



# The Investment Case for Vietnam: Asia's Last Tiger Emerging

# BUILDING ON MACROECONOMIC SUCCESS

**A refocusing of monetary policy in 2011 from “growth above everything” to the pursuit of long-term economic stability heralded a new era and has created a macroeconomic landscape encompassing:**

- GDP growth of 7.1% in 2018: 6.7% expected in 2019
- Inflation rate has moderated from 4.7% y/y in June 2018 to 2.6% as of January 2019; in line with <4% target
- Currency stability reinforced by daily setting of the reference rate
- Trade balance improvements driven by FDI into higher value-added production, particularly electronics
- Vietnam continues to negotiate bi-lateral and multi-party free trade agreements even as protectionism becomes more prevalent

# THE INVESTMENT CASE

## MACRO

- 93 million people with one of the highest literacy rates in the world (95%)
- Near-perfect demographics with ~ 60% under the age of 35
- A fast developing, urbanising nation moving up the value chain
- GDP growth sustainable at a minimum of 6.7% p.a. over each of the next 3 years
- Inflation accelerating slightly but still below 4% annualised as of January 2019
- Trade surpluses now the norm with FDI & exports driving the economy
- One of the most stable currencies in the region thanks to disciplined monetary policy

## MICRO

- Double-digit earnings growth expected in 2019 & 2020 after 20% in 2018
- The market remains relatively cheap outside of a small number of index heavyweights
- Improvements to accessibility on the agenda to promote Vietnam's case for MSCI Emerging Market Index inclusion

# THE RISKS

## MACRO

- Currency depreciation beyond policy possible as a result of USD strength / CNY weakness
- Emerging market contagion
- Trade wars

## MARKET

- Increase in nominal market capitalisation not currently matched by free float
- IPOs (the driver of strong foreign interest in 2017 to 1Q 2018) have stalled after spectacular failures in 2018
- Market access for foreign investors narrowly focused

# VALUATIONS: Regional & portfolio comparison

	<u>2018 PE</u>	<u>2019 PE</u>	<u>2020 PE</u>	<u>2019 Earnings Growth</u>	<u>2020 Earnings Growth</u>	<u>2017 GDP</u>	<u>2018 GDP</u>	<u>2019 GDP</u>
Viet Nam Index	14.9x	12.3x	10.7x	28.5%	14.4%	6.8%	7.1%	6.7%
PXP VEEF	12.9x	12.4x	11.1x	4.0%	10.4%	6.8%	7.1%	6.7%
PXP VSCF	9.3x	8.4x	7.6x	10.1%	10.6%	6.8%	7.1%	6.7%
SE THAI	14.8x	13.6x	11.4x	19.2%	8.2%	3.9%	4.2%	3.9%
FTSE Malay KLCI	19.4x	15.7x	15.2x	3.9%	2.8%	5.9%	4.7%	4.6%
Jakarta Comp	19.6x	14.0x	13.6x	10.8%	3.1%	5.1%	5.2%	5.1%
PSEi - Philippines	18.9x	14.9x	14.8x	13.2%	1.2%	6.7%	6.3%	6.4%

Source: PXP Vietnam Research, Bloomberg consensus , 28 Dec 2018

# ACCESSING THE MARKET

Closed end  
Funds

Exchange  
Traded Funds

Direct Equity  
Access

Open-Ended  
Funds

- Discounts of closed end funds (CEFs) varied 6-years into a bull market, with quality seemingly finally the determinant. Very few still in existence, and are subject to pricing risk
- ETFs facilitate easy access and exit but cannot hold the higher quality stocks at the foreign ownership limit (with the exception of the local version) and historic performance has suffered accordingly
- Direct equity access is problematic due to the cumbersome application process, foreign limits and limited stock coverage by the sell-side
- Open-ended funds, such as PXP VEEF & PXP VSCF, allow focus on the underlying assets instead of creating confusion between “discount” and “value” and will continue to provide liquidity when closed end funds may not

# THE ROAD TO MSCI EMERGING MARKET STATUS

**Vietnam is determined to achieve re-classification from MSCI Frontier to MSCI Emerging Market status. Whilst market size & liquidity measures are probably sufficient, the country has further to go before achieving its goal.**

## **Remaining requirements:**

- Significantly improved access through real relaxation of foreign ownership restrictions
- Simultaneous bi-lingual publication of all corporate announcements

