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## FIRM COMPETITIVENESS: FINDINGS FROM FIVE STARS HOTELS IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is the first to examine and analyze the five stars hotels competitiveness in Jakarta, Indonesia by involving 44 five-star hotels with a combined total of 176 respondents from hotel guests and hotel management. In contrast to previous studies, this study examines firm competitiveness of the five-star hotels and its correlation with competitive advantage, natural sites, tourist attraction and customer value. Partial Least Square (PLS) method was used to answer research questions and positively revealed some findings. Firm competitiveness of five stars hotels in Jakarta is significantly affected by competitive advantage and the competitive advantage of a five star hotel in Jakarta is significantly affected by natural site, tourist attraction and customer value. Suggestions for hotel management are including some improvements of building and public space, intensive promotion and social events, cooperation with local government and respected suppliers.*

**Keywords:** *Firm Competitiveness, Competitive Advantage, Natural Site, Tourist Attraction, Customer Value*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Firm competitiveness or the competitiveness of companies is a topic that has been studied extensively, especially in the sphere of strategic management. Some empirical researches related to the competitiveness of the firm have been performed in various industries such as in the field of agribusiness (Dlamini and Kirsten, 2014), multi-industry (Vargas, Enrique, and Casterona, 2014), services (Chen & Chen, 2012) as well as in manufacturing (Mesquita, Lazzarini, & Cronin, 2007). In many numerous studies, firm competitiveness is described as a multidimensional concept and is often interpreted differently by many experts because it is heavily affected by changes in the business context and time. The concept of competitiveness itself includes three levels of competitiveness in countries, industries and companies (Ambastha & Momoya, 2004). Theoretical explanations about the source of the competitiveness of the firm can be found in Porter (1980) who links competitiveness with generic strategies (low cost and differentiated products), Barney and Clark (2007) who relates the competitiveness of the firm with the concept of Resource Based View (RBV), and Treacy and Wiersema (1995), who describes the creation of the firm's competitiveness through the creation of customer value.

Specifically, Smith (2006) explains that the firm could be competitive at the global level through the firm's ability to manage the skill and potential of existing human resources within the firm. Bartlett and Ghosal (1989) also concluded that the competitiveness of companies is formed from the firm's internal competence (the accuracy of business strategy, ability to innovate), the tangible and intangible resources of the firm. Furthermore Ambastha & Momoya (2004) reveal that the firm's competitiveness is heavily affected by a combination of assets and processes. In general, the measurement of competitiveness will be associated with the firm's internal and external sides of the firm itself. Not until recent time, scientists in strategic management reach a consensus on the most appropriate indicators to be used in measuring firm competitiveness, especially in the five-star hotels industry in a country. Signals of low competitiveness of some five-star hotels in Jakarta outlined from best city center hotels rank in Asia year 2015 and 2016 (Trip Advisor, 2015). The announcement does not put any hotels in Jakarta on the list. Based on observation, this information is triggered by first, unattractive natural site such as difficult access to reach some hotels due to heavy traffic and transportation issues. Some hotels also located in far side of the city near some unappealing sights for tourists like slum areas, hectic bus stations and metro, and unorganized street vended shops; second, deficiencies in tourist attraction within some hotels, including unattractive building architecture and lack of traditional and cultural events; third, some hotels failed to deliver high customer value, depicting in numerous complaints on guests testimonies. Complaints are including room rates, room quality, internet connection, facilities, hotel staffs, old building, and food quality (Agoda.com, 2015). Essentially, weaknesses of some hotel's natural site, visitor attraction, and customer value are weakening hotel's competitive advantage and their competitiveness. Negative consequences from weak hotel's competitiveness is relatively low occupancy rate (Jakarta Statistical Office, 2016) and low public awareness of hotel brands.

Massive studies and researches have been conducted to examine firm competitiveness and factors associated to it. But until now very few researches have been conducted to investigate competitiveness of five stars hotels which are categorized as city center hotels in a capital city. Some previous studies in hospitality and tourism industry have examined hotel sectors, but not specifically on five stars hotels. Studies on five stars hotels in Indonesia also very limited and mainly investigated hotels' best practices. For this reason, this research is carried out to determine some factors that can develop high competitiveness of the five-star hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on prior explanation, do natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value are significantly influencing the extent of five stars hotels' competitive advantage? Another problem is does five stars hotels' competitive advantage stimulated their competitiveness and performance?

