. Not only having an advantage in handicraft and industrial products, the Hoa people exhibited their growing interest in agricultural products. Some firms invested in the tea processing and animal feed industries and are raising chickens and pigs (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). This evidence shows that the Hoa people have diversified their businesses with multiple product lines.

Furthermore, statistics reveal the strong economic growth from 1996 to 2016. The value of industrial production in the non-state sector was 1,826 billion VND in 1994, 5,628 billion VND in 2010, and 6,985 billion VND in 2016, increasing by 10% per year compared to the average in 2000 (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). Plastic, electronics, mechanical engineering, food processing, and oriental medicine became the foremost thriving Sino-Vietnamese industries. The value of these industries accounted for about 65–75% of the total realized value of the whole city in 2016 (Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). Various businesses concentrated on standardizing their commodities and targeted the ISO 9001 quality standard. Also, the total value of imported machinery and equipment averaged over 5 to 8 million USD per year between 1990 and 2015.

The Sino-Vietnamese people also achieved a strong synergy through economic cooperation. They established specialized companies in the city, including Tan Cuong Thanh Co., Ltd; Dai Dong Tien Co., Ltd; Phuc Thanh (Fushin) Co., Ltd; Tan Lap Thanh (Sun Lap Shing) Co., Ltd; and Duc Phat Bakery Co., Ltd. These companies quickly became a considerable source of various merchandise to meet consumer demand in the Ho Chi Minh City market. They even became vanguards in their fields and built their prestige regionally and nationwide, as will be clarified in the discussion section.

4.2. Commerce and services

Sino-Vietnamese people also participate in the service-based economy of Ho Chi Minh City. The role of kinship and family led them to a big push in economic development. Thanks to this benefit, the Sino-Vietnamese people in Ho Chi Minh City focus on the provision of services by operating chains of restaurants and markets. Examples include Arc-en-Ciel restaurant, A Dong restaurant, Dong Khanh supermarket, Dai Quang Minh Center, Kim Bien market, and Tan Thanh market.

The 1997 statistics show that more than 40 Sino-Vietnamese owners were operating a wide range of recreation businesses at that time in District 5. The Sino-Vietnamese accounted for approximately 54% of the owners who ran businesses in the food industry, recreation services, and beauty salons in District 5 (Ban Công tác người

Hoa TP. HCM, 2019). Additionally, they are involved in organized markets and specialized occupations, such as fabrics on Tran Hung Dao, Duong Tu Giang, and Do Ngoc Thanh streets; traditional and modern clothing on Nguyen Trai street; oriental medicine on Hai Thuong Lan Ong, Phung Hung, and Luong Nhu Hoc streets; telecommunications equipment and telephones on Hung Vuong street; electronics on Hong Bang street; hardware and hand tools on Trinh Hoai Duc street; and vehicle services on An Duong Vuong and Nguyen Tri Phuong streets.

The same situation happened in District 6 over the course of time. The District 6 authorities gradually focused on developing the economic contributions of the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic groups. Business leaders and authorities kept cordial relations with the purpose of making economic leverage for District 6. Particularly, the authorities supported Sino-Vietnamese economic activity with planning, plan implementation, and well-tailored policies, while vigorously promoting the vocational professions. Sino-Vietnamese people formed trade and service centers, such as the Binh Tay market, businesses in the Cho Lon bus station area, the Binh Phu Metro supermarket, the Binh Phu entertainment area, and the Phu Lam cluster with its specialized streets. The operation of these centers has contributed to increasing the number of products in the area by 70%, and by increasing the revenue by about 250% compared to the late 20th century. Trade-service revenue reached 47,501 billion VND in 2010 and 112,801 billion VND in 2016. The value (in 1994 prices) of industry and handicrafts produced reached 4,302 billion VND in 2010 and 6,582 billion VND in 2016. State budget revenues reached 617 billion VND in 2010 and 782 billion VND in 2016 (Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 6, 2019).

District 11 has also experienced important contributions to the local economy by the Hoa people in terms of commerce and services. Over the years, the economic activities of the Sino-Vietnamese people have generated 70% of GDP of District 11. Evidently, the revenue of commerce and services shows an upward trend. According to revenue data for District 11 (Table 1), industrial production and handicraft revenue jumped from 2,868 billion VND in 2006 to 3,481 billion VND in 2009 and then peaked to 8,703 billion VND in 2015. The revenue for commerce and services was 18,195 billion VND in 2006 and, remarkably, this number rose to nearly five times as much by 2015 to 80,542 billion VND. This was an impressive increase, which shows the tremendous contribution to gross revenue by Sino-Vietnamese businesses in District 11. Accordingly, the total state budget revenue gradually rose to 751 billion VND in 2015.

