

University of Sopron

**István Széchenyi Economics and Management Doctoral
School**

**SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING FOR SUSTAINABILITY
OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN
VIETNAM**

Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background of the Study	1
1.2. Problem statement.....	3
1.3. Research objectives.....	6
1.4. Hypothesis Development	7
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	7
3. RESULTS.....	9
4. NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS	13
5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS....	15
6. SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS	17

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Tourism, as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, has become increasingly significant across global regions, particularly within developing economies (Hall and Richards, 2000; Tan et al, 2022). Despite these advantages, the expansion of mass tourism has been widely criticized for exacerbating local challenges, including environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, cultural erosion, and the disruption of social structures (Andriotis, 2018; Fennell, 2020). Within these evolving challenges, community-based tourism (CBT) has emerged as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism, emphasizing local control, cultural appropriateness, community empowerment, and economic benefits for host populations (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Tan et al, 2018).

Since its emergence in the early 1980s, CBT has been widely recognized as an alternative model of tourism development that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth through community participation (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Ngo et al, 2018). It is regarded as a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable approach that fosters learning and meaningful engagement between visitors and local communities (Mayaka, 2015). CBT also contributes to the achievement of several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), particularly poverty reduction, environmental protection, and inclusive economic development in

rural areas of developing nations (Imbaya et al, 2019; Kline et al, 2019; Saarinen and Rogerson, 2017).

The topic of CBTEs has been discussed in multiple previous reviews of the CBT context (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Mayaka, 2015; Ngo et al, 2020). A CBTE is a community-owned and community-run business in which local members initiate tourism products or services based on local resources and directly receive the resulting benefits (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Mayaka, 2015; Ngo et al, 2020). Due to these qualities, the benefits to the community as a whole can be more effectively realized, and the business's capacity for self-sustainability can be enhanced. Both financial and non-financial outcomes contribute positively to the community (Malatji and Mtapuri, 2012; Mayaka, 2015).

CBTEs have rapidly developed in developing countries across Africa, Latin America, and Asia to encompass each possible type of CBT (Ngo et al, 2019). CBTEs are regarded as a highly promising strategy for fostering sustainable local development (Ngo et al, 2018). In remote regions of developing nations, CBTEs can help alleviate poverty (Pradhan and Samanta, 2022; Teerakul et al, 2012), preserve and responsibly use natural resources (Ambrose-Oji et al, 2015), increase a society's social capital (Cabras and Mount, 2017), reduce inequalities between socially disadvantaged classes (Nanda and Samanta, 2018), promote community identity, development, and equity (Buratti et al, 2022; Pradhan and Samanta, 2022).

1.2. Problem statement

The main challenge examined in this study is that the implementation of CBTEs is still not reaching the expected potential concerning the objectives of sustainable tourism performance (Ngo et al, 2018). Despite their potential to boost local economies through tourism, CBTEs rarely attain a sustainable financial future (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009; Ngo et al, 2018; Weaver, 2010). The shortcomings of CBTEs can be explained by multiple interconnected factors. At the operational level, numerous studies identify factors such as financial instability, insufficient management, ineffective governance, and limited marketing capabilities as primary contributors to low performance in developing countries (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009; Mielke, 2012; Muckosy and Mitchell, 2008). Moreover, major contributing variables at the managerial level include unequal power relations within communities and an excessive reliance on external support (Van der Duim and Caalders, 2013; Zapata et al, 2013). When inadequately managed, CBTEs may replicate the same adverse effects typically related to top-down, mass tourism models (Kontogeorgopoulos et al, 2015; Taylor, 2017).