## 3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to investigate the contribution of natural site, tourist attraction, customer value, and competitive advantage in creating hotels' competitiveness in Jakarta. This study has secondary objectives include investigating the contribution of natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value toward hotel's competitive advantage. Another secondary objective in this study is to discover alternative action plan to increase hotels' competitiveness.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1. Hospitality

Hospitality is defined as a collection of all processes, activities, and outcomes that arise from the interaction between the visitor, the channeling of visitors, the government as host, local communities, local governments, and the academia in retrieving, delivering, hosting, and managing visitors. Those overall aspects are called the tourism stakeholders system (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Tourist Attractions are divided into two main components; natural sites and events and cultural sites and events (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Another concept is the pleasure periphery that describes the location or region in the world to be the centre of the visit for the tour. In the Southeast Asia region, pleasure periphery is focused in Bali and Phuket (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

### 4.2. Firm Competitiveness

Competitiveness comes from the Latin "competer", means involvement in the business competition. Competitiveness at the firm level is defined as a firm's ability to design, create and market a product or service that is superior to what is offered by its competitors. In an effort to create competitive advantage, there are several processes that must be undertaken by the firm, among other: the process of strategic management, human resource management processes, operations management process, and technology management process (Ambastha & Momoya, 2004). In other words, the source of firm competitiveness is a competitive advantage that is formed from a collection of assets and processes within the firm (Ambastha & Momoya, 2004). Based on the identification of the concept of firm competitiveness as well as through observations of the competitiveness of the five-star hotels in Jakarta, the most relevant aspect of the hotel is the lack of competitiveness in terms of assets, process, and performance (Ambastha & Momoya, 2004; Cerrato & Depperu, 2011; Williams & Hare, 2012; Mika, 2012)

### 4.3. Competitive Advantage

References and several studies related to competitive advantage are largely refers to Porter (1985) who explained that there are two basic types of competitive advantage; cost leadership and differentiation. A firm is said to have a competitive advantage if the firm is able to create higher economic value than its competitors (Barney & Clark, 2007; Barney & Hesterly, 2013). The economic value in question is a comparison of the perceived benefits to the cost incurred by consumers on the products or services being

purchased (Barney & Clark, 2007). Competitive advantage is very important for the firm because it is what distinguishes the firm from competitors (Smith & Flanagan, 2006). Smith and Flanagan divided competitive advantages into two kinds, namely: 1) external competitive advantage, such as product or service that is difficult to be imitated by the competitors, but the advantages can be seen by the consumer, then, 2) internal competitive advantage, the kind of advantage that can not be seen by consumers as the distribution system. Competitive advantage can be obtained in two ways: 1) cost advantage and 2) differentiation advantage (Smith and Flanagan, 2006). In depth study of competitive advantage can be traced back in the writings of D'Aveni (1994) and Johnson and Weinstein (2004). They clearly revealed that there are two ideas in the study of competitive advantage; 1) static view of competitive advantage, 2) the new competitive advantage. The debate about the concept of competitive advantage is continuing but in practice the best way to achieve a competitive advantage for both large and small companies is to provide superior value for customers (Goetsch, 2006).

#### *4.4. Natural Site*

Botti, Peypoch, Robinot and Solonadrasana (2009) explained that in the tourism industry and accomodation, the firm's success is determined by two main elements, namely: 1) comparative excellence factor, that is the advantages of the firm derived from the unique natural conditions or advantages derived from the social environment communities where the business takes place. These conditions include human resources, the cultural aspect, or the unique physical environment, 2) competitive advantage factors, namely the advantages of the firm for successfully managing the resources owned by the firm itself, including strategies to achieve advantages over competitors. The importance of natural sites in the hospitality services industry has been alluded to in various studies and research. In his study, Serrato and Valenzuela (2013) found that natural sites / resources are a very important element in building the competitiveness of companies in the hospitality services industry.

#### *4.5. Tourist Attraction*

Tourist Attractions are divided into natural events, cultural sites and cultural events (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Another view of the tourist attractions is presented by Faranak, Fard and Ali (2009), which explain that the tourist attractions have wider coverage. They mentioned that the attractions for tourists can also be a sport facilities, public facilities, amusement facilities, and interesting buildings. In another paper, Balkaran and Maharaj (2013) mentioned that the tourist attraction will not be separated from some key elements, namely the combination of activities to enjoy scenery / environment, shopping, entertainment activities, play, recreation and cultural elements.

