



The Role of Resources and Capabilities in Airline Competitiveness and Competitive Position: The Case of Vietjet Air

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to develop a model that depicts the effect of resources and capabilities on airline competitiveness and competitive position. The scale and research hypotheses are tested using data from a survey of 570 Vietjet Air employees. The study's findings confirmed the significance of resources and capabilities in competitiveness and airline competitive position. Resources far outnumber capabilities when it comes to creating competitive advantages at the product level. Capabilities, on the other hand, play a larger, but not significant, role in competitive position. Furthermore, the findings of the study confirm that competitiveness serves as a partial moderator in the impact of resources and capabilities on airline competitive position. The study's findings form the basis for recommending implications for focusing on effectively utilizing resources and maximizing capabilities in order to improve airline competitiveness and competitive position in the Vietnam aviation market.

Keywords: Air transport · Capabilities · Competitiveness · Competitive position · Resources

1 Introduction

As an important mode of transportation in the transportation system, air transport is a highly competitive field, so finding ways to improve competitiveness and competitive position is a critical task for airlines. This topic is of interest to many researchers, not just airlines. Recent research has expanded and confirmed the role of factors that reflect and affect competitiveness in the air transport sector [1–6], or competitive position in different contexts [7–11]. Concurrent research on competitiveness and competitive position in air transport, on the other hand, is still quite limited. As a result, the author decided to conduct research on the impact of resources and capabilities on competitiveness and competitive position in the passenger air transport industry, using Vietjet Air as a case study. After ten years of operation, Vietjet Air has grown rapidly as Vietnam's first private airline, operating under a hybrid model with many factors leaning toward low-cost airlines. The brand of Vietjet Air is enhanced because it is one of the leading airlines with a domestic market share in Vietnam. This demonstrates the company's competitiveness

and competitive position. As a result, conducting research with Vietjet Air will be typical of the new generation airline model, which is dynamic and appealing.

This research will help to improve understanding of the role of resources and capabilities factors in airline product competitiveness and competitive position under the hybrid model. The study findings will form the basis for managerial recommendations to improve the airline's resources and capabilities, resulting in the development of an appropriate strategy to improve competitiveness and assist the airline in achieving its goals as well as establishing a sustainable competitive position.

The theoretical foundation and research model will be presented in Sect. 2 of the study. The Sect. 3 goes over research methods, measurement scale construction, sampling, data collection and the data analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the research findings and discussions, which include scale evaluation, suitability evaluation, model, hypotheses test, and discussion. Finally, a comprehensive conclusion on the study's contributions and limitations is provided.

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Literature Review

Competitiveness

Enterprise competitiveness is developed based on basic perspectives, namely the Resource-based view (RBV) and the Capability-based view (CBV). The RBV took shape in the research of Wernerfelt [12] who proposed that, while a firm's performance is directly driven by its products, it is indirectly (and ultimately) driven by the resources that go into their production. Based on this logic, according to Wernerfelt, firms can earn above-average returns by identifying and acquiring resources critical to the development of a desired product. Wernerfelt defined a resource as an enterprise that owns tangible and intangible assets on a semi-permanent basis.

In the framework of Barney [13], resource referred to enterprise controlled all of the assets, capabilities, organization process, enterprise attributes, information and knowledge, which can used to build and implement the strategy to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Barney considered that one resource became the source for enterprise obtaining and maintaining competitive advantage when the enterprise possessed the four characteristics with the value, scarce resources, difficult to imitate and hard to replace at the same time.

According to RBV viewpoint, the enterprise's resources are the determining factor for competitiveness and business efficiency, so it is necessary to focus on analyzing competitiveness based on internal factors. Meanwhile, the CBV viewpoint is concerned with the capabilities that use and combine assets and resources to achieve business growth and performance. The key point of the CBV is that the business environment is dynamic, necessitating continuous capacity building and capacity utilization in order to remain competitive [14]. The CBV viewpoint demonstrated enterprise competitive advantage from the enterprise unique ability which can help the enterprise to obtain and maintain competitive advantage.

Research of Teece et al. [15] proposed that, an enterprise's resources include all tangible and intangible factors such as human resources, financial resources, assets, skills,

processes, technology, information, knowledge, and so on, necessary for the business's existence and development. These factors influence an enterprise's competitiveness and business results. Enterprises that effectively exploit and use their resources will get the most out of their input sources, gaining a competitive advantage and establishing a market position. Despite the numerous classifications, the primary resources in the air transport sector are human resources, physical resources, and financial resources [15–17].