Table 1. Revenue of the Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group in District 11

Fields	2006	2009	2015
Value of industrial production and handicrafts	2,868	3,481	8,703
Revenue from commerce and services	18,195	30,928	80,542
Total state budget revenues	271	515	751

Note: Unit: billion VND.

Source: Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 11 (2019).

Moreover, the number of Sino-Vietnamese enterprises accounts for a significant quantity in Ho Chi Minh City compared to the businesses of other ethnic groups (Table 2). There were 1,750 Sino-Vietnamese businesses in District 5 in 2016, 2,273 in District 6, and 723 in District 11 (Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 11, 2019). However, these enterprises were mainly small-scale, medium-sized, and household businesses. Few large enterprises existed in this highly competitive market.

Table 2. Number of Sino-Vietnamese enterprises in Districts 5, 6, and 11 in 2016

District	Total number of enterprises	
	Sino-Vietnamese	Total
5	1,750	7,000
6	2,273	5,120
11	723	10,268

Source: Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 11 (2019).

4.3. Finance and credit

The mushrooming of financial enterprises and a system of private banks is evidence of the strength of the Hoa people in the field of finance and credit. These activities became much more popular in the late 1980s due to the open-door policy of the government. Unfortunately, financial activities were precarious due to loopholes at that time. Several enterprises either went bankrupt or were adversely confronted by debts. This partially led to a crisis in the local economy.

The banks mainly catered to a small group of Sino-Vietnamese entrepreneurs. For example, the Vietnamese-Chinese Bank (Ngân hàng Đầu tư Việt-Hoa) invested in the Viet-Sino-Vietnamese construction company, and Phuong Nam Bank capitalized the Cau Tre factory and Sino-Vietnamese establishments in District 11. A prominent feature of the Sino-Vietnamese banks is the small amount of state capital involved. The initial charter capital is relatively small but quickly increases through the clan system. Due to cross-share purchases, the Sino-Vietnamese banks formed a fairly close association, and powerful banks, such as Phuong Nam Bank and De Nhat Bank, played a dominant role. These branches continuously added new locations and expanded their operations nationwide from 1996 to 2006.

For example, Saigon Thuong Tin Bank (Sacombank) opened a branch for the Sino-Vietnamese community in Ho Chi Minh City in 2006. Sacombank took a long time to meticulously investigate the local market before establishing this branch. Counting small household businesses, up to 30% of businesses in Ho Chi Minh City are owned by Sino-Vietnamese people (Thùy Vinh, 2007). Sino-Vietnamese enterprises are often inherited by family members and run as traditional occupations. The business growth rate of these enterprises is usually balanced and effective. Sino-Vietnamese people attach great importance to *prestige* in their business relationships, considering it a rationale for the business culture. Thus, administrative procedures are expedient for customers to

obtain loans or conduct transactions. The staff are specialized professionals who are rigorously trained. All forms, invoices, and documents are printed bilingually. The employees are required to understand the Chinese language and culture to better assist the bank's customers. The State Bank of Vietnam allowed Sacombank to open a representative office in Nanning, China, at the end of July 2007.

As one more example, Cho Lon People's Credit Fund was established in District 5 and operates under the law on cooperatives to meet the needs of small producers and traders in the city. The financial and banking sector has been a flourishing field and has played a crucial role in opening up the regional and international financial systems since 1996. It also encouraged foreign Chinese to invest in Ho Chi Minh City, which augmented Sino-Vietnamese and Chinese engagements in multiple spheres of the local economy. Despite a humble beginning with only 100 members and nearly 200 customers, by 2010 the Cho Lon People's Credit Fund had 5,300 members and nearly 2,100 customers. It approached deposit mobilization, receiving deposits and term deposits of organizations and individuals in Ho Chi Minh City. The credit fund offers short-term and medium-term loans from 12 to 36 months for production, businesses, services, house purchases, home repairs, and construction, according to customers' financial needs (Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 5 TP.HCM, 2010). On November 29, 2010, Cho Lon People's Credit Fund opened its new headquarters at No. 136 Nguyen Tri Phuong, Ward 9, District 5. At the same time, the State Bank of Vietnam's branch in Ho Chi Minh City issued Document No. 386/QD-HCM.08, dated November 23, 2010, approving Cho Lon People's Credit Fund's move to its new headquarters as part of its future business plan. However, the activities of credit funds and banks still stagnated from 1996 to 2016 compared to Sino-Vietnamese industry and services. In fact, Sino-Vietnamese banks and credit funds experienced fierce competition with other Vietnamese banks and credit funds. As a result, this bank only functions in the Sino-Vietnamese community.