#### *4.6. Customer Value*

Customer value can be defined as a ratio between the benefit perceived by consumers (in the form of economic benefits, psychological, or functional), with the sacrifices incurred to obtain these benefits (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). In line with this, Kotler and Keller (2013) explained that the value for consumers is the difference between the evaluations of the consumers' benefits with the costs incurred to obtain these benefits. Johnson and Weinstein (2004) defined value as abstract concept of what they want, feel, or considered appropriate for someone. In business, the usual value can be increased to superior value; with superior value is a key element for the success of the firm (Khalifa, 2004). The study of the superior value is also found in Cravens and Piercy (2013). Study on value and customer value in many studies can not be separated from the opinion of Treacy and Wiersema (1995) that stated value creation is the main asset to become a market leader. The importance of the concept of Value Discipline in the firm's

efforts to achieve competitive advantage can also be found in Pearce and Robinson (2009), and in Wheelen and Hunger (2010). In contrast to the experts above, Aaker and McLoughlin (2010) stated that customer value is composed of three elements: 1) a low-cost culture, 2) cost advantage, and 3) value perception.

## 5. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

In the literature and empirical study, the firm's competitiveness is positively affected by a competitive advantage of the firm. (Porter, 1980; D'Aveni & Gunther, 1994; Bateman, & Snell, 2009; Pearce & Robinson, 2009; Barney & Hesterly, 2013; David, 2013; Wheelen & Hunger, 2010). In order to outperform rivals, a firm should have enough strengths and unique capabilities. Strengths and capabilities may vary from human resources, internal process, or technical skills. Therefore, the first hypotheses specified that competitive advantage is truly affecting the firm competitiveness of the five star hotels in Jakarta.

Competitive advantage itself is formed by superior value of the consumer. It can be concluded that some advantages can be obtained if the firm is able to create high customer value or superior customer value for consumers (Treacy and Wiersema, 1995; Treacy, 1995; D'Aveni & Gunther, 1994; Barney & Clark, 2007; Pearce & Robinson, 2009; Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010). In other words, delivering superior value for guest is the key to gain hotel's advantages. Therefore, the second hypotheses stated that customer value is significantly affecting the competitive advantage of the five star hotels in Jakarta.

Tourist attraction and natural sites are very important element in hospitality services industry and is proven to have positive effect on the competitive advantage and hotel's performance (Weaver & Lawton 2006; Mika 2012; Seratto & Valenzuela, 2013). Related to tourist attraction, Faranak et al (2009), Kantanen & Tikkanen (2006) stated that buildings with unique architecture is one of tourist attractions able to improve the advantage of businesses included in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the third and fourth hypotheses stated that natural site and tourist attraction are significantly affecting competitive advantage of the five star hotels in Jakarta.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sources of data and information of this research are obtained through two sources of primary data and secondary data. The unit of analysis to be used in this study is all five-star hotels in Jakarta, while the observation units used in this study are two parties, namely, 1) the management of five-star hotels, and 2) the consumer/hotel guests. There are 44 managers representing a five star hotel as the first observation unit. The second observation unit, namely hotel guests numbered 132 people. In this study, Partial Least Square (PLS) used to test the goodness of research model and to examine all relationship amongst exogenous and endogenous latent variables to answer the research questions. Some test administered including average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability, outer loadings, path coefficients, total effect, R square, and f square.

## 7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 7.1. Hotel Information

Main features of five stars hotels in Jakarta summarized in table 1:

**Table 1. Hotel Information (n=44)**

No	Hotel Features	Jakarta				
		West	North	East	South	Central
1	Location	2/4.5%	4/9.1%	1/ 2.3%	4/9.1%	33/75%
2	Distance from Airport	Nearest (kms/miles) 22.3/13.86	Farthest (kms/miles) 35.9/22.31			
3	Number of rooms	<100 4/9.1%	101-300 16/36.4%	301-500 20/45.5%	>500 4/9.1%	
4	Chains	Local 13/29.5%	International 31/70.5%			
5	Years of service	<10 18/40.9%	11-20 18/40.9%	>20 8/18.2%		
6	Lowest Web Rate	<100 USD 6/13.6%	101-200 USD 16/36.4%	201-300 USD 19/43.2%	>300 USD 3/6.82%	
7	Web Rate	Lowest 50 USD	Highest 8200 USD			
8	Award Won	1 Award 9/20.5%	2 Awards 4/9.1%	3 Awards 3/6.82%	4 Awards 1/ 2.3%	>4 0

Most hotels are in central Jakarta where greatest activities including business, service, and government offices are met. Hectic condition in central Jakarta becomes very intense since the

transportation system is not well organized yet. Some hotels have expensive room rate for Indonesian standard, as the rate reaches more than 1000 USD. The distance of some hotels from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport is relatively far. The nearest distance is more or less 14 miles, and no train or metro is connecting the airport and city center. Main transportation from airport to various destinations is bus or taxi.

