


LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES, ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF TOURISM FIRMS: EVIDENCE FROM A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

Abstract

 **Ngoc Khuong MAI**, Associate Professor,
Associate Dean
International University – Vietnam National University,
HCMC
School of Business
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
E-mail: mnkhuong@hcmiu.edu.vn

 **Thanh Tung DO**, Mr., PhD Candidate
(Corresponding Author)
International University – Vietnam National University,
HCMC
School of Business
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
+84 983 684777
E-mail: tungdo93@gmail.com

Dieu Trang HO NGUYEN, Ms.,
Undergraduate Student
International University – Vietnam National University,
HCMC
School of Business
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
E-mail: hndtrang.baiu@gmail.com

Purpose – This study aims to investigate how leadership competencies (cognitive, interpersonal, and results-oriented competencies) and four dimensions of organizational learning (knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation, and organizational memory) contribute to organizational performance of tourism firms.

Design/Methodology – Data were collected from leaders working at various tourism establishments in Vietnam – a developing country in the Asia. Smart-PLS software was used to perform structural equation modelling of 638 valid responses.

Findings – The results showed that among the three proposed leadership competencies, only managers' result orientation exerted a significant influence on organizational performance. Knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing were fully influenced by the three leadership competencies, while knowledge interpretation and organizational memory were facilitated by the cognitive and outcome-oriented competencies. Knowledge acquisition and knowledge interpretation were positively related to organizational performance. The mediating effect of organizational learning was supported by the existence of knowledge acquisition.

Originality of the research – Although the topics of leadership competencies, organizational learning, and organizational performance have received a great concern among worldwide academia, there is scarce research examining the relationships among these three phenomena together. This paper is among the first study that offers a more comprehensive model of the relationship between these domains.

Keywords Leadership, Organizational learning, Firm performance

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INTRODUCTION

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, tourism industry experienced a rapid upwards trend in the number of tourist and revenue generated. According to the Tourism Department, Ho Chi Minh City welcomed 17 million travelers from January to June 2019, earning approximately VND 73 trillion (US \$3.15 billion) in tourism revenue. However, the severe effects of the pandemic have caused substantial loss for the industry. Specifically, restrictions on tourism activities have caused a reduction of 78.7% of tourists and 59,5% of revenue in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, which led to temporary termination of operation or even business shutdown. Although Vietnamese government has made enormous efforts in controlling the spread of COVID-19, tourism firms have yet to recover and return to normal operation.

The situation of enduring crisis and environmental complexities has urged organizations to increasingly seek strategies to maintain normal operation and improve business performance. Leaders in these organizations then face many challenges to maintain efficient operations, integrate firm resources, and improve firm performance (DuBrin, 2018). For the past decades, the question of “how” leaders lead their organizations toward desirable outcomes has resulted in the thirst for research in leadership. Previous studies have identified some competencies of leaders that can help organizations overcome turbulent market conditions (Rimita et al., 2020; Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019; Wooten & James, 2008). Dirani et al. (2020) highlighted the needs of leaders in maintaining communication with stakeholders and creating post COVID-19 resilience in the organization. Talu & Nazarov's (2020) study revealed that leaders need to exhibit emotional intelligence and goal-oriented behaviors in order to deal with economic uncertainty in the outburst of COVID-19. Besides, several organizations have concentrated on organizational learning to adapt to the new conditions and see it as an essential property for improving organizational performance and competitive advantage (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Muneeb et al., 2019; Castaneda et al., 2018; Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle, 2011). In the context of COVID-19, Alonazi (2021) found that the implementation of knowledge sharing activities among health practitioners strengthened decision making process and performance of organizations.

This study is conducted to investigate how leadership competencies (cognitive, interpersonal, and results-oriented competencies) and four dimensions of organizational learning (knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation, and organizational memory) contribute to organizational performance of tourism firms in Vietnam. The study is important for the following reasons. First, although existing studies have focused on the relationship between leadership and organizational performance (Nguyen & Luu, 2019; Amedu & Dulewicz, 2018), or between organizational learning and organizational performance (Tran, 2021; Ali et al., 2020; Hindasah & Nuryakin, 2020), the connections among these three variables have not yet to be adequately explored. This paper is among the first study to offer a more comprehensive model of the relationship between these domains. Second, since earlier studies on leadership, organizational learning, and organizational performance have been conducted in developed countries, this study is an attempt to validate the applicability of these Western and universal concepts to other parts of the world and add to body of knowledge on these phenomena. Third, although there have been several studies discussing the negative impacts of COVID-19 on tourism firms, studies focusing on how organizations overcome difficulties and adapt to the crisis are still lacking. The findings of this study provide practical implications for business leaders and policy makers to enhance their leadership performance, as well as organizational learning and business performance of their firms.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Theoretical foundation

The resource-based view theory suggests that “firms possess resources, a subset of which enables them to achieve competitive advantage, and a further subset which leads to superior long-term performance” (Wernerfelt, 1984, 108). This theory derives from two assumptions of immobility and heterogeneity of both tangible resources (e.g., facilities and equipment) and intangible resources (e.g., leaders’ competencies) that improve the performance and competitive advantage of an organization (Ulrich, 1998; Barney, 1991; Saffu et al., 2008).

