

“Factors affecting tour operator effectiveness in South Thailand”

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FACTORS AFFECTING TOUR OPERATOR EFFECTIVENESS IN SOUTH THAILAND

Abstract

This paper aims to examine the effect of competitive advantage, business innovation, corporate social responsibility, social media, business adaptation, and human capital management on the effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand. This quantitative study used a questionnaire as a research tool. Five hundred owners/executives of tour operators in South Thailand were asked to fill in the questionnaire during the survey; however, only 470 questionnaires were accepted for further data analysis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the data and hypotheses.

According to the empirical results, competitive advantage, social media, business adaptation, and human capital management significantly, positively, and directly affect effectiveness. Moreover, business innovation and corporate social responsibility have a significant, positive, but indirect effect on effectiveness through competitive advantage. Whereas business innovation and corporate social responsibility have an insignificant, negative, and direct effect on effectiveness. Human capital management also has a direct effect on effectiveness through business innovation. This shows that competitive advantage, social media, business adaptation, and human capital management are, respectively, the factors that could directly increase the tour operator's effectiveness. In contrast, innovation and corporate social responsibility do not directly promote effectiveness. However, these results cannot be generalized, as they may be different if conducting the research in other regions of Thailand.

Keywords

effectiveness, competitive advantage, social media, human capital management, business adaptation, tour operator, Thailand

JEL Classification

M21, M14, M10

INTRODUCTION

Effectiveness is a key to business success. A business that has a clear objective and keeps doing business with the proper plan can gain business effectiveness (Robbins, 1990), which may come in terms of satisfaction in profit or the impression from stakeholders. After all, if the business can do such, it can operate sustainably (Robbins, 1990; Mwai et al., 2018).

K. Chankingthong and W. Chankingthong (2021) stressed the high value of tour operators in the South Thailand. They attract a lot of money from tourists worldwide because this location of Thailand offers many attractive places, such as stunning beaches and islands. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of tour operators in the south of Thailand decreased as many of them could not survive during the difficult times of lockdowns. However, the rest of them need to be acknowledged because they managed to survive and stay sustainable (Department of Tourism, 2021). Although tour operators may highly demand a way of surviving effectively, limited studies have examined the factors affecting their effectiveness. Thus, this study seeks to fill in this research gap.

Since effectiveness is critical to achieving and surviving for tour operators in the south of Thailand, previous studies proposed some recommendations. For example, Hareebin (2020) suggests focusing more on innovation and human capital management. K. Chankingthong and W. Chankingthong (2021) recommend paying attention to the competitive advantage, CSR, social media, and business adaptation as these factors were not much perceived by many tour operators in the south.

Although previous studies have identified these variables, which helpfully improve effectiveness in different contexts, the effectiveness of tour operators, especially in the south of Thailand, still needs to be studied more.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Effectiveness refers to actions in producing both quantitative and qualitative results. The result may be the success of an individual, group, or business, where the effectiveness of the business arises from the fact that the business operates efficiently in various areas (Gibson et al., 1982). One of the key components of effectiveness is the goal's achievement. It is the result that the business has evaluated its performance that must be in accordance with the standards it has effectively set. It can be assessed on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis and whether the performance meets the minimum criteria set by the business.

Efficiency is another critical component of business effectiveness because it is the ability to operate in order for the business to reach the set results (Mwai et al., 2018). In addition, effectiveness in business is self-reliant: the effective business normally can operate without the need for assistance from government or private agencies either under normal circumstances or during various crises that may arise from uncontrollable internal and external factors (Manoharan & Singal, 2019; Sadq et al., 2019). Therefore, a business's effectiveness is how it performs its actions efficiently to achieve the goals set and finally become self-reliant.

Porter (1985) defined competitive advantage as how a business compares its position with competitors in the market. Singjai et al. (2018) suggest that competitive advantage can be achieved through a critical component of cost-reductive ability, as reducing the cost of running a business will result in achieving business profits. Tintara and Respati (2020) also stated that product, service, and image differences could create a unique, distinctive signature to the

business. Suppose the business can respond to the customers' needs in any situation. In that case, it will be able to maintain the existing customers by keeping them buying a product/service continuously and also have a chance to gain a new group of customers (Potjanajaruwit, 2018). Thus, competitive advantage is a business that can be superior to its competitors in the same industry by trying to create a competitive advantage in providing its product/service at a lower cost than competitors, having a product/service differentiation, and having the ability to meet the needs of customers. Yang et al. (2018) and Anwar (2018) found that competitive advantage directly affects effectiveness.

