

RELATION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE OF ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC) AND PERCEIVED THREATS/OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUTH IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was established in 2015 and there will be many agreements, commitments must be completed by Vietnam according to signed agreement in the future. However, Vietnamese companies and their employees seem to be unready for the AEC. The lack of information about the AEC and the implemented instructions become a major obstacle to the economy. The purpose of this research is to measure level of knowledge of the youth about the AEC and estimates its impact on their awareness of opportunities and threats related to the AEC. Results from the survey of 214 young employees show that Vietnamese youth are confident of their subjective knowledge of the AEC, but their objective knowledge of the AEC is quite low. Their knowledge affected also the awareness of opportunities and threats created by the AEC. Some implications for businesses and training centers are also mentioned in this paper.

Keywords: ASEAN Economic Community, youth, knowledge, awareness, Vietnam

1. Introduction

By the end of 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has been established to connect the economies of the 10 member countries in the region towards the goal of peace, stability and development for mutual benefit. In the FTAs that Vietnam has signed, commitments on tariff reductions in the AEC are the highest and fastest. Accordingly, by 2018 Vietnam will have to complete the removal of tariff barriers for ASEAN goods. In terms of trade in services, some sectors of Vietnam have made higher commitments than the WTO. Investment commitments in the AEC are also more comprehensive than in WTO. In terms of labor liberalization, there will be eight skilled occupations moving freely within the ASEAN region. Thus, with the establishment of the AEC, the competition among ASEAN countries will be

increasingly fierce. Are Vietnamese enterprises and labors ready to fulfill their commitments and obligations in the AEC? This is a discutable issue attracting the attention of many researchers for a long time.

According to a survey conducted in April 2016 by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vietnam, as many as 94% know about the AEC but less than 17% clearly know about AEC. The percentage of enterprises taking advantage of the opportunities from the AEC is even lower. For example, according to statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the proportion of export turnover to ASEAN under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) in recent years accounts for less than 30%. Similarly, after one year of AEC implementation, Vietnam's imports from ASEAN decreased by 1.9% but its exports to ASEAN countries decreased by 5.6%. These figures show that Vietnamese companies have not effectively seize the opportunities offered by AEC as well as overcome the threats they may face when Vietnam joins the AEC.

One of the obstacles that businesses have not taken full advantage of the opportunities provided by the AEC probably lies in the understanding of the AEC. The lack of information about commitments and implementation guidelines leads to an inadequate understanding of the AEC. Therefore, improving awareness about AEC is really an urgent issue for businesses today. The enterprises need to make sure that their staffs understand the AEC regulations relating to the interests of the businesses.

According to the General Statistics Office, the proportion of people under 30 years old in 2016 accounted for 51.7% of the total population in Vietnam, labors under 30 years old accounted for nearly half of the country's workforce. It can be said that young labors play an important role in the Vietnamese economy. On the social side, youth is a period of life in-between childhood and adulthood. Therefore, young people will affect these two groups. For businesses, labors under the age of 30 are very active and eager to learn. They will become generations of leaders in the near future. Measuring their knowledge is important because this will give the businesses a proper perspective on the quality of their workforce.

Studies on the ASEAN Community are mostly conducted by government agencies or international organizations. The approach of these studies is mainly based

on the actual situation through analysis of opportunities or challenges to the economy and almost has no mention of underlying theoretical basis. Academic research on young people's understanding of the AEC is limited. Some studies have measured the level of understanding among young people through descriptive statistics (Benny, 2015, Barbin and Nicholls, 2013) and conducted with students rather than young workers. In addition, previous studies have been conducted since 2015 or earlier, when the AEC was not established. Therefore, this research aims to measure the relationship between the understanding of youth and the dependent variables, including the perception of opportunities and challenges.

This research aims to answer some following questions: How do Vietnamese youth self-assess their level of understanding of AEC? What is the real understanding of Vietnamese youth about AEC? How do they perceive the opportunities and challenges that the AEC brings to Vietnam's economy as well as itself?

