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A RESEARCH PLAN AND A REFLECTIVE WRITING ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

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Qualitative Research Method

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PART I: RESEARCH PLAN

Tittle: Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the impacts on exporters in Vietnam market: a case of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

1. ABSTRACT

This paper is a research plan for the purpose of conducting doctoral research in the next three years. After the event of internalisation, Vietnam economy has attracted several investment from foreign investors. Also, various free trade agreements (FTAs) have been signed by Vietnam government. Although there are different researchers contribute to the study of FTAs, there is no database on the influence of FTAs in Vietnam on small and medium sized exporters. So, the main objective of this research is to examin the impications of FTAs on small and medium sized exporters in Vietnam. The author will follow the qualitative method and conduct interviews with ten exportation companies in Vietnam. It is noted that ethical issues will be considered under UK ethics codes.

2. INTRODUCTION

Since early 1990s, Vietnam has engaged in the internationalization, leading to several commercial events. The country first started to normalize its relationship with the United States as well as countries of European Union. This normalization event has brought opportunities for Vietnam and also other developing countries. Vietnam actively participated in the global economic integration and many international organizations like WTO as well as by a lot of bilateral and multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed by the Vietnamese government, of which Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a prime instance. Thus, after the events, the trade barriers were removed and Vietnam has witnessed significant changes in economy. For example, according to Anwar and Nguyen (2010), the country has attracted a huge number of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) for the past three decades and are now

continuing to increase rapidly. As a consequence, there has been more private owned enterprises and foreign invested companies operating in Vietnam while there were mainly government owned corporations existed before the period of 1990s. Furthermore, the reformation has transferred Vietnam economy from an agricultural country to a developing commercial and industrial country, which boosted Vietnam in top of exportation country in Southeast Asia.

Therefore, it can be seen that import and export play important roles which influence the development of Vietnam. However, the country's market is still considered as small market that would not be effective in generating and accelerating the economic growth as a whole. Besides, it is also a significant challenge for Vietnam companies to catch on the global markets. So, Vietnamese government have introduced several programs in trading, especially for globalisation, global trading and commercial, in which would lower the trading barriers and encourage internationalisation for Vietnam corporations. One of the program is to discuss and launch numerous agreements of trading with other countries which are Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Regional Trade Agreements, for the purpose of promoting exporting and commercial of Vietnam to oversea markets.

Given the high proportion of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam market and the essential roles of FTAs, there is a gap on the analysis of the relationship between FTAs and small and medium sized exporters. In other words, the research problem regarding the influence of FTAs on the SMEs in the context of Vietnam remains untouched. To fill the gap, this paper aims to contribute to the literature of FTAs and SMEs analysis through investigating the view of owners of small and medium sized exporters in Vietnam on the opportunities and challenges that FTAs have created for them. In order to clarify the research purpose, the key research question of this paper can be identified as follows:

What is the impact of the Free Trade Agreements on small and medium sized exporters in Vietnam market?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. SMEs and its roles in the development of economy

3.1.1. SMEs definition and roles of SMEs

Small to medium enterprises as known as SMEs is a term that has been used widely in Europe, World Bank and also the United Nations. However, there is no specific definition of SMEs. The European Union has stated SMEs as corporations that are independent and have less than 500 employees. Hillary (2000) supported the definition of SMEs by describing SMEs are organisations with certain limits on workforces. On the other hand, Lee-Ross and Lashley (2009) found the relations between the market and the size of the firm. The scholars argued that a firm in certain sector of a big market is considered as small whilst others in a small market might be medium or even large sized businesses. Additionally, despite of the smaller size, SMEs employ more workers than larger enterprises.

Regarding to the roles of SMEs, those enterprises play different essential roles in economy development. According to Beck and Demirguc-Kunt (2006), in emerging economy, the existence of several SMEs has created the competitive and innovative benefit in diversity markets. Moreover, SMEs also strengthen the living standard in both countryside and urban areas (North and Smallbone, 2000). In other words, the operation of SMEs has direct and indirect affect in a huge number of country's resident. For example, in a developing market, citizen tend to use various products and services with reasonable price from SMEs rather than from large and government owned organisations as those organisations often do not offer such services.

