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Study report "The New Trends in Asian Urban Lifestyle"

"The New Trends in Urban Lifestyle in Ho Chi Minh City" **(serial in 4 parts)**

Part 1 View of Life and Lifestyle of Ho Chi Minh Citizens

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Introduction

Vietnam is located at the east end of the Indochinese Peninsula and in an elongated shape stretching from north to south. Each of Northern, Central and Southern parts has different geographical characteristics and varied traditional culture and lifestyle. The nation is officially called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Under the one-party rule of the Communist Party, the nation follows socialist policies. With a population of 87.84 million people as of 2011, the multiethnic state consists of 90% Kinh people and

other 53 minority groups. 80% of the people worship Mahayana Buddhism. The nominal GDP is 123.6 billion dollars as of 2011, and the land area is approximately 0.33 million km², which is as wide as that of Japan exclusive of Kyushu. The people are very pro-Japanese.

Since the Doi Moi policy in 1986, Vietnam has achieved rapid economic development. After the Lehman Shock in 2008, however, the country has been suffering from deteriorating balance, weak currency of dong and high inflation; current measures against inflation is now causing economic recession.

Nevertheless, in spite of such problems as insufficient legislation and bribery, the country attracts foreign companies one after another as a promising consumption market for future. Furthermore, about 2 million Overseas Vietnamese called "Viet Kieu" remit as vast money as 9 billion dollars to their domestic family, which serves as a great support for the economy.

Although there is some gap, the urban citizens have become certainly rich these days. The number of rich people and potential middle class has been growing to provide a large consumption market, even though the middle class is still immature. Especially the Ho Chi Minh citizens are ambitious and optimistic about their future; they can enjoy basic life in their non-class society though there is some widening gap. They value their family, have strong ties with communities and friends, and are willing to enjoy their life.

"New Trends in Urban Lifestyle in Ho Chi Minh City" reports the trends in new life culture and exciting lifestyle of the rich and potential middle classes in Ho Chi Minh City, a developing city of commerce and economy in Vietnam, as hailing its 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Japan.



* Evening traffic jam of motorcycles and cars

Part 1 features dispositions of Vietnamese people, changes in lifestyle by economic development, changing forms of families and social roles of women. Part 2 reports on economic growth after Doi Moi policy and economic prospect in future, as well as richer consumption culture and issue of gap. Part 3 discusses influence of expanding urbanization,

changing distribution system, and urban lifestyle. Part 4 features future trend in the wealthy and middle classes, and exchange with Japan. The above information is based on literatures, various data and interviews with related persons.

1. Outline of Vietnam history and development of Ho Chi Minh City, formerly named Saigon

1) Outline of Vietnam history

Vietnam has a long history; in Northern part, Dong Son culture (bronze culture) flourished in about 400 BC. However, since the Northern part borders on China, the nation has consistently been influenced by the neighbor. In 111 BC, Nanyue was ruined by territorial expansion of Emperor Wu of Han. Since then, the nation came under the control of China for as long as a thousand years and was greatly influenced by such Chinese cultures as the lifestyle and Confucianism. In the 11th century, Vietnam formed a united kingdom and became independent, though the Chinese influence remained in the country.

In 1852, France occupied Saigon (current Ho Chi Minh City) to rule as a colony. After World War II, anti-French resistance war started seeking for independence. In 1954, the nation was divided into Northern and Southern Vietnams and achieved independence under the Geneva Agreement. Saigon developed as capital city of the Southern Vietnam. Later, the Vietnam War broke out against the US in 1960 resulted in victory of Vietnam when Saigon fell in 1975. In 1976 the Northern and Southern Vietnams were united into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Saigon was renamed to Ho Chi Minh City after late Ho Chi Minh, the founding father. During initial phases of building country, socialist policies were promoted including land ownership by the nation, collectivization of agriculture, and promotion of immigration from urban district to rural area, which brought about conflict with traditional value and family model.

At the same time, the nation invaded Cambodia in 1977 to bring under the Pol Pot army that was threatening the western south of Vietnam. As China supported the Pol Pot regime to influence Cambodia and pressure Vietnam, China-Vietnam War broke out. So many lives were made victim of the war.¹

This way, Vietnam fought wars for liberty over and over again, and the wartime economy disrupted the people's life. Such situation has aggravated the nation's

¹ The author Hien's mother's brother died on the battlefield when he was as young as 22. Also her aunt's husband perished in border conflict with China, leaving his beloved mother, wife and five children behind. These two wars have left deep sorrow and anger at the bottom of the victims' families' heart, regardless of what they think about the justice or injustice of the wars.

relationship with neighboring and developed countries, while the national economy was seriously impoverished even when compared with ASEAN countries; as such, economic recovery has become a pressing issue. To deal with such circumstances, in 1986, the country switched to socialist-oriented market economy policy "Doi Moi (renovation)". As a result, Cambodia Paris Peace Treaty was formed in 1991, diplomatic relations with China was normalized in 1991, and the US economic sanctions against Vietnam were lifted in 1994. Furthermore, Vietnam was admitted to ASEAN in 1995, became a member of APEC in 1998, signed Japan-Vietnam Investment Agreement in 2003, and joined WTO in 2007, through which a platform for current economical development has been formed.



