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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, COOPERATION AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN THE NEW NORMAL



TABLE OF CONTENT

APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND BIG DATA IN THE FIELDS OF FINANCE, ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

BANK RUN AND SILICON VALLEY BANK	1
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa, Ho Minh Khoa, Huynh Vo Nhat Linh	1
BIG DATA AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS	14
Le Thi Minh, Vo Trung Hau	14
THE EFFICIENCY OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN RISK MANAGEMENTHE NAM A COMMERCIAL JOINT STOCK BANK	
Truong Thanh Loc, Tran Ngoc Thanh	23
VIETNAM - AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION IN THE NORMAL: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAMESE INVESTORS	
Nhu Nguyen Phuc Quynh*, Anh Nguyen Thi Nguyet, Duy Nguyen Anh	30
IMPACTS OF CREDIT GROWTH AND CREDIT RISK ON THE PROFIT OF VIETNA STOCK COMMERCIAL BANKS	
Dao Le Kieu Oanh*, Tran Thi Huong Ngan	43
FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMERS' DECISIONS TO USE E-BANKING AT JOIN' COMMERCIAL BANKS IN HO CHI MINH CITY	
Nguyen Duy Khanh ¹ , Pham Quoc Tham ²	57
HOW CHINA_USA POLITICAL TENSIONS AFFECT STOCK MARKET RETURN O AND THE USA? A QUANTILE VAR CONNECTEDNESS APPROACH	
Hao Wen Chang ¹ , Tsangyao Chang ² and Mei-Chih Wang ³	70
BANKING HUMAN RESOURCES BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTINTELLIGENCE AI	
Nguyen Huynh Chi	92
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TRAINING THROUGH IMPROVEMENT OF ST TESTING AND ASSESSMENT – CASE IN ACCOUNTING BRANCH, UNIVERSE ECONOMICS AND FINANCE	SITY OF
Thuy Thi Ha	102
ACTIVITIES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN VIETNAMESE COMMERCIAL AN OVERVIEW DURING THE COVID-19 RECOVERY PERIOD	
Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Châu, Đào Lê Kiều Oanh	109
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAM IN ATTRACTIVE FDI IN MINIMUM CORPORATE TAX IMPLEMENTATION	
Ngo Hoang Thong	117

IMPACTS OF STAT	E OWNERSHIP	AND	BUSINESS	CHARACTERIST	ICS ON	TAX
AVOIDANCE: EVIDENCE	N VIETNAM					128
Huyen Ngoc Nguyen, Than	h Dan Bui					128
RUSSIA'S IMPACTS	AND SCENES ON	BEING	G BANNED F	ROM SWIFT		143
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa 1, Ph	an Ngoc Anh ²					143
THE ROLE OF ACC YOUNGERS IN THE SOUT						
Vu Truc Phuc*, Nguyen Da	ng Hat, Nguyen Ai	n Phu, I) Dao Le Kieu (Oanh		151

DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAM, TRENDS AND POTENTIABILITY

