



A study on the enablers of foreign direct investment inflows from the Republic of Korea into Haiphong, Vietnam

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Abstract

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a crucial role in the economic development of Haiphong, Vietnam, particularly given the city's strategic position as an industrial hub in Northern Vietnam. This study aims to identify and prioritize the factors influencing FDI inflows from Korea into Haiphong. Leveraging the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (Fuzzy AHP) method, the research incorporates insights from a survey of 30 experts in the field to systematically evaluate and rank the importance of various factors. The findings indicate that infrastructure-related factors, including industrial, transport, and logistics, are the most significant determinants of FDI inflows. Human resources, particularly the availability and quality of skilled labor and the quality of institutional frameworks, though important, are assigned a moderate weight. These results provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in enhancing Haiphong's attractiveness to foreign investors.

Keywords: FDI, Korea, Haiphong, Fuzzy AHP, infrastructure.

JEL classification: F21, L52, R11, R50.

1. Introduction

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is widely recognized as a crucial driver of economic growth, particularly in developing countries. It not only provides capital inflows but also enhances technology transfer, boosts productivity, and fosters international economic integration. In the context of Vietnam, FDI has been instrumental in transforming the economy, contributing to its rapid growth and integration into the global market. Haiphong, a key economic hub in northern Vietnam, has attracted significant FDI due to its strategic location, robust infrastructure, and favorable business environment. The Republic of Korea (ROK) has been one of the largest investors in Haiphong, with Korean firms investing heavily in manufacturing, electronics, and infrastructure sectors (Nguyen and Pham, 2020).

Haiphong, Vietnam's third-largest city, is a vital industrial and port city located on the coast of the Gulf of Tonkin. With its deep-water port, Haiphong serves as a critical gateway for trade and investment, particularly for Northeast Asian countries like South Korea. The city has been a major beneficiary of Vietnam's economic reforms, attracting significant foreign investment, particularly from South Korea, which has emerged as one of the top sources of FDI in Haiphong. Korean investors have established numerous factories and industrial zones in the city, contributing significantly to its industrial output and economic growth (Tran and Le, 2021). The viewpoints and orientations for attracting FDI in Hai Phong, Vietnam, are clearly delineated through several strategic documents (Resolution No. 30-NQ/TW of the Politburo, Resolution 45-NQ/TW of the Politburo and Resolution No. 50-NQ/TW of the Politburo) and action programs (Action Program No. 76-CTr/TU of the Standing Committee of Hai Phong City Party) aimed at fostering economic growth, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing the city's competitiveness in the global investment landscape.

Given the rapid pace of economic globalization and the increasing competition for foreign investment, it is essential to identify the factors that make Haiphong an attractive destination for FDI from the ROK. Despite the steady inflow of investments, there remains a need for a comprehensive analysis that considers both macroeconomic and microeconomic factors, as well as the unique characteristics of Haiphong as a destination for Korean investors. This research is necessary to fill the existing gaps in literature and to provide

actionable insights that can guide future investment policies and strategies. The primary purpose of this research is to examine and analyze the key factors affecting FDI inflows from the Republic of Korea into Haiphong, Vietnam. By identifying these factors, the study aims to provide a framework that can assist policymakers in creating a more conducive environment for attracting and sustaining Korean investments in Haiphong. Additionally, this research seeks to contribute to the academic discourse on FDI by offering empirical evidence specific to the context of Haiphong and its relationship with Korean investors.

To achieve the objectives of this study, the Fuzzy Analytic Hierarchy Process (Fuzzy AHP) will be employed as the primary research method. Fuzzy AHP is a multi-criteria decision-making tool that allows for the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data, making it ideal for assessing complex factors influencing FDI. The research will involve interviews and surveys with 30 experts in the field, including policymakers, business leaders, and academics, to gather insights and data. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the factors that impact FDI inflows from the ROK into Haiphong.

This research will contribute to the broader understanding of FDI dynamics in Vietnam and provide valuable insights for enhancing the economic partnership between Haiphong and the Republic of Korea.

2. Literature review on factors enabling FDI inflows

Recently, many research have put focus on the empirical examination of factors influencing foreign direct investment. The factors that enable FDI attraction differ from one region to another. Moreover, they undergo transformations gradually due to advancements in technology and shifts in policies. Nevertheless, the majority of existing research indicates that the nine following determinants play a significant role in determining the inflow of FDI.

