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CÁC NHÂN TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN Ý ĐỊNH ỨNG DỤNG KẾ TOÁN TÍNH GỌN TRONG CÁC CÔNG TY FINTECH TẠI VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu được thực hiện nhằm xác minh các nhân tố ảnh hưởng đến ý định ứng dụng kế toán tính gọn trong các công ty Fintech tại Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu đã tích hợp ba mô hình lý thuyết: Mô hình hành vi có hoạch định, mô hình khuyến khích đổi mới đổi mới và mô hình chấp nhận công nghệ. Kết quả phân tích từ 108 kế toán viên phần lớn đang công tác tại Hà Nội cho thấy ý định ứng dụng kế toán tính gọn chịu ảnh hưởng bởi (1) tính dễ sử dụng được cảm nhận và (2) khả năng dùng thử. Trong khi đó, lợi thế tương đối, thái độ và khả năng quan sát được giữ vai trò không đáng kể. Kết quả nghiên cứu là tài liệu tham khảo cho các chủ doanh nghiệp và kế toán viên hiểu đúng về quy trình kế toán nội bộ tính gọn. Từ đó, các nhà quản lý có thể phát triển một hệ thống tính gọn, hướng tới mục tiêu cải thiện hiệu suất công việc và tối đa hóa giá trị cho khách hàng.

Từ khóa: kế toán tính gọn, công ty fintech, ý định sử dụng, hoạt động tính gọn.

FACTORS AFFECTING INTENTION TO USE LEAN ACCOUNTING AT FINTECH COMPANIES IN VIETNAM

Abstract

The aim of this study is to verify the factors affecting the intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies in Vietnam. To investigate this phenomenon, the theory of planned behavior, the innovation diffusion theory, and the technology acceptance model had been integrated. An online survey was distributed to accountants, mainly accountants in Hanoi, collecting a total of 108 respondents. From five proposed research factors, the findings show that the perceived ease of use and trialability had a positive and significant relationship with the intention to use lean accounting. Whereas, the relative advantage, attitude and observability were found to be insignificant. The results of this study will serve as a reference for business owners and accountants to understand

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internal lean accounting processes with the right awareness and to develop a lean system while improving work performance and maximizing values for customers.

Keywords: lean accounting, fintech companies, intention to use, lean operation.

1. Introduction

The development of the Fintech companies in Vietnam is on the rise. In 2015, the number of startups in the Fintech sector was 44, by 2020, this number climbed more than 2.7 times, reaching 123 startups. This is fueled by the explosion of e-commerce as people are increasingly in favor of online consumption and payment. Along with that is strong support from Vietnamese State's policies, especially for high-tech services industries².

Fintech company is considered to be a lean organization. According to Sheahan (2017), lean organizations are "firms that have adopted the lean methodology into their business model". Its ultimate goal is "to provide perfect value to the customer through a perfect value creation process that has zero waste." (Lean Enterprise Institute, 2018). There is hardly any definition that can help readers instantly understand and clearly visualize a lean organization. However, it can be said that most lean organizations are clearly expressed through lean operation and management, which emphasizes the process speed and quality improvement through reduction of waste.

Moreover, lean accounting is strictly integrated in these lean operation and management. Without a lean accounting system, there is no alignment between lean practices and the information company management will be receiving to understand how well the lean business is performing (Katko & Luca, 2020). A lean accounting process is expected to transform Fintech companies into true lean models, with the most modern and optimal technology applications. In fact, lean accounting has brought numerous benefits to Fintech companies, from receiving orders, billing, instant payments, bookkeeping and tax-filling, all are automated on the cloud-based software. This enabled fintech companies to cut manually administrative costs, reduce the receivable turnover cycle, and allow them to make pre-emptive decisions or to react instantly to evolving financial situations thanks to the ability to access real-time financial information analysis, forecasting, budgeting, and resource management.

In the world, research on lean accounting mainly focuses on manufacturing enterprises. In addition, currently in the world and in Vietnam, there is no research on accounting systems in Fintech companies. Considering this as a research gap, as a primitive study, the author chooses the topic "Factors affecting intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies in Vietnam" for the paper.