DEVELOPING SMART HOME MODEL FOR APARTMENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY BASI ON INTERNET OF THINGS (IoT) TECHNOLOGY1	
Dang Thanh Thuy ¹ , Nguyen Thanh Dien ² 1	
TRANSPARENCY OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION OF CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRIS IN HO CHI MINH CITY – CASE STUDY OF APPLICATION OF ACCRUAL ACCOUNTING1 Truong Thanh Loc ^{1*} , Pham Thi Yen Nhi ²	193
FACTORS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY	
Truong Thanh Loc*, Dang Nguyen Tuong Han, Nguyen Ngoc Mai Phuong, Nguyen Thi Quy	
Huong2	20 /
THE CRITICAL FACTORS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENTION TO USE METAVER TECHNOLOGY FOR SUBJECTS RELATED TO IMPORT-EXPORT LEARNING2	
Van Thuy Nguyen Ho, Chau The Huu, Luan Thanh Nguyen*2	221
CONSUMER PERCEPTION ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT OF LUXUI BRANDS IN VIETNAM AND CHINA MARKETS2	
Tran Minh Tu ¹ 2	233
INFLUENCE OF WOM AND EWOM IN MAKING DECISION BUYING GOODS2	247
Doan Anh Tu ¹ , Kim Phi Rum ² , Nguyen Pham Hai Ha ³ 2	
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL IN VIETNAM2 Hoang Thi Chinh, Nguyen Hoang Phan2	
noang Thi Chinii, Nguyen noang rhan	23 /
BLOCKCHAIN APPLICATION IN MODERN LOGISTICS: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM	
Nguyen Nu Tuong Vi2	266
FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAL	
Vo Tien Si2	272
LEGAL FRAME FOR THE OPERATION OF THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS UTILIZING TO BLOCKCHAIN PLATFORM IN VIETNAM	
La Thi Khanh Linh	20/

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION – COOPERATION – GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN BUSINESS

FACTORS INFLUENCING BUSINESS ACCEPTANCE OF INDUSTRY 4.0 TECHN APPLICATIONS IN DONG NAI PROVINCE	
Thanh-Thu Vo*, Minh-Huong Tang	291
DIGITAL ORIENTATION, INNOVATION CAPABILITY AND FIRM PERFORMATION PROPOSAL RESEARCH MODEL	
Nguyen Van Hau	298
PREDICTION OF STUDENT'S BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE SMART LE. ENVIRONMENT: A COMBINED MODEL OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEOR TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE	Y AND
Nguyen Thi Hai Binh ¹ , Dao Y Nhi ² , Nguyen Thanh Luan ³ , Dang Quan Tri ⁴	309
THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT OF GRAMMARLY ON EFL WRITING COMPETEN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT. Nguyen Thi Hong Lien ¹ , Nguyen Truong Gia Minh ² , Nguyen Ngoc Vu ^{3*}	323
FACTORS AFFECTING PURCHASING DECISION OF THE YOUTH ON TIKTOK	
Ngoc Pham ¹ , Thanh Cong Tran*	
FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY BEHAVIORS OF WORKERS PRODUCTION AT CU CHI POWER COMPANY	
Minh Luan Le, Thi Trang Tran	345
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZA CITIZENSHOP BEHAVIOUR	
Nguyen Xuan Hung ¹ , Ha Le Thu Hoai ¹ , Nguyen Huu My Truc ^{2&3} , Pham Tan Nhat ^{2&3}	355
THE INNOVATION CAPACITY - THE ROLE OF LEADERS OF SMALL AND MENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM	
Huynh Nhut Nghia	365
PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON BU	
Ton Nguyen Trong Hien, Bui Tuyet Anh	
FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND SWITCHING INTENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN VIETNAM	
Ly Dan Thanh, Nguyen Phu Quoi, Tran Hoang Nam, Vo Hong Son, Nguyen Ngoc Thuy Tien	382
ENHANCE THE DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS	398
Tran Quang Canh, Hoang Thi Chinh	398

ASSESSING PATIENT SATISFACTION (BRAND) AFTER THE COVID-19 ITHU DUC CITY HOSPITAL	
Nguyen Hoang Dung 1*, Nguyen Huynh Bao An 2, Van Phuong Trang 2	408
INDUSTRIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR IS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Hoang-An Nguyen	417
IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS ON THE EMPLOYEES' SHARING IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY	
Le Thi Nhu Quynh ^{1,2} , Le Thi Giang ² , Truong Quang Dung ¹	426
THE EFFECT OF PERSONAL MOTIVATION ON THE TACIT KNOWLEI BEHAVIOR OF 5-STAR HOTELS' EMPLOYEES IN HO CHI MINH CITY	
Le Thi Giang, Nguyen Bach Hoang Phung	440
DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF ENTHE DIGITAL ERA: THE CASE OF VIETNAMESE ENTERPRISES	
Diep Nguyen Thi Ngoc ^{1*} , Canh Quang Tran ² , Anh Bach Hoang Ngoc ¹	453
FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE PRESCH	
Thi-Trang Tran ¹ , Thi-My-Dung Pham ² , Thi-Bich-Diep Le ^{1*}	466

