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An AI-Enabled Framework for Supporting Product Innovation in Vietnamese Textile and Garment Enterprises

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ABSTRACT: Product innovation is a strategic option for textile and garment enterprises facing changing demand and growing sustainability requirements. This paper adopts a structured narrative review and comparative case analysis of published experiences in product diversification and environmentally friendly materials, and examines potential artificial intelligence (AI) support. Drawing on international and Vietnamese cases, the study identifies decision challenges concerning market demand, product portfolios, material selection and production capacity. It then proposes a five-component conceptual framework comprising data inputs, AI-enabled analysis, decision support, implementation and performance evaluation. The contribution is a mapping between product innovation experiences, potential AI functions and measurable productivity indicators. The framework is conceptual rather than empirically validated; future studies should assess its feasibility and impacts using firm-level data.

KEYWORDS: product innovation, artificial intelligence, textile and garment enterprises, productivity, sustainable products.

1. INTRODUCTION

Product innovation enables textile and garment enterprises to respond to volatile markets, shorter product life cycles, and increasingly stringent requirements for quality, cost, and sustainability. The OECD [1] identifies connections between innovation, resources, and firm performance. Two prominent directions are product portfolio diversification and developing products made from environmentally friendly materials. Nevertheless, greater product variety can increase costs and supply-chain complexity [2]. AI creates opportunities for data analysis and decision support in textile and apparel design, manufacturing, retail, and supply-chain management [3], [4]. Connected infrastructure and systems for supply-chain data sharing and governance [5] are prerequisites for exploiting these functions.

Existing studies have examined product diversification [2], AI applications [3], [4], or data governance [5] separately. Within the literature reviewed, the relationships among these two product innovation directions, AI capabilities, and productivity indicators have not been systematically integrated into a unified decision-support framework for Vietnamese textile and garment enterprises. Through a literature review and comparison of international and Vietnamese company cases, this study aims to (i) synthesize experience in diversification and material innovation; (ii) identify decision points potentially supported by AI; and (iii) propose a five-component framework and relevant evaluation indicators. Its contribution is an integrated conceptual framework that has not yet been empirically validated.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Theoretical background and research methodology

Product innovation is an important form of business innovation, involving the introduction of new products or significant improvements in their technical attributes, composition, materials, functions, and use value. According to the OECD (2009), business innovation is associated with resources, organizational capabilities, and conditions affecting business performance [1]. In the textile and garment industry, product innovation can follow different paths; this study focuses on portfolio diversification and the development of products made from environmentally friendly materials. Diversification enables companies to enter new customer segments and respond to changing market demand, whereas material innovation seeks to meet requirements for quality, functionality, and sustainability.

The relationship between product innovation and firm productivity must be examined from both economic and production-management perspectives. Mehrjoo and Pasek (2014) found that greater product variety can affect costs, revenue, and profits while increasing supply-chain management complexity [2]. Product diversification therefore does not necessarily generate proportional productivity gains. Revenue, profit, labor productivity, and total factor productivity (TFP) must be distinguished. Labor productivity measures output per unit of labor input, whereas TFP captures the portion of output growth not directly explained by increases in the measured inputs within a model. Higher revenue or profit does not automatically demonstrate an increase in TFP. Accordingly, assessing the impact of product innovation on productivity requires indicators of conforming output, labor time, production costs, and resource efficiency.

In the context of digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI) offers enhanced information-processing and decision-support capabilities for product innovation. Guo et al. (2011) reviewed applications of AI in the apparel industry across four domains: product design, manufacturing, retail, and supply-chain management [3]. Huo et al. (2019) further examined the prospects for AI in apparel design, manufacturing,

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distribution, and consumption, emphasizing its potential to address heterogeneous market demands [4]. On this basis, AI could be considered for demand forecasting, consumer-trend analysis, product clustering, and support for innovation choices consistent with firms' production capabilities.

However, effective AI adoption depends substantially on the collection, standardization, and interconnection of data. Pal and Yasar (2020) proposed an apparel supply-chain data management architecture based on the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain, highlighting the importance of information infrastructure for connecting and sharing data across supply-chain actors [5]. This provides a basis for integrating market, order, product portfolio, material, and production-capacity data for AI-enabled analysis. In this study, AI is understood as a tool supporting analysis and decisions, not as a complete replacement for the judgment of technical experts and business managers.