The knowledge-based view theory is an extension of the resource-based view theory, implying that knowledge is the most vital tool to achieve high performance and competitive edge (Grant, 1996). According to Magno et al. (2017), the performance of an organization is related to its abilities to create, disseminate, apply, and store knowledge. The knowledge-based view theory is “an important approach to organizational learning” and gives rise to the understanding that “firms should become learning organizations to maximize their knowledge base” and gain sustainable performance (Farzaneh et al., 2021, p. 657).

Originated in organizational psychology field, the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory suggests that Ability (competencies necessary for good performance), Motivation (individual’s impetus to perform), and Opportunity (contextual and situational factors that enable performance) are core antecedents in explaining behaviors and performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bailey et al., 2001). Argote et al. (2003) in their study identified ability, motivation, and opportunity as mechanisms of learning and concluded that these mechanisms have an impact on how knowledge is created, retained, and transferred. Recently, Soomro et al. (2021) and Vashdi et al. (2019) applied the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory to empirically examine the connection between leadership competencies and organizational learning. In these studies, each leadership competence could be classified as the ability, motivation, or opportunity mechanism which are related to organizational learning processes.

Drawing on the resource-based view and knowledge-based view theories, in this study leadership competencies and organizational learning were considered as internal intangible resources that foster superior performance of tourism organizations. In addition, this study also extends earlier work (Soomro et al., 2021; Vashdi et al., 2019; Argote et al., 2003) by using the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theory to propose theoretical connections between leadership competencies and organizational learning dimensions.

1.2. Leadership competencies and organizational learning

In this study, three leadership competencies based on Board Assessment Scale (BAS) for Boards of Directors (Dulewicz & Gay, 1997), including cognitive, interpersonal, and result-oriented competencies would be adopted. Cognitive competencies refer to the ability of leaders to acquire and effectively utilize appropriate work-related knowledge (Cheetham & Chivers, 2005). Interpersonal competencies refer to the abilities of leaders regarding relationship management and understanding of social environment, for example, teamwork and empathy (Boyatzis, 2009). Results-oriented competencies relate to the ability of leaders to establish a high standard of excellence and strive for continuous improvement (Northouse, 2013).

Organizational learning has been defined as the process of acquiring and making sense of new knowledge through collective experiences within the organizations to catalyze better organizational outcomes (Huber, 1991; Slater & Narver, 1995). Various dimensions of organizational learning have been investigated for the past decades. In this study, organizational learning would be examined using four subprocesses identified by Huber (1991), including knowledge acquisition - the process of acquiring knowledge internally and externally, knowledge distribution - the process where information is shared among individuals and groups, knowledge interpretation - the process where organizations make sense of newly acquired/distributed information, and organizational memory - the process through which organizations store information for future use.

Earlier studies have investigated the role of leaders' competencies in strengthening organizational learning in organizations. In Amy's (2008) study, cognitive and interpersonal competencies of leaders were found to contribute to the development of organizational learning. Similarly, Domínguez Escrig et al. (2016) found that interpersonal competencies enabled leaders to foster organizational learning. Khalifa & Ayoubi (2015) found that result-oriented leaders who can communicate their vision and stay determined towards future goals could promote organizational learning in Syrian organizations. Muskat & Deery's (2017) study highlighted the role of leaders in knowledge transfer and organizational memory within organizations. Sayed & Edgar's (2019) study found that leaders' competencies played a crucial role in fostering learning climate at individual, group, and organizational levels. Recently, Swanson et al. (2020) in their study found the impact of leadership competencies on knowledge sharing within organizations. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Leadership competencies, including cognitive competence (H1a), interpersonal competence (H1b), and result-oriented competence (H1c), positively affect knowledge acquisition.

H2. Leadership competencies, including cognitive competence (H2a), interpersonal competence (H2b), and result-oriented competence (H2c), positively affect knowledge distribution.

H3. Leadership competencies, including cognitive competence (H3a), interpersonal competence (H3b), and result-oriented competence (H3c), positively affect knowledge interpretation.

H4. Leadership competencies, including cognitive competence (H4a), interpersonal competence (H4b), and result-oriented competence (H4c), positively affect organizational memory.

1.3. Leadership competencies and organizational performance

Organizational performance is commonly defined as the actual output of an organization as compared to its desired goals, including financial aspects such as profitability, return on sales, return on investment (Tubigi et al., 2013) and non-monetary aspects such as reputation, satisfaction, or quality (Arsezen Otamis et al., 2015).

Earlier studies have recognized leadership competencies as determinants of organizational performance (McGivern & Tvorik, 1997; Soebbing et al., 2015; Almatrooshi et al., 2016). Krupskiy & Grynko (2018) found that different cognitive styles of leadership are associated with the organization's capabilities to absorb knowledge and respond quickly to changes in the external and internal environment. Wisittigars & Siengthai's (2019) study revealed five leadership competencies required to help Thai organizations improve business performance: emergency preparedness, crisis communication, emotional intelligence, leadership skills, and problem-solving.