Innovation is something new, such as new production, processes, services, market, or organizational models (Schumpeter, 1934). One of the elements of innovation in business is service innovation (Hanif & Asgher, 2018), as it can help an organization reduce the complexity of providing services to reach maximum customer satisfaction (Tajeddini et al., 2020). Moreover, corporate innovation is characterized by a new approach to business management, such as organizing the workplace, including the relationship between the business and external entities (Alves et al., 2018). In addition, research and development is a crucial innovation tool for improving the products/services in the business through data collection, testing, and trials. If the result of research and development is acceptable, the business will use it to upgrade the old product/service or even create a new product/service eventually (Conesa et al., 2017). Thus, business innovation is creativity, reinvention, or improvement of the service to be more efficient. Rosman et al. (2018) found that business innovation directly affects effectiveness. Udriyah et al. (2019) found that business innovation indirectly affects effectiveness through competitive advantage.

Corporate social responsibility is an activity in business operation that needs to be legal and ethical for stakeholders such as customers, the community/society, and the environment (Carroll, 1983). As customers are the ones who support the business by purchasing products/services, and if customers start noticing that the business's actions in the way of socially responsible, they will feel like the business is taking action on their behalf and will feel more connected and giving support to the business. In addition, if the business is doing so, they will be trustable by the community/society in perceiving that the businesses are not only gaining the benefit but also creating advantages in terms of sharing and being legal to the community/society as well (Boadi et al., 2018). Moreover, businesses that comply with environmental regulations and laws or show voluntary environmental actions will gain a better business image and eventually bring profits from business operations (Fukuda & Ouchida, 2020; Sebrina et al., 2023). Thus, the business needs to be engaged in corporate social responsibility, be accountable in law and regulation, and do business to satisfy all stakeholders. It was also found that corporate social responsibility directly affects effectiveness (Villegas et al., 2018; Anser et al., 2018), and indirectly affects effectiveness through competitive advantage (Yang et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2019).

Social media has emerged from the rapid changes in information and communication technology. It currently has a billion users around the world. Accessibility is an essential component of the use of social media for businesses. A business can access customers, new destinations, travel trends, or other relevant information shared on social media (Lin & Geertman, 2019; Iqbal et al., 2022; Nuzula & Wahyudi, 2022). Furthermore, social media is also one of the ways for businesses to maintain relationships with customers, like sending a birthday promotion or special event news. By doing this, customers will feel they are still important to the business. Therefore, social media is a tool to access various information and also a channel to contact customers conveniently and quickly to help increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the business. Rashid et al. (2020) found that social media directly affects effectiveness.

Business adaptation refers to the ability of businesses to recognize and respond to a changing business environment, such as markets, technology, or even political issues (Munawar, 2019). Therefore, the business has to solve problems quickly and fairly and can build a good relationship with all parties. In addition, situational assessment is the process of analyzing information about customers, suppliers, or competitors. Businesses need to constantly observe and track every movement of this information to use it in evaluating, planning, and deciding on business operations. Moreover, businesses must consider the impact of the upcoming changes. Generally, businesses need to measure the change caused by some kind of crisis and manage the occurrence of that change quickly and correctly (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2020). Thus, business adaptation refers to the ability of a business to adapt its business to be ready for the changes that occur. After all, businesses can operate efficiently and effectively. Chowdhury et al. (2019) and Raza et al. (2020) noted that business adaptation directly affects effectiveness, and Savitri et al. (2021) found an indirect effect.

Human capital management is the ability of a business to take out the current knowledge of individuals to use in business operations as well as systematic development and strengthening of the business (Kucharčíková & Mičiak, 2018). For example, Eva (2018) states that businesses can recruit employees through various channels, such as posting advertisements on the website or other social media. After that, candidates are selected through the business process by emphasizing suitability in terms of skills and experience according to the job requirements. Moreover, development and training are essential for businesses to develop personnel with good knowledge and a positive attitude toward the organization. In addition, employee retention is another critical part of driving a business; thus, a business may satisfy their employee by pleasing them with rewards and other benefits (Al Kurdi et al., 2020). Therefore, human capital management means the ability of businesses to bring out human capability and train them to be more professional and able to run the business successfully. Ruíz et al. (2017) found that human capital management directly affects effectiveness, and Martín-Rojas et al. (2019) and Amagada et al. (2020) showed that it indirectly affects effectiveness through business innovation.