The growing of SMEs also provide more jobs for the workforce in a country. It is argued that in a country development, SMEs help to reduce the rate of idle labor force (Danson, 2002). It can be seen that living standard and unemployment rate are significant issues in developing countries, especially when economic recession happen. Thus, through rules and policies introduced by governments that encourage the development of small businesses, SMEs play an essential function to support the economy (Kongolo, 2010).

SMEs contribute to the transformation of an economy from agriculture focus to commercial and industrial focus. In particular, these enterprises help to produce more products and services for residents. As stated above, government owned corporations and large companies such as multinational companies have sustainable position in developing country. The join of SMEs into the structure has supported the economy, by linking customers with SMEs and large organisations, thus, making the economy more flexible, effective and stable. In a study of Chen (2006), the author claimed that SMEs roles were well-known in various developing economies including Japan, Korea and other Asian countries. There are approximately more than 25% of SMEs in developing countries and SMEs accounted for around 40% in Asian. SMEs are believed to lift the economy out of poverty and benefit the citizen (Chen, 2006).

From scholars' perspective, improving management of SMEs would enhance the development of an economy while in employment view, SMEs generate new job opportunities for citizen. From business perspective, SMEs not only create goods/services but also expand the existing goods/services. Cho (1994) described that SMEs could change quickly to adapt with different markets. Therefore, it is vital to form a better environment where both SMEs and large organisations operate and contribute to the development of economy. The development of the United States economy would be a great example in which SMEs boost the whole country's economy. These companies also help the US economy succeed in technology and innovation. Moreover, around half of the US labor got their jobs in SMEs. The percentage of SMEs and workforce has been recorded to rise up to 90% and 80%, respectively in 2004 (Sengenberger et al., 1990). New Zealand economy also benefit from SMEs that employ around 60% new workforce every year. Other SMEs in European countries created nearly 7 million job opportunities, accounted for 70% in those countries. Even in Africa market, the proportion of SMEs are 95% (Venter et al., 2005).

3.1.2. SMEs around the world

SMEs in developing countries currently are not receiving enough support from government policies while in developed countries, government encourage SMEs by advanced funding. The main reason is government in developed market consider SMEs as an important factor to

resolve any challenges on the economy development. According to Buhalis and Cooper (1998), SMEs in those developed countries are believed to create jobs and innovative supplies that would strengthen the local markets.

Government in Western countries lways encourage the development of SMEs by introducing several regulations for the purpose of an iproved living quality for the country as a whole. For instance, regulations in European countries have been reported to exist among members of European Union as well as other developing markets. In the event of downturn in economy, there were 30% of workers relocating to private sector while large companies flopped and had to reorganized (Subba Rao et al., 2003). In contrast, in developing countries in Asia, such as Vietnam and China which received criticism from researchers about the economy structure. Storey (2003) stated that the link between SMEs and other organisations of these developing markets is not well- established. These countries tend to focus on the role of governement-owned enterprises, resulted in the unbalanced of economy as the large companies often have significant control.

Despite the strong support from government, some studies still show that SMEs have not got adequate promotes. In order to expand the businesses, SMEs need funding as well as supported policies from governments, financial institutions and so on. However, Qian and Li (2003) emphasized that most SMEs do not satisfy the requirements in order to get funding and encouragement from those listed stakeholders above. The key reason was mentioned in a research of Buckley (1989), pointing out that these issues is followed by the bureaucracy environment, especially in developing countries. Additionally, SMEs issues also arise from themselves including the shortage of skills in management as well as innovation and sufficient technology, making the businesses' performance less effective.

3.2. Vietnam economy and SMEs in Vietnam

3.2.1. Overview of Vietnam economy

Vietnam has a high number of workers and it is reported that each year the country recruits around 1.5 million more workers. Most of them are from the countryside without sufficient qualifications. However, in the growing technology decade nowadays, it is required high

qualified labor to join different industries. Harvie and Lee (2002) show that government owned and large corporations demand people with qualifications as these organisations mainly focus on “heavy industries”. Thus, the blooming of SMEs have solved the problem in Vietnam labor force. It is recorded that the employment of local employees from SMEs in Vietnam has been increased significantly every year and it is higher than the recruitment by large corporations (Crick and Chauhdry, 1995). From 2013 to 2016, the number of new SMEs has doubled, leading to the higher employment rate with a standard of around 50 employees working in SMEs.