5. DISCUSSION

The Sino-Vietnamese ethnic group still has a considerable commitment to the Ho Chi Minh City economy. Despite the government's attention, some Sino-Vietnamese businesses still operate on the black market. Meanwhile, many businesses have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. This adverse situation triggered the profits of Sino-Vietnamese enterprises to plummet, and a vast number have permanently closed due to the economic lockdown. As a result, the city council is recommended to save Hoa people's businesses and patronize all Sino-Vietnamese companies to allow the local economy to recover swiftly.

First and foremost, the authorities are advised to be acutely aware of the Sino-Vietnamese business culture. Despite various Sino-Vietnamese groups in Ho Chi Minh City, these people always forge their relationships based on their provenance. As a result, the authorities should closely forge these relationships to encourage them to actively participate in economic activities. The linkage of Hoa people's enterprises to form an economic network in the city is liable to make a strong economic community, whereby the directions of local authorities are of paramount importance to recognize the strength

of the Hoa people in economic development. Simultaneously, it is suggested that the city should facilitate the operations of household companies because this method of production is very prevalent among the Sino-Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City. The municipal committee on ethnic minorities should encourage the young Sino-Vietnamese generation to inherit their families' traditional professions and gain experience at a young age.

Nevertheless, it is evident that Sino-Vietnamese groups still find it challenging to compete with Vietnamese businesses in the region. The common pattern of Hoa people's enterprises are that they are small-scale businesses that lack far-reaching influence. The products of many Sino-Vietnamese businesses do not have sufficient quality to meet international standards. The necessity of being well equipped with modern technology for producing better products is poorly appreciated by Hoa people, which is likely to cause a rise of contraband and uncontrolled market security in Ho Chi Minh City. As a result, the authorities are advised to launch some aid packages to upgrade the technology and manufacturing processes of Hoa businesses. This financial aid is needed by Hoa companies to purchase new technologies and employ well-qualified employees. Also, the local authorities need to understand the current situation of all groups in the city and assist them in a timely manner with rational policies and a complete legal system for running their businesses. This policy is likely to deter Sino-Vietnamese people from illegal production and help all buyers acquire high-quality merchandise in the market.

Moreover, the economic recovery of Ho Chi Minh City is attractive to Vietnamese policymakers. Hoa people's enterprises, along with other groups have endured the negative effects of the pandemic for two years. As a result, the local authorities are advised to pay attention to the economic situation of the Hoa people and assist them with social allowance packages to minimize the potential vulnerability of companies facing interrupted economic activity.

Likewise, the authorities should encourage the relationships between the Sino-Vietnamese people and Chinese ex-pats in Southeast Asia to stimulate a dynamic regional economy after the pandemic. It is undeniable that the Sino-Vietnamese people forge strong relations with Chinese people in countries neighboring Vietnam. Their relationships may be those of kinship, nationality, or ethnicity. This benefit has helped the Sino-Vietnamese people thrive economically (Trần, 1998, p. 106).

Table 3 illustrates the steadfast economic alliances between the Hoa people and other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. The data show that the Sino-Vietnamese have a close relation with Chinese communities in Thailand and Malaysia at rates of 50% and 38.89%, respectively. Overall, the Hoa people keep in touch with countries that have a considerable Chinese population. The open-door policy of Vietnam since 1986 paved a way for this connection. The similarities of language and business culture are a critical factor to help Hoa people partner easily with other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia to forge economic links. Significantly, such linkages have triggered a widespread use of advanced technologies and factory management skills in running Hoa businesses. This strength helps Sino-Vietnamese people boost their incomes and establish an economic network in Southeast Asia. The authorities are recommended to make lenient

regulations for Chinese-based people's private enterprises to connect and expand cooperation for mutual benefit. Legal support can be seen as an assistance to the Sino-Vietnamese and an encouragement of international capital flows in the absence of obstacles. Simultaneously, it is recommended that the authorities should publish an official Ho Chi Minh City webpage to make available necessary directions for businesses citywide. Through the website, they can hold meetings and online seminars with Sino-Vietnamese companies and non-state economic enterprises to make job offers, information exchange, and support business relationships.