The efficient use of resources by the enterprise is referred to as enterprise capacity. It is defined as the integration, construction, and connection of internal and external resources in order to deal with rapid changes in the environment, resulting in operational efficiency, competitiveness, competitive advantage and position improvement [15]. Furthermore, competence denotes a company's ability to exploit resources, and capabilities can be classified based on functions [18]. Despite the fact that there are numerous factors, airlines' key competencies are frequently expressed through factors such as research and development capacity, management and administration capacity, and marketing capacity.

This study employs Sanchez and Heene's concept of competitiveness, which is based on the allocation of resources and capabilities. As a result, a company's competitiveness is defined as its ability to maintain, deploy, and coordinate resources and capabilities in order to help the company achieve its goals [14]. Airline competitiveness is reflected in price policy, speed, reliability, and convenience of service [2, 5]. Customers will be more satisfied with the airline's service if they increase its responsiveness to price, speed, reliability, and convenience of service in accordance with customer needs.

Competitive Position

The competitive position of an organization is defined as its position in relation to its competitors in the same market or industry [19]. According to Nguyen Hai Quang's study [20], the airline's competitive position is reflected by three important criteria: sales and market share, brands awareness, and customer satisfaction. The larger the market share, the stronger the enterprise's competitive position because a large market share allows the enterprise to reduce costs by achieving the experience curve effect and creating customer brand loyalty [19].

Good brand awareness will assist businesses in gaining a competitive advantage and reaffirming their market position [8]. Because customer satisfaction is regarded as a critical factor in the air transportation industry, it is regarded as a factor reflecting competitiveness and competitive position [9].

2.2 Hypothesis Development

The Role of Resources in Airline Competitiveness and Competitive Position

According to Penrose's study [21], resources contribute to a firm's competitive position to the extent that they are utilized. Furthermore, Rubin [22] acknowledged that owning good resources will convert them into useful products, resulting in business competitiveness. According to the resource-based perspective, a firm can achieve competitiveness and competitive position by utilizing its valuable resources and capabilities [12].

Airlines that maximize the efficiency of their input resources will be able to create competitiveness at the product level and build a competitive position in the market.

According to [20], resources and capabilities have a positive impact on airlines' competitive position in the field of freight transport. Based on this context, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H₁: Resources have a positive impact on the airline's product competitiveness.

H₂: Resources have a positive impact on the airline's competitive position.

H₃: Product competitiveness plays a partial mediating role in the impact of resources on the airline's competitive position.

The Role of Capabilities in Airline Competitiveness and Competitive Position

Capabilities, like resources, play an important role in determining competitiveness and competitive position [12]. The ability to integrate, build, and connect internal and external resources in order to respond to rapid changes in the environment and improve operational efficiency, competitiveness, and enterprise competitive position [15]. The airline's well-utilized capabilities will contribute to the airline's competitiveness and market position. The following hypotheses are proposed as a result:

H₄: Capabilities have a positive impact on the airline's product competitiveness.

H₅: Capabilities have a positive impact on the airline's competitive position.