RECOVERY COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE MEASUREMENT SCALI
OF AN GIANG474
Nguyen Vuong Hoai Thao ¹ , Nguyen Quyet Thang ²
PROSPECTS OF VIRTUAL REALITY TOURISM APPLICATION IN VIETNAM TOURISM PROMOTION
Nguyen Thi Hong Ha, Pham Thi Huong Giang
PERSONALIZATION TRAVEL TRENDING IN HO CHI MINH CITY IN THE CONTEXT OF POST COVID-19
Duong Bao Trung
IMPACTS OF MEDIA ON CUSTOMERS' DECISION TO CHOOSE FOOD AND BEVERAGI SERVICES POST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC51
Nguyen Thi Bich Van51
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION APPLICATION TO PROMOTE THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INBOUND TOURISM IN HO CHI MINH CITY52
Tran Trong Thanh
VIETNAM TOURISM AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC52
Nguyen Hoang Phan ¹ , Hoang Thi Chinh ² 52
NAVIGATING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DATA MINING ANI PRIVACY53
Pham Thai Hien53
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-REPORTED GENERAL WELL-BEING AND PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, TEACHERS, AND UNIVERSITY54:
Virginia Kelsey ¹ , Đăng Thi Mai Ly ^{2*} , Nguyễn Anh Khoa ² , Nguyễn Văn Tường ²

DIGITAL VERSUS NON- DIGITAL

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6
6
G 4
4
A
0
0
S
7
7

CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

COMPETENCE SCALE FOR UNIVERSITY LECTURERS	PROPOSE AN ONLINE TEACHING O
596	
en596	Duong Thi Kim Oanh*, Dang Thi Dieu Hier
G MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSS) BY FACULTY	EXAMINE USAGE OF LEARNING
OMICS (UEF) AND FINANCE WITH EXPANDED	STAFF AT UNIVERSITY OF ECONO
TAM)608	TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (T
ach Tran Huy608	Ha Truong Minh Hieu, Ngo Minh Hai*, Ma

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AN INDISPENSABLE EVOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATES

FACTORS AFFECTING THE APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING AT MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE
Truong Thanh Loc ¹ *, Nguyen Thi Thanh Truc ² 618
HRM DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: TAKING A ROAD OF SUCCESSION PLANNING629
Trương Phan Hoàng Anh, Giang Ngọc Anh629
THE IMPLICATION OF CONTACLESS SERVICE AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER
REVISIT INTENTION
Linh, Nguyen Duy Yen*640
TOURISM BRAND LOVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF ONLINE TOURIST EXPERIENCES, TOURIST-BRAND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY651
Thanh Nguyen Ngoc Le651
CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS IN CROSS-CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SoTL): A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY662
Punithan Moganathas ¹ , Jenny Hill ² , Andy VM. Kok ² , Matt Barr ² , Ruffin Relja ^{2*} , Philippa Ward ² , Duong Tran Quang Hoang ³ , Quynh Phuong Tran ³
LEVERAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE EVOLUTION IN VIETNAM
Nguyen, Tan Dat ¹ , Le, Dinh Thang ²