*Various weapons of the Vietnam War are displayed at museums.

2) Vietnam economy has been suffering from inflation after financial crisis in 2008

Between the introduction of Doi Moi policy and integration into the global economy and ASEAN economy bloc, Vietnam economy has steadily grown without seriously damaged by the Asia Shock in 1998. Seeking a future consumption market or for China-plus-one strategy, foreign companies of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Western countries, and China have moved into Vietnam to make investment, develop production factories, and create jobs. Also Official Development Assistance (ODA) for infrastructure development and other purposes has greatly contributed to the growth of Vietnam economy. Consequently the economy sustained high growth rate with the real GDP growth rate at 7 to 8%. After 2000, the country joined WTO and greatly promoted policies for peace and economic development within the framework of international business.

However, the vulnerable Vietnam economy with immature supporting industries was to be seriously affected by the global economy; in 2008, the international financial crisis triggered by the Lehman Shock directly hit the Vietnam economy on fragile foundation.

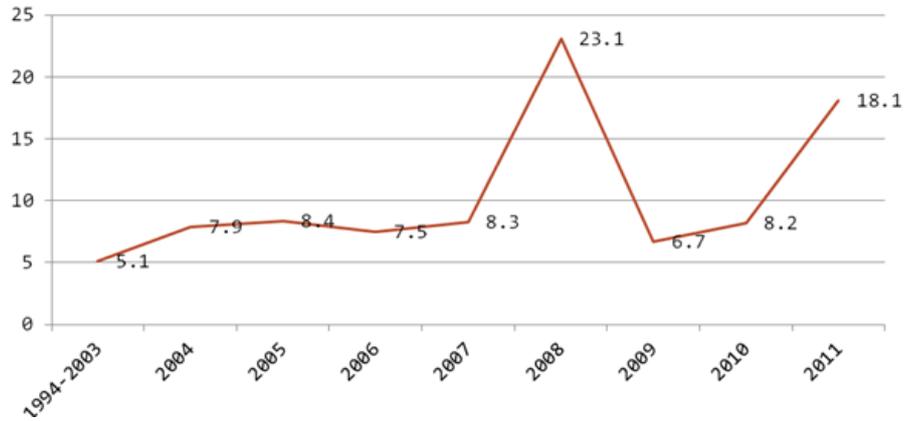
The Vietnam economy went into a stall because of over-20% inflation and worldwide recession. To recover the economy, the government started to tackle economic measures, which adversely resulted in economic chaos with high inflation in 2010 and 2011. Therefore, the government switched to inflation control at the beginning of 2011 and further strengthened belt tightening. As a result, although the GDP growth rate in the first half of 2012 was as low as plus 4.4%, the inflation rate slowed down to about 5.0%.

In the meantime, another viewpoint for growth of domestic economy is real estate development. Like in other Asian countries, domestic investors and enterprisers have appreciated the value of lands in response to the expansion of urbanization, actively developed real estates including high-rise housings and office buildings, and greatly contributed to development of urban area and economy. Some of the enterprisers have made enormous fortune. However, after a peak in 2005, the real estate bubble has burst; as land prices have tumbled down to about half and many of the development projects were canceled in the middle of construction, the real estate market has been stagnant. Consequently, bad loans have been inflated to deteriorate the management of banks and caused consolidation of them, having an adverse effect on the real economy. From 2011 to 2012, more than 0.1 million small and medium companies went bankruptcy (source: GSO, General Statistics Office of Vietnam). Currently, the loan rate is ten and several percent and accommodation of funds are stagnant under the influence of the inflation control policy, resulting in sluggish business activity and consumers' recession.

Owing to the inflation, labor cost is steeply rising, too. During the year of 2011, wage was raised twice to deal with the inflation. For now, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) is considering hike in the minimum wage for laborers; the wage is expected to be raised to about 150 dollars a month by 2015. The average monthly wage of white-collar employees in Ho Chi Minh City is about 200 dollars, that of Japanese company employees is about 300 to 500 dollars, and that of managerial employees is about 800 dollars. Even if the inflation rate is high, the whole income, as well as disposable income, has been certainly increasing.