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Overview of the AEC

ASEAN was established in 1967 and so far has 10 member countries with a population of about 622 million people, GDP reached 2,600 billion dollars in 2014. Vietnam became an official member of ASEAN in 1995. By the end of 2015, the AEC is formed. However, some commitments in the ASEAN region officially entered into force and many relevant agreements have already been committed. For example, the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) scheme has been in place since 1992, the Trade in Goods Agreement entered into force in 2010 ... Therefore, the nature of the AEC is a process of regional economic integration rather than an agreement or an agreement with binding commitments. Documents that Vietnam has signed in the AEC may include enforceable commitments (for example, agreements) and also non-mandatory documents that aim to declare or set goals towards. Therefore, learning about the AEC requires a diverse, multidimensional and constantly updated knowledge.

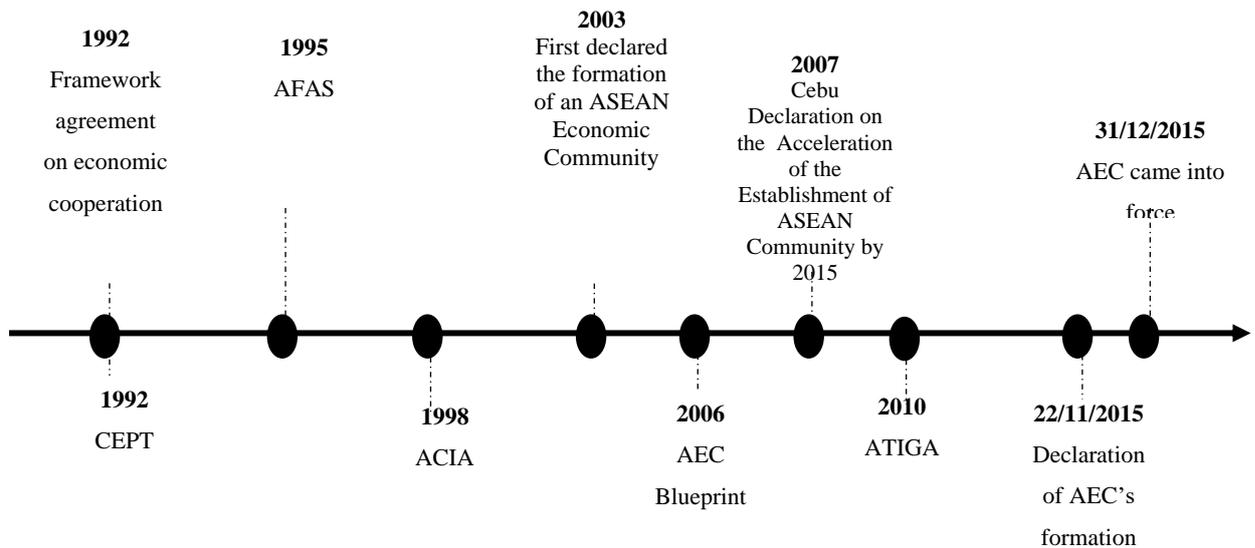


Figure 1: The formation of AEC

Source: compiled from VCCI website

2.2. Overview of the youth

According to Henze (2015), youth is a period of life in-between childhood and adulthood. It is described as a time of people leave their parents, choose a career for themselves and contribute to the development of society. According to the UN Habitat (Youth Fund), those persons between the ages of 15 and 32 will be classified as “youth”. Thus, the understanding of youth is not entirely identical between the approaches.

In this research, the term “youth” refers to persons between the ages of 18 and 30. In terms of social aspect, people in the age of 18 or older are considered mature enough to begin life on their own. In terms of legal aspect, they are capable of acting civilly and responsible for their behaviors. In terms of education, this is the age of ending general education and moving to higher education. According to the traditional view “Tam thap nhi lap” in Vietnam, a person after the age of 30 is considered mature. According to the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, people under 30 year olds account for 53% of the total population in the ASEAN region. Therefore, young people under the age of 30 are important work force for countries participating in the AEC, including Vietnam.