The sustainability challenges faced by CBTEs are increasingly prevalent and may be alleviated through the adoption of effective social media marketing strategies (Lee et al, 2024; Ngo et al, 2019). Digital marketing, including social media marketing, is essential for the long-term success of CBTEs, as well as for various other

management considerations (Beetson et al, 2020; Ngo et al, 2020; Sinh et al, 2024) for diverse reasons. First, the majority of CBTEs are small enterprises, generally operated by the community or private households, situated in regions with restricted development (Sinh et al, 2024; Tan et al, 2018). Second, market-generated material, including information, images, and videos (Tan et al, 2018), can be simply generated and shared among mobile users (Ditta-Apichai et al, 2020). Thirdly, the customizable nature of social media platforms facilitates the exchange of feedback and comments, enabling locals to promote their businesses, manage tourist interactions, and maintain greater independence and income control (Tan et al, 2018). The advantages of social media for destinations include increased brand awareness and involvement and decreased promotional costs (Berhanu and Raj, 2024); promotion by word of mouth; social acceptance and validation (Oyewobi et al, 2021; Tan et al, 2018).

The adoption of social media marketing effectively supports tourism SMEs in achieving sustained long-term performance (Berhanu and Raj, 2024; Borah et al, 2022; Sharma and Sharma, 2024). In this context, assessing social media adoption can promote the comprehensive development of CBTEs is crucial, as tourism SMEs are likely to use it if they perceive it as cost-efficient, user-friendly, and compatible (Berhanu and Raj, 2024; Çalışkan et al, 2025; Deb et al, 2024). The existing studies primarily focus on the adoption of social media marketing and sustainable outcomes within SME tourism in general (Deb et al, 2024; El-Gohary, 2012; Sharma and Sharma,

2024); however, none of the studies have specifically investigated this relationship in the context of CBTEs.

Moreover, stakeholder engagement and collaborations are often identified as indicators of CBTE performance and are extensively analyzed in scholarly studies (Ngo et al, 2019; Ngo et al, 2018). Establishing marketing collaborations with external stakeholders is crucial for the sustained success of CBTEs (Ngo et al, 2018). The primary stakeholders of CBTEs are tour operators, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups, social institutions, and CBTE networks (Ngo et al, 2019). Therefore, many studies have examined the possible stakeholders in CBTE development, along with their marketing assistance (Dodds et al, 2018; Ngo et al, 2019; Ngo et al, 2018).

The previously mentioned problems should be resolved to enhance the long-term sustainability of CBTE. This study addressed key environmental, social, and economic performance concerns using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods approach. The existing evaluations focus on the adoption of social media marketing and sustainable outcomes in SME tourism broadly (Deb et al, 2024; El-Gohary, 2012; Sharma and Sharma, 2024), although none have specifically investigated the connection in the CBTEs context. Furthermore, the adoption of social media marketing and sustainability performance is a contextually complex, multidimensional phenomenon supporting contextual validity (Borah

et al, 2022; Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; Tajudeen et al, 2018). Consequently, the researcher reviewed existing literature to identify study variables and research gaps, then conducted qualitative interviews with CBTE owners in Vietnam to gain deeper insights and validate the contextual relevance of social media marketing adoption and sustainability performance factors. After collecting quantitative survey data, the study tests the proposed research model's structural relationship. Consequently, this research extends the practical perspective of social media marketing adoption by significantly applying it to sustainable success within the CBTE framework.

1.3. Research objectives

There are four main research objectives:

RO1: To identify the key factors that affect the adoption of social media marketing for the sustainability of CBTEs in developing countries.

RO2: To examine the impact of social media marketing adoption on the sustainability performance of CBTEs.

RO3: To explore the stakeholders who collaborate to strengthen the relationship between social media marketing adoption and the sustainability performance of CBTEs.

RO4: To assess the moderating role of stakeholder collaboration moderates the relationship between social media marketing adoption and the sustainability performance of CBTEs.

1.4. Hypothesis Development

The following hypothesis was proposed in this study:

H1: There is a significant impact of perceived usefulness (PEU) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H2: There is a significant impact of perceived ease of use (EOU) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H3: There is a significant impact of Cost (COS) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H4: There is a significant impact of compatibility (COM) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H5: There is a significant impact of facilitating conditions (FCO) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H6: There is a significant impact of interactivity (INT) on social media marketing adoption (SMA).

