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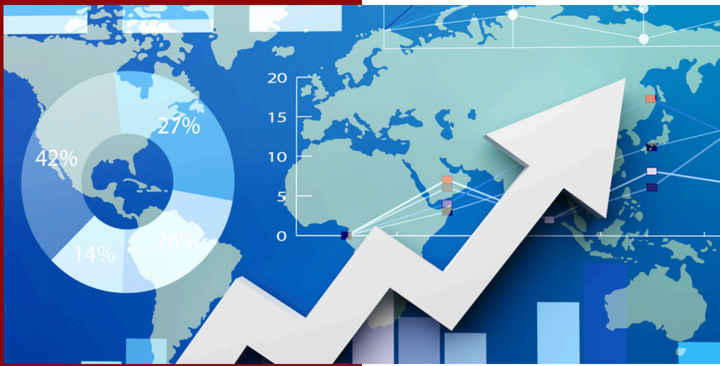

Vietnam is poised to remain Southeast Asia's fastest-growing major economy

Vietnam is poised to remain Southeast Asia's fastest-growing major economy, supported by technology exports, foreign investment and an infrastructure-led expansion, according to Maybank.

The Malaysian banking group forecasts Vietnam's gross domestic product to grow 7.8% in 2026 and 7.9% in 2027. Despite an uncertain global environment, the country is benefiting from rising demand for AI-related electronics, continued supply-chain diversification and sustained public investment.

Corporate earnings are also expected to remain resilient. Banks could outperform as provisioning costs decline, while retailers stand to benefit from stronger domestic demand. Energy companies are likely to receive support from elevated oil prices, and marine logistics may exceed market expectations. Fertilizer and chemical producers, however, face pressure from sharply lower urea prices.

Maybank expects market-wide earnings per share to increase 13% to 16% in 2026 and has maintained its VN-Index target at 2,000. This signals confidence that economic expansion and policy execution can offset external volatility, although current market valuations and the pace of reform will determine further upside.

Vietnam's scheduled FTSE emerging-market upgrade from September represents another catalyst. The change could attract additional institutional capital and improve market liquidity, with banks, infrastructure developers, energy companies and upgrade beneficiaries likely to draw the greatest interest.

Vietnam had the largest corporate delegation at Maybank's Invest ASEAN 2026 conference in Singapore, underscoring its rising profile among global investors. The central investment case is increasingly clear: Vietnam is moving from a low-cost manufacturing story toward a broader growth model built on technology, infrastructure and deeper capital markets. VIR

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South Korea's decision to deepen its food distribution footprint in Vietnam reflects a broader shift in Southeast Asia's logistics landscape

South Korea's decision to deepen its food distribution footprint in Vietnam reflects a broader shift in Southeast Asia's logistics landscape, where cold-chain capacity and regional connectivity are becoming as important as consumer demand.

Vietnam has emerged as a natural base for this strategy. Its large domestic market, expanding modern retail network and proximity to Cambodia and Laos give Korean food producers access to both local consumers and neighbouring markets. The country is therefore being positioned not merely as an export destination, but as a platform for regional distribution.

The most significant development is the launch of a logistics centre in Hanoi equipped with freezing, rapid-chilling and temperature-controlled storage. Such infrastructure could allow Korean exporters to move beyond packaged foods and instant noodles into higher-value categories including fresh fruit, meat and other perishable products.

This expansion also points to a change in distribution economics. Instead of relying mainly on supermarket sales, Korean suppliers are targeting restaurants, food-service chains and institutional kitchens with larger and more predictable orders for sauces, ingredients and processed foods.

Local partners will play a central role. Retailers such as K-Mart, with more than 150 outlets in Vietnam, offer existing warehousing, delivery and market-access capabilities that can shorten expansion time and reduce capital requirements.

For Vietnam's logistics sector, the strategy may generate new demand for refrigerated transport, inventory management and cross-border fulfilment. It also strengthens the country's case as a mainland Southeast Asian hub for specialised food logistics. VNA

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Combining physical stores with e-commerce channels help Vietnamese producers access to wider demand

Vietnam’s supermarket operators are using a discount drive to bring locally made goods and One Commune, One Product, or OCOP, brands into mainstream retail, linking regional producers with urban consumers.

Under the Vietnam Grand Sale 2026 programme, Co.opmart is running its “Vietnam Festival – 34 colours of pride” through July 22, featuring thousands of OCOP products and regional specialties. Shoppers spending at least VND400,000 ($15.3) are eligible for scratch cards offering vouchers, household items and other rewards. The chain is also cutting prices on fashion products by as much as 35%.

Rivals are pursuing similarly aggressive campaigns. GO! is focusing on daily necessities such as fresh food, dairy and frozen products, while Lotte Mart is offering reductions of up to 50% on selected groceries and household goods. MM Mega Market and WinMart are discounting fresh produce, beverages and confectionery.

The significance extends beyond short-term sales. By combining physical stores with e-commerce channels, the campaign gives smaller Vietnamese producers access to wider demand, better merchandising and brand visibility. It also allows retailers to turn regional products into differentiated inventory rather than relying solely on mass-market goods.