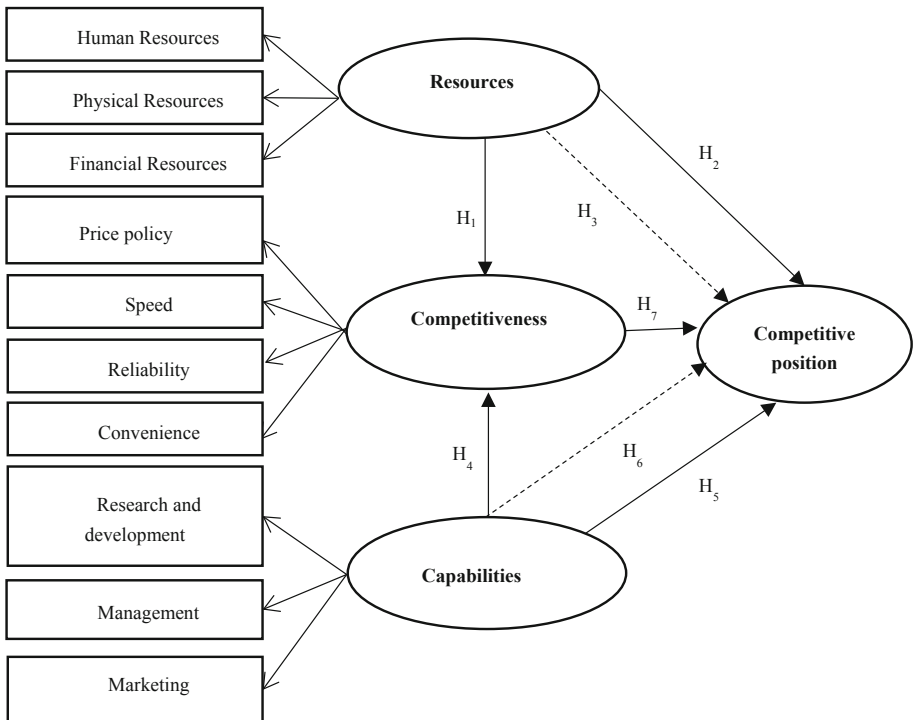


Fig. 1. Research model

H₆: Product competitiveness plays a partial mediating role in the impact of capabilities on the airline's competitive position.

The Role of Competitiveness in Airline's Competitive Position

Enterprise competitiveness is regarded as a factor determining an enterprise's competitive position. In other words, enterprise competitiveness determines competitive position [2]. According to [12], competitiveness (cost and/or differentiation) generates value, that is, creates a competitive position for the enterprise ahead of competitors. The study of Nguyen Hai Quang [20] found that competitiveness has a positive impact on competitive position in air freight. As a result, the following final hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: Product competitiveness has a positive impact on airline's competitive position.

2.3 The Research Models

Figure 1 depicts the research model based on the proposed hypotheses. In which, resources include human resources, physical resources, and financial resources; capabilities include research and development capacity, management capacity, and marketing capacity; and airline product competitiveness include price policy, speed, reliability, and convenience.

3 Methodology

3.1 Variables and Scales

Based on discussions with 5 experts who are VietJet Air managers and scientists at Vietnam Aviation Academy, the variables and scales are inherited, and words are adjusted to fit the context. The research model employs 38 variables for 11 concepts related to four factors, including: Human resources (6 variables) based on [23]; physical resources (3 variables) based on [16]; financial resources (3 variables) and management (4 variables) based on [24]; research and development (3 variables) based on [25]; marketing (3 variables), pricing policy (3 variables), speed (3 variables), reliability (3 variables), and convenience (4 variables) based on [5]; competitive position (3 variables) based on [20]. The questionnaire was created with statements and was scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree.

3.2 Data

To ensure that the questionnaire can be answered including the factors of resources, capabilities competitiveness in product level, and competitive position, the survey respondents are chosen as Vietjet Air employees who have used the company's transportation service. The survey received 578 votes, 8 of which were invalid in comparison to the request. Thus, 570 questionnaires were processed using SPSS/IBM 23 software and AMOS 25. Table 1 summarizes the research sample's characteristics.

Table 1. Sample Summary

Sample characteristic		Frequency	Proportion (%)
Total		570	100,0
Gender	Male	241	42,3
	Female	329	57,7
Job position	Officer	91	16,0
	Ground staff	184	32,3
	Pilot, Flight Attendant	262	46,0
	Manager	33	5,8
Age	Under 24 years old	124	21,8
	From 25–35 years old	355	62,3
	From 36–45 years old	62	10,9
	Over 45 years old	29	5,1
Average monthly salary	Under 10 million VND	82	14,4
	From 10 - 20 million VND	332	58,2
	Over 20 million VND	156	27,4
Working experiences	Under 3 years	345	60,5
	From 3–5 years	134	23,5
	Over 5 years	91	16,0
Education background	Intermediate degree	105	18,4
	College degree	144	25,3
	Bachelor degree	301	52,8
	Master degree	20	3,5

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Analysis

To eliminate junk variables, the scale is first evaluated for reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and Corrected item - total correlation. Variable has corrected item - total correlation less than 0,3 will be disqualified and the scale will be chosen when Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0,7. The results show that the observed variables HUM₁, HUM₆, and CON₃ have a correlation with the total variable of less than 0,3, so they are excluded. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients after removing variables for the concepts all ranged from 0,816 to 0,922, ranging from 0,7 to 0,95 to ensure consistency and discrimination [26] and were included. Table 2 summarizes the mean values of variables, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, and loading coefficients in Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As a result, the load coefficients of variables in CFA range from 0,724 to 0,909 and are all greater than 0,5, implying that variables are loaded.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha and load factor in CFA