## **Time-frame:**

- Annual market classification review in June each year (earliest June 2019)
- MSCI decision is announced one year later (earliest June 2020)
- Reclassification to EM from Frontier effective one year later (earliest June 2021)

## **Potential Impact:**

- Approx. US\$1.6 trillion follows MSCI EMI; a 0.1% weighting might attract US\$ 1.6 billion of inflows (> 10 days current turnover & >2 times 2017 inflows); latest estimate would suggest a 0.7% weighting for Vietnam

# THE VIEW FROM PHAN XI PANG

## **Core elements are in place for a retest of index highs by the end of 2019:**

- Supportive macroeconomic environment
- Political stability
- Reform-minded government
- Decent earnings growth
- Increased market visibility and a surge in (particularly foreign) interest

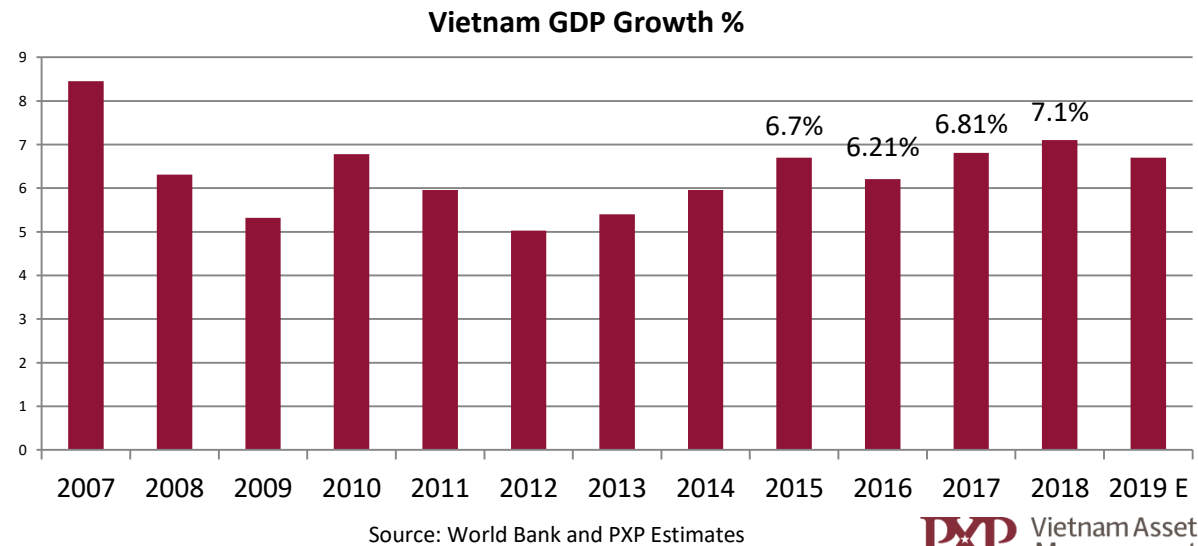
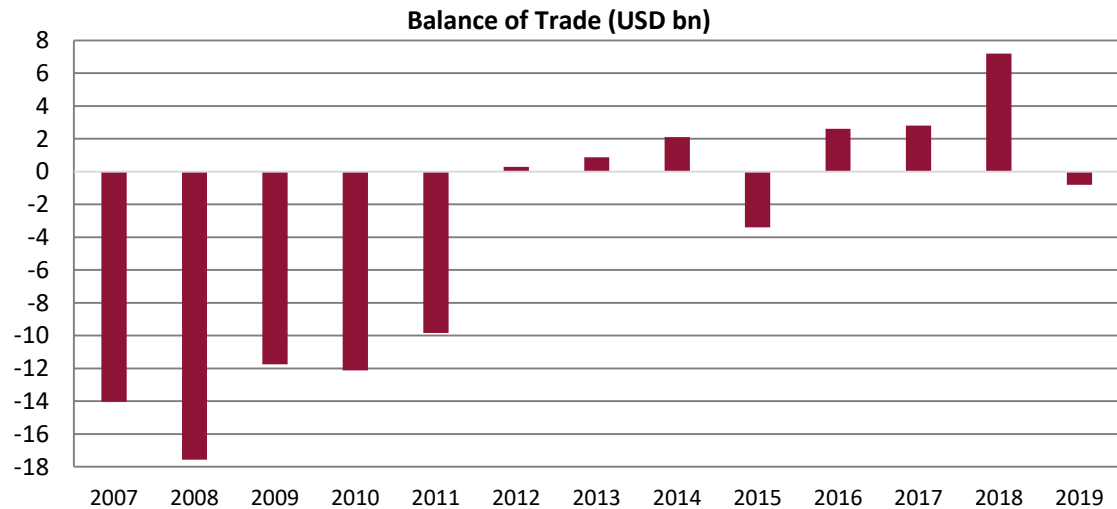
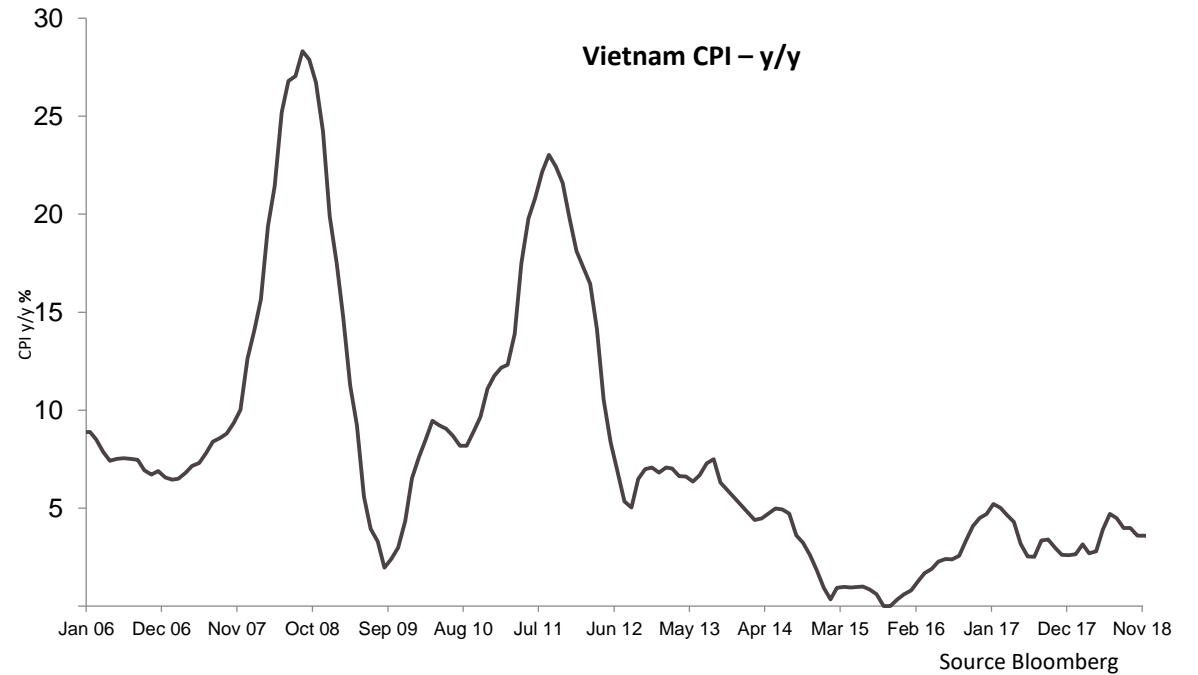
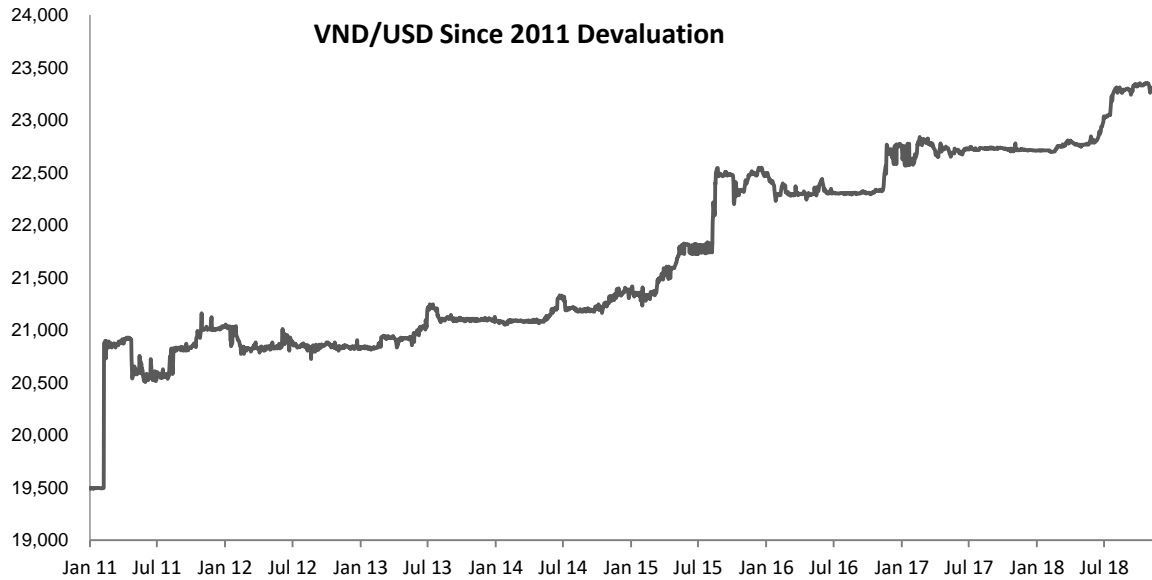
## **Further gains should precede re-designation as “MSCI Emerging” assuming:**