Among the various factors influencing FDI, Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) stands out as a crucial determinant. Coughlin et al. (1991) found that U.S. states with higher GRDP attracted more FDI, as investors seek large and dynamic markets to maximize returns. Blonigen and Piger (2014) also emphasized that regions with substantial economic output offer greater business opportunities and higher consumer demand, making them more appealing to foreign investors. Nguyen and Nguyen (2007) found that provinces with

higher GRDP attracted more FDI, as investors seek dynamic markets to maximize returns in Vietnam. The correlation between GRDP and infrastructure development is another critical factor in FDI attraction. Asiedu (2002) and Kinda (2010) demonstrated that well-developed infrastructure, often a byproduct of higher GRDP, significantly boosts a region's attractiveness to FDI. Nguyen et al. (2019) demonstrated that well-developed infrastructure, often a byproduct of higher GRDP, significantly boosts a region's attractiveness to FDI in Vietnam.

Secondly, the presence and development of local supporting industries play a significant role in attracting FDI, as they provide necessary inputs, services, and infrastructure that facilitate the operations of foreign firms. According to Caves (1996) and Zhang et al. (2010), regions with well-developed supporting industries attract more FDI as they offer readily available inputs and services, reducing the need for foreign firms to import materials. Nguyen (2017), Pham and Nguyen (2019) found that foreign investors are more likely to invest in regions where they can source inputs locally, as it reduces logistics costs and improves supply chain reliability in Vietnam.

Thirdly, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is an important economic indicator that measures the average change over time in the prices paid by consumers for goods and services. Asiedu (2002), Buckley et al. (2002), Gwartney (2010), Nguyen and Nguyen (2010), Pham (2011) and Tran and Le (2015) supported the idea that high inflation discourages FDI in developing countries due to increased uncertainty and reduced real returns on investment.

Forthly, human capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a country's workforce, is an important factor in attracting FDI. The presence of human capital is widely recognized as a significant determinant of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, and it serves as a crucial catalyst for FDI acceleration (Noorbakhsh et al., 2001; Khan, 2007). Nonnenberg and Mendonca (2004), Huang (2009) and Ma and Zhou (2009) found a correlation between the growing of FDI inflows and well-educated labor. Ngo et al. (2018), Nguyen (2015) and Ngo et al. (2020) all found that labor supply and labor quality exerts a significant, positive, and consistent impact on foreign direct investment inflows into various regions in Vietnam.

Fifthly, wage rate in emerging economies is a significant factor that attracts a substantial portion of FDI. Several studies (Goldsbrough, 1979; Saunders, 1982; Flamm, 1984; Schneider and Frey, 1985; Culem, 1988; Shamsuddin, 1994) have found evidence of a negative correlation between foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow and wage rates. In studying the factors that attract FDI in Vietnam, Le (2004), Ngo et al. (2018), and Yukhanaev et al. (2015) found evidence to suggest that the significance of low labor costs as a factor of foreign direct investment in Vietnam is noteworthy.

Sixthly, the other critical factor influencing FDI attraction is the quality and availability of industrial infrastructure. Wheeler and Mody (1992), Asiedu (2006) and Campos and Kinoshita (2008) found that countries with better infrastructure tend to attract more FDI. Nguyen and Nguyen (2007), Pham and Vo (2014) and Le and Pomfret (2011) found that provinces with well-developed industrial zones attracted more FDI due to the availability of essential infrastructure and supportive services.

Seventhly, transportation and logistics infrastructure also plays a crucial role in attracting FDI. Studies by Globerman and Shapiro (2002), Asiedu (2006), Blonigen and Piger (2014) demonstrated that countries with better logistics performance, including efficient ports, airports, and road networks, attract higher levels of FDI. In Vietnam, Nguyen et al. (2009), Le and Pomfret (2011) and Pham (2011) highlighted that regions with better transportation networks have attracted higher levels of FDI.

Eighthly, political stability is another enabler for attracting FDI as it provides a predictable and secure environment for investors. Globerman and Shapiro (2002) and Busse and Hefeker (2007) found that political instability, including government instability, internal conflict, and corruption, significantly deters FDI inflows. In Vietnam, Nguyen and Nguyen (2007), Pham (2011) and Le and Pomfret (2011) agreed that the country's stable political environment, characterized by consistent government policies and a secure environment, has been crucial in attracting foreign investors.