² Nation Agency for Technology Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Development is established in 2016 to incubate businesses and provide financial support to tech startups; Corporate income tax reduction for companies working in the high-tech sector or high tech zones is set at the preferential tax rate of 10% for 15 years or of 17% for 10 years compared to the normal tax rate of 20% (Government, 2016); Regulatory Fintech sandbox on Project "Plan on restructuring the service industry to 2020, with an orientation to 2025" is on the process (Government, 2017).

2. Theoretical framework of lean accounting

2.1. Definition and characteristics of lean accounting

Introbooks (2015, pp.65) perceived lean accounting as the common term used for the changes necessary to a company's accounting, organizing, measurement and executive process to maintain lean manufacturing and lean thinking. Aligning financial management with company's Lean strategies, lean accounting improves not only the accounting affairs but the entire economics of your business.

According to Katko (2020), lean accounting is defined as "the management accounting system for a lean organization. It provides the relevant financial and nonfinancial information necessary to execute the lean strategy and drive financial success." With the same view, an article on Kanbantool website (2020) pointed out that lean accounting "describes the financial reporting practices used by a company that embraces Lean thinking: focusing on the value delivered to the client and on waste elimination, through better workflow and material management".

Among the preceding definitions, lean accounting definition mentioned by Katko and Kanbantool (2020) is compatible with the author's viewpoint and is used in this study. There are three key characteristics in it:

Firstly, lean accounting provides both financial and non-financial information. The financial statements used in lean accounting are concise summaries of financial transactions over an accounting period, which helps analyzing company's operations, financial position and cash flows. (Fernado, 2021). Furthermore, lean accounting could provide a knowledge base for effectively making decisions about the future, which is the main feature of management accounting.

Secondly, lean accounting focuses an organization on customer value. The deployment of lean tools and techniques, for example: value stream costing and visual management, that create flow and eliminate waste will bring in improved cost management and revenue growth. These are the economics of lean.

Last but not least, lean accounting primarily focus on continuous learning. Through the use of various lean tools and methods, employees could learn to master their work. Each employee also possesses ideas and abilities that many leaders may not have. Therefore, their perspectives and methods to implement their duties should also be considered and discussed.

2.2. Lean accounting tools

Table 2.1. Comparison of the three main lean accounting tools

Tool Criteria	Value Stream costing	Visual management	Continuous improvement
Definition	Value stream costing is an accounting system for tracking revenues and costs for an entire value stream as opposed to individual products as with standard costing (Aaron, L., 2020).	Visual Management is a method designed to create a visual workplace with controls communicating without words and interruptions in process (Chris, A, O., Murry, P., 2010).	Continuous improvement seeks to improve every process by enhancing the activities that generate value for customer while removing as many waste activities as possible (Kabanize).
Advantages	Improves cross-functional collaboration Reduces costs by eliminating waste and bottlenecks	Allows employees to synthesize and visualize the information (signals, instructions, processes, measurements) Requires little or no prior training to interpret	The business will always put systems in place to analyze and enhance its operations on a regular basis.
Disadvantages	Cannot be used for products with no identical material flow maps Unable to show the impact on WIP, order throughput and operating expenses of inefficient material flows	Can easily become overwhelming and too difficult to maintain Requires virtual systems with alerts and notifications to keep tasks moving and provide real-time information	It's possible that goals aren't being conveyed properly, or that managers aren't motivated enough to make changes.

Source: Synthesized by the author

Value Stream Costing

Value Streams represent “the series of steps that an organization uses to implement solutions that provide a continuous flow of value to a customer”. A business may contain one or more value streams, which is dedicated to build and support a set of solutions delivered to the customer (SAFe, 2020). When put into lean context, value stream costing is directly related to lean accounting system. Following that, costs, revenues and profit or loss reporting are also developed (Maskell, B., H., and Kennedy, F., A., 2007).