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS

FB-PROPHET MODEL FOR TIME SERIES FORECASTING IN SALES	691
Thanh Cong Tran	691
USING AI CODE IN C# PROGRAMMING	698
Nguyen Ha Giang	698
DETERMINANTS OF CONTINUANCE USAGE INTENTION OF MOBILE FOOD ORDERING APPLICATIONS (MFOAS) AMONG VIETNAMESE USERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SATISFACTION	E-
Lam Hoang Phuong ^{1*} , Nguyen Thi Kim Lien ² , Tien Hung Nguyen ³ , Vinh Long Nguyen ⁴	705
DECODING MARKETING INSIGHT: INSIGHT FROM OUTSIDE	718
Hoàng Thị Hằng, Trần Thành Công*	718
DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND DATA SECURITY: HOW FINTECH IS RESHAPING BANKING	r724
Hoàng Văn Hiếu, Trần Ngọc Thiên Ngân	724

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNIC GAME-BASED GRAMMAR TEACHING	
Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen ¹ , Tran Quoc Thao ²	
APPROACHES TO TEACHING L2 LISTENING:	749
CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN REAL-LIFE AND CLASSROOM-BASED LISTENING .	
DEFINING ROLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY LANCED CLASSROOM	
Ho Xuan Tien, Duong My Tham	755
EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING INVESTMENT IN PORTFOLIO - I ENGLISH WRITING LEARNING: A LITERATURE REVIEW	
Ly Gia Huy ¹ , Tran Quoc Thao ²	763
EXPLORING EFL LEARNER IDENTITIES IN PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNI A HIGH SCHOOL IN AN GIANG PROVINCE	
Nguyen Hong Thien ¹ , Tran Quoc Thao ²	774
THE VALUES OF SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A LITERAREVIEW	
THE ISSUE OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE Nguyen Dinh Tuan	
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS' MOTIVAT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING	
Huynh Thanh Nhon ¹ , Tran Quoc Thao ²	812
EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF WRITING ANXIETY ON VIETNAMESI UNDERGRADUATES' WRITING PERFORMANCE: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY	
Nguyen Ngoc Nguyen, Nguyen Hoang Phan	821
THE APPLICATION OF THE "FLIPPED CLASSROOM" MODEL IN TEACHING ENGLE THE VIETNAMESE UNIVIVERSITY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT	
THE USE OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN EFLFLIPPED CLASSR	
Nguyen Quynh Thao Vy ^{1,*} , Duong My Tham ²	
INSIGHTS INTO ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' USE OF PHRASAL VERBS IN ACAI WRITING	
Do Thi Thanh Thuy Tran Quoc Thao	860

LAW IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

LEGALISING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INFRINGEMENTS IN RUSSIA – A WAR TACTIC IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE869
Bui Thi Hong Ninh*869
MODEL OF ASSET REGISTRATION WORLDWIDE AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM IN IMPROVING ASSET REGISTRATION LAWS880
Vu Anh Sao ^{1,2} , Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai ² 880
LEGAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) - INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM887
Le Hoang Minh Huy*, Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Dao Trong Duc, Ky Dieu Linh, Bui Thi Thuy Linh, Nguyen Nam Trung
SOUTH KOREA'S EXPERIENCES ON PROPERTY REGISTRATION LAW - LESSONS FOR VIETNAM896
Vu Anh Sao, Pham Huynh Bao Oanh896
THE RISE OF REMOTE WORK: LEGAL CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT LAW IN VIETNAM903
Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai ¹ , Nguyen Thi Ngoc Loan ²
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE EMERGING AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE910
Nguyen Thi Thu Trang910
THE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX ON FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) CORPORATIONS IN VIETNAM921
Trần Ngọc Thanh ¹ 921
CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES AND TAX MANAGEMENT ISSUES933
Le Huynh Phuong Chinh, Ngo Thi Khanh Linh, Pham Ngoc Lan Anh
EXPERIENCE IN KOREA AND CHINA ON TAX MANAGEMENT FOR CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES941
Duong Anh Son ¹ , Tran Vang Phu ² 941
LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON REGULATIONS RALATED TO PERSONAL INCOME TAX WHEN EARNING INCOME THROUGH E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS IN VIETNAM, TAKING THE CASE OF INDIVIDUALS DOING BUSINESS THROUGH TIKTOK APPLICATION946
Nguyen Duc Tri ¹ , Hoang Minh Châu ² 946
THE COMPATIBILITY ON THE SCOPE OF MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE (MLA) IN CRIMINAL MATTERS AND THE CONDITIONS OF REFUSAL MLA IN CRIMINAL MATTERS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE LAW AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES WHICH VIETNAM HAS SIGNED.