Interpersonal competencies have been considered as one of the most important competencies of effective leaders (Awan et al., 2015; Englefield et al., 2019). Mysirlaki & Paraskeva (2020) suggested that leaders could improve performance directly through their emotional intelligence and interpersonal competencies. In the context of COVID-19, Talu & Nazarov (2020) concluded that the leaders' interpersonal competencies were important for organizational performance and effective transformations during fluctuated economic situation.

In addition, findings of Talu & Nazarov's (2020) study stressed that leaders during the pandemic should be goal-oriented and seek for continuous improvement to sustain performance and gain competitive advantage. Amedu & Dulewicz (2018) utilized The Board Assessment Scale (BAS) to measure the influence of leaders' competencies on organizational performance and found that result-oriented behaviors strongly impacted all three aspects of organizational performance. Thus, hypothesis 5 was proposed:

H5. Leadership competencies, including cognitive competence (H5a), interpersonal competence (H5b), and result-oriented competence (H5c), positively affect organizational performance.

1.4. Organizational learning and organizational performance

Organizational learning has been recognized as an essential resource for an organization to achieve superior performance and sustain competitive advantages (Camps & Luna-Aroca, 2012; Muneeb et al., 2019; Castaneda et al., 2018; Brockmand & Morgan, 2003). Pérez López et al. (2005) study in 195 firms with over 200 employees in Spain found that organizational learning fostered both organizational performance and innovation. According to Skerlavaj et al. (2007), organizational learning could directly predict non-financial performance and indirectly predict the financial performance of organizations. Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle (2011) also found a significant and positive relationship between organizational learning and organizational performance in their study.

Regarding the effects of four organizational learning subprocesses on organizational performance, earlier studies found that knowledge acquisition enhance organizational performance as the process allowed firms to explore solution and develop

products that meet the market demand (Yli-Renko et al., 2001; Bollinger & Smith, 2001). The process of knowledge acquisition also resulted in the frequency of strategies renewal and thus contributing to firm continuous performance in turbulent conditions (Shin & Pérez-Nordtvedt, 2020). Holsapple et al. (2015) found that knowledge acquisition activities positively influenced competitiveness of organizations. Literature also supported the influence of knowledge distribution on organizational performance (Keszey, 2018; Ali et al., 2019; Muhammed & Zaim, 2020). Keszey (2018) proposed the model to examine the impact of boundary spanners' knowledge sharing on new product development and firm performance with data collected from top 10% highest sale revenue company. A study by Abdelwhab Ali et al. (2019) found that knowledge distribution had a positive influence on both organizational tangible and intangible performance. This was in line with Lin's (2007) findings that knowledge distribution could lead to a culture of knowledge sharing and thus increasing firms' profitability. Besides, knowledge interpretation was also recognized as a vital element in the performance of an organization (Thomas et al., 2001). In the proposed framework of IT capability and organizational capability on firm performance, knowledge interpretation was categorized into the process of information synergy and was found to relate to various firm's performance aspects such as customer retention, sales growth, profitability and return on investment (Li et al., 2006). Gonzalez-Padron et al. (2010) indicated that knowledge interpretation had a positive impact on all three balanced scorecard variables, including innovation and learning performance, customer performance, and internal process performance. Besides, Lee et al. (2017) found a positive and direct relationship between organizational memory and firms' new product development performance. Nieves et al. (2014) conducted a study at 120 Polish organizations and concluded that organizational memory exerted positive influences on firm innovativeness and customer satisfaction. Aminu & Madmood (2016) also found that organizational memory positively related to overall performance of firms. Therefore, hypothesis 6 was proposed:

H6. Organizational learning factors, including knowledge acquisition (H6a), knowledge distribution (H6b), knowledge interpretation (H6c), and organizational memory (H6d), positively affect organizational performance.

1.5. The mediating roles of organizational learning processes

Although the mediating role of organizational learning processes in the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational performance has yet to be defined much in the literature, evidence for their roles in the relationship between leadership and organizational performance was presented. In the study of García-Morales et al. (2012), leadership was found to foster a learning culture and consequently enable the firms to achieve higher organizational performance. Choudhary et al. (2012) studied the effects of leadership on organizational outcomes and found that leadership positively affected organizational learning; thereby enhancing overall performance. According to Ur Rehman et al. (2019), organizational learning mediated the influences of leaders on both financial and non-financial performance of Malaysian firms. Therefore, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H7. Organizational performance is indirectly affected by cognitive competence (H7a), interpersonal competence (H7b), and result-oriented competence (H7c) through the mediating role of knowledge acquisition.

H8. Organizational performance is indirectly affected by cognitive competence (H8a), interpersonal competence (H8b), and result-oriented competence (H8c) through the mediating role of knowledge distribution.

H9. Organizational performance is indirectly affected by cognitive competence (H9a), interpersonal competence (H9b), and result-oriented competence (H9c) through the mediating role of knowledge interpretation.