For OCOP suppliers, wider distribution will raise expectations around packaging, traceability, fulfillment and digital content. Discounts can attract first-time buyers, but repeat demand will depend on quality and convenient delivery.

The campaign also points to links between domestic retail, tourism and cross-border commerce, as Vietnamese specialties are positioned as gifts, souvenirs and export-ready products. VNA

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Vietnam puts battery storage at center of renewable energy transition

Vietnam is shifting the focus of its renewable energy strategy toward battery storage as fiscal constraints delay a dedicated incentive package for rooftop solar power.

Under the revised national power development plan, the country aims to install between 10,000 and 16,000 megawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030. Initial investment is being directed toward northern Vietnam, where electricity supply is under greater pressure than in the central and southern regions.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade is also considering recognizing battery storage as an ancillary grid service, potentially creating a new revenue stream for investors. Utility-scale solar projects included in national planning will be required to install storage equal to roughly 10% of generation capacity, with a minimum discharge duration of two hours.

From an energy-sector perspective, this marks a significant change. Vietnam is moving beyond policies focused primarily on adding renewable capacity and beginning to address system flexibility, evening peak demand and grid stability.

Progress on rooftop solar remains less certain. Proposed state subsidies cannot yet be funded, while concessional lending arrangements are still under discussion. Decree 243, issued in June, provides additional legal support, but a bankable financing framework will be needed to unlock household investment.

The government is separately studying time-of-use tariffs for large residential consumers as solar generation reshapes the national load curve. Any implementation, however, will depend on smart-meter deployment and reliable data infrastructure.

Vietnam's energy transition is therefore entering a more complex phase: renewable expansion must now be accompanied by storage, digitalized grid management and electricity-market reform. VIR

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WinCommerce turns from Masan's bottleneck into growth engine

WinCommerce is emerging as a major profit driver for Masan Group after a seven-year restructuring transformed the once heavily loss-making retailer into Vietnam's largest modern grocery network.

When Masan acquired the WinMart and WinMart+ chains in late 2019, the business had accumulated losses of nearly 4 trillion dong ($153 million). WinCommerce reached break-even in 2024, generated almost 500 billion dong in profit in 2025 and is targeting roughly 1 trillion dong this year.

The turnaround is increasingly supported by operating fundamentals. First-quarter revenue rose 29% year on year, while like-for-like sales increased 14%. Profit after tax before minority interests surged more than 250% to 204 billion dong, despite the opening of 225 new stores during the quarter.

Three factors underpin this transformation.

First, WinCommerce has shifted from uniform expansion to market-specific formats. Its rural WinMart+ model requires about $30,000 in investment per outlet and offers a payback period of less than two years. Rural stores contributed around 28% of systemwide revenue during the first five months of 2026.

Second, digital forecasting, artificial intelligence and centralized distribution are improving inventory availability and logistics productivity. Distribution centers now handle more than 60% of network volume, while standardized store designs have reduced investment costs by around 30%.

Third, WinCommerce's negative seven-day working-capital cycle creates a natural source of cash for expansion.

The retailer's strategic value extends beyond store profitability. As Masan's distribution backbone, it accelerates product launches and strengthens the group's consumer ecosystem. UBS expects WinCommerce's share of Masan's EBITDA, excluding Techcombank, to rise from 15% in 2025 to 25% by 2028.

With Vietnam's five largest retailers controlling only about 10% of the market, WinCommerce still has substantial room to grow as consumption shifts from traditional trade toward formal retail. VNE

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Vietnamese enterprises broaden their Go-Global strategies

Vietnamese enterprises are moving beyond conventional exports as they seek new growth through overseas investment, digital services and deeper participation in international value chains.

Their expansion can broadly be grouped into six models. Market investment involves establishing subsidiaries, representative offices and sales networks abroad. Telecom groups such as Viettel illustrate how Vietnamese companies can build long-term commercial operations in multiple emerging markets.

Infrastructure investment covers telecom networks, logistics facilities, factories, data centers, cloud platforms and colocation. As businesses become more digitally dependent, overseas infrastructure is increasingly important for service reliability, customer experience and compliance with local data regulations.

Technology investment is becoming a more prominent pathway. Vietnamese companies are seeking to export artificial intelligence, software, digital platforms, cybersecurity and cloud services. VNPT's establishment of VNPT Global Solutions on 10 July 2026 is one example of efforts to coordinate overseas market development, software delivery and digital service operations more systematically.

Mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures can provide faster access to customers, technologies, licenses and distribution networks. This model may become increasingly important for companies entering complex or highly regulated markets.

Cross-border commerce allows businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to reach international customers through e-commerce platforms, software-as-a-service, application programming interfaces and online marketplaces.

Finally, Vietnamese companies are seeking deeper participation in global value chains, moving beyond contract manufacturing toward ownership of products, technology, brands, distribution and customer relationships.

Overall, Vietnam's Go-Global trend is shifting from export-led internationalization toward a more diversified model combining capital investment, technology, digital infrastructure and strategic partnerships. VNPT, Viettel and other large groups provide early examples, but the broader trend is expected to involve a wider range of private and state-owned enterprises.

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