2.3. Overview of human’s understanding

According to Korchia (2004), consumer insight is that all information related to products and markets stored in long-term memory that allows consumers to make informed decisions. Meanwhile, Brucks (1985) argued that understanding is characterized by the structure and content of information stored in memory. Consequently, the understanding of consumers is reflected in two aspects: subjective understanding and objective understanding. Subjective understanding is the perception of people that they know about an object. Objective understanding is the amount of information people keep in mind. Thus, while objective knowledge reflects what we know, subjective knowledge reflects what we think we know (Alba and Hutchinson 2000). It can be said that objective knowledge is the real knowledge of people about a certain object and can be measured through the test, open-ended questions or multiple-choice questions ...

Research results from Brucks (1985) and Benny (2015) showed that subjective understanding and objective understanding are interrelated. In other words, the more knowledgeable a person is, the greater their confidence in their knowledge. In contrast, some researchers have reported non-significant or relatively weak objective knowledge/subjective knowledge correlations. For example, Ellen (1994) identified a non-significant relationship ($r = 0.08$) between objective knowledge and subjective knowledge in her research of pro-ecological behavior knowledge. Similarly, Duhan et al. (1997) indicated a relatively weak correlation ($r = 0.15$) between objective and subjective knowledge of medical services. Given the findings and mixed results regarding the discutable link between two aspects of knowledge, it is not surprising that researchers continue to call for further research to better understand this relationship. The objective of this study is also to examine the relationship between the two aspects of knowledge in the economic domain. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Objective knowledge of the AEC positively affects subjective knowledge of young people about the AEC.

2.4. Overview of awareness

According to Siegel, Germer & Olendzki (2009), the concept of awareness, consists of many cognitive, emotional and social components, is defined as

distinguishing subjective experiences, directing the attention to momentary living with an unbiased attitude and accepting them. Therefore, one has the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

According to Jarut Kunanoppadol (2014), Thai people are aware that the formation of the AEC will benefit not only their country but also society and the economy. By contrast, Benny's study (2016) showed that Malaysian students are already aware of the obstacles created by the AEC in reducing regional security and undermining national cultural identity. Benny (2015) showed that awareness of the role of the AEC is strongly affected by subjective knowledge with coefficients from 0.2 to approximately 0.5. Meanwhile, Selnes & Gronhaug (1986) concluded that subjective knowledge affected human behavior more strongly than objective knowledge. To this date, there is also no consensus on the link between human understanding and their awareness of the obstacles/opportunities. Therefore, this research expects young people's confidence in the AEC's understanding to help them have a positive attitude towards the opportunities brought by the AEC. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Objective knowledge positively affects the perceived opportunities that the AEC offers.

Similarly, an individual with a high level of understanding will soon be aware of the threats that the AEC brings to the economy. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Subjective knowledge positively affects the perceived threats that the AEC creates.

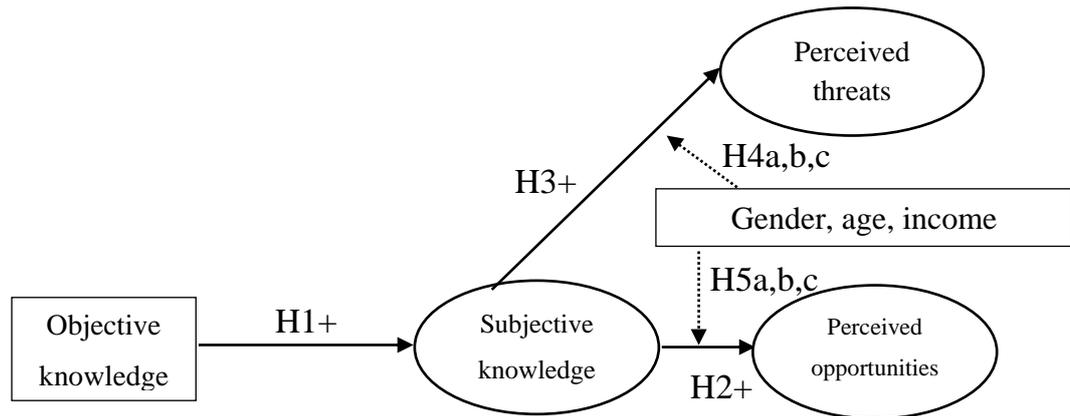


Figure 2: The proposed model

Source: Proposed by authors

2.5. Demographic factors

Benny (2015) conducted study in three countries (Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia) and found that the student's academic majors were influenced the level of understanding of the AEC. Accordingly, groups of students in economics, business administration, banking have higher level of understanding of the AEC than groups of students in natural sciences, law or technology. However, this research did not find differences between groups of students by age, gender or educational background due to the limited respondents.