### 7.2. Respondents Information

The profile of five-star hotels managers who become the first respondents in this research reflects in table 2:

**Table 2. Managers Profile**

1. Gender	Men	Women		
	35/79.55%	9/20.45%		
2. Age	<30	31-40	41-50	>50
	0	13/29.54%	29/65.90%	2/4.56%
3. Educational Background	Bachelor	Master	Ph.D	
	37/ 84.85%	7/15.15%	0	
4. Educational Major	General			
	Management	Hospitality	Engineering	Others
	26/59.09%	3/6.81%	11/25%	4/9.10%
5. Period of Occupation	<5 Yrs	5-10 Yrs	>10 Yrs	
	0	32/72.73%	12/27.27%	
6. Experience in Other Hotels	Yes	No		
	37/ 84.09%	7/15.91%		

The managers of a five star hotel in Jakarta are dominated by men. The ranges of age of those managers are between 41 and 50 years. The educational background of the majority of the managers is a bachelor from general management. Period of occupation is in the range of 5 to 10 years and has had work experience in another hotel before. The second respondents in this research are the guests of the five-star hotels as following:

**Table 3. Guests Profile**

1. Gender	Male	Female		
	64/48.48%	68/51.52%		
2. Age	31-40	41-50	>50	
	110/83.33%	22/16.67%	0	
3. Status	Married	Single		
	124/93.94%	8/6.06%		
4. Eductaional Background	Bachelor	Master	Ph.D	
	114/86.36%	18/13.64%	0	
5. Income	<5mill	5,1-15mill	16-25mil	>25mill
	3/2.27%	126/95.45%	3/2.27%	0
6. Domicile	Jakarta	Outer Jakarta		
	97/73,48%	35/26,52%		
7. Period of Staying	1 day	2 days	3 days	
	111/84,01%	11/8.33%	10/7,57%	

Gender of the hotel guests is quite evenly between male and female. The age of most of the hotel guests is in the range of 31 to 40 years. The majority of hotel guests are married and most of the hotel guests have an income in the range of 5 to 15 million per month. Guests are mainly domiciled in Jakarta and stay only for one day.

### 7.3. Model Measurement and Goodness of Fit

Testing construct validity is required to evaluate how well the model used in this study is in compliance with the theory. Table 4 reveals the average variance extracted:

**Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

	AVE
CA	0.840
CV	0.516
HC	0.921
NS	0.808
TA	0.596

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA; Tourist Attraction

Table 4 indicates that construct validity of research model is good since all values are higher than minimum criteria of 0.5. Beside construct validity, composite reliability test is used to determine internal consistency of all latent variables. Table 5 shows the outcome of composite reliability:

**Table 5. Composite Reliability**

	Composite Reliability
CA	0.913
CV	0.756
HC	0.972
NS	0.926
TA	0.821

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA; Tourist Attraction

Table 5 concludes that the reliability of the research model is good since all values are higher than minimum criteria of 0.7. Outer model evaluation conducted to investigate the reflective power of all indicators. High loading value of indicators in every latent variable contributes to the goodness of research model. Table 6 shows the outer model loadings:

**Table 6. Outer Loadings**

	CA	CV	HC	NS	TA
x1				0.897	
x2				0.940	
x3				0.858	
x4					0.914
x5					0.905
x6					0.245
x7					0.748
x8		0.831			
x9		0.527			
x10		0.762			
y1	0.935				
y2	0.898				
z1			0.974		
z2			0.957		
z3			0.948		

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA: Tourist Attraction

Table 6 indicates that most of indicators have strong relationship with their latent variables. Strongest indicator for natural site is surrounding ( $x_2$ ); strongest indicator for tourist attraction is architecture ( $x_4$ ); strongest indicator for customer value is best total cost ( $x_8$ ); strongest indicator for competitive advantage is lower price ( $y_1$ ); and strongest indicator for firm competitiveness is asset ( $z_1$ ). Only  $x_6$  (events) has weak relationship toward tourist attraction. According to AVE, composite reliability, and outer loading test results, the research model in this study is acceptable and can be used for further analysis.