Dimension	Scale items	Code	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor loadings (CFA)
Human resources (HUM)	Size and number of employees	HUM1	3,065	0,922	
	Employees quality	HUM 2	3,823		0,850
	Attitude and service capacity of employees	HUM 3	3,821		0,892
	Employee policy	HUM 4	3,725		0,844
	Training and developing human resources	HUM 5	3,788		0,900
	Education level of the employees	HUM 6	3,149		
Physical resources (PHY)	Fleet size	PHY1	3,746	0,922	0,879
	The uniformity of the fleet	PHY2	3,791		0,909
	Equipment and facilities	PHY3	3,758		0,882
Financial resources (FIN)	Strong capital	FIN1	3,784	0,898	0,863
	Capital to ensure long-term operation	FIN2	3,781		0,865
	Easy fundraising to grow	FIN3	3,783		0,864
Research and development (RES)	Product development capabilities	RES1	3,454	0,865	0,808
	Technology application, technical improvement	RES2	3,486		0,847
	Human resources of research and development department	RES3	3,528		0,889
Management (MAN)	Management ability	MAN1	3,400	0,864	0,739

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Dimension	Scale items	Code	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor loadings (CFA)
	Product production organization ability	MAN2	3,539		0,876
	Ability to analyze business environment	MAN3	3,684		0,689
	Ability to plan and implement strategy	MAN4	3,523		0,860
Marketing (MAR)	Ability to organize sales and distribution	MAR ₁	3,518	0,889	0,848
	Ability to organize promotional activities	MAR2	3,546		0,864
	Management capacity and customer care	MAR3	3,567		0,871
Price (PRI)	The price is in line with the quality of service	PRI1	3,993	0,816	0,800
	Diversified and flexible pricing policy	PRI2	3,865		0,863
	Regular promotions	PRI3	3,897		0,798
Speed (SPE)	Time to buy tickets and check in	SPE1	3,947	0,897	0,858
	Flight time and transit time	SPE 2	3,895		0,872
	Time to resolve unusual situations	SPE 3	3,909		0,867
Reliability (REL)	On - time performance rate	REL1	3,935	0,879	0,857
	Safety flights rate	REL2	3,923		0,858
	Error rate in service	REL3	3,893		0,835
Convenience (CON)	Purchase and pay for tickets easily and conveniently	CON1	3,930	0,880	0,834

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Dimension	Scale items	Code	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Factor loadings (CFA)
	The flight schedule is diverse and convenient	CON2	3,916		0,865
	Simple and flexible service process	CON3	3,265		
	Easily track journey information	CON4	3,898		0,858
Competitive position (CP)	Brand awareness	CP1	2,763	0,832	0,724
	Customer satisfaction and word of mouth	CP2	2,907		0,867
	Market share dominance	CP3	2,775		0,783

Table 3. Summarized of CR, AVE and MSV

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	CO	RE	CA	CP
CO	0,968	0,718	0,384	0,969	0,847			
RE	0,970	0,766	0,384	0,971	0,619***	0,875		
CA	0,957	0,691	0,250	0,962	0,500***	0,432***	0,831	
CP	0,835	0,630	0,215	0,851	0,409***	0,436***	0,464***	0,793

Note: *** is significant at the 1% level; components of the quadratic scale of competitiveness (CO) include PRI, SPE, REL and CON; resources (RE) including HUM, PHY and FIN; Capabilities (CA) including RES, MAN and MAR.

The CFA test results show that the important indicators all meet the criteria (Hair et al., 2010): Significance level (p) = 0,000 < 0,05; CMIN/df = 3.599,500 (acceptable); CFI = 0,933 and Tucker & Lewis index (TLI) = 0,926 (range 0,9–1); RMSEA index = 0,068 (range 0,03–0,08). As a result, the model is appropriate.

Table 3 shows the scale's reliability, convergence, and discriminant evaluation statistics in CFA. As a result, the scales have composite reliability (CR) values ranging from 0,835 to 0,970 (greater than 0,7) to ensure dependability, and average extracted variance (AVE) values ranging from 0,630 to 0,766 (greater than 0,5) to ensure convergence. Furthermore, all of the scales are discriminant because the maximum specific variance (MSV) is less than the AVE and the values below the diagonal are less than the diagonal value [27].