This research was conducted with a wide range of participants in terms of education level and age. Therefore, the expected results aim to find differences in the impact of subjective knowledge on seizing opportunities and identifying threats among the different respondent groups. The following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: The impact of subjective knowledge on recognizing threats will be stronger for males than females.

H4b: The impact of subjective knowledge on recognizing threats will be stronger for the higher educated respondents.

H4c: The impact of subjective knowledge on recognizing threats will be stronger for those with higher incomes.

Similarity, this research aims to explore the relationship between subjective knowledge and perceived opportunities which will be moderated by gender. Therefore, this research tests these following hypotheses:

H5a: The impact of subjective level of knowledge on perceived opportunities will be stronger for males than females.

H5b: The impact of subjective level of knowledge on perceived opportunities will be stronger for the higher educated respondents.

H5c: The impact of subjective level of knowledge on perceived opportunities will be stronger for higher income respondents.

3. Research Methodology

To test the proposed research model, the linear-structure modeling methodology has been used for the sake of simplicity, which can simultaneously estimate the relationship between multiple variables as well as measure the effect of intermediate variable.

3.1. Construction of the scale

To measure the level of actual understanding of youth about the AEC, the five-point Likert is used to reflect objective knowledge in which three categories are used from the study of Benny (2015), two categories related to import tariffs and moving objects in AEC developed by the authors. Since these questions allow direct measurement of a person's level of understanding of the AEC, the concept of "objective understanding" is a direct observation variable. The scale for subjective knowledge consists of five categories, in which the first three categories are adjusted from Benny's study (2015), the other two categories proposed by the authors. Based on the findings of Barbin & Nicholls (2013) conducted in Thailand to investigate the opportunities that AEC brings to its students, the authors proposed a scale for perceived opportunities that the AEC created for young people: finding a job, increasing income, traveling and accessibility to imports. The scale for perceived threats consists of four categories, two of which relate to cultural factors and the level of market competition proposed by the authors. The security-related scale is derived from the results of Barbin & Nicholls (2013). The scale related to job search was used in Benny's (2015) study.

3.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part was for measuring objective knowledge of the youth about the AEC. Since this is a direct observation

variable, there is only one correct answer in each question to calculate the correct answers for each respondent. The second part was for measuring subjective knowledge of the youth about the AEC as well as perceived opportunities and threats brought by the AEC. All the questions were designed in five-point Likert scale format. The third part focused on general information and demographic variables.

3.3. Sample and data collection

The data collected was done by email. There are three reasons for choosing this method. Firstly, the email channel ensures access to the right target respondents. When collecting email lists, the authors actively selected respondents as young people who were working. Secondly, young people often spend much time on the internet. Therefore, the online survey will help to reach the right target respondents and help respondents save time to respond. Thirdly, by controlling the amount of email sent, the authors will calculate response rates to proactively scale up the survey sample as needed.

To reach out to young people, the authors contacted with Alumni Contact Boards of some universities and colleges in HCMC and Da Nang city. In total, 1,542 emails were collected from graduates in the period from 2009 to 2016. In addition to create the spillovers, the authors asked respondents to provide their friends' email addresses, which they would recommend to participate in the survey. A total of 21 respondents provided information with 49 emails.

Data collected were processed by SPSS 22 for cleaning and analysis. After calculating indicators for measuring the reliability of variables and removing inappropriate items, data were further analyzed by AMOS 23 to estimate the relationship between variables in the model and test hypotheses.