Table 3. Partnerships of Sino-Vietnamese businesses in Ho Chi Minh City with other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia in 2006

Business Partner	Percentage
Indonesia	11.11
Malaysia	38.89
Singapore	33.33
Philippines	11.11
Thailand	50
Cambodia	11.11
Myanmar	5.56
Others	11.11

Source: Trần (2005).

However, the interruption of the regional supply chain has caused a serious economic crisis for Southeast Asia. Markets in Southeast Asia underwent lockdowns, and the Sino-Vietnamese people are sensitive to economic instability and financial turbulence in such situations. In this adversity, it is highly recommended that Sino-Vietnamese people be in contact with overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia to catch new trends and to reconnect in the post-pandemic period. Business negotiations are crucial for them to maintain their partnerships and surmount multifaceted challenges amid the pandemic common to Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries.

Furthermore, training entails improvements in the quality of Sino-Vietnamese human resources. The Sino-Vietnamese people are not well-trained enough to manage their economic activities effectively. Thus, the authorities are advised to organize short-term courses in economics for the Sino-Vietnamese people so they are able to seize new trends of the urban economy and political policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam in the contemporary context. Accordingly, this would directly contribute to reinforcing the solidarity of the Sino-Vietnamese people to boost the local economy, which leads the national economy of Vietnam. Also, the use of their mother tongue should be ranked top in city policies. In fact, many young adults and teenagers are not proficient in Chinese, which creates a grave concern about the loss of their cultural heritage and customs. According to statistics, only 31.4% of Sino-Vietnamese people speak Chinese fluently

(Tổng cục Thống kê & Ủy ban Dân tộc, 2019, p. 19). The local authorities are recommended to implement favorable policies, primarily linguistic and vocational policies, to ensure the quality of human resources and meet the demand for preserving traditional customs in Hoa businesses. Young Hoa people should adequately understand that the role of tradition and mother tongue preservation is their emergent mission in the context of ethnic integration. Opening Chinese language centers is vital to teach the Mandarin script to young Sino-Vietnamese people as bilingualism is the best way to forge business links between Hoa companies.

Last, but not least, the number of tourists is predicted to rise in Ho Chi Minh City in the post-pandemic period. This is an opportunity for Sino-Vietnamese merchants in Ho Chi Minh City to promote their products and culture to tourists. Therefore, Sino-Vietnamese people should focus on their traditional products as soon as the pandemic ends. It is suggested that the model of Chinatown be established around bustling commercial centers and that annual trade fairs be organized. Oriental Medicine Street, Cuisine Street, Lantern Street, and Clothing Street can create a cultural space of Chinese culture and attract many tourists and visitors, whereby the economy of the Hoa people can be expected to significantly improve in the future. Moreover, it is highly recommended that social media be used as an effective channel for product promotion. A marketing campaign on popular social websites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, is crucial for Sino-Vietnamese people to circulate information about their commodities to both domestic and international customers. For example, sellers and business owners would be able to produce promotional materials and describe their merchandise and services on the Internet. This is expected to encourage a hybrid method of commerce, including online shopping and in-person shopping.