#### 7.4. Path Coefficients

Evaluation of path coefficient is essential to determine the effect of natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value on competitive advantage and hotels' competitiveness. Table 7 shows the path coefficients of each variable:

**Table 7. Path Coefficients**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistic	P Values
CA→HC	0.747	0.751	0.066	11.353	0.000
CV→CA	0.230	0.223	0.095	2.427	0.016
NS→CA	0.494	0.510	0.095	5.224	0.000
TA→CA	0.319	0.311	0.091	3.519	0.000

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA; Tourist Attraction

Table 7 reveals that all path coefficients are positive and significant. The highest coefficient is CA→HC and the lowest is CV→CA. Since the path coefficients are positive and significant, total effect of natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value on competitive advantage and hotels' competitiveness are discovered. Table 8 shows the variables total effect:

**Table 8. Total Effect**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistic	P Values
CV→HC	0.747	0.751	0.066	11.353	0.000
CV→CA	0.230	0.223	0.095	2.427	0.016
NS→CA	0.494	0.510	0.095	5.224	0.000
NS→HC	0.369	0.384	0.083	4.433	0.000
TA→CA	0.319	0.311	0.091	3.519	0.000
TA→HC	0.238	0.232	0.066	3.590	0.000

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA; Tourist Attraction

Table 8 reveals that the highest total effect is CV→HC and the lowest is TA→HC. This result also indicates that customer value and competitive advantage are the key factors for five stars hotels to develop their competitiveness.

### 7.5. R Square and f Square

Evaluation of R Square and f Square are needed to determine the accuracy and capability of model to answer research problems. Tabel 9 shows the R Square:

**Table 9. R Square**

	R Square
CA	0.849
HC	0.558

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness

Combination of natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value are producing a high R square of competitive advantage at 84.9% level. The hotels' competitive advantage also contributes to develop competitiveness at 55.8% level. Table 10 reveals more detail contribution of natural site, tourist attraction, and customer value toward hotels' competitive advantage:

**Table 10. f Square**

	CA	CV	HC	NS	TA
CA			1.261		
CV	0.237				
HC					
NS	0.583				
TA	0.236				

CA: Competitive Advantage; HC: Hotel Competitiveness; CV: Customer Value; NS: Natural Site; TA; Tourist Attraction

Table 10 indicates that natural site is the dominant factor that contributes to hotels' competitive advantage, while competitive advantage is crucial to develop hotels' competitiveness.

## 8. DISCUSSION

Findings on the effect of the competitive advantage towards firm competitiveness of five-star hotels in Jakarta confirmed some earlier studies as in O'Farrell, Hitchens, and Moffat (1993), O'Shannassy (2008), Cerrato & Depperu (2011), as well as in Mahmood & Hanafi (2013). These findings also confirm an important concept in business that a firm will have high competitiveness if the firm has a distinct advantage/excellence in comparison with its competitors (Porter, 1985). In case of Jakarta, some hotels are having trouble in service differentiation. Guest's testimonies describe that some hotels do not have unique service or product that can create unforgettable experience. Regular services in some hotels are inadequate to build high competitiveness.

The positive effect of natural site towards competitive advantage of five stars hotels in Jakarta is inline with earlier studies such as in Carson et al (2004), Dugulan et al (2010), Wiiliams and Hare (2012), and Serrato and Valenzuela (2013). This finding is also confirmed by statements from hotel guests who said that they liked the hotel that is conveniently located and is close to entertainment facilities such as shopping malls or restaurants. Some hotel guests also stated that the hotel location is of their concern when holding business meetings.

The effect of tourist attraction towards competitive advantage of five-star hotels in Jakarta confirmed some earlier studies as in Kantanen and Tikkanen (2006), Faranak et al (2009), Champoosri et al (2014), and in Balkaran and Maharaj (2013). This finding is consistent with some of the statements from hotel guests who said that they liked the unique architectural design. They claimed that unique architecture and well maintained hotel building is a good attraction. Similarly, some of the hotel guests who expressed their disappointment to the hotel that appears "old" and "dull" that the condition of the building as such should not be found in a five-star hotels. Thus the competitive advantage of the hotel is indeed affected by the attractiveness of the hotel itself.

Finding on the effect of customer value towards the competitive advantage of five-star hotels in Jakarta confirmed some earlier studies as in Zemke (1993), Parasuraman (1997), Woodruff (1997), and in Saliba and Fisher (2000). This finding is in line with some of the statements from guests who consider that five-star hotels that are "good" are capable of giving satisfaction or high benefit. When guests' expectations are lower than the money they have spent, then would feel disappointment with the hotel.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

To improve the firm competitiveness of the five-star hotels in Jakarta, the management needs to have a high competitive advantage both from the lower price or service differentiation. Service differentiation should also be supported by attractive natural site and attraction that are managed properly by the management. The research recommends that five stars hotels in Jakarta should improve their competitiveness in short and long term. In the short term, the hotel management needs to immediately improve and increase the benefits for hotel guests by improving service quality and collaborate with respected suppliers. Some hotels also need physical renovation or building facelift, and improving the quality of their facilities. In the long term, the hotel management should improve the condition of the public space outside the hotel. Cooperation and coordination with local government is also crucial to minimize negative effect of heavy traffic and unpleasant sights outside some hotels.

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