4. Results and evaluation

4.1. Result

The authors received 227 responses via email, reaching a rate of 14.26% of the total email sent. This is a relatively low ratio compared to traditional survey methods. However, sample size of 227 is sufficient to apply a linear-structure model. However, there were 13 respondents with the age of 30 and over, the responses of these

respondents were excluded. The total number of final answers used in this research was 214. Table 1 describes the general information about survey respondents.

The data in Table 1 shows that most of the respondents had at least a college degree. This also reflects the spirit of studying fondness of Vietnamese youth. 95% of the respondents knew at least one foreign language, more than 30% of respondents were fluent in 2 or more foreign languages. 67% of respondents have income levels ranging from 5-18 million VND per month. The target subject of the survey is young people, mainly new graduates with less working time, so the income is only average, the number of people with high income accounted for about 13%. The number of female respondents was twice as much as the number of male respondents.

The original Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the perceived threats was 0.673, after eliminating the first item in the scale, the index increased significantly to 0.738. Exploratory Factor Analysis also found three factors that correspond to the three research variables proposed by the model.

Table 1: General information of respondents

	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Education	(people)	(%)	Age		
Under-graduated	5	2.3	18-21	24	11.2
Graduated	187	87.4	22-25	134	62.6
Post-graduated	22	10.3	25- under 30	56	26.2
Language			Income		
Do not know	9	4.2	Under 5 million VND/month	40	18.7
Know 1 language	137	64	5 million VND - under 10 million VND/month	85	39.7
Know 2 languages	63	29.4	10 million VND - under 18 million VND/month	59	27.6
Know 3 languages	5	2.3	18 million VND - under 32 million VND/month	19	8.9
Gender			Above 32 million VND/month	11	5.1
Female	147	68.7	Total	214	100
Male	67	31.3			

Results of structural equation modeling (SEM) showed that the measurement model was compatible with market data ($\chi^2_{[57]}= 113.5$ ($p<0.001$); CFI= 0.951; TLI=0.933; RMSEA=0.055). Objective knowledge has a positive impact on young people's subjective knowledge about the AEC (H1: $\beta = 0.079$; $p <0.1$) (see Table 3). The level of subjective knowledge of the AEC has a strong impact on the perceived opportunities that the AEC gives to each individual (H2: $\beta = 0.948$; $p <0.001$) and greatly affects the perceived threats brought by the AEC (H3: $\beta = 1.041$; $p <0.001$). Three hypotheses (H1, H2, H3) are accepted and statistically significant.

Table 2: Reliability and factor analysis results

Variable	Items	Average value	Cronbach Alpha	Rotational matrix
<i>Subjective knowledge (KNOWSUBJ)</i>	5		0.821	
KNOWSUBJ1		3.692		.563
KNOWSUBJ2		3.822		.744
KNOWSUBJ3		3.463		.774
KNOWSUBJ4		3.425		.664
KNOWSUBJ5		3.762		.688
<i>Perceived opportunities (AWARENESS)</i>	4		0.823	
AWARE1		3.556		.740
AWARE2		3.500		.736
AWARE3		3.126		.805
AWARE4		3.766		.559
<i>Perceived threats (DIFFCTS)</i>	3		0.738	
EFFECT2		3.364		.723
EFFECT3		4.061		.653
EFFECT4		3.794		.507

Table 3. Analysis results of Linear Structure (SEM)

Hypotheses	m (un-normalized)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Test hypothesis
H1: Objective knowledge → Subjective knowledge	0.079	0.039	2.0	0.045	Accepted
H2: Subjective knowledge → Perceived opportunities	0.948	0.104	9.139	***	Accepted
H3: Subjective knowledge → Perceived threats	1.041	0.095	10.92	***	Accepted