These arguments establish the following relationship among product innovation, data, and AI: product innovation creates decision-making needs; data provide the inputs; AI supports analysis and the generation of alternatives; and the effectiveness of the selected alternatives is evaluated using productivity, quality, and cost indicators. This approach provides the theoretical foundation for synthesizing product innovation practices and proposing an AI application framework for Vietnamese textile and garment enterprises.

2.1.2. Research methodology

The study employs a structured narrative review and comparative analysis of illustrative published cases to synthesize product innovation experiences and propose an AI-enabled decision-support framework. This is a qualitative synthesis of secondary data, not a representative survey or a causal evaluation.

Sources include studies on innovation and AI [1]–[5], together with cases involving Uzbekistan, Viet Tien, Zara, H&M, CANIFA, BOO, and Thanh Cong Textile and Garment. Cases were selected for their relevance to product diversification, sustainable materials, and managerial decision problems requiring support.

The analytical procedure comprises four steps: (1) classifying experiences under two innovation directions; (2) identifying decision problems concerning demand, products, materials, and capacity; (3) matching these problems to AI analytical functions; and (4) proposing a framework and evaluation indicators. The anticipated benefits require subsequent verification.

Based on the theoretical literature [1]–[5] and company experiences, the study develops a five-component model comprising data inputs, AI-enabled analysis, decision support, implementation, and performance evaluation. Section 2.4 of the restructured paper presents the model and its data feedback mechanism.

Consistent with the stated objectives and methods, the study addresses three groups of outcomes. First, it synthesizes experience in product portfolio diversification and environmentally friendly material innovation to identify lessons for portfolio selection, sourcing, and production organization. Second, it identifies AI-enabled decision points, required data, and implementation conditions at enterprise level. Third, it proposes a five-component framework and indicators covering development lead time, labor productivity, costs, quality, and forecasting error.

2.2. Review of product diversification practices

Product diversification helps textile and garment enterprises adapt to market volatility, reach additional customer groups, and utilize production capacity. It may involve developing new products, expanding product varieties using existing technologies, or investing in related manufacturing activities. Its effectiveness, however, depends on costs, organizational capabilities, and responsiveness to market demand.

International experience. In Uzbekistan, Asimova (2022) [6] describes production diversification associated with technological modernization and broader product portfolios. According to historical data cited in that study, the Uzbekyengilsanoat organization comprised 312 enterprises equipped with modern machinery, producing goods ranging from yarn and textiles to garments and exporting to 55 countries. Reported exports included 157.1 thousand tonnes of yarn, 33 million square metres of textile products, 4.9 thousand tonnes of knitted fabrics, 148.1 million knitted garments, and 9.1 million pairs of socks. These figures describe the industry during the period covered by the cited research and must not be treated as current statistics. Asimova (2022) [6] identifies three diversification pathways: (i) developing new products using new technologies; (ii) improving and expanding products with existing technologies; and (iii) developing products that are not directly technologically related to current operations. These approaches can help companies expand markets, utilize resources, and reduce reliance on a single product group. Nevertheless, diversification should be aligned with market research, product quality, design capabilities, and an appropriate production strategy.

Mehrjoo and Pasek (2014) [2] used system dynamics simulation to examine the effects of product diversification on fast-fashion supply chains through cost, revenue, and profit measures. The simulated outcomes are shown in Figure 1.