Finally, institutional quality which refers to regulatory frameworks, legal regulations and laws and informal social norms also acts as an important factor in attracting FDI. Various research has been carried out to evaluate the effect of institutional quality towards FDI attraction. Bui (2011), Yukhanaev et al. (2015), Ngo et al. (2018) and Hoang et al. (2020)

with various prospect of institutional quality have come to a similar conclusion that a higher degree of control over corruption and a stronger index of voice and accountability lead to an increase in foreign direct investment inflows in Vietnam.

3. Methodology

3.1. Rationality and introduction of Fuzzy AHP method

The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which the factors that aid international investors in Haiphong in their investment decision-making are significant. The central research question concerns the influential factors that shape the incentive for foreign direct investment in Haiphong. To tackle this inquiry, Multiple Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) arises as a suitable approach frequently utilized to establish criteria priorities. The application of MCDM theory entails the determination of ranking outcomes for selected criteria and the assignment of weights.

A variety of MCDM techniques are utilized in practical applications to allocate weights to various factors. Among them, Fuzzy AHP stands out as a robust MCDM method due to its capacity to handle uncertainties and imprecise information in decision-making processes. The method emerges as a compelling choice in the specific context of FDI enablers exploration in dealing with uncertainties of fuzzy judgments and linguistic expressions of decision-makers. FAHP enables decision-makers to express their preferences using linguistic terms, facilitating a more realistic representation of their perceptions.

Fuzzy normal data can be denoted by $\tilde{A}(x) = (l, m, u)$, where the membership function is defined as follows:

$$\mu_{\tilde{A}(x)} = \begin{cases} 0, & x < l \\ \frac{x-l}{m-l}, & l \leq x \leq m \\ \frac{u-x}{u-m}, & m \leq x \leq u \\ 0, & x > u \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

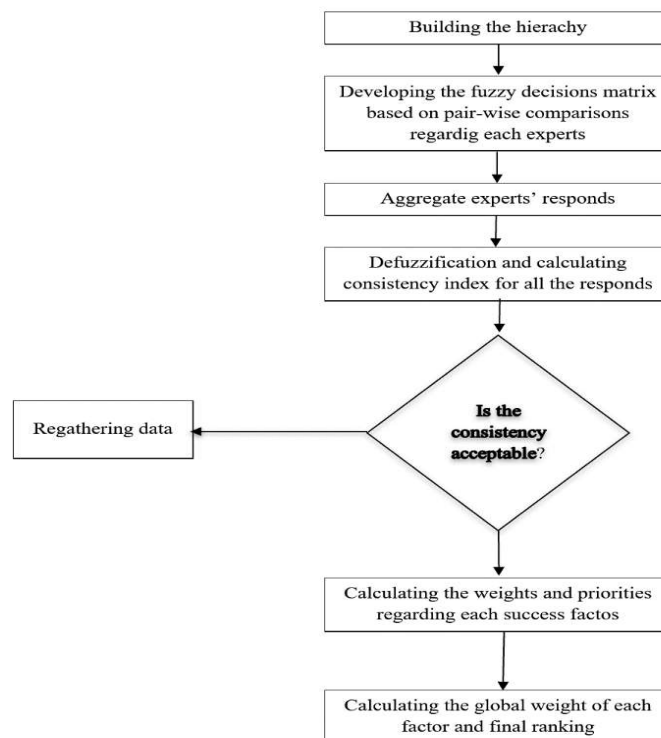
When using the FAHP, it is common to use a numerical scale from 1 to 9 to evaluate how important a criterion is compared to others.

TABLE 1: Scale of importance for the Fuzzy-AHP analysis

AHP scale	Meaning	Convert into triangular fuzzy scale
1	Equally important	(1, 1, 1)
3	Weakly important	(2, 3, 4)
5	Fairly important	(4, 5, 6)
7	Strongly important	(6, 7, 8)
9	Absolutely important	(9, 9, 9)
2	Intermittent values	(1, 2, 3)
4		(3, 4, 5)
6		(5, 6, 7)
8		(7, 8, 9)

The subsequent diagram depicts the sequential procedures that must be executed in Fuzzy AHP.

FIGURE 1: Steps of Fuzzy AHP



3.2. Data collection

When selecting survey participants to evaluate the topic being studied, it is advisable to choose individuals who have relevant knowledge, expertise, and interest in the decision-making issue, and who are capable of providing clear and logical judgments (Mohammad and Hairunnizam, 2022). This study utilizes a rigorous screening method to identify individuals who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in the area of foreign direct investment by Korean enterprises in Haiphong. These professionals are assigned the responsibility of supplying input data to tackle the research difficulties at hand. In addition, they employ the Fuzzy AHP technique to evaluate and analyze multiple options or factors that impact decisions regarding FDI in Haiphong. The approach to these experts were made by questionnaire survey, personal interviews and group meetings. Based on the examination of available literature, the chosen specialists are as follows.