H10. Organizational performance is indirectly affected by cognitive competence (H10a), interpersonal competence (H10b), and result-oriented competence (H10c) through the mediating role of organizational memory.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sample and data collection

In this study, we developed a survey questionnaire to collect data. After pilot testing with ten academics and tourism leaders, some modifications were made to the raw questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire was sent to target respondents via Google Form due to social distancing during COVID-19. The list of large tourism organizations was developed using Governmental websites and personal contacts. Respondents are the owners, chief executive officers and managers of tourism firms who receive information on firm performance from various sources and govern operating processes of their organizations. To filter out the leaders who were not able to do so, a specific question asking about the respondents' strategic role in their organization was included at the beginning of the survey questionnaire. We applied convenience and snowball sampling to reach potential participants. Both face-to-face and online self-administered surveys were used due to the geographical distribution of the respondents and social distancing during the pandemic. A total of 638 valid responses were received for data analysis, which satisfied the minimum number of required for structural equation modelling (Hair et al., 2019). Sample characteristics in this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' demographic information

Measure	Items	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	428	67.1
	Female	210	32.9
Age	Under 31	135	21.2
	31-40	301	47.2
	41-50	153	24.0
	Over 50	49	7.7
Education level	College	113	17.7
	Bachelor	389	61.0
	Master	134	21.0
	Doctor	2	0.3
Major	Economics	149	23.4
	Humanities	60	9.4
	Tourism	290	45.5
	Management	139	21.8
Company type	Restaurant/bar	138	21.6
	Tourist attraction	62	9.7
	Hotel/Resort	218	34.2
	Retailing system for tourists	54	8.5
	Transportation company	84	13.2
	Travel agency	45	7.1
	Event company	37	5.8

2.2. Measures

Leadership competencies, including results-oriented competence, interpersonal competence, and cognitive competence were measured based on The Board Assessment Scale (BAS) developed by Dulewicz & Gay (1997). Organizational learning components, including knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation, and organizational memory were measured using scales adapted from Jiménez-Jiménez & Sanz-Valle's (2011) study. A scale developed by Arsezen-Otamis et al. (2015) was adopted to measure organizational performance in this study. Five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) was applied to measure dependent and independent variables.

2.3. Statistical methods

Partial Least Square method – SmartPLS was applied to analyze data (Ringle et al., 2015). SmartPLS would analyze both inner model (relationship between dependent variables and independent variables) and outer models (relationship between independent variables and its constructed items). This method is popular in testing casual models (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004) and is well-suited for the purposes of this study for the following reasons. First, PLS-SEM has been applied in social science, evident by a variety of books and articles proposing PLS-SEM as a methodological extension in recent years (Hair et al., 2019). Second, researchers are encouraged to apply PLS-SEM “when the analysis is concerned with testing a theoretical framework from a prediction perspective” and “when the structural model is complex and includes many constructs, indicators and or model relationships” (Hair et al., 2019; p. 5).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Measurement model results

The construct of research model was analyzed in terms of reliability and validity. First, indicator reliability was assessed by calculating the square of each indicators' outer loadings. According to Hair et al. (2019), the index must be above 0.6 to be accepted and index above 0.7 is preferred. Overall, all indicators showed positive reflection as the index were greater than 0.6, except for OGP4, OGP6, ROR4. Secondly, reliability tests concerning composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach Alpha showed positive results with all indexes (Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.6 and CR greater than 0.7). Specifically, among measured

variables, their CR values ranged from 0.838 to 0.919 and their Cronbach Alpha values ranged from 0.711 to 0.902. Regarding convergent validity test, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent variable must score 0.5 or higher (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In this study, all investigated variables satisfied this requirement, meaning that items in the same group could explain well the variables (Table 2).

Table 2: Measurement Model Evaluation

<i>Constructs and items</i>	<i>Outer loadings</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Threshold</i>		≥ 0.7	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5
Cognitive Competence (COG)		0.892	0.893	0.912	0.537
COG1 I can produce a clear and consistent picture of the long-term future state of the organization.	0.713				
COG2 I am aware of the firms' strengths and weaknesses and of the impact of the board's decisions upon them.	0.736				
COG3 I am aware of the factors (market, technology...) which determine the firm's opportunities and threats.	0.705				
COG4 I generate and recognize imaginative solutions and innovations.	0.748				
COG5 I make decisions based on reasonable assumptions and factual information.	0.752				
COG6 I show a readiness to take decisions and make judgments.	0.699				
COG7 I identify problems, transforms and relates information from different sources and identifies possible or actual causes.	0.749				
COG8 I identify the disadvantages of proposals and provide counter arguments.	0.778				
COG9 I can relate disparate facts and see the wider issues and implications.	0.712				
Interpersonal Competence (INT)		0.860	0.860	0.899	0.641
INT1 I make a strong positive impression on first meeting.	0.805				
INT2 I adopt a flexible style when interacting with others.	0.801				
INT3 I show an understanding of the feelings and needs of others, and a willingness to provide personal support.	0.826				
INT4 I inspire others to achieve goals.	0.793				
INT5 I persuade others to give their agreement and commitment.	0.778				
Results-Oriented Competence (ROR)		0.902	0.903	0.919	0.533
ROR1 I am responsive to the need for change and encourage the implementation of new initiatives.	0.699				
ROR2 I am assertive and ready to take charge of a situation.	0.711				
ROR3 I show conspicuous levels of energy, vitality and output.	0.736				
ROR5 I set high goals or standards of performance for self and for others.	0.698				
ROR6 I stay with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is achieved.	0.715				
ROR7 I identify those opportunities which will increase the organization's business advantage.	0.769				