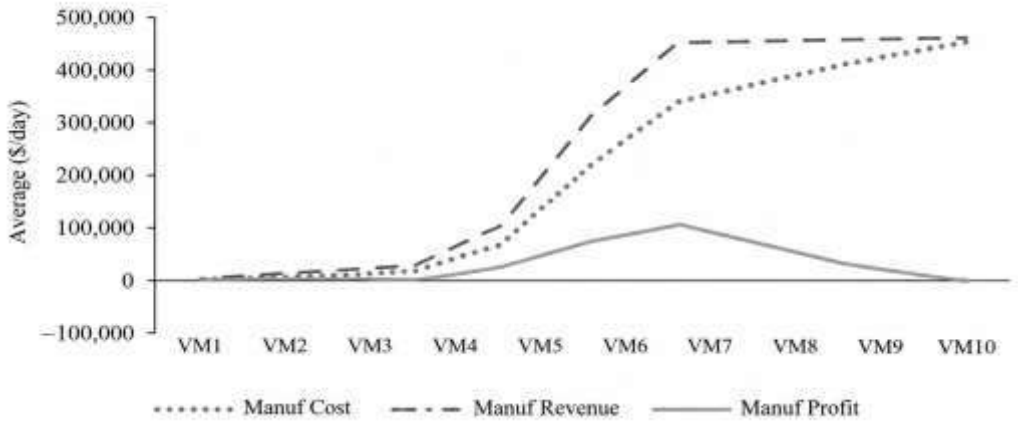


Figure 1. Costs, revenue and profit under product diversification scenarios
Source: Mehrjoo and Pasek (2014) [2].

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The simulation indicates that manufacturer profit is highest in scenario VM7, corresponding to 14 product types with 13 variants of each type. When diversity increases further, costs continue to rise while revenue approaches a ceiling, reducing profit. This illustrates a trade-off between market responsiveness and complexity in production, inventory, and supply-chain management [2]. However, VM7 is optimal only under the specific simulation assumptions, not a universally applicable threshold. Product portfolio choices should therefore reflect production capability, costs, and market demand forecasts.

Vietnamese experience. Viet Tien Garment Corporation provides an example of expanded product lines and distribution channels. In 2017, the company transferred a 51% equity interest in Viet Tien Meko Co., Ltd. to Kwong Lung Enterprise and entered the Skechers sports footwear business through cooperation with a US partner. Alongside men's office wear, Viet Tien developed smart-casual, streetwear, travel, sportswear, and accessory lines to serve additional market segments [7]. This experience illustrates the connection between diversification, brand strategy, distribution systems, and consumer demand. Its effectiveness, however, should be assessed using revenue, costs, sales performance, and resource utilization; expanding the range of products cannot be equated with increasing productivity. The original manuscript also refers to Thanh Phat Co., Ltd. shifting from export processing to serving domestic brands, while Thanh Cong Textile Garment Investment Trading JSC retained traditional export markets and developed products responsive to emerging needs. These cases illustrate changes in products and markets in response to business fluctuations, but the information requires verification against direct public disclosures before being used as formal evidence.

Lessons and implications for AI. The reviewed cases indicate that diversification may create market opportunities and strengthen adaptability, but also increases the need to control costs, allocate resources, and manage product variants. Rather than maximizing the number of product types, enterprises should establish a portfolio compatible with demand and production capability. Three possible AI support functions follow: (i) analyzing market data and forecasting product demand; (ii) supporting portfolio and diversification choices subject to cost, capacity, and sales constraints; and (iii) evaluating alternative production arrangements for new products. These are prospective applications derived from the synthesis of cases, not experimental evidence that AI improves firm productivity.

2.3. Innovation using environmentally friendly materials

Developing products from environmentally friendly materials is an important innovation direction for the textile and garment industry, responding to demand for sustainable consumption and more efficient material use. Vartio (2022) [8] found an association between eco-friendly product line extensions and consumers' perceptions of brand image. Nevertheless, innovation outcomes should be assessed in light of material properties, technical standards, costs, and production conditions.

International experience. Zara and H&M illustrate the development of products using materials selected according to environmental criteria. Inditex (2016) [9] reported that Zara's Join Life range used organic cotton, TENCEL Lyocell, and recycled fibres. In 2016, the brand placed 42.3 million Join Life items on the market, accounting for more than 5% of all items. Similarly, H&M developed its Conscious collection with an emphasis on more sustainable materials [8]. According to H&M Group [10], recycled or sustainably sourced materials represented 89% of materials used in commercial products in 2024, including 29.5% recycled materials. The experiences of Zara and H&M show that green product innovation is associated with changes in material composition, input standards, and supply-chain management. Nevertheless, the share of sustainable materials does not directly establish gains in labor productivity or TFP; effects should be assessed through costs, quality, material losses, and resource efficiency.