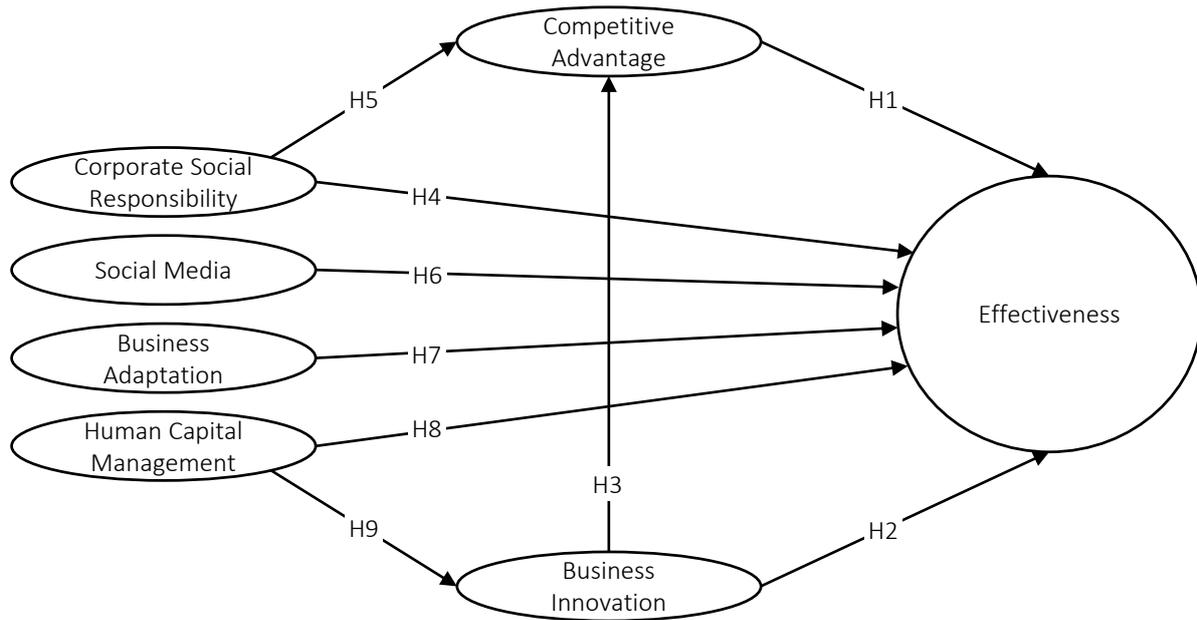


Figure 1. Conceptual model

Therefore, this study aims to determine the factors influencing the effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand, considering such variables as a competitive advantage, social media, business innovation, business adaptation, corporate social responsibility, and human capital management. Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of this study. Following the literature review, the study elaborates on the following hypotheses:

H1: Competitive advantage directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H2: Business innovation directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H3: Business innovation indirectly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand through competitive advantage.

H4: Corporate social responsibility directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H5: Corporate social responsibility indirectly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand through competitive advantage.

H6: Social media directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H7: Business adaptation directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H8: Human capital management directly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand.

H9: Human capital management indirectly affects effectiveness of tour operators in South Thailand through business innovation.

2. METHOD

This quantitative study was conducted among 2,821 tour operators in the southern region of Thailand (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, 2021). Table 1 shows the measurement constructs adopted from previous research. The items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (Babakus & Mangold, 1992).