Instead of controlling cost of each individual products, value stream costing aims to calculate total cost in each value stream. There are many different ways to categorize value stream, for example: (1) By product; (2) By process; (3) By customer. Once value stream to be defined, it is important to identify costs. Below is an example of 02 different value stream by product groups: product family A and product family B (Figure 2.1).

Costs charged to a value stream can be divided into 3 categories: (1) purchase costs of raw materials and other inputs; (2) processing costs or conversion costs; (3) facility costs. Indirect cost could be allocated on the basis of meter square occupied by each value stream. When indirect costs cannot be directly allocated to value stream but are high, they can be allocated by using simplified version of activity-based costing. When the indirect costs' value is low, indirect costs are simply recorded in the company' income statement.

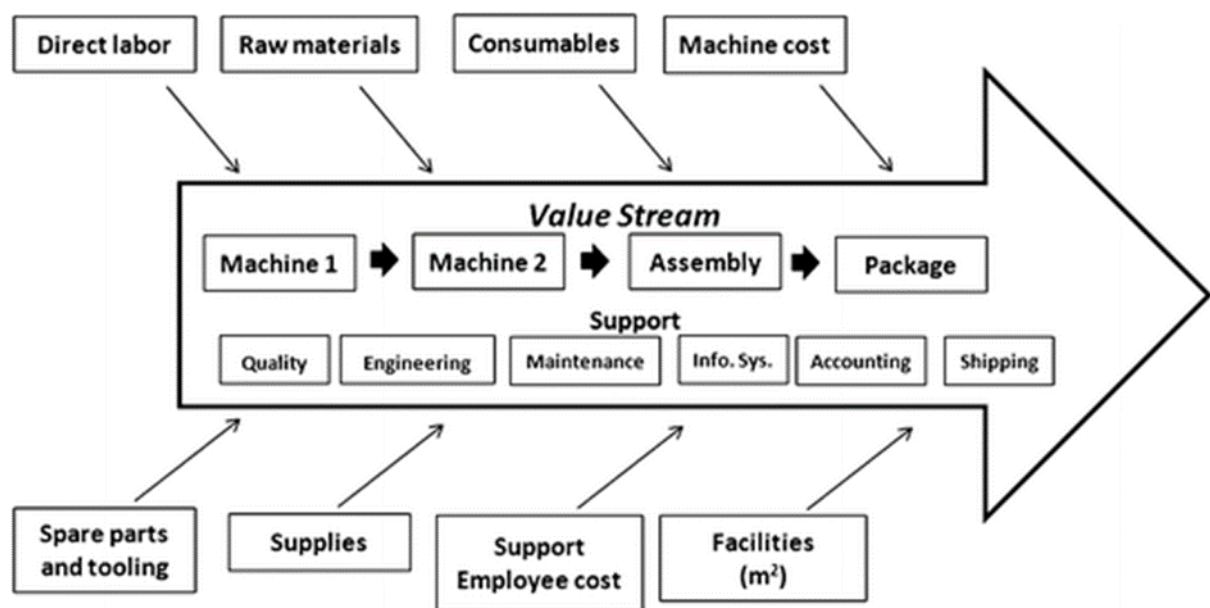


Figure 2.1. Value Stream Costing in an auto-parts factory

Source: Ruiz de Arbulo P., Fortuny J., García J., Díaz de Basurto P., Zarrabeitia E. (2012)

Visual management

Visual management aims to provide all the information with visual and auditory methods to present simple, clear and easy-to-monitor information. It is considered to be one of the most effective ways for companies to show the highest performance with minimal error. (Uzun, T., 2015). There are five main purposes for using visual management: (1) Sharing information – about day-to-day operation with metrics showing inputs, outputs, and any problems; (2) Building standard work; (3) Sharing Standard Work –to share standards of how work should be completed; (4) Highlighting Problems; (5) Solving Problems.