Table 4. Results of testing the hypotheses

Hypotheses		Unstandardized Estimate.				Standard Estimate
		Coefficient	Standard Error (SE)	Composed Reliability (CR)	Sig.	
H ₁	RE → CO	0,400	0,032	12,686	***	0,520
H ₂	CA → CO	0,182	0,025	7,282	***	0,270
H ₄	RE → CP	0,208	0,049	4,267	***	0,232
H ₅	CA → CP	0,236	0,039	6,097	***	0,300
H ₇	CO → CP	0,141	0,065	2,177	0,029	0,121

Note: *** is significant at the 1% level

4.2 Results of Testing the Hypotheses

As a result, the coefficients in the unnormalized estimate were all positive with significance levels of 1% or 5%, implying that hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₄, H₅, and H₇ were supported. According to the standardized estimation results, of the two factors influencing competitiveness, resources ($\beta = 0,520$) play a larger role than capabilities ($\beta = 0,270$). Meanwhile, capabilities ($\beta = 0,300$) has the most influence on competitive position, followed by resources ($\beta = 0,232$), and finally competitiveness ($\beta = 0,121$) (see Table 4).

The results of estimating the parameters in the research model using the linear structural model are summarized in Fig. 2 and below.

Bootstrap estimation is used with a repeated sample of 1,000 to increase the reliability of the results of estimating the parameters in the model. Table 5 compares the Bootstrap estimation results to the sample's normalized estimator.

As a result, the bias (Bias) between the Bootstrap estimate and the sample estimate is very low, as is the standard deviation of bias (SE- Bias). The critical values (CR) are all less than 1,96 (or the p-value is greater than 5%), indicating that the non-zero deviation is not statistically significant at 95% confidence and that the estimated model is reliable.

The SEM model evaluates the indirect impact of resources and capabilities on competitive position via the mediating role of competitiveness. As a result, the indirect effects of resources and capacity have Sig of 0,043 and 0,035, respectively, less than 5%, indicating that an indirect effect exists and hypotheses H₃ and H₆ were supported. The indirect impact on competitive position of resources and capabilities is estimated to be $0,520 \times 0,121 = 0,063$ and $0,270 \times 0,121 = 0,033$, respectively. As a result, competitiveness serves as a link between the impact of resources and capabilities on competitive position. The impact coefficients in the research model are summarized in Table 6.