- Increased free-float through public primary & secondary offerings
- Improved access through encouraging relaxation of foreign ownership restrictions after rationalisation of conflicting legislation via a new Securities Law (draft released in October 2018)

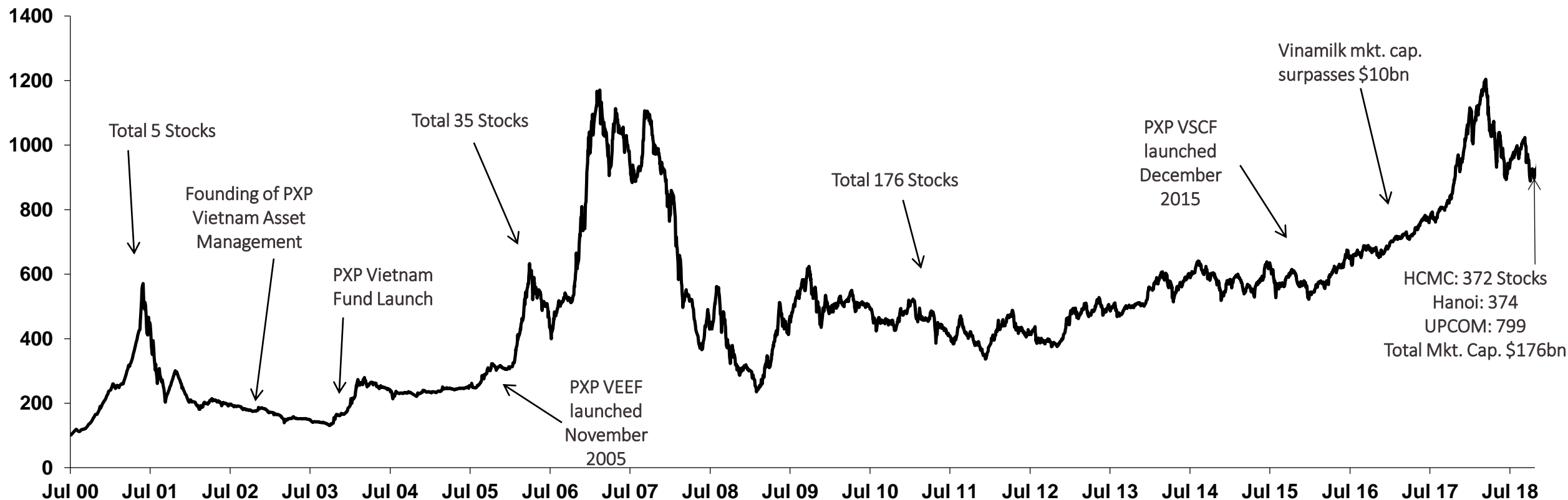
***Although disappointed by its omission in 2017 and 2018, possibly due to a lack of sustained progress in free-float expansion and the glacial progress of improvement in foreign access, we see few other realistic alternatives for re-designation, and Vietnam is focused on success.***



# APPENDIX A: Macro data



# APPENDIX B: The life-cycle to date of the VN Index



Ho Chi Minh City  
Stock Exchange  
opens (2 stocks,  
\$35m Mkt. Cap.)

Vinamilk (VNM) lists  
Jan 06, Mkt. Cap.  
\$500m (50% of  
total market)

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