Continuous improvement

Opposed to traditional accounting, which defines perfection as meeting predetermined standards. In a lean company, every employee within the value stream strive to continuously improve their processes so as to provide perfect, high-value products and/or services to their customers. Because continuous improvement is permanent, the accounting and measurement systems need to actively support the quest for perfection (Maskell, B. H., & Kennedy, F. A, 2014). It is the primary method for driving customer value and waste elimination throughout the value streams. Maskell B. H., and Bruce L. Baggaley (2006) perceived target costing as the tool for understanding how the company creates value for the customer and what must be done to create more value”. It is used when new products are being designed and/or when the value stream team needs to understand the changes required to increase value for the customers.

3. Research model and hypothesis

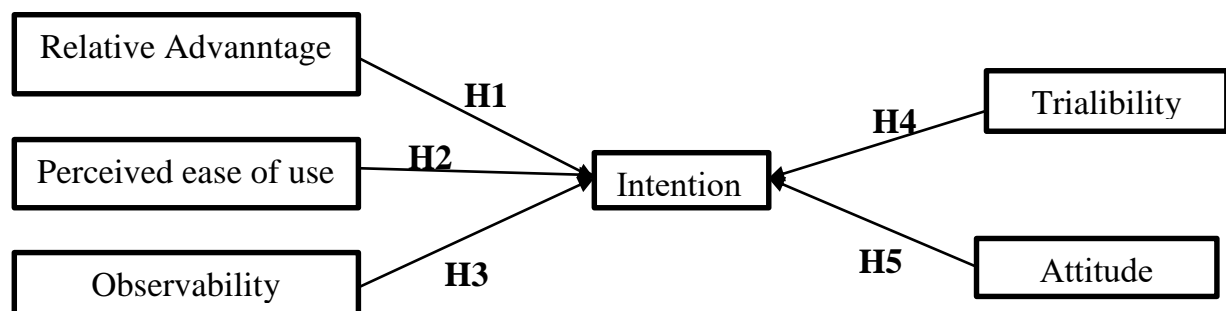


Figure 3.1. Proposed research model

Source: Synthesized by the author

Relative advantage (RA)

RA was first identified in 1962 by E.M. Rogers as the “extent to which customers observe a new product or service as enhanced than its substitute”. Later, in 1993, he gave it another definition as “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it overtakes”. Mostly used with new products or service, the term RA refers to the degree to which a particular product seems to be superior to another already existing product. It is most often used for new goods or services: RA have a significant impact on intention to use internet voting Carter, Lemuria, & Campbell, Ronald. (2011); It is a key factor to the intention to adopt competing Information and Communication Technology - ICT (Wang, Y.; et al, 2008); and in many other studies (Bandara, U.C. & Amarasena, S., 2018; P. W. Handayani and Z. Arifin, 2017). To assess the impact of RA factor on Intention, the author proposes the hypothesis:

H1: The Relative advantage has a positive effect on the Intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies

Perceived ease of use (PE)

PE is defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort” (Davis, F., 1980). The easier the use, the more likely the system would be adopted. PE is shown to have positive effect on behavioural intention to both actual and future use Statistical Software of the Slovenian Students of Social Sciences (Alenka Brezavšček et al, 2016). Since defined as “ease or difficulty in implementing behavior, is said to reflect past experience as well as predictable obstacles” (Ajzen, 1980), Perceived behavioural control factor in TpB model could be replaced by the term “Perceived ease of use” in TAM model. In addition, factor “Ease of use” could replace Complexity determinant in Innovation diffusion theory (Huang, C.-Y et al, 2020; Lee, Y-H. et al, 2011). Thus, the following hypothesise is formed:

H2: The Perceived ease of use has a positive effect on the Intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies

Observability (OB)

The degree to which the effects of an innovation are apparent to the adopters is referred to as observability. If the implementation of the innovation produces observable positive results, the innovation is more likely to be adopted. The index of opportunities to observe other people's interactions, as well as the visibility of advantages, can be used to analyze respondents' perceptions of observability (Lingxian, Z., et al, 2010). Observability has significant positive influence on behavioral intention to use online services in Saudi Arabia (Alghaith, W. et al, 2010), to use mobile payment (Lin, W.R. et al, 2020), to adopt E-learning adoption (Lingxian, Z., et al, 2010),... There is a scarcity of studies on the effects of observability in the field of accounting. However, considering that Lean accounting is bringing in innovation in accounting technology, the author proposed hypothesis:

H3: The observability has a significant positive influence on the Intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies

Trialability (TR)

Trialability is also an attribute of an innovation in Innovation diffusion theory. Trialability refers to how likely people think they will be able to try out an innovation before determining whether or not to implement it. Trialability has been proved to directly affect the Intention to adopt innovation on health (Scott, S.D, et al., 2008); on Intention to Adopt Mobile Banking Services in Jordan (Awwad, M., & Ghadi, M., 2009); on e-book purchase intention (Hsiuli, Liao., 2016); In some other studies, Trialability has no direct effect on the intention, but it has through Perceived usefulness and PE (Shahrokh, N., (2019) or through Perceived usefulness and Enjoyment (Cheolho, Y., & Dongsup, L., 2020). Accordingly, the author proposed the following hypothesis:

H4: The Trialability is positively related the Intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies

Attitude (AT)

In the original TpB model, Attitude is created by a set of beliefs that result in the behavior's outcome through meditating factor – Intention. If the outcome or consequence of a behavior is viewed as favorable, useful or advantageous, a person's attitude will be positive, and the intention to engage in the behavior will be higher. The effect of attitude on intention is commonly applicable to the study of accounting information systems (Qi, L., Ismail, S., 2019; Amin, Md., et al, 2016). Intention factor in TAM model has also proved to be applicable to explaining consumer intention in various technological contexts and areas. For example, attitude plays a significant role in persuading the students' intention to use E-learning (Husseina, Z, 2016); Attitude is positively and significantly correlated with consumer's intention to use mobile health technology (Hussein, Z., et al, 2017) ... From previous empirical studies, the author proposes hypothesis:

H5: The Attitude has a positive effect on the Intention to use lean accounting at Fintech companies

4. Research findings and discussion

Group	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
GENDER	Female	87,0	87,0
	Male	12,0	12,0
	Blank	1	0,9
AGE	18 - 25 years old	85	78,7
	26 - 35 years old	18	16,7
	36 - 45 years old	1	,9
	Over 45 years old	4	3,7
EDUCATION	Bachelor's	107	99,1
	Master's or higher	1	,9
BUSINESS FIELD	Fintech	20	18,5
	Other	88	81,5
DEPARTMENT	Accounting - Finance	104	96,3
	Other	4	3,7
LOCATION	Hanoi	79	73,1
	Ho Chi Minh	22	20,4
	Long An	1	,9
	Blank	6	5,6

Table 4.1. Results of demographic descriptive analysis

Source: Syntherized by the author

The data collection method for the official investigation is entirely online. After a month, the author collected 108 valid samples. Research data were coded and cleaned on Excel, analyzed and evaluated on SPSS software.

Results of the study showed that the number of respondents who were female was up to seven times that of respondents who were male. Demographic statistics also show that most of the surveyed people are very young, 78.8% are in 18-25 years old. At the same time, up to 99% of respondents with education level is Bachelor. Thus, it can be seen that these people have a few years of experience in the profession.

96.3% of respondents are working in the accounting department. Just a small number of respondents, however, work for Fintech firms (18.5%). This is the most unfavorable point, as it contradicts the author's initial emphasis on the target community of Fintech accounting-financial staff. This can partly be attributed to the objective reason that the current proportion of Fintech companies is extremely small compared to other businesses.

Concerning the surveyors' perceptions of impact investing. Lean accounting has been heard of by 89.8% of survey respondents, and 80.6% understand the definition. This demonstrates that Lean accounting is a well-known and simple term. However, this statistic does not guarantee that the surveyor comprehends the principle of lean accounting as well as other practical applications.

