

Property research unlocks Southeast Asia's potential

Successful real estate developer Wilson Yeh didn't just receive a world-class education upon embarking on his DBA journey. His research helped him develop a brand-new decision-making methodology that has directly benefited his company, his industry, and may even improve housing development across three countries.

Yeh, executive director at Orient Century Group conducted his thesis on *Real Estate Investment and Analytical Model in Southeast Asian Countries; Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam*. He called it "the most challenging and yet highly rewarding learning experience" he has ever had.

"Education unleashes the brain's power," he said. "This is real and true. The research work was demanding, and yet it was like a tasty, yummy dish, and I swallowed every bit of it. Receiving my DBA degree was definitely the most rewarding milestone I have ever achieved."

Yeh said he chose the CityU DBA because it is a "true world-class programme" with a rigorous approach and structure that laid a solid foundation for him to complete his research. He credited his supervisor and his own discipline and time-management skills for getting him through the programme.

But Yeh's experience and research results highlight what makes a DBA different from typical degrees. Because the research is so focused and business-specific, it allows students to make significant contributions both in academia and industry.

"On the academic front, my research developed a novel methodology using a two-tier multiple-criteria decision-making model to simulate the actual decision-making process, thereby leading to a practical and useful outcome," Yeh explained. "On the industrial front, the novel decision model provides analytical results which assists key decision makers in making well-informed investments. In brief, the model provides a trend for the investment preference which ranked Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar from high to low."

This new decision model can be adjusted to focus on both short- and long-term trends. As his research is shared with others in the real estate industry, Yeh believes it will unlock one of the largest untapped real estate markets on the planet.

"Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam are three emergent countries in Southeast Asia, and are different from the developed countries in Europe and North America," he said. "There is a lack of quality financial data, and limited transaction records are available for analysis. However, Southeast Asia represents the third-largest market in the world and real estate investments have grown into a multibillion-dollar business in the last decade. There are tremendous investment opportunities and yet so little research has been done on real estate investment in these three emergent countries."

Yeh's advice to DBA students is to think of it as a potentially life-changing passion project.

"You have to have real objectives," he said. "Is it academic curiosity, solving business problems, learning different approaches or creating new practices? Only true enthusiasm in your heart can take you through the demanding DBA journey."



Wilson Yeh says the DBA is "a highly rewarding learning experience".