Vietnamese experience. CANIFA emphasizes material selection and quality control in accordance with Cotton USA, Woolmark, and OEKO-TEX standards. Company information [11] states that CANIFA obtained Woolmark certification for wool products in 2014, while its Van Giang production complex began operating in 2019 and was reported to have achieved LEED green building certification. This is an example of combining raw material quality control with resource-efficient manufacturing aspirations. BOO has adopted water-based printing inks, reused leftover and surplus fabrics to produce tote bags, and collected used clothing [12]. Such activities show how recovered materials may be used to develop products and limit waste, although economic outcomes require cost, output, and recovery-rate data. Thanh Cong Textile Garment Investment Trading JSC's 2024 company report [13] states that it has emphasized research and development of environmentally friendly products since 2017, particularly recycled polyester, viscose, and cotton. The firm has developed polyester from recovered feedstock, reused cotton fibres, and introduced ECO WOOD products made from controlled wood and pulp sources. According to Thanh Cong's own disclosure [14], its ECO WOOD fibre production process was presented as having water-related impacts and emissions more than 50% lower than those of a conventional viscose process. This is a company-reported claim and should be interpreted according to the relevant comparison conditions. The case highlights the R&D, quality assurance, traceability, and cost-management capabilities required for material innovation.

Lessons learned. The cases indicate that sustainable product development requires coordinated material selection, design, and production organization, with simultaneous consideration of technical performance, prices, supply, loss rates, and environmental criteria. Three AI-support directions are consequently proposed: (i) classifying materials according to technical attributes and product requirements; (ii) screening and comparing material alternatives subject to quality, cost, and supply constraints; and (iii) forecasting demand and evaluating the feasibility of new products made from recycled or alternative materials. Such functions could improve decision quality, but any productivity effects must be established using enterprise data before quantitative claims are made.

2.4. Synthesis of evidence and AI decision-support opportunities

The analysis of cases in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the restructured paper identifies two principal product innovation pathways in textile and garment enterprises: portfolio diversification and development of products from environmentally friendly materials. Although these pathways differ in objectives and implementation, both require decisions on market demand, product choices, material inputs, and production organization. Evidence drawn from Mehrjoo and Pasek [2], Asimova [6], Vartio [8], and the published information of the companies reviewed [7], [9]–[14] provides a basis for identifying managerial problems that might benefit from data analytics and AI.

For diversification, the central challenge is selecting a product portfolio and level of variation that fit market demand and production capacity. Mehrjoo and Pasek (2014) [2] show that increasing variety may raise costs and supply-chain complexity. AI-supported demand forecasting, product grouping, and comparison of portfolio scenarios could therefore improve the information available for decisions. For

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sustainable product development, material alternatives must be evaluated simultaneously for quality, technical specifications, availability, cost, and environmental requirements. AI could support material-data classification and the screening of alternatives against predefined constraints.

On this basis, Table 1 summarizes four groups of decision problems, the data required, potentially applicable AI functions, and corresponding performance measures.

Table 1. Product innovation experiences and ai-enabled decision support opportunities

Innovation direction	Decision problem	Required data	Proposed AI function	Performance indicators
Product diversification	Select portfolio and level of variation	Orders, sales, costs, capacity	Demand forecasting; product clustering	Forecast error; unit cost; sell-through rate
Market expansion	Select segments and target markets	Orders by market, selling prices, delivery lead times	Demand clustering; market-level forecasts	Sales by market; order fulfilment rate
Green product development	Select materials and product configuration	Specifications, material prices, certifications, supply	Constraint-based material classification and recommendation	Loss rate; material cost; conformity rate
New product implementation	Select a production organization option	Changeover time, defect rates, standard times, capacity	Quality and processing-time forecasts	Prototype lead time; labor productivity; defect rate

Source: Author's synthesis and proposal based on [2], [3], [4], [6]–[14].