6. CONCLUSION

Sino-Vietnamese people have a significant impact on the thriving Ho Chi Minh City economy. Industry and handicrafts, commerce and services, and finance and credit sectors are deemed to be the strengths of the Hoa people. This paper makes four general recommendations on future economic activities of Hoa businesses in Ho Chi Minh City. First, the Sino-Vietnamese are recommended to expand their businesses in quantity and quality to include many products to satisfy the high demand of domestic and international customers. It is suggested that Sino-Vietnamese enterprises should closely keep in touch with Chinese people in Southeast Asia to boost revenue and follow new trends of the regional economy. Second, the authorities should aid Sino-Vietnamese people in running their businesses with appropriate policies and an effective legal system because legal support and a standardized legal system are crucial for enterprises to attract international capital without obstacles. Third, the local authorities should subsidize some weak Sino-Vietnamese companies that face adversity due to the global pandemic. Fourth, Sino-Vietnamese businesses should use social media to promote traditional merchandise and culture online because doing so will likely help them overcome financial difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is an abbreviated version of a scientific report entitled “Economic activities of Hoa people from 1996 to 2016 in Ho Chi Minh City” defended at the Annual Student Conference of Science at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in May 2019. I would like to thank my advisor, Duong Thanh Thong, M.A. I also wish to thank the Ho Chi Minh City Board of Hoa Ethnic Group Affairs, who provided me with accurate data to analyze in this research paper. Finally, I want to thank Associate Professor Nguyen Van Tuan, Mai Thi Hoa, and Dr. Steve Carlson for helping improve this paper for publication.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, M. J., Armstrong, R. W., & Mulliner, K. (2001). *Chinese populations in contemporary Southeast Asian societies: Identities, interdependence and international influence*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ban Công tác người Hoa TP. HCM. (2019). *Thống kê của Ban Công tác người Hoa về kinh tế ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Statistics of Department of Sino-Vietnamese people’s economy in Ho Chi Minh City]. Unpublished data.
- Carrier, J. G. (Ed.). (2005). *A handbook of economic anthropology*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849809290>
- Chen, M. (2003). *Inside Chinese business: A guide for managers worldwide*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Chen, M. (2004). *Khám phá bí mật kinh doanh của người Trung Quốc* [Discoveries on business secrets of Chinese people]. NXB. Trẻ.
- Đào, N. T. (2017). *Thế lực khách trú và vấn đề di dân vào Nam Kỳ* [Hakka force and the problem of immigration to Cochinchina]. NXB. Nhã Nam.
- Firth, R. (1972). Methodological issues in economic anthropology. *Man*, 7(3), 467-475. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2800918>
- Nguyễn, D. (2008). *Tổ chức xã hội của người Hoa ở Nam Bộ* [Social organization of Sino-Vietnamese people in southern Vietnam] [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City].
- Thùy Vinh (2007, August 8). *Sacombank đồng loạt khai trương 4 chi nhánh*. Đầu tư chứng khoán – Chuyên trang của báo Đầu Tư. <https://tinnhanhchungkhoan.vn/sacombank-dong-loat-khai-truong-4-chi-nhanh-post80590.html>
- Tổng cục Thống kê & Ủy ban Dân tộc. (2019). *Kết quả Điều tra thu thập thông tin về thực trạng kinh tế-xã hội của 53 dân tộc thiểu số năm 2019* [Statistics on socioeconomic situation of 53 ethnic minorities in 2019]. NXB. Thống kê.
- Trần, S. H. (1998). *Hoạt động kinh tế của người Hoa từ Sài Gòn đến Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Economic activities of Sino-Vietnamese people from Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City]. NXB. Tổng hợp.

- Trần, S. H. (2005). *Quan hệ kinh tế giữa người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh với người Hoa ở Đông Nam Á* [The relationship between the Sino-Vietnamese community in Ho Chi Minh City and the Chinese community in Southeast Asia]. Sở Khoa học và Công nghệ & Viện Kinh tế TP. Hồ Chí Minh.
- Trần, V. T. A. (2016). *Đời sống kinh tế người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Economic life of Sino-Vietnamese people in Ho Chi Minh City]. NXB. Văn hóa Văn nghệ.
- Trinh, T. M. L., Hoang, D. M. T. (2021). The naturalization of the Hoa communities in Southern Vietnam from 1955 to 1975. *Ho Chi Minh City University of Education Journal of Science*, 18(7), 1289-1298
- Ủy ban Mặt trận Tổ quốc Việt Nam Quận 6. (1991). *Người Hoa ở Quận 6, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Sino-Vietnamese people in District 6 of Ho Chi Minh City]. Unpublished manuscript.
- Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 5 Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. (2010, December 3). *Quyển tín dụng nhân dân Chợ Lớn khai trương trụ sở mới*. <http://www.quan5.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/tintuc/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?List=f73cebc3%2D9669%2D400e%2Db5fd%2D9e63a89949f0&ID=1121>
- Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 6. (2019). *Thống kê của Ban Kinh tế Ủy ban nhân dân Quận 6* [Statistic of the board of economy at District 6's People Committee]. Unpublished data.
- Ủy ban Nhân dân Quận 11. (2019). *Thống kê của Ban Kinh tế Ủy ban nhân dân Quận 11* [Statistic of the board of economy at District 11's People Committee]. Unpublished data.
- Vương, V. T. H. (2007). *Văn hoá kinh doanh của người Hoa ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Master's thesis, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn - Đại học Quốc gia TP. Hồ Chí Minh].
- Weidenbaum, M., & Hughes, S. (1996). *The Bamboo Network: How expatriate Chinese entrepreneurs are creating a new economic superpower in Asia*. Free Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Well-known Sino-Vietnamese markets in Ho Chi Minh City