TABLE 1: Selection of experts for questionnaire survey

No	Experts	Description
1	FDI investors in Haiphong and neighbors	Ones who directly make decisions to invest in Haiphong and neighboring area (Bac Ninh, Thai Nguyen)
2	Researchers and academics	Ones who study FDI and its impacts on economic development, trade, environment, etc.
3	Consultants and practitioners	Ones who advise FDI investors in Haiphong or recipients on the best locations, sectors, policies, etc.
4	Policy makers and regulators	Ones who design and implement FDI policies and regulations (HEZA, MOIT)

HEZA: Haiphong Economic Zone Authority

MOIT: Ministry of Industry and Trade

The demographic characteristics of respondents are further explained in the following table.

TABLE 2: **Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Characteristics	Details	No of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Response rate	Questionnaire survey	20	100%
	Interview	10	60%
Affiliations	Investors	18	60%
	Researchers	5	17%
	Advisors	4	13%
	Policy makers	3	10%
Working seniority	Less than 5 years	0	-
	5-10 years	15	56%
	More than 10 years	12	44%

The weight of experts' ideas based on work experience is described in the following table.

TABLE 3: **Weight of experts' ideas**

Working seniority	< 5 years	5~10 years	>10 years
Weight	1	2	3

Out of the 30 responses received, a careful review was conducted to ensure the quality and consistency of the provided data. It was identified that three responses exhibited inconsistencies in the information provided. In order to maintain the integrity and reliability of the dataset, a decision was made to omit these three responses from the analysis and the total number of replies chosen is 27. The decision to omit inappropriate data was guided by the principle of upholding the accuracy and coherence of the information gathered. This meticulous approach ensures that the analysis and insights derived from the questionnaire responses are robust and reflective of the genuine trends and perspectives within the diverse expert groups.

4. Results and analysis

This study uses interviews and questionnaires as data collection methods to obtain information from participants. Interviews are conducted in order to examine and determine the elements that contribute to the motivation for FDI, as well as to solicit any recommendations or comments. Questionnaire surveys are specifically developed to efficiently gather data from respondents from various agencies regarding the importance of determinants to FDI promotion in Haiphong.

By consulting with experts, an average pair-wise comparison matrix has been created based on the weight of each response to determine the weight assigned to each factor. The following table illustrates the matrix acquired.

TABLE 5: Pair-wise comparison matrix

Factors	Social	Economic	Political
Social	(1, 1, 1)	(5,6,7)	(2,3,4)
Economic	(0.14,0.17,0.2)	(1, 1, 1)	(0.33,0.5,1)
Political	(0.25,0.33,0.5)	(1,2,3)	(1, 1, 1)

The calculation of the fuzzy geometric mean values of the factors involves the multiplication of matrix vectors that represent fuzzy integers.

TABLE 6: Fuzzy geometric mean value of each factor

Factors	Fuzzy geometric mean value \tilde{r}_i	Mean value
Social	$\tilde{r}_1 = ((1 * l_{12} * l_{13})^{\frac{1}{3}}, (1 * m_{12} * m_{13})^{\frac{1}{3}}, (1 * n_{12} * n_{13})^{\frac{1}{3}})$	(2.15,2.62,3.04)
Economic	$\tilde{r}_2 = ((\frac{1}{n_{12}} * 1 * l_{23})^{\frac{1}{3}}, (\frac{1}{m_{12}} * 1 * m_{23})^{\frac{1}{3}}, (\frac{1}{l_{12}} * 1 * n_{23})^{\frac{1}{3}})$	(0.36,0.44,0.58)

Political	$\tilde{r}_3 = ((\frac{1}{n_{13}} * \frac{1}{n_{23}} * 1)^{\frac{1}{3}}, (\frac{1}{m_{13}} * \frac{1}{m_{23}} * 1)^{\frac{1}{3}}, (\frac{1}{l_{13}} * \frac{1}{l_{23}} * 1)^{\frac{1}{3}})$	(0.63,0.87,01.14)
Sum	(3.15,3.93,4.77)	
Inverse	(0.32,0.25,0.21)	
Increasing order	(0.21,0.25,0.32)	

Upon performing the computation of the fuzzy geometric mean values, the subsequent step involves the determination of the fuzzy weight for each factor. The comprehensive procedure for this calculation is elucidated in the subsequent table.