M: estimate; S.E: standard error; C.R: critical value; P: P-value

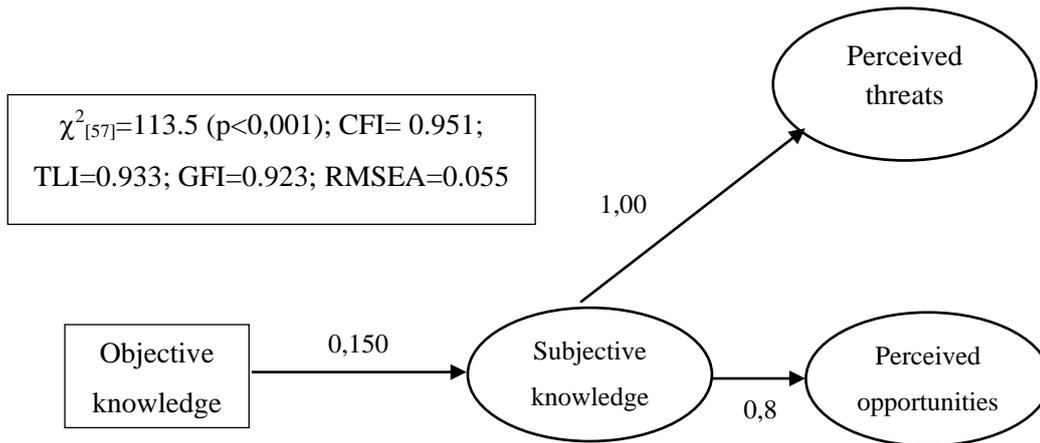


Figure 3: SEM results with normalized coefficients

Group analysis

Group comparison by gender: Data were split into two groups of male and female respondents to test for hypotheses H4a and H5a. Non-invariance test (all parameters in two models are unbound) and partial measurement invariance test (regression coefficients are equivalent across two groups). The results of the SEM analysis showed that the difference between the two models was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2_{[16]}= 17.745$; $p = 0.40$). Thus, the partial measurement invariance model is chosen, in other words, the relationship between the subjective understanding of the young and the perceived opportunities/threats provide by the AEC is not dependent on gender. Therefore, hypotheses H4a and H5a are rejected.

To compare respondents in terms of age, three age groups were divided, ranging from 18 to 21 years old, group 2 from 22 to 25 years old and group 3 from 25 to 30 years old. Non-invariance and partial measurement invariance test results show that there is a difference in the impact of subjective perceptions on the perceived opportunities and challenges that the AEC brings across age groups ($\Delta\chi^2_{[32]}= 43.022$; $p = 0.092$). Specifically, with respondents from 22 years old and older, the impact of subjective knowledge on perceived opportunities and challenges, were significantly and statistically significant at $\beta_{22-25t}=1.111$ và 1.186 ; $\beta_{25-30t}= 0.901$ và 1.011 ; $p<0.001$. In contrast, young people under the age of 22 experienced a relative level of subjective perception of opportunities and challenges ($\beta_{18-22t}= 0.463$ và 0.805 ; $p<0.005$). Thus the H4b and H5b hypotheses are accepted.

Similarly, to compare respondents in terms of income, three groups were divided from the low income level (below 5 million VND/month), the average (over 5 million VND -18 million VND/ month) to the high (over 18 million VND/month). The results of the SEM analysis showed that the difference between the three models was statistically significant ($\Delta\chi^2_{[32]}= 49.301$; $p = 0.026$). Thus, the relationship between subjective knowledge and the perception of opportunities and challenges of the AEC depends on the income of the respondents. For those with lower incomes, subjective knowledge have a greater impact on recognizing opportunities from the AEC ($\beta_{low}=1.033$; $\beta_{average}=0.992$; $\beta_{high}=0.505$; $p<0.05$). Hypothesis 5c is accepted. Similarly, in this group, the grasp of AEC constraints is also strongly influenced by actual perceptions, whereas in higher income groups, the effect is weakened as they may be see practical threats ($\beta_{low}=1.072$; $\beta_{average}=0.746$; $\beta_{high}=1.013$; $p<0.05$). Hypothesis 4c is accepted.

4.2. Assessment

Young people in Vietnam highly self-assess their understanding of the AEC with the average value of all items is higher than 3.5 on a scale of 5. This result shows that they have grasped the AEC's goal of building a unified market; a highly competitive economic sector and towards balanced economic development. Therefore, it can be said that the AEC has more or less gone to the sub-consciousness of the youth, AEC is not a strange concept to most young people in Vietnam.