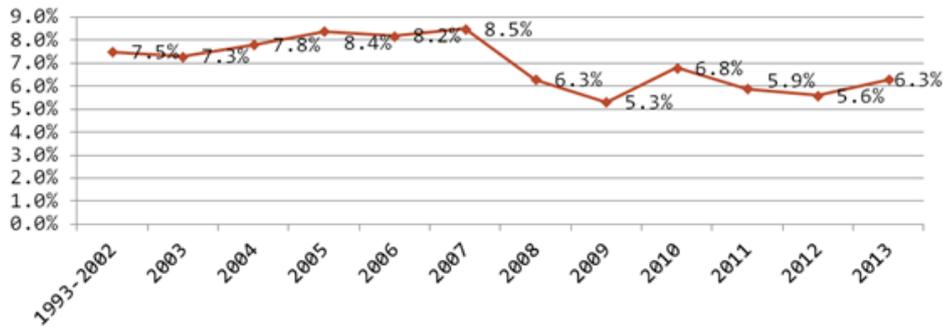
In Ho Chi Minh City, the GDP per person is estimated at 3600 dollars in 2012, and the average annual income is at 2500 dollars. When the GDP per person exceeds 5000 dollars, consumption is said to dramatically increase such as cars start to sell; now an explosive expansion of consumption market comes into view.

Graph 1. Inflation rate (%)



Source: Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)

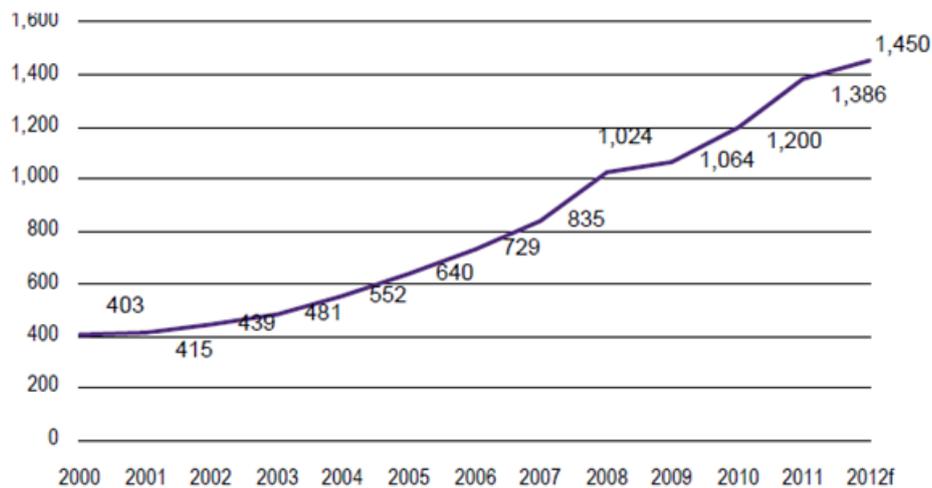
Graph 2. Real rate of Vietnamese economic growth



Source: IMF (forecast for 2012 and 2013)

Graph 3. Transition of nominal GDP in terms of US dollars

GDP per Capita USD (2000 - 20112)
Source: Ministry of Planning and Investment



Source: Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)

Table1. Transition of Vietnam economy

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Real GDP growth rate (%)	7.1	7.3	7.8	8.4	8.2	8.5	6.2	5.3	6.8	5.9
Total of nominal GDP (million US\$)	35,064	39,552	45,428	52,917	60,913	71,016	91,094	97,180	106,427	123,600
Nominal GDP per capita (\$)	440	489	554	637	724	835	1,048	1,068	1,174	1,374
Inflation rate of consumer price (%)	3.9	3.1	7.7	8.3	7.5	8.3	23.0	6.9	9.2	18.6

Source: JETRO

3) Development of Ho Chi Minh City

The Southern part of the country is a fertile delta area benefited from the Mekong River and a productive land yielding crops three times a year. Its relatively short history can be traced back to about 300 years ago. Originally the place was inhabited by the Manchu and the Khmer including the Chanlap (Cambodia) and the Ailao (Laos). There the Vietnamese came down to form the Nguyen dynasty, and constructed castle wall for ruling and developed the place as a military town. The Southern culture was fostered through long-time exchanges among such ethnic groups as the Khmer, the Chinese and the Vietnamese.

After that, France colonized Vietnam. In order to govern Vietnam, France carefully determined its ethnic characteristics and cleverly divided the whole country into Northern, Central and Southern areas and administered each of the colonies separately. As part of the colonial policy, France projected a harbor city for trading, which developed into a city of 0.5 million citizens. This is the original of old Saigon that was praised as "Pearl of the Orient".

Today, Ho Chi Minh City is estimated to have a population of about 7 million and about a million unregistered people (in 2009). While Hanoi has about 6.4 million and Da Nang City has 0.9 million people, Ho Chi Ming City continues to grow as the first commercial economic city in Vietnam. With a long experience of market economy from the days of Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City has been playing a role of engine for economic development of Vietnam and contributing to the business growth since Doi Moi policy.

Although the streets have many beautiful French buildings of the colonial days, redevelopment has been promoted to accommodate the expanding economy and increasing population by construction of modern commercial buildings, office buildings and shopping centers. For the future, development of urban infrastructures is a

pressing issue such as new housings, transportation, and water supply and sewerage systems etc, in order to accommodate the new influx of people and foreign companies and to deal with the heavy traffic jams.