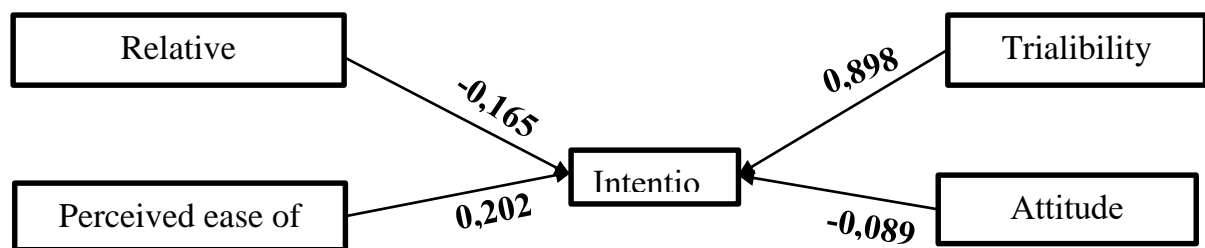


Figure 4.1. Results of the research model

Source: Synthesized by the author

Shown by linear regression analysis and multivariate regression, PE is the component that has the closest relationship with IN. This can be explained by the fact that the ease with which accounting approaches and lean accounting reporting can be implemented has a significant impact on survey respondents' intentions to use Lean accounting. When implementing an innovation in an organization, this often indicates a worry about its complexity. TR, or the desire to try the lean accounting system, is the second element influencing IN, aligning with the author's hypothesis. Although 77.8% of survey respondents say that their businesses apply Lean accounting, these businesses may not fully exploit the potential of this system. Therefore, surveyors want to have a chance to experience the system before use.

Although there is a quite high Pearson Correlation with IN, the AT factor is excluded from the model since the significance of Coefficients lower than 0.05. This shows that there is linear relationship between IN and AT because the factor IN has a positive effect on AT. The regression coefficient of RA < 0, negatively affects dependent variable IN. This is unreasonable and contrary to the results from all previous studies.

According to the findings of the empirical study, perceived ease of use and trialability are two variables that influence the intention to use lean accounting, with perceived ease of use having a higher impact level. Meanwhile, the three initial hypotheses that the relative advantage, trialability, and observability have a positive impact on intention are all rejected.

5. Suggestion and implications to develop lean accounting at fintech companies in vietnam

5.1. *Suggestion to develop lean accounting at fintech companies in vietnam*

Recommendations for the internal accounting process

As previously stated, lean accounting cannot be isolated from a company's operations. If a company runs a lean business model, lean accounting will play a more significant role and becomes more valuable. Fintech companies typically fall into one of two categories: (1) companies that specifically provide technology and digital utilities (Blockchain, Crowdfunding, Lending, Fund management, etc.); and (2) companies that specialize in back-office services, such as assisting financial institutions in integrating and improving payment functions, data management, Insuretech, and so on. While the organizational structure, complexity, and flexibility of the departmental structure and employees of these two types of businesses vary, they are all service businesses with a technology-based final product.

Manufacturing companies will concentrate on implementing lean accounting in inventory management and the factory production process. Meanwhile, the activities of Fintech firms have been a suitable platform to become lean due to the absence of raw materials, inventory, and storage of products, among other factors. The author suggested that costs in Fintech companies be handled according to the value stream of each client/order, based on the Value Stream Costing tool, which means that the resource requirements for each customer/order will be different. Only by concentrating on cost statistics by product/order would the organization be able to efficiently monitor prices, track and compare resources of orders of the same/different characteristics, thus appropriately determining the resources allocated.

To better manage operational performance, capacity (percentage of productive or non-productive time lead), and to link financial performance to the flow, the author suggests Fintech companies focus on **recording, tracking, and reporting** some criteria on Box score as follows:

- + The productivity of employees (number): Unit per person;
- + On-time shipment (%): The ability to meet customer demand;
- + First time through (%): Measure of quality through the entire process, whether there is any rework;
- + Dock-to-dock days (days): Flow time from initiation of the order to delivery to the customer;
- + Productive (%): Time spent adding value during profitable work;
- + Non-productive (%): Time lost to non-added value activities (waste, rework, scrap, downtime,...);
- + Available capacity: Time that is available to new profitable work. Only when lean improvement releases capacity, the companies would accept more customer's orders to reap the benefits of increased profitability;
- + Revenue, cost and profit.