The sample size was calculated by considering the number of observable variables. There were 21 observable variables. Using a 20:1 ratio (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010), the sample size of 420 tour operators was obtained. The tour operators in South Thailand were selected using simple random sampling. Therefore, the distributed question-

Table 1. Research measurement constructs

Variable	Items	References
Effectiveness		
Goal	Goal 1: The business has a clear numerical profit target.	Gibson et al. (1982) Hoy and Miskel (1991) Mwai et al. (2018)
	Goal 2: The operating results are monitored to ensure the set goals are achieved.	
	Goal 3: The performance is evaluated to ensure the targets are achieved.	
	Goal 4: The business achieves the profit goals that have been set.	
Efficiency	Efficiency1: Business executives have divided the work among employees appropriately.	
	Efficiency 2: Most business employees can prioritize tasks correctly and appropriately.	
	Efficiency 3: All employees have appropriate time allocations for their work.	
	Efficiency 4: All employees can work to meet the needs of the business.	
Reliant	Reliant 1: The business has a guideline for self-reliance when experiencing problems or crises.	
	Reliant 2: The business has its own funds to operate without borrowing from funding sources.	
	Reliant 3: The business can operate independently without relying on government agencies.	
Competitive advantage		
Reduction	Reduction 1: The business reuses materials and equipment.	Rua et al. (2018) Anwar (2018) Singjai et al. (2018) Liu et al. (2020)
	Reduction 2: The business is operated by a digital system.	
	Reduction 3: Reducing the cost by using social media for advertising.	
	Reduction 4: Businesses have lower service costs than operations in the past year.	
Difference	Difference 1: The business has a variety of unique travel programs.	
	Difference 2: The business gives importance to after-sales service to all tourists.	
	Difference 3: The business has decorated tools and equipment that are unique in providing tourist services.	
	Difference 4: The brand of the business is well-known and popular.	
Response	Response 1: Businesses can customize travel programs to meet the needs of tourists.	
	Response 2: Businesses can set travel expenses according to the budget of tourists.	
	Response 3: Businesses can provide information about tourist attractions.	
Business innovation		
Service	Service 1: The business has a new way to serve tourists.	Conesa et al. (2017) Anning-Dorson (2018)
	Service 2: The business has invested in bringing innovative tools or devices.	
	Service 3: The business has introduced safety innovations to tourists.	
Organization	Organization 1: The business has an organizational restructuring by adding necessary departments/divisions.	
	Organization 2: The business has adjusted its management style.	
	Organization 3: The business uses modern equipment and tools.	
Research	Research 1: The business searches for related information and applies it in business operations.	
	Research 2: The business collects satisfaction or the need of tourists in order to improve the service.	
	Research 3: The business uses the research results to make the organization more efficient.	
Corporate social responsibility		
Customer	Customer 1: The business provides excellent transparency and fairness service.	Conesa et al. (2017) Maqbool and Zameer (2018) Villegas et al. (2018)
	Customer2: Business strictly complies with the promises to tourists.	
	Customer 3: The business takes good care of tourists like their own relatives.	
Community	Community 1: The business purchases goods/services from the community.	
	Community 2: The business generates income and sustainability for the community.	
	Community 3: The business has a good relationship with local authorities to help develop the community's infrastructure to support tourism.	
Environment	Environment 1: The business focuses on the care and protection of tourism resources.	
	Environment 2: The business strictly complies with the rules and regulations of various tourist attractions.	
	Environment 3: The business regularly participates in activities to restore the natural resources of tourist attractions.	

