

Abstract

In the 1980s, a concern was that traditional costing systems provided distorted information when product diversity increased. Therefore, cost accounting researchers aimed to find a new type of costing system that would provide less distorted information. In the search for a new type of costing system, Activity-Based Costing (ABC) systems have gained much attention because they have the potential to provide less distorted information for decision making and a better understanding of the drivers of costs. Although technical aspects associated with costing systems have been intensively studied, there is a lack of understanding of behavioral aspects associated with costing systems, when used for cost management.

To enhance users' motivation to use information systems, some researchers suggest the use of behavioral approaches. Such approaches can allow users to take advantage of information systems and enhance the quality of decision making. Although some studies have already examined behavioral issues associated with costing systems, these studies specifically focus on a particular type of costing systems, namely ABC or time-driven ABC. There is a lack of understanding of behavioral issues associated with costing systems more generally. Hence, this dissertation aims to fill this gap by conducting the three following studies.

The first study examines the impact of managers' participation in costing system design on process improvements. Particularly, drawing on the participation literature, this study hypothesizes that the link between managers' participation in costing system design and their contribution to process improvements is driven by two factors, namely autonomous motivation for cost management and perceived usefulness of cost information. The survey results reveal that participation in costing system design enhances managers' perceived usefulness of cost information, which in turn stimulates their contributions to process improvements.

The second study deals with national culture influencing the link between a type of costing system formalization and managers' willingness to use this system. According to the formalization literature, a coercively formalized costing system reduces managers' willingness to use the system. However, this literature does not take into account the impact of national culture. This study addresses this issue by conducting a case study in a Vietnamese company. The results show that two cultural dimensions, namely collectivism and power distance, positively influence managers' willingness to use a coercively formalized costing system.

The third study focuses on the impact of a costing system on agency problems. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate how four functionality characteristics of a costing system, namely the level of cost information detail provided, the ability to classify costs according to their behavior, the frequency of cost reporting, and the extent to which variance are analyzed, influence superiors' ability to detect budgetary slack and managers' creation of budgetary slack. The results of the survey suggest that only the first and the last characteristic increase superiors' ability to detect budgetary slack, and this, in turn, lowers managers' creation of budgetary slack.

Curriculum vitae

Quang-Huy Ngo (1985, Can Tho City, Vietnam) obtained the degree of Master of Business Administration at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (USA) in 2011. After that, Quang-Huy worked at the Accounting department of Can Tho Technical Economic College in Vietnam. Since September 2013, Quang-Huy has been working as a doctoral researcher at the department of Accounting, Corporate Finance and Taxation of Ghent University. His research was funded by the European Commission.

Quang-Huy presented his research at the 8th Conference on Performance Management and Management Control (Nice, France, 2015), the 13th Annual Conference for Management Accounting Research (Vallendar, Germany, 2016), the 37th Congress of the AFC (Clermont-Ferrand, France, 2016), and workshops at Ghent University.