Raising awareness and transparent information about Lean accounting

According to the results of the study, a reasonably high percentage of survey respondents agree that their company uses the Lean accounting method. However, whether or not the perception of lean accounting is right needs to be investigated further. The author recommends that businesses in general, and Fintech firms in particular, be encouraged to engage in a lean accounting forum. Not only will technical insights and widely used Lean Accounting tools be shared at that forum, but accountants will also have the opportunity to discuss lean accounting activities in their companies. Lean accounting does not require a high level of methodology; instead, it can be as simple as finding small ways to increase work performance. Accountants will no longer be concerned about the complexities of the lean accounting principle after the proofs have been shared, and they will be able to try flexible implementation in practice.

The problem of labour power in a lean company must fully be understood by business owners and accountants in particular. To generate and maintain lean processes in the workplace, employees must minimize non-value-added lead time. This is not exploitative since the employees can have full control over his or her schedule, and set the deadline for completing each job after the agreement with employers. The employers should, in the meantime, fully publicize policies for evaluating performance metrics based on quality and quantity parameters. As a result, labor rates will become more equitable. In addition, it must be emphasized that one of the main foundations of lean is human and involving people in lean is as important as lean tools. Lean accounting needs a human system that produces people who are willing and able to identify and solve them. Therefore, each accountant needs to train themselves collaborative behaviors that focus on continuous improvement and problem-solving.

5.2. Implications of the study

The topic is one of the pioneering studies on Lean accounting with quantitative research method in Vietnam. First, the topic synthesizes the theoretical framework from many reliable sources, providing general insights for readers. Second, the topic applies the model of the Theory of planned behavior — TPB, Innovation Diffusion Theory – IDT, and Technology Acceptance Model - TAM, discuss and select factors for a new research model. Third, based on data collected and analyzed, the topic verifies the model's reliability, suitability of the scale and Multivariate regression of research factors. Fourth, the subject serves as a useful reference for potential research in the path of psychological-behavioral research in Vietnamese Fintech companies that are implementing lean accounting model.

In practical terms, research shows that to promote the intention of applying Lean accounting: First, the accounting functions must be closely linked to the operation of departments in the company. Accountants should apply Lean accounting tools such as Value Stream Costing and Box score with criteria that are relevant to the product (services) of Fintech companies. Second, the selection of the appropriate application of lean accounting should be discussed and evaluated through the opinions of consultants, communities with experience in lean accounting. Third, business owners, accountants, and all employees in the company need to correctly understand the nature of Lean accounting, so that they will be ready to participate in the lean system while ensuring labor equity and improving work performance and maximizing benefits for customers and achieving financial benefits.

5.3. Limitations for further study

The biggest limitation of the study is survey forms from Fintech companies only account for 18.5%, not ensuring research scope. The limited number of research samples has not met the requirements of the factor discovery analysis EFA. Although this sampling defect is influenced by objective factors, this is a significant weakness that affects the research results. To overcome this limitation in future studies, the author suggests using Smart PLS software.

Through reliability analysis, there are quite a few observed variables that have been removed due to the failure to meet the correlation standard. As a result, the questionnaire should be re-evaluated, and the author should perform a small-scale trial survey to refine the scale. Although the Trialability factor is sufficient to explain the impact on the Intention factor, the correlation level is still poor, and the observed variables account for only 52% of the factor. This means that Trialability has several other manifestations causes that need to be investigated, and that study needs to broaden the scope of variables observed.

The two limitations listed above are suggestions for future study. Instead of online surveys, the following research can be conducted directly at Fintech firms to ensure the appropriate subject of research to be examined. Alternatively, rather than pursuing factor verification in the model, the study may establish questionnaires for face-to-face interviews to obtain qualitative information and collect more practical assessments about lean accounting practice in Vietnam before verifying a specific model.

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