Table 1 (cont.). Research measurement constructs

Variable	Items	References
Social media		
Access	Access1: Businesses use social media to reach information on the needs of both domestic and international tourists.	Parveen et al. (2016) Odoom et al. (2017) Tajudeen et al. (2018)
	Access2: Businesses use social media to access information about competitors' domestic and international marketing strategies.	
	Access 3: The business uses social media to find new attractions, places, or information on rules and regulations.	
Interactive	Interactive 1: The business uses social media to interact quickly and instantly with customers.	
	Interactive 2: The business uses social media to interact with travelers.	
	Interactive 3: The business can always sell travel programs through social media interaction channels.	
Relationship	Relationship 1: The business uses social media to engage and communicate with customers regularly.	
	Relationship 2: The business sends special privileges or promotions to customers.	
	Relationship 3: The business uses social media to communicate with customers to organize events and recreation to build good customer relationships.	
Business adaptation		
Problem	Problem 1: The business can solve problems that arise quickly and immediately, keeping them from escalating.	Ali et al. (2017) Adomako (2018)
	Problem 2: The business solves various problems that arise creatively, accurately, and directly to the point.	
	Problem 3: The business has clear principles or guidelines for solving various problems effectively.	
Situation	Situation 1: The business accurately assesses and analyzes the needs of customers.	
	Situation 2: The business accurately assesses and analyzes current and future trends.	
	Situation 3: The business can analyze competitors' marketing strategies promptly and adjust business marketing strategies appropriately.	
Change	Change 1: The business tracks changes occurring outside the business from various sources.	
	Change 2: The business creates understanding among employees to be ready for changes that occur.	
	Change 3: The business has timely management of changes that occur.	
Human capital management		
Recruitment	Recruitment1: The business has determined the qualifications of those who will come to work.	Cahyaningsih et al. (2017) Jain et al. (2017)
	Recruitment 2: The business uses different websites or social media channels to recruit effective employees.	
	Recruitment 3: The business selects employees by testing their knowledge, understanding, and attitude toward the tour operator.	
Train	Train 1: The business allocates a budget for employee development.	
	Train 2: The business conducts internal training for employees.	
	Train 3: The business sends employees to train with external organizations.	
Retention	Retention 1: The business provides opportunities in work for employees.	
	Retention 2: The business has a path for career advancement for employees.	
	Retention 3: The business pays compensation in terms of money and welfare to employees equal to or higher than the labor market.	

naire may be incomplete, so the number of questionnaires was increased proportionally to 500 tour operators; the data were collected over four months (August-November, 2022). As a result, only 470 questionnaires were deemed valid for further data processing and analysis. Data were then analyzed with LISREL software.

3. RESULTS

This study used the structural equation model (SEM) to analyze the data from 470 responses. First, the loading factors met the standard; all scores exceeded 0.5. Moreover, each construct contained content reliability as all of the Cronbach's

Alpha score was greater than 0.7 (Mosavi et al., 2018), while the result of composite reliability (CR) was above 0.7 (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2018). The average extracted variance (AVE) was all above 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As a result, all the values showed an acceptable indication of convergent value in the measurement model (Table 2).

Second, the result of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was a good and reliable fit $\chi^2/df = 3.906$, NNFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.079 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Moreover, SRMR = 0.018 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), followed by the acceptable value mentioned in Table 3.

Table 2. Measurement model

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Effectiveness					
Goal	Goal1	.734	.895	0.821	0.789
	Goal2	.871			
	Goal3	.818			
	Goal4	.818			
Efficiency	Efficiency1	.775	.893	0.813	0.823
	Efficiency2	.756			
	Efficiency3	.831			
	Efficiency4	.812			
Reliant	Reliant1	.755	.822	0.811	0.814
	Reliant2	.730			
	Reliant3	.798			
Competitive advantage					
Reduction	Reduction1	.717	.897	0.775	0.725
	Reduction2	.780			
	Reduction3	.811			
	Reduction4	.894			
Difference	Difference1	.801	.894	0.785	0.778
	Difference2	.715			
	Difference3	.785			
	Difference4	.813			
Response	Response1	.742	.883	0.764	0.732
	Response2	.771			
	Response3	.773			
Business innovation					
Service	Service1	.712	.821	0.772	0.812
	Service2	.714			
	Service3	.777			
Organization	Organization1	.813	.843	0.721	0.789
	Organization2	.826			
	Organization3	.824			
Research	Research1	.755	.838	0.742	0.754
	Research2	.767			
	Research3	.813			
Corporate social responsibility					
Customer	Customer1	.833	.859	0.812	0.745
	Customer2	.875			
	Customer3	.852			
Community	Community1	.868	.876	0.817	0.798
	Community2	.816			
	Community3	.874			
Environment	Environment1	.831	.853	0.787	0.742
	Environment2	.865			
	Environment3	.832			

Table 2 (cont.). Measurement model

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Social media					
Access	Access1	.831	.875	0.824	0.748
	Access2	.865			
	Access3	.832			
Interactive	Interactive1	.831	.856	0.779	0.776
	Interactive2	.865			
	Interactive3	.832			
Relationship	Relationship1	.831	.865	0.744	0.792
	Relationship2	.865			
	Relationship3	.832			
Business adaptation					
Problem	Problem1	.721	.864	0.826	0.725
	Problem2	.734			
	Problem3	.724			
Situation	Situation1	.809	.862	0.723	0.722
	Situation2	.805			
	Situation3	.789			
Change	Change1	.776	.871	0.721	0.723
	Change2	.723			
	Change3	.712			
Human capital management					
Recruitment	Recruitment1	.765	.858	0.812	0.781
	Recruitment2	.790			
	Recruitment3	.808			
Train	Train1	.865	.836	0.734	0.771
	Train2	.817			
	Train3	.824			
Retention	Retention1	.774	.865	0.786	0.790
	Retention2	.793			
	Retention3	.766			