Since the transition from agriculture focus to commercial focus in the period of 1990, Vietnam has been successful in improving the life for its residents. Although there was an economy recession, Vietnam still presents a remarkable and stable growth. The normalisation and internationalisation have brought the economy of Vietnam to a higher stage, which benefit the SMEs. The country can enter global trading and develop its exportation in numerous markets, including western countries like the United States, the European Union. In the other side, Vietnam economy also takes advantage from the entry of multinational corporations to the market. Besides, the change in Vietnam economy leads to the extra demand for the country and other countries globally. One of the reform demand can be mentioned is the corporation with World Bank, resulted in the change in management and trading regulations for exporting businesses. Regnier (2000) expressed the same opinion when adding that various type of organisation like non- profit and non- government organisations in Vietnam have impact on the government policies.

During Vietnamese war, the country economy was considered as a backward economy in which government –owned corporations had main responsibility. At that time, Vietnam solely focused on agriculture. After the reformation of economy, in order to survive, those government- owned corporations had to choose between restructuring themselves to fit in the new economic form or continue to rely on the government (Zutshi, 1997). Most of companies who continue to run under Vietnam government control traditionally failed and became burden for Vietnam economy. Those who restructured and transformed themselves into new

organisations also suffered failure as they were lack of skills in various aspects such as technology, management (Harvie and Lee, 2002). There were some successful companies but the proportion of them were relatively low.

At the early stage of the economic development, government – owned enterprises in Vietnam still dominated the economy due to the fact that SMEs did not receive enough investment to run the businesses properly. However, after the reformation and the restructuring of government- owned enterprises mentioned above, there were gaps in the Vietnam market as the number of large corporations decreased. In order to fill the gaps and fulfil the demand of the economy at that time, Tambunan (2009) argued that the increasing number of SMEs helped to minimize the economic burden. Although SMEs faced similar issues just like government-owned enterprises, they still emerged quickly in Vietnam market. Beal (2001) explained some main reasons which caused the growing in number of Vietnamese SMEs. Firstly, with small number of workers, SMEs are more flexible and can operate easier than larger enterprises. Secondly, Vietnamese SMEs work independently, without the control of government, which can urge management of SMEs to gain knowledge and practice when running businesses in such economy environment. However, lack of control from government also pose a threat that SMEs do not receive adequate encouragement from the government.

3.2.2. The characteristics of SMEs in Vietnam

Studies have shown that current SMEs in Vietnam have same characteristics with those who operate in other developed markets. Vietnamese SMEs are willing to accept challenges and are described as risk seekers in order to create profit for their businesses, especially in the fast changing environment nowadays. This characteristic has shaped the environment in Vietnam and made it a more positive environment for different firms in the market. According to Harvie and Lee (2002), most of Vietnamese SMEs currently are family businesses, which is similar with other global markets. Family businesses have a key strength that all employees are family members who often share same thoughts. The strength would help their business overcome problems quickly and effectively.

Also, Rowe et al. (2012) determined that SMEs depend solely on the domestic culture where they operate. In Vietnam, it can be seen that profit is the main aspect that SMEs focus on. Thus, for the purpose of generating profit, management in Vietnamese SMEs are likely to concentrate on short-term opportunities rather than long-term orientation. This is also the main difference that distinguishes Vietnamese SMEs from other firms in developed countries. In developed markets, SMEs would mainly focus on the sustainability of the companies, consisting of labor force, technology, innovation, suppliers or customers. Huy and Filiatrault (2006) explained the difference might be the cause of lack of knowledge and skills from both managers of SMEs and Vietnamese government.