Table 1 indicates that potential AI support extends beyond product design to market analysis, material selection, and production organization. Demand forecasting and product clustering can inform portfolio diversification; material classification and recommendation can contribute to green product development; and quality and processing-time predictions can help assess the feasibility of introducing new product lines. These functions are consistent with AI applications in apparel discussed by Guo et al. [3] and Huo et al. [4].

The synthesis identifies three conditions for integrating AI into product innovation. First, input data must be complete, consistent, and regularly updated, particularly for orders, materials, and production capabilities. Second, each AI function must address a specific decision problem and respect the enterprise's technical and economic constraints. Third, effectiveness must be measured using appropriate indicators rather than inferred from technology adoption alone.

Thus, the contribution of this synthesis goes beyond cataloguing forms of product innovation. It establishes relationships among managerial decision problems, data inputs, AI functions, and performance indicators, providing a direct basis for the framework presented in Section 2.5. The proposed functions and indicators in Table 1, however, are research recommendations rather than evidence of AI implementation or experimental validation in the companies analyzed.

2.5. Proposed AI application framework for product innovation

Drawing on innovation theory, the synthesized experiences, and the identified decision-support opportunities, the study proposes an AI application framework to help textile and garment enterprises select and implement product innovation options. The framework combines market, materials, and production-capacity data with AI analytical capabilities to inform decisions and provide a basis for performance assessment. This approach builds on the apparel AI applications discussed by Guo et al. [3] and Huo et al. [4], while incorporating the role of supply-chain data governance highlighted by Pal and Yasar [5].

The proposed framework consists of five interconnected components and an information-feedback mechanism, as illustrated in Figure 2.

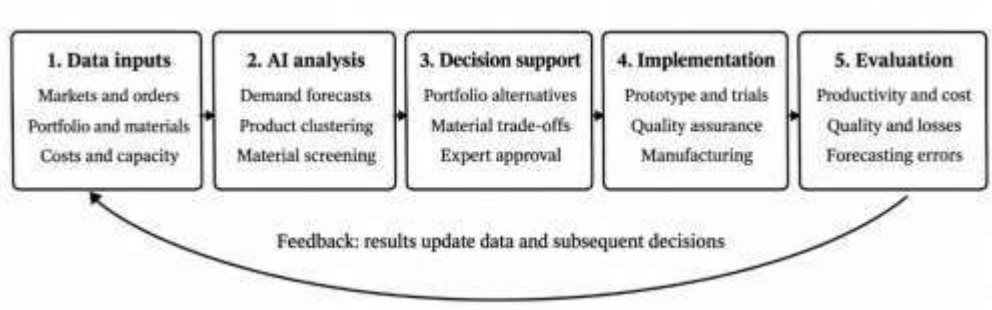


Figure 2. Proposed AI Application Framework for Product Innovation in Textile and Garment Enterprises
Source: Author's proposal based on the synthesis of [2]–[5], [6], [8]–[14].

First, data inputs cover orders, markets, portfolios, material characteristics, costs, and capacity; environmentally friendly products additionally require information on origin, certifications, and losses. Second, AI supports demand forecasting, product clustering, and material screening under technical, economic, and environmental constraints. Data reliability and limitations must be assessed. Third, the system presents portfolio and material alternatives and compares them on cost, quality, supply, and capacity; technical experts and managers retain final approval authority. Fourth, implementation entails sample design, material trials, quality checks, and manufacturing, while recording lead times, defects, and material consumption. Fifth, productivity, costs, quality, losses, and forecasting errors are measured, and the findings are fed back to update data and inform subsequent decision cycles.

To clarify how the proposed framework could be evaluated, Table 2 specifies indicators and corresponding measurement procedures.

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Table 2. Proposed indicators for evaluating the AI application framework

Evaluation area	Indicator	Measurement method
Product development	New sample development lead time	Days from idea approval until the sample meets requirements
Productivity	Labor productivity	Conforming output / total labor hours
Cost	Unit product cost	Total production costs / number of conforming products
Quality	Defect rate	Number of defective products / total inspected products × 100%
Material utilization	Material loss rate	Weight of material losses / weight of material inputs × 100%
Forecast quality	Demand forecasting error	MAE or MAPE, depending on the characteristics of the data

Source: Author's proposal.