H7: There is a significant impact of social media marketing adoption (SMA) on sustainability performance (SUSP).

H8: Local authority stakeholders (LA) as a moderator of the correlation between social media marketing adoption (SMA) and sustainability performance (SUSP).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-method research approach. First, a qualitative study (Phase 1) investigates the

variables and assessment indicators of social media marketing adoption, sustainability performance, and local government stakeholders. The qualitative study comprises two steps: a literature review and content analysis to identify research gaps and to delineate the preliminary dimensions and variables of the study. The next part involved conducting a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews with 14 CBTE owners, followed by thematic analysis of the interview transcripts using the Nvivo 15 software package to guarantee the contextual validity of the research framework. The variables and factors were further defined through a comparison of interview data (inductive approach) and the findings of the literature review (deductive approach).

Second, a quantitative phase comprising two steps. Particularly, Phase 2 entailed the development of a questionnaire and the conducting of a pilot study involving 52 owners of CBTEs. The pilot findings assist in identifying unclear questions, evaluating internal consistency, and refining the measurement scales, which reduces the original 27 items to 21 well-structured items of three main constructs, including social media marketing adoption, sustainability performance and local authority stakeholders. The concluding phase (Phase 3) involved an online questionnaire that was distributed via Google Forms to 391 CBTE owners across Vietnam, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships. Therefore, the study synthesizes both qualitative and quantitative findings to offer a comprehensive

understanding of the antecedents, outcomes, and moderators of social media marketing adoption in CBTEs in Vietnam.

3. RESULTS

The qualitative study supports identifying the factors and indicators of social media marketing adoption, sustainability performance, and local government stakeholders, based on the perceptions and experiences of 14 owners of CBTEs in Vietnam. Furthermore, the findings of this qualitative study validate the literature review and pilot study, thus confirming the contextual validity of the study variables. Consequently, the research model was developed through the investigation. The study model is illustrated in Figure 1:

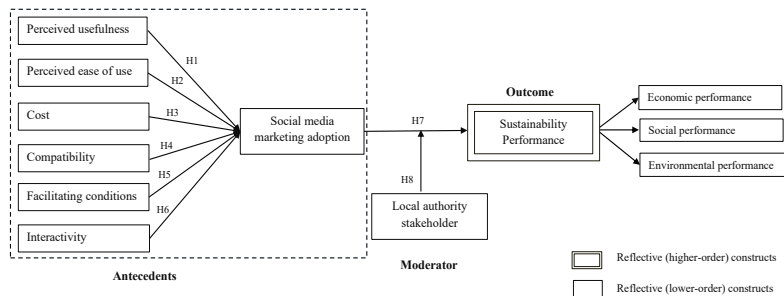


Figure 1. Proposed framework for research

Source: Own construction (2025)

The quantitative phase was conducted using SmartPLS software to validate and test the proposed model.

Hypothesis (H1): Perceived usefulness (PEU) has an insignificant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical outcomes uncovered by the research indicate that perceived usefulness (PEU) does not influence social media marketing adoption (H1) ($p > 0.05$). Although CBTEs' owners may recognize the potential benefits of social media for promoting their businesses, this perception alone does not strongly influence their decision to adopt it. As a result, the perceived usefulness of social media alone is insufficient to drive adoption among CBTE owners, as practical constraints, cultural values, and limited technological capability tend to moderate or weaken its effect.

Hypothesis (H2): Perceived ease of use (EOU) has a positive and significant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical outcomes uncovered that perceived ease of use (EOU) positively and significantly influences social media marketing adoption (SMA) with statistical support ($\beta = 0.141$; $t = 3.357$). This finding was consistent with the theory of the TAM model, which reflects its fundamental concept (Davis, 1989). This finding indicates that when CBTEs' owners find social media platforms simple, user-friendly, and convenient to operate, they are more willing to adopt and use them for marketing purposes (Chatterjee et al, 2024; Chatterjee and Kar, 2020).