3.3. FTAs in Vietnam and Asia

In the early years of 1990s, internationalisation has captured the attention from countries all over the world. Also, at that time, Vietnam had a significant reformation in the economy. Several trading agreements have been formed globally, including free trade agreements (FTAs) or regional and bilateral trade agreements, thanks to the liberalisation. While regional and bilateral trade agreements only practice in particular countries, FTAs benefit most countries around the world (Gable, 2009). In details, for regional and bilateral trade agreements, the trade barriers could be lessened among members of the agreements only. Thus, those barriers remain unchanged for countries that are not members of those agreements. In other words, the restrictions limit the ability of other countries. Moreover, signing the regional or bilateral trade agreements may lower the quality of local goods and services.

As FTAs were introduced, several scholars expressed their concerns on the impact of FTAs on the economic development. Beine et al (2010) emphasized that FTAs strongly help the trading activities globally even though some different in regulations such as taxes are still in the top concern. Additionally, developing countries in Asia area are now implementing FTAs for economic development, leading to the quick growth both industrially and commercially and bring those Asian countries closer to other countries from different regions. Another concern that has raised attention among researchers is FTAs and its contribution to the fair in agreement of developed countries and developing countries.

Over the last decade in Asia, with the global intergration and liberalisation, countries in this area have witnessed a significant change. As ASEAN was formed and developed, members in this organisation benefit from the regional trade agreements, resulting in the better GDP and capability. Furthermore, Asia has gained interest and received huge investments from developed countries around the world. Some of the countries with incredible development that could be mentioned are China, Japan and Korea (Wong and Chan, 2003). From the past until now, these countries have taken the advantage of low cost workforce and implemented cost effective production to achieve the commercial success throughout the world.

In Southeast Asia region, ASEAN is known as one of the biggest associations that promotes different aspects including cultural, political, educational, economic, etc. among the members. The association currently become a leading commercial network in the Southeast Asia as it helps to connect all biggest countries in Asia. Furthermore, to enrich its position and impact regionally, ASEAN has engaged with other nearby countries, for instance Korea and New Zealand, to sign agreements for free trading. Among members of ASEAN, Singapore is considered as one of the strongest economy with impressive location, active economy and excellent services in various sectors. Besides, Thailand and Malaysia also are famous for their diversification in industries, namely, electronic, modern technology and garments (Calvo Pardo et al., 2009). Regarding Vietnam economy, the country has several advantages from favorable geography to the encouragement of government.

Since 1990s, Vietnam has engaged in the internationalization, leading to several commercial events. The country first started to normalize its relationship with the United States as well as countries of European Union. This normalization event has brought opportunities for Vietnam and also other developing countries. Vietnam actively participated in the global economic integration and many international organizations like WTO as well as by a lot of bilateral and multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed by the Vietnamese government, of which Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a prime instance. Thus, after the events, the trade barriers were removed and Vietnam has witnessed significant changes in economy. For example, according to Anwar and Nguyen (2010), the country has attracted a huge number of Foreign

Direct Investments (FDIs) for the past three decades and are now continuing to increase rapidly. As a consequence, there has been more private owned enterprises and foreign invested companies operating in Vietnam while there were mainly government owned corporations existed before the period of 1990s.

In one report of government in 2016 from the National Committee, there has been 15 FTAs that were discussed and authorized in Vietnam. In particular, the country has trading agreements with ASEAN members and around five FTAs with some Asian countries such as Japan, China, India, New Zealand and Australia. Vietnam also joined FTAs with European Union and the Trans Pacific Partnership. Although Vietnam would continue to join other FTAs in the near future, the country get criticised for limitations in the global economic. First of all, Vietnam is considered to mainly relies on the low-cost labor force and resources without paying attention on the performance of new technology and qualified labor. Next, although Vietnam get lots of investment from foreigners, those investment are not enough for the purpose of improving modern technologies to replace the out-of-date technologies. Finally, the quality of Vietnam infrastructure is relatively low.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

4.1. Research philosophy and research approach

Several authors agreed on the important of research paradigm in research. A researcher must consider to identify research paradigm to make the research clear and easy to understand (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Likewise, Bryman and Bell (2015) clarified that scholars must understand the research philosophy and research approach before starting to deal data.