The proposed AI framework links product innovation activities with decision support and manufacturing performance assessment. Its value lies in specifying data requirements, AI functions, and measurable indicators within a feedback process consistent with the two innovation directions reviewed. However, the framework remains conceptual and has not been deployed or empirically tested in enterprises. Its capacity to improve productivity and resource efficiency must therefore be assessed in future studies.

2.6. Discussion, feasibility, and research limitations

The findings suggest that the proposed AI application framework may help Vietnamese textile and garment companies improve decision-making in product innovation. Compared with processes that rely primarily on managerial experience, fragmented information, and manual assessment, the framework aims to integrate market, material, and production-capacity data into a common analytical workflow. Its potential value is to help firms recognize demand, compare innovation alternatives, and control factors influencing manufacturing outcomes. This direction is consistent with the AI opportunities in apparel design, production, and supply-chain management discussed in earlier studies [3], [4].

For diversification, AI could help analyze sales trends and select portfolios suited to capacity, costs, and market conditions. Mehrjoo and Pasek (2014) [2] demonstrate that the economic benefits of variety do not increase indefinitely, because higher variety can raise costs and operational complexity. For products made from environmentally friendly materials, AI could classify, compare, and screen material alternatives against specifications, price, supply, and environmental criteria. Such support cannot replace quality inspection, product life-cycle assessment, or expert decisions.

Implementation in Vietnamese textile and garment enterprises depends on three main conditions. First, firms must standardize and connect data on orders, product portfolios, material consumption norms, costs, and production capability. Second, they need personnel who can combine technological knowledge with expertise in design, materials, and production management. Third, AI tools must be selected in line with company size, financial resources, and digital transformation readiness. The work of Pal and Yasar (2020) [5] on data governance and sharing infrastructure provides a useful reference for these prerequisites.

In practical terms, an enterprise could begin with a pilot involving a product group for which reasonably complete historical data are available, defining the decision problem and evaluation indicators before deployment. Results should be compared between AI-supported and existing decision approaches under similar order, labor, capacity, and production-time conditions. The metrics in Table 2, particularly labor productivity, unit cost, sample-development time, and defect rate, could be used to evaluate actual outcomes. Investment, system maintenance, and staff training costs must also be considered to determine economic feasibility.

This study has several limitations. First, it draws primarily on secondary sources and purposively selected illustrative cases, which are not representative of Vietnam's entire textile and garment industry. Second, the cases were reported at different times and used non-identical scopes and measurement methods, limiting quantitative comparability. Finally, the AI application framework has only been developed conceptually; no firm-level data were available to train an AI model, test prediction accuracy, or evaluate impacts on productivity. Consequently, the benefits discussed are scientifically motivated expectations rather than experimentally demonstrated results.

Future research should pilot the framework in textile and garment enterprises, collecting data before and after implementation and using an appropriate comparison group or counterfactual approach to evaluate changes in performance indicators. Empirical findings would provide the evidence needed to refine the framework and determine where it can be applied in actual manufacturing settings.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the structured literature review and analysis of illustrative cases in the textile and garment sector, the study identifies two main directions for product innovation: portfolio diversification and development of products using environmentally friendly materials. The synthesis indicates that outcomes depend on appropriate portfolio choices, demand forecasting, cost control, material quality, and production organization aligned with enterprise conditions.

The study's principal contribution is a five-component AI application framework for product innovation comprising data inputs, AI-enabled analysis, decision support, implementation, and performance evaluation. The framework connects managerial problems derived from enterprise experiences with analytical functions and performance indicators, thereby offering guidance for integrating AI into product innovation. Its scientific value lies in the unified treatment of innovation decisions, data requirements, and performance measurement.

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Vietnamese textile and garment enterprises are advised to prioritize the standardization of product, order, and material data; select AI applications with clearly defined objectives and evaluation criteria; and start with appropriately scaled pilots before wider deployment. AI adoption should be accompanied by technical assessment, financial feasibility analysis, and managerial accountability. As the framework has not been empirically validated, subsequent research must employ enterprise data and suitable comparisons to establish its feasibility and actual effects on productivity.

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