*Harmony of European and Modern-style buildings



*Popular high-brand shops

2. The Vietnamese sense of values and different dispositions of the peoples in Northern, Central and Southern areas.

1) The Vietnamese traditional sense of values is influenced by Confucianism

As a result of being ruled by China for as long as a thousand years, Vietnam has strongly been influenced by the Chinese culture. Although the country was also colonized by France for about a hundred years from the mid 19th century and came under the influence of the western country for life culture etc, Confucianism and other Chinese cultures are deeply rooted in the Vietnamese society.

Since Vietnam has a war-torn history for independence, the people feel they have to protect their own lives and assets by themselves. Accordingly, as a Vietnamese proverb "the laws of the emperor yield to the customs of the village" shows, they put emphasis on endurance and development of "family" and "village", the minimum units of the society. The Vietnamese are kind of individualistic people as they value blood relationship and regional bond. In the Vietnamese society, personal connections count from entrance into school, getting employment, advancement in one's career, to business itself; this practice can be understood from the fact that gift giving to show gratitude is a common practice throughout the society.

The influence of Confucianism still remains today, though it is not as strong as in feudal times. Examples are: large family system, village communities, filial devotion to parents, sisters and relatives helping each other in hard times, students' respect for teachers, and the junior's esteem for the senior. The basic ideas of life culture are: "Jin (benevolence)", "Gi (justice)", "Rei (courtesy)" "Chi (knowledge)" and "Shin (truthfulness)".

However, this moral framework has started to change in Ho Chi Minh City. Dual working couples of nuclear family who do not have their parents in their vicinity rely on helpers for child care and housework. Even the families living in the city from Saigon era are getting reliant upon helpers for care of parents, as the number of nuclear families among them has increased. A greater number of people seem to have a notion that their domestic problems can be solved with money. Though the Vietnamese society generally puts much faith in regional bond and blood relationship, Ho Chi Minh City has fewer festivals and events held with local people; it is no longer uncommon a citizen of the City has trouble recognizing faces of his or her neighbors.

Other feature of Vietnam is that the society is not hierarchical. The nation scarcely sees discriminatory behaviors against certain regions or ethnics, or class distinction for marriage. Partly thanks to the socialist policies, the people live in relatively equal ways in local communities. However, the rapid economic development has brought about significant economic disparity in this equal society. Especially in major cities the trend is noticeable. The disparity provides a social worry that requires counter-actions.

2) The Vietnamese disposition

According to "A Brief History of Vietnam" authored by Tran Trong Kim² (1883-1953), a renowned scholar of Vietnam in the fields of education, history, literature and religion, and a former Prime Minister of Empire of Vietnam, the Vietnamese people are well-natured in that they have good brain and memory, love studying and understand things quickly, and do things deftly. Also women are hard workers, take good care of their family, and have the integrity (innocence) of women, good manners, diligence and thrift in accordance with Confucian teachings.

At the same time, the people are sometimes cunning, thoughtless, high-handed, lack of perseverance, vain, look down on others and put greatest importance on one's face and pride. They also love fortune-telling and believe in life after death, while they are not very devoted to any religion, the author says.

A Vietnamese researcher at American Social Research Institute in the US describes typical quality of the Vietnamese as following, which may be appropriate from the viewpoint of the Vietnamese themselves.

1. The Vietnamese tackle short-term difficulties in smart and creative way, but they are not good at forming and dealing with a long-term plan.
2. They are keen to acquire knowledge and have an excellent understanding, but their

² One of the most notable historian of the 20th century (Harvey H. Smith & others, North Vietnam ~ a country study~, The American University, 1981, p.157) .

studying is lukewarm, in other words, they give up too quickly. As a result, they can't construct their knowledge systematically.

3. While they are frugal, they waste money. In hard times, they stand together and help each other, but in peace, they fail to close ranks.
4. They love groups but are not good at cooperative works or enforcing organizational power. (Work by one person would be successful, by two would be insufficient, and by three would be a mess.)

(Source: Phan Thanh Nham, Master's thesis "Two-sidedness of the Vietnamese Disposition", Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, University of Social Science and Humanities)

The Vietnamese nature has been gradually changing since 1945 when the ideologist education of socialistic state denied the traditional moral framework which was then replaced by new rule of socialistic collectivity and equality. Under the influence of market economy after Doi Moi policy, more and more people attach a higher value to individual than family or community and size up things with money; the traditional values have become further scarce. As a reaction to this change, however, those who have studied abroad started to revalue the traditional identity of the Vietnamese people.

3) Difference of the people's dispositions in Northern, Central and Southern parts.

According to the geographical characteristics, Vietnam can be divided into Northern, Central and Southern areas, each of which has different traditional culture, lifestyle, communities and attitude toward work.

Northern area has four seasons; in winter, though not as snowy as in Japan, it is cold and chilling to the bone in this tropical area. The Northern part adjacent to China had a rough history of long-control by China, as well as a great cultural influence. Under such severe circumstances, the local people are diligent and hard working, and have turned out competent people in various fields including researchers, many bureaucrats and politicians.