Research philosophy defines the perspective of researchers on collecting and analysing data. Mkansi and Acheampong (2012) suggested that there are two key research philosophies, which are interpretivism and positivism. In terms of interpretivism approach, the data are gathered based on the observations and perceptions of researchers (Holden and Lynch, 2004). On the other hand, positivism is considered as an efficient approach for collecting and analysing data

(Hunt, 1991). Likewise, according to Jumah (2006), positivism philosophy apply hypothesis for the purpose of studies.

Within two research philosophies, the author decides to conduct this research by using positivism. To explain, it can be seen that this study structure and interview questions are designed based on the literature of SMEs and FTAs in Vietnam. Also, this paper concentrates on the situation of Vietnam joining different FTAs but there is shortage of studies about the implications of FTAs on small and medium sized Vietnamese exporting companies. So, the research require a realistic philosophy, in which positivism are perfectly fit the objectives of this paper. Moreover, in accordance with positivism, the author will adopt deductive approach. It means that specific cases of small and medium sized exporters in Vietnam will be captured.

4.2. Research method

Qualitative method and quantitative method are two common research method. Bowen (2009) stated that in business, researchers apply qualitative method to examine individuals or groups relating to the social problems and human activities. Thus, result from qualitative research can be pictures or words. In contrast, quantitative method includes numerical data to demonstrate the research' hypothesis and objectives. Both types of research method have their own pros and cons. While quantitative method seeks to select samples that represent a population, qualitative approach has fewer participants. However, qualitative method would provide a more depth and detail answers from individual participant.

As a result, for the purpose of generating in-depth paper, the author choose qualitative research method along with positivism and deductive approach selected above. The main reason for this selection is that there is no set of data which study the small and medium sized exporter in Vietnam. Therefore, the data will be collected through direct interviews with top management in different Vietnam SMEs in exportation industry. Additionally, the author would benefit from various in-depth answers as each company will have specific reflects on the implications of FTAs. Moreover, during the data collection procedures, it is possible for the author to compare and contrast participated companies perspectives in the same situation of Vietnam market recently.

4.3. Data collection

When conducting a research, collecting data is one of the crucial parts. There are two types of data, namely primary data and secondary data. The researchers will select a type that fit the nature of the studies, sometimes both types of data are used in a paper. Primary data can be collected via survey, questionnaire, interview or observations. Selecting primary data for the research means the researcher directly gather data that are original and suitable for the research's nature. However, as the primary data is collected from a number of participants, the reliability of the research may not be guaranteed. Thus, it is suggested that researcher should pay attention to the data collection procedures in many aspects including researchers' skills, guidelines for collecting primary data or seeking help from supervisors. In contrast, researchers collect secondary data from different sources rather than conducting survey or interview. Secondary data come from public documents and reports. Thus, the level of reliability of secondary data is relatively high. However, it is quite impossible to find secondary data for new academic research topics.

In this paper, the author chooses to collect primary data for the purpose of the research. The author will make appointment with managers in SMEs in exportation in Vietnam and conduct interviews to gather information. Although there are several studies of SMEs, there is no information of FTAs and small and medium exporters in Vietnam markets. Hence, primary data is appropriate for this study. The author decided to do interviews with ten top managers from ten Vietnam small and medium sized exporters. The chosen companies are not random. The author would select ten companies depending on some certain features. Firstly, companies should be in the development stage. Secondly, companies must have experiences in exporting and benefit from FTAs.

The participants will be contacted and asked to contribute to the study via emails in which explaining the objectives of the research. Then, the author will interview them through skype directly. At the start of this paper, the interview questions will be designed (see Appendix). Additionally, the interview will be done with the author and participants' language, which is Vietnamese. The using of Vietnamese during the interview would provide confidence for both

participants and author. Participants will confidently answer the questions in-depth in their first language. Moreover, the identity of managers will not be reveal in order to protect them and their businesses. The author will respect participants' requirement if they do not wish to be recorded during the interviews. Alternatively, the researcher will try to take notes to gather information.

4.4. Ethical issues

Ethical issues are appeared in several studies, Clack and Creswell (2008) stated that researchers need to consider various dimensions. The data for this paper will be collected from Vietnam, but the auhor of this study decided to follow the UK ecthic codes of practice. Busher and James (2002) suggested some elements that should be included for enhancing the ethical considerations, consisting of anonymity, research behavior and informed consent.