No.	Name	Information
1	An Dong Market Center	Address: 34-36, An Duong Vuong, Ward 9, District 5 Size (m ²): 25,000 Primary goods: cosmetics, handicrafts, groceries, machinery, footwear, and fabrics.
2	Dong Khanh Market Center (Soái Kinh Lâm)	Address: 506 Tran Huong Dao, Ward 14, District 5 Size (m ²): 2000 Primary goods: various fabrics and clothing accessories.
3	Hoa Binh	Address: 18 Bui Huu Nghia, Ward 5, District 5 Primary goods: groceries, gold, silver, clothing, footwear, fabric, and food.
4	Tan Thanh	Address: 68, Pham Huu Chi, Ward 15, District 5 Primary goods: transport accessories, bicycles, motorcycles, electronics, and hand tools.
5	Vat lieu xay dung	Address: 1A, Trinh Hoai Duc, Ward 13, District 5 Primary goods: building materials, interior decoration.
6	Kim Bien	Address: 37 Van Tuong, Ward 13, District 5 Primary goods: chemicals, food, groceries, clothing, small fishery, watches, and computers.
7	Vat Tu	Address: 133 Hai Thuong Lan Ong, District 10, District 5. Primary goods: various materials, equipment, agricultural tools, fishery, and electrical equipment.
8	Xa Tay	Address: 36A Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Ward 11, District 5. Primary goods: fresh and processed foods.
9	Thuy Hai san	Address: 30A Tran Van Kieu, Ward 10, District 5 Primary goods: dried seafood.
10	Bau Sen	Address: 138/26 Nguyen Trai, Ward 3, District 5 Primary goods: vegetables, food, and groceries.

Source: Ban Công tác người Hoa TP.HCM (2019).

Appendix B: Well-known specialized professional streets in Ho Chi Minh City

No	Street name	Main goods	Scale
1	An Duong Vuong	Car parts	Part
2	Huynh Man Dat	Car parts	Part
3	Hung Vuong	Mobile and telecommunication	Part
4	Nguyen Trai	Sports equipment	Part

Source: Ban Công tác người Hoa TP.HCM (2019).

Appendix B: Well-known specialized professional streets in Ho Chi Minh City (cont.)

No	Street name	Main goods	Scale
5	Tran Chanh Chieu	Rice	Whole
6	Phu Giao	Rice	Whole
7	Xom Voi	Rice	Whole
8	Trang Tu	Glue	Part
9	Trang Tu	Nylon	Part
10	Phu Huu	Nylon, paper, wrap	Part
11	Tran Phu	Art and frames	Part
12	An Binh	Marble	Part
13	Luong Nhu Hoc	Traditional art attire	Part
14	Tran Phu	Coffins	Part
15	Phung Hung	Paper and paper products	Whole
16	Hai Thuong Lan Ong	Oriental medicine	Part
17	Trieu Quang Phuc	Oriental medicine	Part
18	Luong Nhu Hoc	Oriental medicine	Part
19	Hai Thuong Lan Ong	Paper and paper products	Part
20	Hoc Lac	Tobacco	Whole
21	Nguyen Van Cu	Photocopier and printing	Part
22	Hung Vuong	Machinery	Part
23	Tran Hung Dao	Wedding attire	Part
24	Nguyen Tri Phuong	Fruit	Part
25	Nguyen Chi Thanh	Vehicle repair	Part
26	Tran Hung Dao	Fabric	Part
27	Do Ngoc Thanh	Fabric	Part
28	Vo Van Kiet	Marble	Part
29	Nguyen Trai	Decoration	Part
30	Vo Van Kiet	Building materials	Part
31	Nguyen Tri Phuong	Vehicles	Part
32	An Duong Vuong	Vehicles	Part
33	Ta Uyen	Motorcycle parts	Whole
34	Tan Thanh	Motorcycle parts	Whole
35	Pham Huu Chi	Motorcycle parts	Part
36	Mac Cuu	Lumber	Part

Source: Ban Công tác người Hoa TP.HCM (2019).