Central area has steep mountains on its back and narrow farm land. In summer, wind blowing from Laos brings in severe hotness, while in winter cold wind from western mountains brings in unbearable coldness. Furthermore, typhoons almost directly hit the Central region and extensively damage the agricultural production etc. The people are living in such severe natural environment. Therefore, the dwellers of the Central area work hard, make efforts, exercise economy and have endurance. Not a small number of them move to the Southern area or work abroad.

In the Southern part, the climate is mild throughout a year; thanks to the bountiful Mekong Delta, the people can easily keep body and soul together with an abundant fruits, farming crops and sea food. They leisurely work and think about only today's life without worrying about tomorrow's. They are optimistic and usually contact with others in a tenderly manner.

Since the people of each region has different disposition and lifestyle as introduced above, skillful use of the differences would produce good results in the fields of business or research. For example, you may entrust difficult challenges to a native of the Northern, leave commerce and business to the Southern and rely on a tireless Central worker for troublesome task and new projects.

3. Lifestyle in lively Ho Chi Minh City

1) Saigon food culture is a collection of domestic and foreign cuisines.

Ho Chi Minh City, i.e. Saigon is a center of the Southern area and a junction of food cultures of north, south, east and west. In Vietnam, people basically live by a large family; citizens of Ho Chi Minh City leave work at closing time without overtime, go home by motorcycle and enjoy supper with their family. When a family live by three generations, cooking is a job of grandmother. Vegetables, chicken, pork, fruits, and other materials are fresh and cheap. Traditional dishes are rich in variation. The Vietnamese cuisines typically complement flavor of material with Umami seasonings, and diners season the dishes as they like with Nuoc Mam (fish source) and hot pepper which are set up at table.

The Saigon citizens usually eat out for breakfast at a food stall. On weekday nights they always have dinner with their family at home. Even if they have an appointment with their friends at night, they go out after they enjoy dinner with their family because they value their time spending with their family. On holidays and weekend nights, they go out with their family and friends to enjoy eating and drinking at various restaurants and stalls. Cho Lon Market and Ben Thanh Market have many stalls opening overnight. Food life in Saigon can be enjoyed around the clock.

Saigon cuisine features attractive country dishes, very tasty with sweetness of sugar and coconut milk, a unique flavor in the Southern area. Also Saigon boasts a collection of various local cuisines from both domestic and oversea areas. The popular Pho (noodle), Cha Ca (fried fish), Bun (rice noodle), Mien (bean-starch vermicelli), Nem Hanoi (Hanoi-style fried spring roll), Banh Cuon (steamed spring roll) and other capital Hanoi- and Northern-style dishes adorn the Saigon gastronomic culture. Central

cuisine includes imperial dishes, Bun Bo Hue (rice noodle topped with beef) and Nem (fried spring roll). At the same time, various countries' food cultures such as Chinese, Indian, French, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Aussie take root in Saigon.

While Saigon adopts various food cultures of domestic and foreign regions, it maintains its traditional dishes and adds depth to the diversified food culture. Other noteworthy gastronomic culture of Saigon is stall and street stores. They deal with varied and tasty dishes including staple dishes, light meals, snacks and drinks, which are indispensable part of the citizens' daily life and enrich the urban life in Saigon.



In this Saigon city, a foreign fast food shop KFC opened in 1997, followed by Lotteria, Jollibe, Burger King and other fast foods to join the Saigon food culture.

Also coffee culture has taken root in Saigon. The Saigon citizens love drinking a cup of Vietnam coffee or Cà phê đá (iced coffee) as they enjoy chatting with their friends. Many spacious and greenery garden cafes are popular among the citizens as place of relaxation. There appeared new-style cafes such as Vietnamese Trung Nguyen Coffee, High Land Coffee, Aussie Gloria Jean, Korean The coffee Bean, American NYDC, all enjoying great success in Saigon. In February 1, 2013, the first Starbucks opened in the city. Though the coffee is as expensive as 3 dollars a cup, the business is flourishing.



*Restaurant in the leafy shade



*Aromatic Vietnam coffee

2) Coexistence of traditional and modern fashions

Vietnamese fashion of today can be categorized into traditional and modern. The traditional fashion is represented by Ao dai, worn by school teachers, as company uniform, on such occasions as marriage and festival. These days, some of the Ao dai designs are arranged for the younger people. Additionally more casual Ao ba ba is popular among the elderly people. On the other hand, a variety of styles flood the modern fashion world under the influence of Hong Kong and Korean movies and TV dramas. After Vietnam became a member of WTO, famous fashion brands have branched into Ho Chi Minh City. This movement has boosted the fashion consciousness of the younger people.

However, most of the Ho Chi Minh citizens have low awareness of fashion. They choose their outfits in line with their narrow taste, instead of consulting tasteful colors, styling and coordinate of fashion magazines. Regretfully, the Ho Chi Minh citizens have not developed a sophisticated fashion sense yet. It may be partly caused by their narrow variety of outfits owing to the hot climate around the year in Ho Chi Minh City.