Hypothesis (H3): Cost (COS) has a positive and significant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical outcomes uncovered Cost (COS) positively and significantly influences social media marketing adoption (SMA) with

statistical support ($\beta = 0.378$, $t = 8.782$). This finding was consistent with the theory of the UTAUT2 model (Venkatesh et al, 2012). This finding was supported by previous literature (Chatterjee et al, 2024; El-Gohary, 2012; Ngo et al, 2020). The finding indicated that CBTEs' owners perceive social media as an affordable and cost-effective marketing tool compared to traditional advertising methods.

Hypothesis (H4): Compatibility (COM) has a positive and significant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical results showed that compatibility (COM) positively and significantly influences social media marketing adoption (SMA) with statistical support ($\beta = 0.101$, $t = 2.183$). This finding was consistent with IDT theory (Rogers, 1983). This finding of the adoption of social media marketing in CBTEs was supported by previous literature, which was compatible with current practices (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; El-Gohary, 2012). Practically, CBTE owners will feel comfortable adopting technology if they feel it matches their existing experience and practices (Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; Hsu et al, 2007).

Hypothesis (H5): Facilitating conditions (FCO) have a positive and significant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical outcomes uncovered that facilitating conditions (FCO) positively and significantly influence social media marketing adoption (SMA) with statistical support ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 5.475$). This finding was consistent with the theory of the UTAUT2 model (Venkatesh et al, 2012). This finding of the adoption of social media marketing in

CBTEs was supported by previous literature that enabling factors significantly influence the adoption behavior of novel technology (Chatterjee et al, 2024; Chatterjee and Kar, 2020; El-Gohary, 2012). If CBTE owners have appropriate training for handling this new method (social media marketing) and the present circumstance is conducive and motivates them to accept, they will adopt it (Chatterjee et al, 2024; El-Gohary, 2012).

Hypothesis (H6): Interactivity (INT) has a positive and significant impact on social media marketing adoption (SMA)

The empirical results revealed that interactivity (INT) positively and significantly influences social media marketing adoption (SMA) with statistical support ($\beta = 0.141$, $t = 3.214$). This finding was consistent with the theory of Interactivity (Tajudeen et al, 2018). This finding of the adoption of social media marketing in CBTEs was supported by previous literature that social media is regarded as a platform for interaction that facilitates two-way communication instead of one-directional dissemination of information to a community (Kiráľová and Pavlíčka, 2015; Tajudeen et al, 2018).

Hypothesis (H7): Social media marketing adoption (SMA) has a positive and significant impact on sustainability performance (SUSP).

The empirical findings showed that social media marketing adoption (SMA) positively and significantly influences sustainability performance (SUSP) ($\beta = 0.645$, $t = 17.795$). This finding of the adoption of social media marketing in CBTEs was supported by

previous literature that examined the correlation between social media marketing adoption and its effect on the sustainability performance of small tourism enterprises, finding significant outcomes (Deb et al, 2024; Oyewobi et al, 2021; Sharma and Sharma, 2024).

Hypothesis (H8): Local authority stakeholder (LA) moderates the relationship between social media marketing adoption (SMA) on sustainability performance (SUSP).

The empirical outcomes uncovered that local authority stakeholder (LA) positively increases and significantly influences the relationship between social media marketing adoption (SMA) on sustainability performance (SUSP), with statistical support ($\beta = 0.105$, $t = 2.475$). Therefore, the moderator role of local government by strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of social media strategies. When local authorities offer strong institutional support, infrastructure, and collaboration, the positive influence of social media marketing on sustainability outcomes becomes significantly greater.

4. NEW SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The first scientific result provides a contextual contribution by empirically validating the antecedents of social media marketing adoption inside the CBTE framework (supporting hypotheses from 1 to 6). The outcomes suggest that the five antecedents (perceived ease of use, cost, compatibility, facilitating conditions, and interactivity) of SMM adoption in CBTEs in Vietnam.