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis

COF Index	Acceptable Value	CFA Model	Results
X2 (Chi-square)	-	644.53	Good Fit
Df (Degree of freedom)	-	165	-
X2/df	<5	3.906	Good Fit
NNFI	>0.9	0.99	Good Fit
CFI	>0.9	0.99	Good Fit
RMSEA	<0.08	0.079	Good Fit
SRMR	<0.08	0.018	Good Fit

Table 4. SEM results for testing the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path		p-value	Result
H1	Competitive advantage → Effectiveness	0.36	**	Supported
H2	Business innovation → Effectiveness	-0.11	0.102	Rejected
H3	Business innovation → Competitive advantage → Effectiveness	0.23	**	Supported
H4	Corporate social responsibility → Effectiveness	-0.15	0.114	Rejected
H5	Corporate social responsibility → Competitive advantage → Effectiveness	0.12	**	Supported
H6	Social media → Effectiveness	0.29	**	Supported
H7	Business adaptation → Effectiveness	0.28	**	Supported
H8	Human capital management → Effectiveness	0.33	**	Supported
H9	Human capital management → Innovation in business → Effectiveness	0.08	0.213	Rejected

Note: Degree of confidence: ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4 shows that for H1, the results of competitive advantage got a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.36 for effectiveness. Hence, the affectation of competitive advantage on effectiveness was positive. H1 is supported, meaning that the competitive advantage directly affects effectiveness. H2 testing shows that the results of innovation in business got a p-value of 0.102 and a standardized coefficient (β) of -0.11 for effectiveness; the affectation of innovation in business on effectiveness was negative. So, H2 is rejected, meaning that business innovation does not directly affect effectiveness. H3 testing shows that the result of business innovation got a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.23 for the effectiveness through competitive advantage. So, the affectation of innovation in business on effectiveness through competitive advantage was positive. H3 is supported, meaning that business innovation indirectly affects effectiveness through competitive advantage.

H4 testing shows that the results of corporate social responsibility got a p-value of 0.114 and a standardized coefficient (β) of -0.15 for effectiveness, and the affectation of corporate social responsibility on effectiveness was negative. So, H4 is rejected, which means that corporate social responsibility did not directly affect the effectiveness. H5 testing shows that the result of corporate social responsibility got a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.12 for the effectiveness through competitive advantage. So, the affectation of CSR on effectiveness through competitive advantage was positive. Then, H5 is supported, meaning that CSR indirectly affects effectiveness through competitive advantage.

H6 testing shows that the result of social media obtained a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.29 for effectiveness. Then, the affectation of social media on effectiveness was positive. So, H6 is supported, meaning that social media directly affect effectiveness. H7 testing shows that the result of business adaptation obtained a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.28 for the effectiveness. Then, the affectation of business adaptation on effectiveness was positive. So, H7 is supported, meaning that business adaptation directly affects effectiveness.

H8 testing shows that the result of human capital management got a p-value of < 0.01 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.33 for effectiveness. So, the affectation of human capital management on effectiveness was positive. Then, H8 is supported, meaning that human capital management directly affects effectiveness. H9 testing shows that the results of human capital management got a p-value of 0.213 and a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.08 for effectiveness. Then, the affectation of human capital management on effectiveness was negative. So, H9 is rejected.

4. DISCUSSION

First, the results of this study prove that competitive advantage has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of tour operators by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.36 and p-value of < 0.01 . The higher the business cost reduction, differentiation of tour programs, and response to the need of tourists, the higher the effectiveness of the tour operator. Therefore, the competitive advantage affected the effectiveness of tour operators. This result is consistent with Yang et al. (2018), who found that competitive advantage directly affects effectiveness. In addition, Do et al. (2022), who studied tour operators in Vietnam, found that to increase the effectiveness of tour operators, it is crucial to reduce the cost of carrying out activities or projects, try to create differentiation, and respond to customers' needs.