3) Housings from the colonial era and trend in new housings.

The citizens generally live in a collective housing or a detached house. Detached houses located in urban district are generally very slim with 4 to 5 meter width, 10 to 20 meter depth and 3 to 4 storied. Some of them are as slim as a road, with 4 meter width and 50 meter depth. These characteristics are said to be derived from the history that during French colonial era the tax was laid on houses according to their width. The families engaged in trade use the 1st floor for shop space and the 2nd to 4th floors for residence. Those who are not engaged in trade use the 1st floor facing street for dining and living space as well as parking of their valuable motorbikes. Relatively wealthy family has each floor used by each member of the family; as for common people, however, a whole family live on each floor. Accordingly, repeated inheritance will confuse ownership and use rights of building and land, resulting in extreme difficulty of buying out of lands for redevelopment.

Detached houses of 60 square meters located in off-street area cost about 1.5 to 2 billion dong (70 to 100 thousand dollars). The prices of houses on main street differ according to their location, ranging from about 80 to 180 million dong per square meter. A condominium of 60 square meters costs around 50 thousand dollars, which is nearly equal to the price level of a detached house; so many people prefer a detached house.

In Vietnam, not only single persons but married couples are basically supposed to live with their family. Even relatives who come from local regions usually live with their

kin in the city. Students and workers who do not have relatives in the city rent and share an apartment with some of their friends. Vietnamese houses are designed to be airy and comfortable at night in the subtropical region. This is the traditional housing style.

During the past ten and several years, however, a great number of people flowed into the city and in future the population is expected to further increase. With more than 7 million population in Ho Chi Minh City now, supply of new housings is a significant challenge.

As redevelopment within the city would take a long time for acquisition of land etc, the local government has made the ex-wetland on the opposite bank of the Saigon River a development site for new housings and commercial facilities. From around 2000, District 2 in northeast was developed into an area of huge apartment buildings and luxurious villas, where the Western people and the wealthy Vietnamese live. Also District 7 Phu My Hung in south has rows of high-rise apartment buildings and detached mansions, which were initially developed by the local government and Taiwanese company, later joined by Korean company. These real estates are in actual demand, while many buy them for investment purposes.

Since 2005, the market of real estate has been worsening. Although the government is taking various measures, there is no sign of price recovery for high-rise housings. However, detached houses are not going down, some of them are even going up.

In general, the Vietnamese are fond of a detached house, but the youth and the middle class are likely to prefer condominiums. Since life environment of condominiums is sophisticated, quiet and safe, the people think "condominiums are more comfortable than detached houses".



*Living space with sophisticated interior decoration



*Modern high-rise housings

4. Female roles and positions in the society

1) Outdated male chauvinism and preference for boys

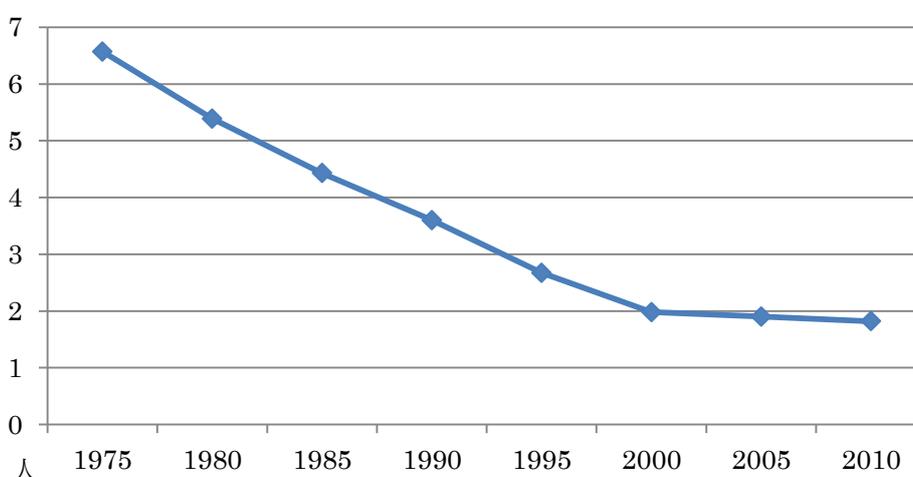
In preparation for population growth in future, the government has taken incentive measures for smaller family and controlled population by limiting the number of children per household to one or two during the past 50 years. If a public worker has three children, social sanctions would be imposed such as delayed career progress; consequently the percentage of household with three children lowered to 16.1% in 2009 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam). In this sense, the two-child policy is successful.

However, for various reasons, there is no end to having third children. Firstly, under the patriarchy and male domination, an old aspiration for a boy persists as family heir. According to Confucianism, females must be obedient to her father, husband and son. Children share their father's family name and their family assets are owned by father. Therefore, even if a family has two daughters, they often covet for a boy. The population control was strict until about ten years ago, but these days the punishment is milder and a larger number of families have three children. However, this is the case limited to families of executives or public officers.