TABLE 7: Fuzzy weight of each factor

Factors	Fuzzy weight \tilde{w}_i	Fuzzy weight value
Social	$\tilde{w}_1 = \tilde{r}_1 \otimes (\tilde{r}_1 \oplus \tilde{r}_2 \oplus \tilde{r}_3)^{-1}$	(0.45,0.67,0.96)
Economic	$\tilde{w}_2 = \tilde{r}_2 \otimes (\tilde{r}_1 \oplus \tilde{r}_2 \oplus \tilde{r}_3)^{-1}$	(0.08,0.11,0.19)
Political	$\tilde{w}_3 = \tilde{r}_3 \otimes (\tilde{r}_1 \oplus \tilde{r}_2 \oplus \tilde{r}_3)^{-1}$	(0.13,0.22,0.36)

After obtaining the fuzzy weight of all criteria, the de-fuzzification procedure known as Centre of Area is utilized to determine the measured weight of each element. Table 4.4 provided illustrates the aforementioned method.

TABLE 8: Weight of each factor

Factors	Weight w_i	Weight value
Social	$w_1 = \frac{w_1^l + w_1^m + w_1^n}{3}$	0.69
Economic	$w_2 = \frac{w_2^l + w_2^m + w_2^n}{3}$	0.12
Political	$w_3 = \frac{w_3^l + w_3^m + w_3^n}{3}$	0.24

The weights calculated above represent the degree of significance assigned to each factor enabling FDI inflows from Korean enterprises in Haiphong based on expert opinions and fuzzy logic calculations. The highest weight among the three factors is assigned to the social factor, indicating that experts perceive social considerations as the most influential in attracting FDI to Haiphong. This suggests that social conditions, such as infrastructure, human and other related social indicators, are considered pivotal in the decision-making process of FDI investors. The economic factor has the lowest weight among the three factors, implying that, in the context of Haiphong, economic considerations have a relatively lower impact on FDI inflows compared to social and political factors. The lower weight suggests that these aspects are considered less critical by experts in influencing FDI decisions. The Political factor falls between the Economic and Social factors in terms of weight, indicating that political stability, government policies, and regulatory frameworks play a significant but intermediate role in attracting FDI to Haiphong. The moderate weight suggests that political considerations are important, but not as dominant as economic factors, in the decision-making process for FDI investors in Haiphong.

The last stage of the FAHP approach involves calculating the normalized weight for each factor, resulting in a total weight of one for all factors combined. The computation is delineated in the subsequent table.

TABLE 9: Normalized weight of the criteria

Factors	Normalized weight N_i	Normalized weight value	Rank
Social	$N_1 = \frac{w_1}{w_1 + w_2 + w_3}$	0.66	1
Economic	$N_2 = \frac{w_2}{w_1 + w_2 + w_3}$	0.12	3
Political	$N_3 = \frac{w_3}{w_1 + w_2 + w_3}$	0.23	2

Following the determination of the weights of the components, a consistency test was conducted. In the context of FAHP, the pair wise comparison matrix is represented by triangular fuzzy numbers. In order to calculate the consistency ratio, it is necessary to convert

these numbers into crisp numbers (Freselam et al., 2014). Defuzzification is required for this. After the defuzzification process is carried out, the computation of the consistency ratio is performed according to the AHP technique. The table below demonstrates the computation of the consistency ratio for the weight assigned to each enabler in relation to FDI inflows.

TABLE 10: The calculation of consistency ratio

Factors	Social	Economic	Political	Weighted Sum	Priority	λ
Social	1	6	3	2.04	0.66	3.11
Economic	0.17	1	0.61	0.37	0.12	3.13
Political	0.36	2	1	0.70	0.23	3.09

Consistency index and consistency ratio are calculated as below:

$$CI = \frac{\lambda_{max} - n}{n - 1} = \frac{\sum \frac{\lambda}{3} - 3}{2} = 0.05$$

$$CR = \frac{CI}{RI} = \frac{0.05}{0.58} = 0.09$$

According to the result of consistency ratio calculated above, the value less than 0.1 indicates that the expert judgments are in good agreement, and the pairwise comparisons are consistent with the principles of the AHP method. This enhances the credibility of the derived weights, contributing to a more reliable and robust decision-making process based on the fuzzy AHP analysis.