Firstly, for the purpose of protecting confidentiality and anonymity, the participants will be remained anonymous, also the collected data would be separated from the participants' personal information. In addition, the author will conduct the interview individually. Besides, in order to minimise the risk of loosing data to third party, the author will withdraw and delete the data and only publish data that serve the academic research's objectives. Next, the behavior of author when collecting data is a vital factor in terms of ethic. During the interview, the author should carefully take notes and produce a clearly transcript at the end. The transcript then will be given to the participants to review and they also have chance to change their answers if necessary. Moreover, the author must be guided and supervised by a qualified supervisor during the process of writing this paper. The research might be stopped if there are any damages for the participants and their companies. In the end, it is suggested that the author should send the final findings of this study to participants. The last element mentioned in ethical considerations of this paper is producing formal consent that would assure the rights of contributors (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

In order to ensure the process of this study, the time plan of author will be described as following table:

Task	W2	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
Reviewing the literatures										
Building conceptual framework and designing questionnaire										
Producing interview questions										
Correcting interview questions										
Contacting participants										
Collecting data via interview dates										
Analyzing data										
Concluding the findings										
Recommendations										
Completing report										

5. EXPECTED FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The key objectives of FTAs in Vietnam is to boost the performance of importers and exporters both in local market and foreign markets. FTAs are believed to be created for the purpose of reducing trade barriers. The expected outcomes of this study hopefully will demonsatrte the current important roles of FTAs and the positive impact of those agreements to participants' businesses and to Vietnam market. Also, the findings will be expected to show that the barriers for small and medium sized exporters are not only tariffs barriers but also non tariffs barriers such as financial barriers (Schott, 2004). Moreover, in cosistent with FTAs, the supports from government will also influence the performance of Vietnam exporters.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Limitation and future recommendations for the research

This research contains some limitations. The significant limitation is that the size of sample is relatively small. The number of SMEs exporters in Vietnam is quite large comparing with other firms. There are only ten respondents from ten small and medium sized exporters, which might not be representative sample for the research. Besides, for the research generalization, it is suggested that the future research should follow both qualitative and quantitative method. Thus, the sample size will be larger and represent almost Vietnamese exporters. Additionally, the future research should examine the impact of FTAs on not only exportation but also other SMEs in Vietnam in order to get a full picture of relations of FTAs and SMEs regarding Vietnam market. Lastly, the researcher may include the comparison of FTAs and small and medium sized exporters with large exporters.

6.2. Conclusion

To conclude, it can be seen that the internationalization has brought various benefits for the developing economies. Vietnam market is known as a developing market with low cost labor force, excellent geographical conditions and resources. Along with those outstanding conditions, the transformation from agriculture focus to commercial focus has boosted the existence of different FTAs between Vietnam and other countries. Therefore, exportation in Vietnam has benefits, especially small and medium sized enterprises. This study is believed to suggest the idea that FTAs not only remove trade barriers but also bring opportunities for small and medium sized exporters. Overall, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to the literature on the impact of FTAs on SMEs, especially exporters in emerging countries like Vietnam market. In particular, this study serves as the first research that studies the relation of FTAs and small and medium sized exporters in the context of Vietnam, so it would hopefully provide strong reference to other researchers in the future. From practical view, this study finding would give understandings for the current practices of exporters in Vietnam in order to support SMEs improve business performance in the event of the growing number of FTAs.

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8. APPENDICE

Interview questions

Question 1: Could you tell me about information of your company briefly?

Question 2: What is your company performance in the past few years and now?

Question 3: How long have you been working in the industry? Could you provide me more information of your experiences of FTAs in Vietnam?

Question 4: Could you tell me your opinion on the impact of FTAs on your business development? Is it positive or negative impact?

Question 5: What are the issues that your company exportation activities are currently dealing with?

Question 6: Does government in Vietnam has any regulations that affect exportation activities?

Question 7: What is your view on the future of FTAs in Vietnam? What do you expect on the support from Government for the exportation?