<i>Constructs and items</i>	<i>Outer loadings</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
<i>Threshold</i>		≥ 0.7	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.7	≥ 0.5
ROR8 I allocate all other tasks and resources efficiently and effectively.	0.783				
ROR9 I organize all other resources efficiently and effectively.	0.774				
ROR10 I establish priorities and take account of all relevant contingencies.	0.732				
ROR11 I am truthful and do not compromise on matters of moral principle or the law.	0.676				
Knowledge Acquisition (KNA)		0.779	0.782	0.872	0.694
KNA1 The employees attend fairs and exhibitions regularly.	0.849				
KNA2 There is a consolidated and resourceful R&D policy.	0.853				
KNA3 New ideas and approaches on work performance are experimented continuously.	0.796				
Knowledge Distribution (KND)		0.711	0.713	0.838	0.632
KND1 The company has formal mechanisms to guarantee the sharing of the best practices among the different fields of the activity.	0.815				
KND2 There are individuals within the organization who take part in several teams or divisions and who also act as links between them.	0.787				
KND3 There are individuals responsible for collecting, assembling and distributing internally employees' suggestions.	0.783				
Knowledge Interpretation (KNI)		0.738	0.740	0.851	0.657
KNI1 All the members of the organization share the same aim to which they feel committed.	0.818				
KNI2 Employees share knowledge and experiences by talking to each other.	0.822				
KNI3 Teamwork is a very common practice in company.	0.791				
Organizational Memory (ORM)		0.821	0.822	0.882	0.651
ORM1 The company has directories or e-mails filed according to the field they belong to, so as to find an expert on a concrete issue at any time.	0.773				
ORM2 The company has up-to-date databases of its clients.	0.836				
ORM3 There is access to organization's databases and documents through some kind of network.	0.797				
ORM4 Databases are always kept up-to-date.	0.821				
Organizational Performance (OGP)		0.848	0.850	0.884	0.522
OGP1 The profitability of the firm is satisfactory.	0.755				
OGP2 The sales of the firm is satisfactory.	0.689				
OGP3 The customers are satisfied with the firm.	0.713				
OGP5 Relative to the similar firms, market share of the firm is good.	0.715				
OGP7 We get the worth of our money, labour and time we spent for the firm.	0.744				
OGP8 Our firm can find credits easily when needed.	0.725				
OGP9 Our company is successful in general.	0.715				

Discriminant validity or the square root of AVE was then assessed to ensure that items in a same group must be closer related to each other than to items in other groups. In other words, this indicator demonstrates the uniqueness of a construct to others. The HTMT index was assessed in addition to Fornell & Larcker Criterion due to a dispute in cognitive competence and results-oriented competence construct. As can be seen in Table 3, the HTMT index of the construct was 0.933, which indicated a well-fitting model according to Garson (2016).

Table 3: **Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)**

	COG	INT	KNA	KND	KNI	ORM	OGP	ROR
COG								
INT	0.837							
KNA	0.738	0.705						
KND	0.790	0.718	0.968					
KNI	0.738	0.655	0.757	0.871				
ORM	0.759	0.627	0.725	0.765	0.821			
OGP	0.683	0.657	0.725	0.714	0.656	0.574		
ROR	0.933	0.868	0.718	0.776	0.730	0.732	0.723	

Table 4 shows the specific results of discriminant validity. The means of all determinants of organizational performance are above 4. The highest variable was ROR (mean = 4.328), followed by ORM (mean = 4.291), INT (mean = 4.271), and COG (mean = 4.260). Components of organizational learning KNA, KND and KNI also have high mean values of 4.196, 4.248, and 4.282, respectively. Finally, the mean of OGP was 4.173, which also indicated a high level of agreement.

Table 4: **Discriminant validity coefficients (Fornell & Larcker Criterion)**

	Mean	SD	COG	INT	KNA	KND	KNI	ORM	OGP	ROR
COG	4.260	0.751	0.733							
INT	4.271	0.780	0.734	0.801						
KNA	4.196	0.771	0.617	0.579	0.833					
KND	4.248	0.790	0.635	0.567	0.721	0.795				
KNI	4.242	0.718	0.600	0.523	0.576	0.641	0.810			
ORM	4.291	0.737	0.651	0.529	0.578	0.586	0.639	0.807		
OGP	4.173	0.853	0.602	0.565	0.596	0.569	0.526	0.488	0.723	
ROR	4.328	0.731	0.838	0.765	0.603	0.626	0.597	0.630	0.640	0.730

Note: Square root of AVE in bold on diagonal

3.2. Common method bias assessment

We applied procedural and statistical approaches to reduce common method bias in this study (Kang et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2012; Kock, 2015). Regarding procedural approach, we applied various methods to ensure response accuracy, namely changing the order of variables when designing the survey, conducting a pilot test of the survey to remove ambiguous and hard-to-understand items, and informing all respondents of the purpose of this study and instructions on how to answer the questions when carrying out the survey. Regarding statistical approach, we assessed common method bias using the values of variance inflation factor. This study is free of common method bias problem since the values of variance inflation factor are from 1.278 to 2.207 (lower than 3.3).