On the contrary, the level of true understanding of the AEC is low. The median value was only 2.4 on a 5-point scale. Only 7 respondents out of 214 responded correctly to all AEC-related knowledge questions. Up to ¼ respondents correctly answered no more than one question. These results show that objective understanding (real knowledge) is significantly different from subjective knowledge (self-assessment). Thus, it can be said that Vietnamese youth are very confident in their subjective knowledge but do not actually know about the AEC.

This research also confirms the positive relationship between the subjective knowledge and objective knowledge. In other words, the higher the individual's knowledge of practice, the greater their confidence in knowledge is. This has been demonstrated in many previous studies (Brucks, 1985, Cole et al., 1992, Goldsmith &

Goldsmith, 1997), where subjective knowledge and objective knowledge are strongly correlated (correlation coefficient is from 0.30 to 0.60).

It can be said that Vietnamese youth are quite optimistic about prospects for joining the AEC. They have recognized many opportunities such as studying and traveling will be easier; income will increase thanks to the policy of promoting competition among AEC economies; imported goods from member countries will be cheaper. Perceived opportunities are largely dependent on the subjective knowledge of the youth. According to research results, the more confident an individual is, the sooner they recognize the threats they will face in order to have better preparation themselves for the future. However, it seems that Vietnamese youth do not consider the obstacles that the AEC created is too great. For them, it seems that only threats relating directly to personal life such as finding a job, security or safety. How integration affects the preservation of national cultural identity is not much cared by young people. This conclusion is similar to that of a study conducted in Thailand to explore the opinions of students on difficulties brought by AEC (Barbin & Nicholls, 2013). This can be explained by the characteristics of the young generation today: they are more open-minded, more individualist than their predecessors - those born and raised in the period closed economy, influenced by collectivism and Confucianism (Le & Jolibert, 2001). However, it is still necessary to continue to study the awareness of the threats created by the AEC because in a recent Malaysian survey, 85% of respondents said that the issue of nationalism should be taken more seriously than the the problem of the region (Benny, 2016). In terms of the relationship between the perceived threats and the subjective knowledge of youth, this research confirms the relationship between these two variables. In other words, an individual who thinks he or she knows the AEC will recognize more threats that the AEC provides. This conclusion is consistent with the results of Benny (2015).

There are some inevitable limitations in this research. When assess objective understanding of young people, the authors omitted many aspects such as knowledge of AEC member states, advantages and disadvantages of visa exemptions for AEC citizens ... The survey is only accessible to respondents in HCMC and some other cities. Future studies should expand the data collection site to increase the

generalizability of research results. Sample survey in this study is mainly concentrated in the economic, financial and education sectors ... so it is not reflected closely with the demographic structure of Vietnam in terms of gender. In addition, more demographic variables should be explored in multi-group analysis to help managers better understand the characteristics of employees, such as foreign language proficiency, travel preferences to ASEAN countries. ...

5. Conclusion

Young people are dynamic and creative workforce of one nation. However, the understanding and awareness of Vietnamese youth about the country's issues, namely integration into the AEC is not high. To some extents, that will affect the development of the country. To raise awareness of young people on this issue, the State should actively propagandize through mass media such as television, newspapers, social networks... According to survey results, 125 people know the AEC through television, newspapers, accounting for 58.4%; next is social networking with 71 people, accounting for 33.1%. In addition, the Government should coordinate with relevant national and international organizations to organize seminars to disseminate knowledge about the AEC or organize contests to explore international economic integration in general.

For educational institutions, knowledge about AEC should be included in the content of the curriculum. Depending on the level, time and form of training, this content should be appropriately included. Currently, almost all knowledge of the AEC has only been taught at economic colleges, while other sectors are almost unreachable. When Vietnam's commitments in the AEC come into force, the business is the first to be most aware of the changes that take place in the economy. Therefore, employers should quickly include AEC content in internal training programs. Respondents involved in this research are most likely to be working in businesses and agencies. The results of the research show that young people have limited knowledge of the AEC. Their perceptions of opportunities and threats are incomplete. When AEC agreements enter into force, there will be many changes in procedures, tariffs as well as standards for goods, services or rules of origin. If human resources do not know these rules, it will prevent the business from grasping the opportunities as well as responding to the

challenges to maximize the profits and other benefits. Therefore, equipping the knowledge of the AEC and the changes in policies, procedures or regulations when Vietnam integrates for the staff, including young people, is highly necessary. Businesses need to organize training and periodic training about the AEC knowledge. In addition, there should be activities that encourage employees to self-study, learn the AEC knowledge or participate in the AEC knowledge competitions.