Secondly, a family is supposed to preferably have children of both genders. For this reason, many give birth to third child. Note that the mother feels much easier when a girl is expected than when a boy is waited for.

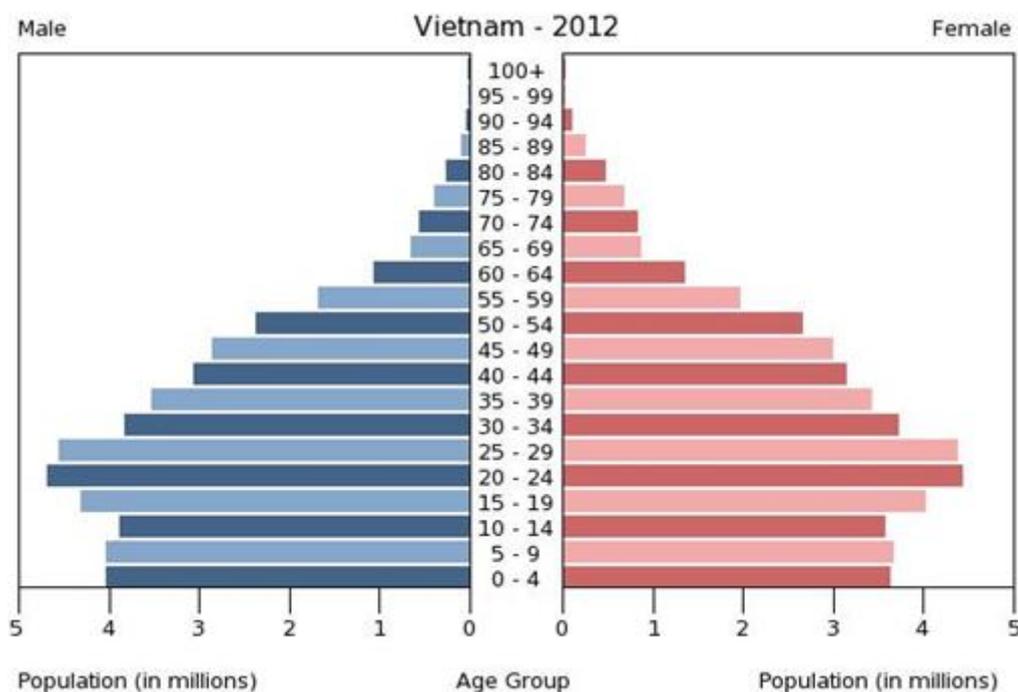
Thirdly, since men are labor force at farms and most farmers do not have pension plan or health insurance, they need boys for care of old age. In the same way, public servants need boys for their retirement life because even if they have insurance the amount is very small.

Graph 4. Total fertility rate, birth rate 1.80 in 2011



Source: World Bank

Graph 5. Dynamics of population



Source: [Http://www.cia.gov/libray/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html](http://www.cia.gov/libray/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html)

Table 2. Population Composition in Vietnam

Total population	92,477,857 (July 2013, speculated value)
age0-14 (persons)	24.6% male 11,931,623 female 10,807,661
age15-24(persons)	18.4% male 8,796,395 female 8,215,536
age 25-54(persons)	44.5% male 20,554,252 female 20,551,460
Average age	28.2 (male 27.1, female 29.2)
Religion	Buddhist 9.3%, Catholic 6.7%, Hoa Hao 1.5%, Cao Dai 1.1% etc
Ethnic groups	Kinh85.7%, Tay1.9%, Thai1.8%, Muong1.5%, Khmer1.5%, Mon1.2%, Nung1.1%, Others5.34% (1999 Census)

2) Population control: distorted dynamics of population

Other problem relevant to childbirth is an unbalanced ratio of boys and girls, 112/100 at birth. In Northern area, the ratio of male to female is much higher, and in some area the sex ratio is 130.7/100 (source: survey by Hung Yen Province). This is partly because the mothers tend to have an abortion when they see their babies are girl, the United Nations Population reports.

"The sex ratio of babies will be as high as 125/100 by 2030. Vietnam will suffer from shortage of 4 million brides" the National Population and Family Planning Commission says. Furthermore, Camilla Mellander, the Swedish Ambassador to Vietnam raises a problem, saying "If the old ideas of patriarchy and male domination are not ameliorated, marriage rate will decline and the number of such problems as human traffic and domestic violence will certainly increase." Since Vietnam sends out brides to farm villages in Taiwan (the cumulative number of Vietnamese brides amounts to approximately 0.1millions), Korea and China, the shortage of women is a grave issue for development of sound society.

3) Women contribute to the nation and the society.

Women are playing important roles for the society. First, they support their whole families' happiness at home as good mother and educator of their children, supporter of their husbands' job, and care taker of their aged parents.