3.3. Structural model assessment

Coefficient of determination (R^2 value) measures how much a dependent variable can be explained by its independent variables. Statistics showed that three independent variables of leadership competencies (interpersonal competence, result-oriented competence, and cognitive competence) explain 0.423, 0.440, 0.393, 0.448 and 0.495 of knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation organizational memory and organizational performance, respectively. According to Hair et al. (2019), these results indicated a moderate predictive accuracy of the model. Regarding predictive relevance (Q^2 value), the index scores greater than zero for a certain endogenous latent variable, which indicated that the PLS path model has predictive relevance for this construct. As for the proposed model, the indexes for knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation, organizational memory, and organizational performance were 0.287, 0.270, 0.253, 0.286, 0.250, respectively. This implied that the construction of values was very good and that the model exogenous variables were predicted to be relevance to the endogenous variables.

Table 5: Path Coefficients - Direct effect on KNA, ORM, KND, KNI, and OGP and Indirect effect on OGP

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T-value	P-value	Decision
H1a	COG → KNA	0.307	5.056***	0.000	Supported
H1b	INT → KNA	0.213	2.946**	0.003	Supported
H1c	ROR → KNA	0.183	2.341**	0.019	Supported
H2a	COG → KND	0.326	4.797***	0.000	Supported
H2b	INT → KND	0.140	2.402**	0.016	Supported
H2c	ROR → KND	0.246	3.472***	0.001	Supported
H3a	COG → KNI	0.308	4.596***	0.000	Supported
H3b	INT → KNI	0.090	1.326	0.185	Rejected
H3c	ROR → KNI	0.270	3.616***	0.000	Supported
H4a	COG → ORM	0.406	5.569***	0.000	Supported
H4b	INT → ORM	0.020	0.314	0.753	Rejected
H4c	ROR → ORM	0.274	3.485***	0.001	Supported
H5a	COG → OGP	0.054	0.746	0.456	Rejected
H5b	INT → OGP	0.072	1.206	0.228	Rejected
H5c	ROR → OGP	0.298	3.954***	0.000	Supported
H6a	KNA → OGP	0.232	4.235***	0.000	Supported
H6b	KND → OGP	0.087	1.499	0.134	Rejected
H6c	KNI → OGP	0.103	1.980**	0.048	Supported
H6d	ORM → OGP	-0.025	0.395	0.693	Rejected
H7a	COG → KNA → OGP	0.071	3.127**	0.002	Supported
H7b	INT → KNA → OGP	0.049	2.697**	0.007	Supported
H7c	ROR → KNA → OGP	0.043	1.950**	0.051	Supported
H8a	COG → KND → OGP	0.028	1.399	0.162	Rejected
H8b	INT → KND → OGP	0.012	1.232	0.218	Rejected
H8c	ROR → KND → OGP	0.021	1.373	0.170	Rejected
H9a	COG → KNI → OGP	0.032	1.749	0.080	Rejected
H9b	INT → KNI → OGP	0.009	1.069	0.285	Rejected
H9c	ROR → KNI → OGP	0.028	1.769	0.077	Rejected
H10a	COG → ORM → OGP	-0.010	0.386	0.700	Rejected
H10b	INT → ORM → OGP	-0.001	0.110	0.912	Rejected
H10c	ROR → ORM → OGP	-0.007	0.381	0.704	Rejected

** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed)

*Notes: COG = Cognitive Competence; INT = Interpersonal Competence; ROR = Results-Oriented Competence; KNA = Knowledge Acquisition; KND = Knowledge Distribution; KNI = Knowledge Interpretation; ORM = Organizational Memory; OGP = Organizational Performance.

Table 5 presents the results of hypothesis testing. The coefficient significance was tested through nonparametric bootstrap procedure, in which T-value were calculated via bootstrapping. The hypothesis showed supported results when its value is higher than 1.96 or P value < 0.05 .

Hypothesis 1 was tested. Results showed that knowledge acquisition was positively impacted by all three leadership competencies with the largest influence rooting from COG ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.001$), INT ($\beta = 0.213$, $p < 0.05$), and ROR ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c were fully supported. The same pattern applied for knowledge distribution with all three competencies demonstrated positive influences. Specifically, COG ($\beta = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$) exerted the greatest impact on KND, followed by ROR ($\beta = 0.246$, $p < 0.001$), and INT ($\beta = 0.140$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypotheses H2a, H2b and H2c were fully supported. Hypothesis 3 was partially confirmed by H3a and H3c, in which COG ($\beta = 0.308$, $p < 0.001$) and ROR ($\beta = 0.207$, $p < 0.001$) positively affected KNI, while INT ($\beta = 0.090$, $p = 0.185$) showed no impact on KNI. Therefore, H3a, H3c were supported and H3b was rejected. Hypothesis 4 was tested and the results showed that INT ($\beta = 0.090$, $p = 0.753$) was the only factor that had no impact on the ORM, while COG ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.001$) and ROR ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.001$) showed significant effects on ORM. Therefore hypothesis 4 were partially supported by H4a and H4c.