Pham Huynh Bao Oanh	956
TAX POLICY FOR E-COMMERCE OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD RECOMMENDATIONS TO VIETNAM	967
Tigayon Thaim Minn Chaim, Ta Tin Yan Tinn, Thain Bain Tuni Ma	
LEGAL REGULATIONS FOR ENTERPRISE OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE INFORM	MATION
ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORM	974
Truong Kim Phung*, Nguyen Hoang Chuong	974
"ROBOT TAX" – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM	981
Gian Thi Le Na, Pham Phuong Doanh	981
WTO APPELLATE BODY REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF ESCALATING GEOPOI	ITICAL
TENSIONS	
Nguyen Nam Trung	988

EXPERIENCE IN KOREA AND CHINA ON TAX MANAGEMENT FOR CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Cross-border trade in products and collecting goods taxes are familiar practices. However, as science and technology, particularly information technology, advance quickly, e-commerce operations become more thrilling and sophisticated. Since then, the aim has been that the tax legal laws be completed to contribute to the regulation of cross-border e-commerce activities that are developed stably and safely for stakeholders while not causing tax revenue loss for the State. This paper examines the lessons from Korea and China on this topic and gives suggestions for Vietnam.

Keywords: tax, e-commerce, goods, cross-border

1. Introduction

E-commerce has continued to grow globally in 2021. Although COVID-19 has significantly impacted the economics of several countries, the epidemic has resulted in a substantial increase in e-commerce. In terms of e-commerce penetration, Asia-Pacific remains the fastest-expanding area. E-commerce sales in South Korea have increased from nearly a fifth of all transactions in 2019 to more than a quarter in 2020. During 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, India, the world's third largest shopper, had a 25% increase in e-commerce, driven mainly by online sales in major urban regions. China continues to be the undisputed leader in the world's largest e-commerce consumer market. Although Chinese consumers spend roughly twice as much on online purchases as consumers in important Western European and Japanese markets, the United States continues to lead e-commerce sales per capita, closely trailed by the United Kingdom (Sindrestean et al., 2021).

2. Experiences of Korea and China in combating tax loss for e-commerce activities

2.1 Korean experience

South Korea is one of the world's most fantastic e-commerce markets, with 93% of the population accessing the Internet. According to industry data, retail e-commerce volumes will continue to rise, partly due to the influence of COVID-19. Internet shopping is trendy among those under 40, with over 97% of Koreans aged 20 to 39 utilising it. Food and beverages and home appliances will be the top online shopping categories in terms of sales in 2021. Because of increased time at home and travel constraints, the cost of online trip booking and organising services has decreased dramatically in recent years. Clothing, shoes, sportswear, and accessories were the most popular online purchases last year, with a high-profit margin. Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, online shopping has grown in popularity worldwide. Many South Koreans have increased their internet shopping due to safety concerns. According to a survey, most respondents increased their internet shopping compared to traditional shopping behaviour before the

pandemic. Food and consumables were the most popular internet purchases during the pandemic (Jobst, 2022).

The Korean tax agency has implemented steps to combat tax evasion through e-commerce, including (Hue, 2017):

First, the tax agency has to check for incorrect revenue declarations when paying via a bank account.

Many firms falsify their revenue when filing tax returns when payments are made through a bank account in online transactions. To avoid this issue, the Korean tax agency checked the account number displayed on the website or produced a fake order and verified the financial transaction, allowing the tax authority to establish whether the revenue was erroneously claimed.

Second, the tax agency must determine revenue using bank data.