PART II: REFLECTIVE ESSAY

1. INTRODUCTION

It is noted that selecting an appropriate research method for a particular study is essential in order to achieve validity and reliability results. There are two types of research method that researchers need to engage. Several arguments arise among scholars on the difference of concepts between these two methods. Some claimed that the two methods comprise distinctiveness on approaches. On the other hand, others argued that qualitative and quantitative method share the same feature that they both rely on acquiring understanding by analysing collected information. As a student of Doctor Business of Administration, I have opportunities to learn in-depth on both qualitative and quantitative method. Also, the program required me to complete two separate projects of these two approaches, giving me the chance to review and reflect the process when carrying out both analysis. Therefore, this essay will be discussed about the knowledge and my personal experience in the procedure of completing my two coursework.

2. BODY

Before this Doctor of Business Administration program, I had my first- hand experience when conducting dissertations for my undergraduate and master's degrees. So, at this time, I am more confident. Although I still made some mistakes, to be honest, it has been an enjoyable experience. I also learned from those mistakes and will definitely improve and continue to try my best in order to achieve a good performance for my doctoral research.

First of all, I would like to briefly discuss about two methods that I has used for my two coursework this semester. Qualitative research method is believed to be conducted to analyse characters of individuals and groups of individuals based on researcher's perspective. Gilbert (2008) argued that the objectives of qualitative method are to examine certain issues by collecting sufficient data from interviews. Similarly, Bryman (2004) suggested that a qualitative approach highlighted words rather than quantification. In terms of quantitative

research, researchers will test hypothesis by examining variables and analysing data through statistical processes (Creswell, 1994). Hence, collected data in quantitative research is numerical data. Due to the difference in characteristics of two methods, the processes of conducting researches are different. While qualitative research deals with unstructured and semi- structured questions for interviews, quantitative method contains various types of questionnaires and surveys for the purpose of generating large sample population. As a result, researchers will use statistical test for analysing quantitative method data. In contrast, the number of selected participants in qualitative method is often small. Next, depending on the characteristics of two methods listed above, I realized that each method has identical strengths and weaknesses.

For qualitative method, I had chance to prepare questions for the interview with managers from exportation companies in Vietnam. The questions that I have designed are followed by semi-structured type. According to Harvey (2011), that type of question is the most appropriate type for interviews as they are flexible and would increase the rate of response from participants. The number of FTAs in Vietnam is currently increasing and no one can deny the strong impact of those agreements on the development of economy. In the case of my research, voluntary managers from small and medium sized exporters participate in the research are hopefully to provide in-depth information. However, it would be time- consuming when doing qualitative research. Interviews are conducted through skype due to the long distance of Vietnam and United Kingdom. Also, the time zone is different leading to the difficult in arranging the most convenient time for both researcher and respondents. Besides, it is not easy to persuade participants to join the research interview as there are sensitive information of companies that most managers and directors do not want to share. Thus, the full picture might not be addressed.

In the context of quantitative method with a large sample size, the conclusion for the research findings will be generalized. The results are also mom- biased and separate from researcher's perspective. Therefore, it is believed to be useful in the case of examining a large population. When comparing with qualitative analysis, the procedure of collecting data in quantitative method is quicker. Additionally, by using the software to analyse collected data, it not only

saves time for researcher but also make less error for the data processing. Despite of the strengths, quantitative method has its own limitations. The total population of the research might not indicate all information that help the research objectives. Furthermore, collected data is generated through questionnaire, not a face-to-face interview, leading to lack of validity if the participants do not response with care and honest.

Overall, the procedure of conducting research is stressful and challenging. However, I have gained some valuable lessons. Obviously, I need to prepare and have a detailed plan before starting to conduct a research. But I realized that nothing will be smooth. Thus, it is essential for me to also prepare back-up plans as in some situation, things were not as expected plan so I had to spent a few more days to deal with problems arose.

3. CONCLUSION

To conclude, both qualitative method and quantitative method have their own characteristics. In my opinion, it is difficult to decide which method is easier as they both have strengths and weaknesses. So, after doing coursework of both methods, I would decide to adopt mixed study method using both numerical and non- numerical set of data. With this chosen method, the level of validity of my doctoral research would be higher. Moreover, two methods can support each other and reduce weaknesses that exist in either qualitative method or quantitative method.

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