Hypothesis 5 was tested to see the direct impact of three leadership competencies on organizational performance. The findings showed that only ROR ($\beta = 0.298, p < 0.001$) confirmed this direct effect, while COG ($\beta = 0.054, p = 0.456$) and INT ($\beta = 0.072, p = 0.228$) showed negative results, which led to the acceptance of H5c and rejection of H5a and H5b.

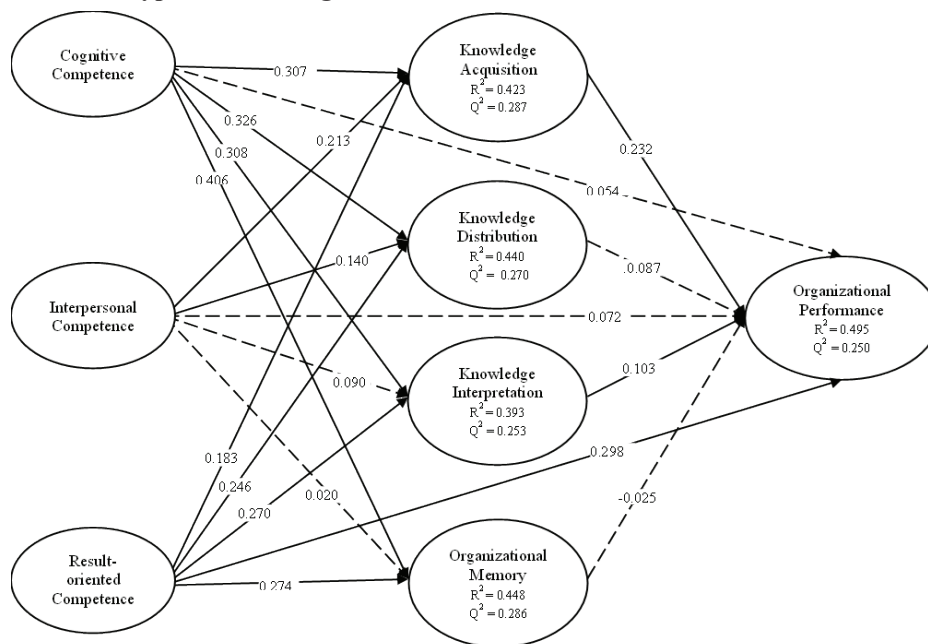
Hypothesis 6 refers to the direct impacts of organizational learning components on organizational performance. Result showed that KNA ($\beta = 0.232, p < 0.001$) and KNI ($\beta = 0.103, p < 0.05$) had positive impacts on OGP. In contrast, KND ($\beta = 0.087, p = 0.134$) and ORM ($\beta = -0.025, p = 0.693$) had no influences on OGP. Therefore, H6a and H6c are supported and H6b and H6d are rejected.

Finally, the mediating roles of four organizational learning components on the relationship between three leadership competencies and organizational high performance were investigated. As can be seen in Table 5, only knowledge acquisition had mediating effects on organizational performance through COG ($\beta = 0.071, p < 0.05$), INT ($\beta = 0.049, p < 0.05$) and ROR ($\beta = 0.043, p = 0.051$). Therefore, H7a, H7b and H7c were supported. Furthermore, full mediating impacts were demonstrated in the case of COG and INT. While the direct impacts of COG and INT on OGP were rejected, with the intervention of KNA, the relationship became significant. Other three organizational learning factors KND, KNI and ORM were tested and showed no effects on OGP as mediating factors. Thus, H8a, H8b, H8c, H9a, H9b, H9c, H10a, H10b and H10c were rejected.

The total effect on OGP would be calculated by the sum of direct and indirect effect of all constructs. Among three leadership competencies, ROR had the most significant impact on OGP with $\beta = 0.383 (p < 0.001)$, followed by COG with $\beta = 0.175 (p < 0.05)$, and INT with $\beta = 0.143 (p < 0.05)$. As for four organizational learning components, KNA had greater total effects on OGP with $\beta = 0.232 (p < 0.001)$ than KNI ($\beta = 0.103, p < 0.05$), while KND ($\beta = 0.087, p = 0.134$) and ORM ($\beta = -0.025, p = 0.693$) had negative influences on OGP.

Figure 1 depicts path coefficients of hypotheses testing.

Figure 1: Path coefficients of hypotheses testing



4. DISCUSSIONS

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between leadership competencies, organizational learning, and organizational performance, as well as the mediating roles of organizational learning components in the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational performance. The findings revealed interesting insights regarding these relationships.

First, as for the role of leadership competencies in facilitating organizational learning, results showed that all three leadership competencies positively influenced knowledge acquisition and knowledge distribution with the strongest impact generated by cognitive competence. Knowledge interpretation and organizational memory were both generated by cognitive and results-oriented competencies with the more significant impact stemming from cognitive competence. The findings emphasize the significant impact of cognitive competence in all aspects of organizational learning, which implies that leaders engaging high level of related knowledge in problem solving could inspire and nurture learning culture in their organizations. Such findings were previously supported by Barr et al. (1992) who implied that any new problems required changes in managers mental model for better organizational adaptation.