Unlike traditional commerce, orders and contracts are made online and delivered via a shipping business. The Korean tax agency will compare the e-commerce sales company's data with the shipping company's to determine whether the revenue was improperly stated.

Third, make use of customer analytics data.

E-commerce enterprises create a database of all transactions, using personal information about consumers such as gender, age, address, quantity information, purchase history, and purchasing trends as marketing data and customer rewards depending on purchases. As a result, the Korean tax authorities can use bonus points and discount prices to calculate taxes.

Fourth, use data stored on the server (database server).

Currently, most businesses that trade items via e-commerce have a server with a database that connects information about inventories and goods consumed via online databases and database administration. The server integrates and manages the entire tax calculation database, which includes information about e-commerce users, purchase history, and payment information such as credit cards, inventory, and shipping details. Korean tax authorities require businesses to provide this data and combine it with other information to determine their tax liability.

The tax investigation process is uniformly applied to enterprises doing other types of commercial business for e-commerce transactions; however, this investigation process can be supported by information technology applications such as: collecting computer data using digital crime investigation techniques; recovering deleted files in computers; reading lock files; collecting email; collecting the accounting database of the accounting management system; and collecting and analysing member data (Sung et al., 2015).

2.2 China's experience

According to statistics, China's Internet population climbed by 35 million individuals in December 2022 compared to December 2021. More than a billion people in the country have internet access, resulting in a rapidly developing mobile app market. China will account for almost one-fifth of the world's 5.3 billion internet users by 2022. The number of mobile internet users in China has consistently expanded over the years, laying the groundwork for the growth of e-commerce transactions in China. Online shopping has become a popular way for people worldwide to find their favourite products, thanks to the rapid development of the Internet and international transportation services. Cross-border e-commerce in China is also rapidly expanding. According to China's Ministry of Commerce, the import and export value of China's cross-border e-commerce will reach 6.5 trillion yuan by 2020, with an annual growth rate of more than 30% (Thomala, 2023).

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the People's Bank of China, the General Administration of Customs (GAC), and five other ministries jointly issued the Circular on Promoting the Fast and Healthy Development of E-Commerce in 2012 for local E-commerce pilot programmes (Tsang, 2016a). Shanghai, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Zhengzhou, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Fuzhou, and Fujian have been chosen as Comprehensive Pilot Areas (CPA) to develop cross-border e-commerce operations (Tsang, 2016b).

On December 30, 2013, the Chinese Ministry of Finance collaborated with tax administration authorities to produce Circular No. 89 on tax policy for cross-border e-commerce retail exports, which became effective on January 1, 2014. As a result, e-commerce retail exporters who meet the following conditions may be eligible for refunds of value-added tax and consumption tax (White, 2023).

First, a cross-border e-commerce retail export company registered in the comprehensive e-commerce pilot area (CPA) and registered the export date, goods description, unit of measure, quantity, unit price, and amount on the cross-border e-commerce online service platform at the company's registered location (1 in 10 of the CPA).

Second, the cross-border e-commerce retail export declaration processes with Customs at the CPA site have been completed.

Third, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the State Taxation Administration of China (STAC) do not list export items as free from export tax refunds.

According to the State Tax Administration of China's tax policy No. 36 of 2019, any company with e-commerce activities in the region and CPAs that meet specific criteria will be subject to a corporate income tax review plan, where the taxable income percentage can be as low as 4%, as opposed to 25% in general cases; to get such the tax preferences businesses must meet the following requirements (Li, 2020):

First, the firm is registered at the CPA, and the date, name, unit of measurement, quantity, unit price, and quantity of the exported items are recorded on the cross-border e-commerce online service platform where the company is registered (i.e., the CPA's location).

Second, the cross-border e-commerce retail export declaration processes with Customs have been completed at the CPA's location.

Third, the exported items lack an official invoice (i.e., legal proof of purchase), and the export is under tax policy, which states that the exported products are exempt from value-added tax and excise duty.