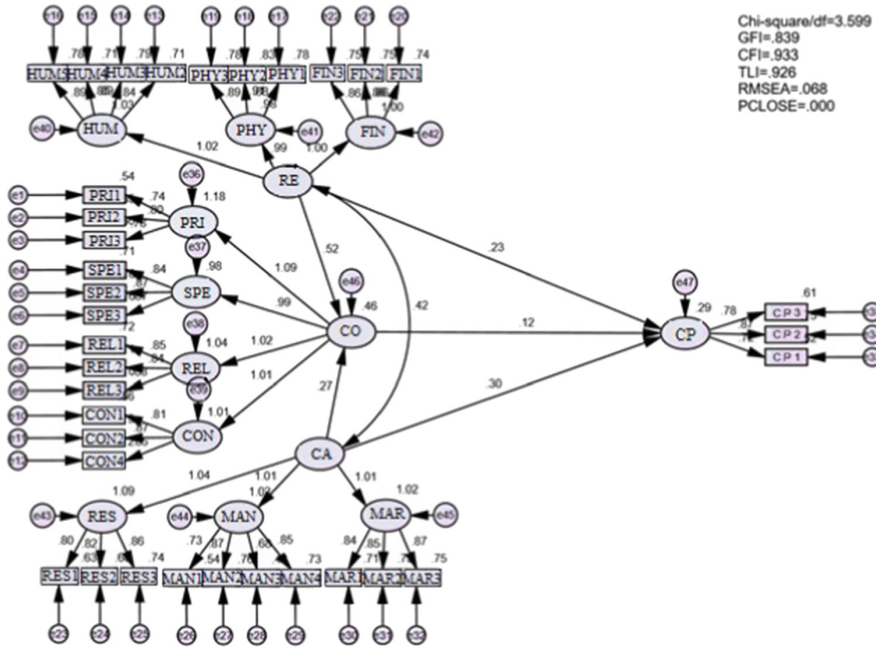


Fig. 2. The hypothesized structural model

Table 5. Compare Bootstrap estimators and samples

Path Relationship	Estimation from Bootstrap			Compare with sample		CR = Bias/SE-Bias
	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias	
RE → CO	0,044	0,001	0,520	0,000	0,001	0,000
CA → CO	0,044	0,001	0,271	0,001	0,001	1,000
RE → CP	0,061	0,001	0,232	0,000	0,002	0,000
CA → CP	0,046	0,001	0,300	0,000	0,001	0,000
CO → CP	0,057	0,001	0,122	0,001	0,002	0,500

Note: SE-SE is the standard deviation of the standard deviation; Mean is the estimated mean value.

Table 6. Summary of impact factor

Path Relationship	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Combined effects
RE → CO	0,520		0,520
CA → CO	0,270		0,270
RE → CP	0,232	0,063	0,295
CA → CP	0,300	0,033	0,333
CO → CP	0,121		0,121

4.3 Discussion

The impact coefficients of resources and capabilities on product competitiveness and airline's competitive position in this study show that if the airline increases their resources and capabilities by one unit, then the competitiveness increases by 0,520 units and 0,270 units, respectively, and competitive position increases by 0,295 units and 0,333 units, respectively. This finding emphasizes the importance of resources and capabilities in determining product competitiveness and airline competitive position. The findings of this study are consistent with those of [16, 28] on the impact of resources on airline competitiveness, and [17] on the role of capabilities in airline competitiveness. Due to resources factors such as human resources, financial resources, physical resources especially the fleet, which plays an important role in the product competitiveness of airline, the coefficient of impact of resources on competitiveness is much higher than the capabilities, which is typical in the field of air transport. Capabilities, however, have a slightly greater impact on an airline's competitive position than resources. Marketing activities that have played an important role in the airline's brand identity can explain this. These findings imply that airlines should prioritize the development of resources and capabilities in order to improve product competitiveness and competitive position.

Furthermore, the positive impact of product competitiveness on competitive position in this study backs up the findings of many other studies [1, 2, 5, 17]. The level of impact is a manifestation of Vietjet Air, which increases the airline's competitive position by 0,121 units for every unit increase in product competitiveness. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that product competitiveness plays a partial mediating role between the impact of resources and capabilities on airline competitiveness. Although the indirect impact is minor, it provides a solid foundation for airlines to recognize that in order to improve their competitive position, they must focus not only on the direct role of resources and capabilities, but also on the indirect role of product competitiveness. As a result, in order to maintain a competitive position in comparison to competitors, airlines must constantly improve their competitiveness by developing quick services (ticket purchase time, check-in, transportation, transfer, handling situations), reliable (on time, safe), convenient (easy to buy tickets, extensive route network, high frequency, simple service process, easy to access information), and have a reasonable price policy (price matching quality, flexible pricing policy).

5 Conclusion

Consideration of the impact of resources and capabilities on product competitiveness and airline competitive position through the case of Vietjet Air is significant both in theory and practice because it complements adding different roles through the hybrid airline model with many manifestations of low-cost airlines as a basis for proposing governance implications for improving the airline's competitiveness and competitive position. The research developed and evaluated the scale to suit the conditions of the hybrid airline model by forming hypotheses, collecting and analysing data. As a result, three important components of the airline's resources are human resources, physical resources, and financial resources. Activities such as research and development, marketing, and management are critical for the efficient use of airline resources.

From a product standpoint, the airline's competitiveness is primarily reflected in factors such as speed, convenience, and reliability, as well as reasonable service prices. According to the research findings, resources are more important than capabilities in creating airline competitiveness at the product level. Meanwhile, capabilities have a marginally greater positive effect on competitive position than resources. Furthermore, the research findings confirm the mediating role of product competitiveness in the impact of resources and capabilities on airline competitive position. These findings serve as the foundation for recommending implications for airlines in terms of improving product competitiveness and competitive position through the development of resources and operational capabilities.

Although some valuable results were obtained, this study only examined the case of Vietjet Air and did not survey other airlines in Vietnam to determine the differential impact of resources and capabilities. However, this study did not take into account the impact of each basic component of resources and capabilities on airline competitiveness and competitive position. These issues may provide gaps for future research on this topic.

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