Second, only knowledge acquisition ($\beta = 0.232$, $p < 0.05$) and knowledge interpretation ($\beta = 0.103$, $p < 0.05$) exerted positive influences on organizational performance. This finding is similar to the study of Shin & Pérez-Nordtvedt (2020), which supported the role of knowledge acquisition in organizational performance in 152 South Korean firms during turbulent business environment. Knowledge interpretation was found to have a positive relationship with organizational performance. This is correlated with Gonzalez-Padron et al. (2010) findings that the process of generating meanings for knowledge within an organization positively influenced customer performance, firm's innovation, learning performance and internal process performance.

Third, among three leadership competencies, only results-oriented competence ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.05$) had positive influences on organizational performance. This outcome is in line with the findings of Amedu & Dulewicz (2018), which recognized results-oriented competence as the most critical competence of leaders in generating organizational performance compared with interpersonal and cognitive competencies. The result also correlates with Šparl et al. (2013) study which indicated that analytical and solution-oriented competencies were the most important competencies perceived by Slovenian and Austria leaders. However, with the rejection of interpersonal and cognitive competencies, the study goes against the findings that support the importance of these competencies in previous studies (Talu & Nazarov, 2020; Wisittigars and Siengthai, 2019).

In terms of indirect effect, among four organizational learning components, only knowledge acquisition mediated the influences leadership competencies have on organizational performance, with the strongest impacts generated by cognitive competence. The mediating roles of other organizational learning components were not supported in the context of Vietnamese tourism industry. The indirect effect results also encourage the implementation of knowledge acquisition in the path from cognitive and interpersonal competence to organizational performance since the direct impacts of the path were previously rejected in direct hypothesis testing.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1. Implications for theory

This study has several contributions to theory. First, the resource-based view, knowledge-based view and Ability-Motivation-Opportunity theories are applied in this study to explain the theoretical connections among leadership competencies, organizational learning, and organizational performance. The significant results of the impact of leadership competencies and organizational learning on organizational performance support the meaning of these theories.

Second, this study extends and enriches the literature of leadership, organizational learning, and organizational performance by integrating these domains and developing a unique and comprehensive conceptual model of their relationships. This study is also one of its kind since it is the first attempt to investigate the mediating roles of organizational learning components in the relationship between leadership competencies and organizational performance.

Third, this research adds new insights on the applicability of these Western concepts in the context of tourism industry in a developing country, which is known to suffer severely from COVID-19 pandemic. More importantly, the research contributes to the study of organizational performance of tourism firms in Vietnam, where the combined role of leadership competencies and organizational learning on overall performance has yet to be adequately addressed. Finally, by carrying out research during the pandemic situation, the study can be used as a reference for crisis leadership and crisis management in the future.

5.2. Implications for practice

In practice, the study provides some suggestion for tourism management in exhibiting appropriate leadership competencies to nurture organizational learning and improve firm performance.

First, tourism leaders and managers are encouraged to acquire and develop their results-oriented competence, including orienting towards change, delegating, organizing, planning, etc. to drive continuous organizational performance. Furthermore, leaders need to work on their results-oriented, cognitive, and interpersonal competencies to assist the process of creating and sharing new knowledge within their organizations. As for knowledge interpretation and organizational memory, leaders should set challenging goals, efficiently allocate resources, initiate new strategy, envision a long-term picture of the organization, recognize possible solutions, and encourage innovations to foster the sense making and utilization of knowledge. Tourism leaders and managers should pay attention to the process of knowledge acquisition in their organizations, which can be facilitated through catering fairs, workshops for employees, continuous implementation of new ideas and methods. Knowledge interpretation activities, such teamwork and information sharing sessions, are also worth considering in order to improve overall performance.

Second, in the current situation of COVID-19, tourism organizations can apply appropriate leadership competencies and organizational learning practices to overcome and recover from the crisis. Leaders need to articulate shared values, actively seek new opportunities, develop appropriate strategies for adaptation, and disseminate the information across the organization.

Leaders should also focus on the results and exhibit high cognitive intelligence to implement suitable knowledge-interpreting methods and expand the volume of knowledge property for future use as the end of the pandemic has yet to be defined and later crisis management may refer to such organizational memory for creating coping plans. Even though this study rejects the direct implementation of cognitive and interpersonal competencies on organizational performance, leaders should approach the final outcome indirectly through the intervention of knowledge acquisition. In other words, managers possessing high level of cognitive and human relation competencies can encourage the process of generating knowledge internally and externally, which could later contribute to the overall organizational performance.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

The study has some limitations. First, as the research restricts within Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, so it cannot satisfy the generalization of the results. Further studies should be carried out in other regions and countries. Second, leadership competencies were restricted to results-oriented, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies, which leaves a pool for later research in addressing more leadership competencies and investigating their influences on organizational outcomes. Third, further research should collect information on firm age and firm size and view them as control variables to further examine how they influence the connections among leadership, organizational learning, and organizational performance. Finally, in future research a sample difference test could be conducted to compare the means of the sample groups.

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