Furthermore, if organisations with cross-border e-commerce activities meet the parameters for preferential policies for low-profit small businesses, they will benefit from preferential corporate income tax policies. As a result, if the money enterprises receive is tax-exempt by Article 26 of China's Law on Corporate Income Tax, firms can take advantage of preferential policies for tax-exempt income.

According to China's experience, one of the contents of tax management for e-commerce activities is to concentrate on resolving the issue of executing the right to tax by country. Boundaries bind each country and have its own taxation system, whereas e-commerce is a transaction in a virtual space that transforms the entire world into a large market. As a result, allocating taxing rights between countries is critical (Xie, 2012). However, to achieve the goal, criteria for determining permanent establishment in e-commerce transactions must be developed, as well as a mechanism for information sharing and cooperation between countries to avoid conflicts with other countries worldwide and double taxation on e-commerce transactions (Zeng at el., 2012).

China has signed international tax cooperation agreements with countries worldwide, typically a network of more than 100 bilateral double taxation avoidance agreements with provisions allowing tax

authorities in the two countries to exchange information for tax administration (Li, 2020). Suppose the tax authorities need to verify information about foreign suppliers in general and specifically suppliers of ecommerce goods and services. In that case, the Chinese tax authorities will propose that the tax authorities of the agreement partner country coordinate verification, thus best serving the domestic tax administration (Han, 2020).

3. Conclusion

Korea has implemented legislation requiring the provision of technology products and services in Korea to go through enterprises established in Korea (for example, Google must provide products and services in this market through Google Korea). In terms of value-added tax obligations, this country is also studying and amending in the direction of learning from the tax authorities of European countries so that when calculating value-added tax, it will be collected based on the geographical location of consumers rather than the location of the company's headquarters. Between 2008 and 2014, the Korean tax administration collected 314.7 billion won (\$277 million) in corporate income tax from Oracle, a US database management software business, through harsh manoeuvres. Cisco, a South Korean network equipment supplier, is also accused of tax evasion by forcing tiny distribution partners in other countries to deal directly with suppliers at lower tax rates (Suk-yee, 2017). Furthermore, the National Assembly of Korea passed a bill in August 2021 that prohibits large app store operators such as Google and Apple from compelling software developers to use their payment systems, effectively barring them from taking commissions for in-app purchases. It is the first major economic constraint on Apple Inc. (AAPL.O) and Alphabet Inc's (GOOGL.O) Google, which has been chastised worldwide for requiring proprietary payment methods that charge up to 30% commissions. This new legislation is also expected to protect software developers and users and prevent tax evasion through e-commerce transactions (Yang, 2021).

According to Chinese experience, it is necessary to clarify and strengthen the legal responsibility of third-party intermediaries and financial institutions that provide information related to businesses operating in the field of private e-commerce to tax authorities because, according to other countries' regulations, the collection of information from third parties by tax authorities is still minimal due to issues related to customer information security (Digwatch, 2023).

According to the Tax Administration Law terms, business organisations operating on Vietnamese territory must declare tax before engaging in business activity. Foreign enterprises without permanent establishments in Vietnam that provide goods and services to domestic business organisations and individuals doing business in Vietnam, as well as domestic business organisations and individuals who are buyers, will be required to declare and deduct and pay tax on behalf of foreign enterprises. In theory, the buyer is not a taxpayer for VAT and corporate income, but because the seller is located outside of Vietnam, the registration need remains limited. As a result, the management agency must study and supplement the regulation. Before providing cross-border services to domestic consumers, foreign service providers must register for tax (via electronic method) with the Vietnamese tax authority and pay tax on income generated when buyers pay for arising services under Vietnamese regulations (Hue, 2017). Suppose this regulation is adopted and successfully executed. In that case, it will aid in effective tax administration for foreign ecommerce service providers, creating a level playing field comparable to domestic service providers. As a result, supporting e-commerce activities in general, and cross-border e-commerce in particular, to establish a healthy and safe environment for all stakeholders.

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