The sub-criteria weights are consistently computed using the identical methodology. Subsequently, the overall significance of each factor on a global scale is determined by multiplying the local weight of each sub-factor with the corresponding weight of the relevant factor. The subsequent table demonstrates the methodology for calculating.

TABLE 11: Local and global weights of the criteria

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Local weight	Global weight	Rank
Social	Industrial infra	0.31	0.20	1
0.66	Trans - Log infra	0.28	0.18	2
	Human capital	0.24	0.16	3
	Wage rate	0.17	0.11	5
Economic	GRDP	0.26	0.03	9
0.12	Local supporting industries	0.31	0.04	8
	CPI	0.43	0.05	7
Political	Institutional quality	0.64	0.15	4
0.23	Political stability	0.36	0.08	6

In interpreting the results of the Fuzzy AHP for finding the weights of factors affecting FDI inflows in Haiphong, the provided weights for each factor offer insights into their relative importance in influencing FDI decisions. The highest weight is assigned to infrastructure factors, including industrial, transport and logistics ones, suggesting that experts believe that the development of infrastructure plays a significant role in attracting FDI to Haiphong. Human resource is the second most influential factors, indicating that the supply of workers and quality of workers are crucial in shaping FDI inflows in Haiphong. The institutional quality has a moderate weight, suggesting that the effectiveness, efficiency, and reliability of a region's legal, regulatory, and governance frameworks is considered important but not as decisive as infrastructure and human factors in influencing FDI decisions. Other factors (wage rate, CPI, political stability and local supporting industries) are positioned between the higher and lower weights, indicating their intermediate level of

influence on FDI inflows. The specific positioning of these factors in terms of weights provides valuable information about their comparative importance within the context of the study. GRDP has the lowest weight, suggesting that, according to expert opinions, the level of emphasis on GRDP is relatively low compared to other factors in attracting FDI to Haiphong.

Overall, the Fuzzy AHP results provide a clear hierarchy of factors based on their perceived importance in influencing FDI inflows. Infrastructure and human resources are identified as the most critical factors, while GRDP is considered the least influential. Policymakers and stakeholders can utilize this information to prioritize efforts and policies that enhance the identified crucial factors, fostering a more favorable environment for FDI in Haiphong.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing FDI inflows from the Republic of Korea into Haiphong, Vietnam. In this research, Fuzzy AHP method was utilized to weigh the importance of each factor. The data collection was done using ideas from experts in the field via interviews and questionnaire surveys. The results reveal that infrastructure factors, including industrial, transport, and logistics, are the most significant determinants of FDI attraction. Following closely are human resource factors, underscoring the importance of a well-trained and accessible workforce in influencing investment decisions. Institutional quality, while still important, holds a moderate weight, indicating that the effectiveness of legal, regulatory, and governance frameworks is crucial but not as critical as infrastructure and human resources in shaping FDI inflows.

The study's findings offer clear guidance for policymakers and stakeholders in Haiphong to enhance the city's attractiveness as a destination for Korean FDI. Basing on the results concluded above, key recommendations to promote the attraction of Korean FDI into the city may include ensuring the availability of land within industrial parks and accelerating the development of the Southern Coastal Economic Zone to drive growth. Sustainable and environmentally friendly industrial parks should also be prioritized. In transportation and logistics, it is crucial to develop a multimodal system that connects Haiphong seaport with

the hinterland and to strategically plan logistics centers that offer diverse value-added services. Human resource development is another critical area, where incentives should be provided to businesses for training and education, investments should be increased in educational infrastructure, and collaboration between businesses and training institutions should be strengthened. Additionally, expanding Korean language programs and ensuring social housing supply are essential for attracting and retaining the workforce. Public administration efficiency should be improved through digital transformation, while policy mechanisms should be continuously refined to create a stable, transparent, and investor-friendly environment. Implementing these solutions will not only strengthen Haiphong's infrastructure, human resources, and institutional quality but also enhance the city's competitiveness and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

By implementing these solutions, Haiphong can strengthen its infrastructure, develop its human resources, and improve its institutional quality, thereby creating a more favorable environment for attracting FDI from the Republic of Korea. This strategic approach will not only enhance Haiphong's competitiveness but also contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region.

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Article history

Received on September 16, 2024

Revised on September 17, 2024

Accepted on September 30, 2024