In addition to their vocation as wife and mother, women play great parts in the society. Women have largely been contributing to the nation through the history of independence and foundation. In the history, many heroines existed such as Hai Ba Trung³ and Ba Trieu⁴. In recent years, many women participated in the War of Independence and fought for freedom and national liberation, leading Vietnam to liberty and independence.

After the independence, the Vietnamese women have overcome various difficulties and made efforts to adapt themselves to the society. In social activities, many women are involved in political parties, the government, labor unions and local activities to undertake important roles. Also many females are flourishing as politician, scientist, manager, educator, author and artist. Women occupy 33% of the members of National Assembly, 36% of undergraduates, 34% of graduates and 26% of doctors. At the same time, in such fields as textile, apparel and services, women are indispensable workforce. Females are playing important roles for the national development.

Since women are contributing to the activity of the government and the Communist Party, their existence always draws attention. The attention is apparent in the female supportive policies. In April 2007, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party passed a bill titled "Support measures for women toward industrialization and modernization".

³ Hai Ba Trung : Trung Trac and Trung Nhi are sisters who commanded rebellion in Vietnam around the 1st century under the dominion of Houban. They are called "Jeanne d'Arc of Vietnam".

⁴ Ba Trieu (225—248) : (Trieu Thi Chinh, Lady Trieu), In the era of Three Kingdoms, she fought against Dong He army commanded by Giao Chau.

This is a policy for improvement of women's status. In an attempt to achieve the objectives, goals of national action plan were decided for gender equality from 2011 to 2020. For example, in the category of education and training, female roles in the field of education were determined. As a result, the quality of female teachers in education has been improved, as the number of them has increased. Today women make up 74% of whole teachers and 94% of standard-level teachers at high schools. Among them female teachers who exceed standard level account for 20 to 25%. Also college educational institutions have 20,849 female teachers, and those with graduate degrees make up 43.8% of the whole female teachers. Many of the female teachers have earned the honorable medal of "People's Teacher" and "Excellent Teacher" from the nation. The female teachers greatly contribute to improvement of Vietnamese children's education level.



*Reunification Palace
(former Presidential Palace)



*Female teachers lead and instruct students in history

Japanese co-researcher's viewpoint

View of Today's Ho Chi Minh City

With an average age of approximately 28, much younger than 46.1 of the Japanese, and as large population as 88 million, Vietnam is not only young, populous and lively, but an attractive country as a market.

At the same time, Vietnam has high potential for wealth. Blessed with grain belt of the Red River Delta in north and the Mekong Delta in south, the country boasts high production of rice and other agricultural products, which serve as main export items. Furthermore, the country is rich in natural resources. As for the industries, many foreign companies have moved into the country and are contributing to the economic

development as they highly appreciate the nation as production base and future market. The amount of remittance from overseas Viet Kieu to domestic Vietnam is estimated at 9 billion dollars, which is a valuable incoming resource and a support for the national affluence.

Although the middle class is immature for now, the real income is certainly increasing. The younger people willingly purchase some expensive goods that used to be unaffordable for them, such as smartphone at the price of 2-3 times of their monthly salary, or motorbike which costs as much as their whole annual income. They have started to ask for pleasure of lifestyle by purchasing such items rather than frugality.

When you view Vietnam, it may be a good idea that you pay attention to the following two points. For one thing, the statistics are undeveloped and lack in reliability. It is often the case that important data are not released intentionally or the statistics are not in consistent with the reality, causing difficulty in grasping the accurate statistics. Accordingly, it may be important to develop an ability to reveal reality from announced data without swallowing them whole, considering macro environment and economic relations with other countries.

For another thing, there is a problem of bribery. The policemen at traffic accidents, Customs, local governments, buyers of private companies, the examples are too many to enumerate here. Just as an example, a public employee is supposed to have a monthly salary from minimum 50 to maximum 500 dollars; however, not a small number of high-ranking officials live in a luxurious apartment that costs several thousand dollars a month, own a classy car and purchase brand products in foreign countries. Certainly, such figures never appear in the statistics. Even if bribery can be regarded as marketing cost, it makes a significant disincentive for the foreign companies moving into Vietnam. For a greater development in future, political remedies are required against such social injustice.

Vietnam has survived a thousand years of Chinese domination and a hundred years of French colonial rule, and was exposed to the US control ensuing battles; the people endured the unspeakable suffering of war-torn history, won the war and have survived robustly. While the domestic economy is unstable with high inflation, bad loan and other problems, the nation is heading for deregulation of trade through ASEAN economic integration and participation in TPP. As for the border conflict at the Paracel Islands, the nation still has a tense relationship against China. Through the history, however, Vietnam has cultured all-round diplomatic power as a tough negotiator even

against great countries or global companies.

Vietnam has just started to be modernized. Through a step-by-step progress of such domestic and diplomatic policies as liberalization of trade and investment, fostering measures for supporting industries, development of social security and improvement of legal systems, Vietnam is expected to newly grow into a nation for richer life of the people.

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