Second, the finding shows that business innovation has a negative and insignificant effect on the effectiveness of tour operators by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of -0.11 and a p-value of 0.102. However, the result has shown that business innovation has a positive and significant effect on effectiveness through competitive advantage of the tour operator by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.23 and p-value of < 0.01 . This means the activities in service innovation, organization, and research and development do not directly affect effectiveness but indirectly affect effectiveness through competitive advantage. This result is consistent with Puspita et al. (2020), who found that business innovation does not affect business effectiveness but indirectly affects effectiveness through compet-

itive advantage. This is because the business operates as a family-run, also having less skill and knowledge of creating business innovation; more than that, the business did not trust that effectiveness can be gained by applying innovation. In addition, Sandybayev and Houjeir (2018), who studied the innovation of tour operators in the United Arab Emirates, discovered that innovation is the source of creating a competitive advantage which reasoning for business to be effective furtherly.

Third, the finding shows that corporate social responsibility has a negative and insignificant effect on the effectiveness of tour operators by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of -0.15 and a p-value of 0.114 . However, the result shows that corporate social responsibility has a positive and significant effect on effectiveness through competitive advantage by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.12 and p-value of < 0.01 . This means the activities responsible to customers, the community, and the environment do not directly affect effectiveness but indirectly affect effectiveness through competitive advantage. This result is consistent with Garg and Gupta (2020), who examined corporate social responsibility in India and found that it did not affect effectiveness because the sample was small businesses who did not want to invest in activities for social responsibility. In addition, Kubareva et al. (2018), who studied the corporate social responsibility of tour operators in Ukraine, indicated that businesses responding to customers and communities will gain competitive advantages, which will continuously help increase business effectiveness.

Fourth, the results of this study prove that social media has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of tour operators by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.29 and p-value of < 0.01 . The higher the social media elements, such as offering accessibility to the cus-

tomers, creating interactivity, and making a relationship with all parties, the higher effectiveness of tour operators. This result is consistent with Tajvidi and Karami (2021), who found that social media directly affects effectiveness. In addition, Matikiti et al. (2018) conducted a study of tour operators in South Africa; they found that tour operators that use social media to run businesses were able to work effectively.

Fifth, the results prove that business adaptation has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of tour operators by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.28 and a p-value of < 0.01 . The higher the business adaptation, like solving problems, analyzing situations, and perceiving business change, the higher the effectiveness of tour operators. This result is consistent with Chowdhury et al. (2019), who found that business adaptation directly affects effectiveness. In addition, Parsons et al. (2018) also indicate that business adaptation is essential to the effectiveness of tour operators in Samoa, Pacific Islands.

Sixth, the analysis proves that human capital management has a positive and significant effect on effectiveness by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.33 and p-value of < 0.01 . However, human capital management insignificantly affects effectiveness through innovation in business by producing a standardized coefficient (β) value of 0.08 and a p-value of 0.213 . This means that efficiency in recruitment, training, and retention directly affects effectiveness. This result is consistent with Ruíz et al. (2017), but human capital management indirectly affects effectiveness through business innovation. In addition, Hareebin (2020), who conducted a study on human capital management in tour operators on the Andaman coast, Thailand, found that human capital management was critical to the effectiveness of tour operators.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of South Thailand's tour operators. The results indicated that competitive advantage, social media, business adaptation, and human capital management significantly and directly affect effectiveness. In contrast, business innovation and corporate social responsibility did not show any significant direct effect. After all, the most significant factors that affect the effectiveness are competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.36$), human capital management

($\beta = 0.33$), social media ($\beta = 0.29$), and business adaptation ($\beta = 0.28$), respectively. Therefore, if the tour operator in South Thailand wants to be effective, competitive advantage is the first factor to be considered and applied.

Although the study's primary purpose was met, some limitations remain. For example, this analysis should target tour operators in other regions of Thailand to consider how similar or different the results are. In addition, future studies should do qualitative research to collect more information in-depth from the owner or executive of the tour operator. Lastly, it is advised to study tour operators in a specific group, such as those with problems from a significant decrease in tourists, because the study results will benefit the tour operators.

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