As commitments made within the AEC enter into force, not only goods and services but also investment and skilled labor can be affected. So even if the company does not operate in the field of import or export, the impact of the AEC on the business is not limited to the national scope, but also extends to the ASEAN region. Therefore, the impact of AEC does not exclude any businesses. In order to take advantage of the opportunities and confront the challenges, recruiting high-quality employees is one of the most necessary preparations for Vietnamese businesses. Therefore, businesses need to put the AEC knowledge test into the recruitment program as a mandatory requirement for the candidate. Thanks to that, employers can recruit good candidates.

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Annex 1: Concepts' scales

Sign	Content	Origin
<i>Objective knowledge</i>		
KNOWOBJ1	Full name of the AEC	Proposed by authors
KNOWOBJ2	How many countries make up the AEC?	Guido Benny (2015)
KNOWOBJ3	When will the AEC come into effect?	Guido Benny (2015)
KNOWOBJ4	In which city is the ASEAN Secretariat located?	Guido Benny (2015)
KNOWOBJ5	When Vietnam joins the AEC, which are the average import tariff rates Vietnam apply for imported goods from ASEAN?	Proposed by authors
<i>Subjective knowledge</i>		
KNOWSUBJ1	I understand that the AEC intends to develop the region as a single market and a single production base.	Guido Benny (2015)
KNOWSUBJ2	I understand that the AEC intends to develop a highly competitive economic region.	Proposed by authors
KNOWSUBJ3	I understand that the AEC aims to balanced economic development.	Proposed by authors
KNOWSUBJ4	The AEC is important for my profession.	Guido Benny (2015)
KNOWSUBJ5	The AEC is important for my country.	Guido Benny (2015), Guido Benny & Kamarulnizam Abdullah (2011)
<i>Perceived opportunities</i>		
AWARE1	Policies of the AEC once effected will help me to find job easier in members' countries.	Barbin & Nicholls (2013)
AWARE2	I will have the chance to travel easier when the AEC comes into effect.	Barbin & Nicholls (2013)
AWARE3	My income will increase thanks to encouraging	Proposed by

	competition policy among the AEC's economies.	authors
AWARE4	I can buy imported goods from the AEC's members with cheaper prices.	Proposed by authors
<i>Perceived threats</i>		
EFFECT1	Vietnam's culture will be undermined due to integration into the AEC.	Proposed by authors
EFFECT2	Vietnam's goods will be fiercely competed by imported goods.	Proposed by authors
EFFECT3	Fierce competition due to the establishment of the AEC will make me difficult to find job.	Guido Benny (2015)
EFFECT4	Security will be worse due to liberalization in the region.	Barbin & Nicholls (2013)

Annex 2: Multi-group analysis results

Model (gender)	χ^2	df	p	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI
Variable	328.753	210	0.00	0.802	0.743	0.918	0.889
Partial invariant	346.498	226	0.00	0.791	0.749	0.916	0.895
Differentiated value	17.745	16	0.40	0.011	0.006	0.002	0.006
Model (age)	χ^2	df	p	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI
Variable	596.602	315	0.00	0.699	0.61	0.831	0.768
Partial invariant	639.624	347	0.00	0.677	0.62	0.821	0.781
Differentiated value	43.022	32	0.092	0.022	0.01	0.01	0.013
Model (income)	χ^2	df	p	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI
Variable	514.678	315	0.00	0.725	0.644	0.872	0.824
Partial invariant	563.979	347	0.00	0.699	0.646	0.858	0.826
Differentiated value	49.301	32	0.026	0.026	0.002	0.014	0.002