The second scientific result provides additional empirical proof regarding the impacts of social media marketing adoption (supporting hypothesis 7). The study has determined that the increased adoption of SMM significantly enhances the economic, social, and environmental performance of CBTEs, which is consistent with the multidimensional conceptualization of sustainability performance in the CBT context (Ngo et al, 2018).

The third scientific result investigates the moderating influence of local government stakeholders (supporting hypothesis 8). The results indicate that local government stakeholders play a substantial moderating role in promoting the adoption of social media marketing and the sustainability performance of CBTEs. Consequently, the findings indicate that the most efficient way for local government stakeholders to support the adoption of social media marketing and sustainability performance is through facilitation and collaboration, rather than an excessive directive approach.

The fourth scientific result contributes a comprehensive research framework. The research establishes and validates a comprehensive structural model that integrates antecedents, outcomes, and moderating effects. The complete validation of this model contributes to a deeper comprehension of the intricate interrelations that explain the sustainability of CBTE.

The fifth scientific result contributes to the integration of theory. This study adopted the TAM theory, as well as combining competing

theories such as UTAUT2, IDT, and Interactivity, to clarify the antecedents of social media marketing adoption.

The sixth scientific result presents a substantial methodological contribution. Qualitative research has been the sole focus of prior research in the context of CBTE (Manyara and Jones, 2007; Ngo et al, 2018). Consequently, the research employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, which involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to investigate the research questions deeply.

The seventh scientific result contributes to the validation and development of the scale. The research develops and validates measurement scales for sustainability performance, social media marketing adoption, and local authority stakeholders. These validated instruments provide reliable tools for future research within the CBTE and sustainability domains. This study introduced novel psychometric instruments for assessing hierarchical and multidimensional constructs of sustainability performance.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study aims to investigate three main research questions about the antecedents, outcomes, and moderators of social media marketing adoption in CBTEs in Vietnam, therefore facilitating the application of these findings to other contexts. Generally, the research findings confirm the research model and support the majority of the hypotheses. First, the researcher conducted a qualitative study to

contextualize the factors and measurement indicators of social media marketing adoption, sustainability performance and local government stakeholders in the perception and experience of 14 owners of CBTEs in Vietnam. Drawing on insights from the literature review, interviews, and pilot surveys, the researcher developed a conceptual model and corresponding questionnaire. Second, a quantitative phase was conducted using SmartPLS software to validate and test the proposed model. The survey instrument's validity and reliability were confirmed through pilot testing. An online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to 377 CBTE owners across Vietnam, and the data were analyzed using PLS-SEM to test the hypothesized relationships.

The hypothesis testing results revealed several key relationships within the proposed model. These findings highlight that ease of use, affordability, technological compatibility, supportive conditions, and interactivity are critical drivers for adopting social media marketing in CBTEs. In contrast, perceived usefulness insignificantly influences adoption, suggesting that CBTE owners may not fully recognize the prospective benefits of social media marketing. Furthermore, the results highlighted a significant positive relationship between social media marketing adoption and the sustainability performance of CBTEs. In addition, the study identified the moderating role of local authority stakeholders as both positive and significant, confirming that local governments play a complementary, partial moderating role in strengthening this relationship. A comprehensive model for this study,

incorporating the antecedents, outcomes, and moderators of social media marketing adoption, is also proposed to advance digital marketing research within the tourism industry. The results of this study offer a practical framework for future research in the CBT context, particularly in developing countries. They also provide valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to promote sustainable development by integrating social media marketing strategies into the long-term planning and management of CBTEs.

6. SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

6.1. Journal articles

Sinh, T. T. T., Nemeth, N. and Sarker, M. S. I., (2026). Developing a perspective on the functions of marketing in the contents of sustainable tourism: a bibliometric analysis. *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/IJEMR.2025.10073703>. **Q3 (Accepted for publication)**

Sinh, T. T. T., Nemeth, N. and Sarker, M. S. I., (2024). Digital marketing in community-based enterprises: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, Complexity*: 100414. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2024.100414>. **(D1)**

Huong, P. T. T., Tuan, N. M., **Sinh, T. T. T.,** Khanh, T. Đ. and Hoa, N. T., (2023). State land management: Case study in Viet Tri city, Phu Tho province. *Journal Of Science And Technology*. Hung Vuong University. Vol. 33, No. 4: 26 – 39, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59775/1859-3968.170>.

- Thuy, P. T., **Sinh, T. T. T.**, and Quan, N. H., (2022). Development of circular economic models in agriculture in Phu Tho province. Journal Of Science And Technology. Hung Vuong University. Vol. 29, No. 4 (2022): 28 – 37.
- Huong, P. T. T., **Sinh, T. T. T.**, Hieu, N. T., (2022). State management of telecommunications in Yen Bai province. Journal Of Science And Technology. Hung Vuong University. Vol. 29, No. 4: 38 – 50.
- Nga, P. T., Huong, P. T. T., **Sinh, T. T. T.**, Impacts of the non-state economic sector on social-economic development: a study In Thai Nguyen province. IJARW | ISSN (O) - 2582-1008. October 2022 | Vol. 4 Issue. 4. pp.7-18.

6.2. Conference proceedings

- Sinh, T. T. T.**, Németh, N., Sarker, M. S. I. and Nguyen, N. A., (2025). Past, Present, and Future Viewpoints on the Sustainability of Community-Based Tourism: A Bibliometric Study in Southeast Asia. Sustainability Transition - Innovation Ecosystems - Digital Solutions: Conference volume. Sopron University Publishing House, Sopron, pp. 120-138. ISBN 9789633345504. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35511/978-963-334-550-4-s3-1>
- Zhang, Y., Yadan, L., **Sinh, T. T. T.**, (2025). Harnessing Digital Tools for Sustainable Heritage Tourism: Comparative Analysis of Natural and Cultural Sites in China. Sustainability Transition – Innovation Ecosystems – Digital Solutions: Conference volume. Sopron University Publishing House, Sopron, pp. 582-605. ISBN

9789633345504. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35511/978-963-334-550-4-s9-6>

Sinh, T. T. T., Németh, N., Sarker, M. S. I., Zhang, Y. and Nhat, A. N., (2024). Community-Based Tourism in Southeast Asia. Sustainability Transition: Challenges And Innovative Solutions - International scientific conference on the occasion of the Hungarian Science Festival. Sopron University Publishing House, Sopron, pp. 309-327. ISBN 9789633344996. DOI: https://doi.org/10.35511/978-963-334-499-6-Tran-et_al

Sarker, M. S. I., Bartok, I. & **Sinh, T. T. T.,** (2024). Circular Economy Research Trends in the Textile and Apparel Industries: A Bibliometric Analysis. Sustainability Transition: Challenges And Innovative Solutions - International scientific conference on the occasion of the Hungarian Science Festival. Sopron University Publishing House, Sopron, pp. 389-404. ISBN 9789633344996. DOI: 10.35511/978-963-334-499-6-Sarker-Tran-Bartok

Sinh, T. T. T., Németh, N., (2023). Decent Work and Economic Growth Goals 8: Tourism and the Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia. SDGs in practice – how to operate sustainable? : VI. BBS International Sustainability Student Conference Proceeding. pp. 104-115. ISBN 978-615-6342-69-0 DOI: 10.29180/978-615-6342-69-0_10

Sinh, T. T. T., Németh, N., Thuy, P. T., Nguyen, N. A., (2023). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism Sector in Vietnam. Society - Economy - Nature: Synergies In Sustainable

Development (International scientific conference on the occasion of the Hungarian Science Festival). Sopron University Publishing House, Sopron, pp. 259-275. ISBN 9789633344507. DOI: 10.35511/978-963-334-450-7_s6_Tran_et_al

6.3. Book review

Sinh, T. T. T., (2023) The Essential Guides for Comprehending Digital Marketing. Journal of Economy & Society. Vol. 16 (34) No. 2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21637/GT.2023.2.06>