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The Differences in Competitive Advantages via Productivity: Creative Application in Economics and Sociological Knowledge

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Abstract

Competitive advantage can increase growth opportunities and optimize profits, contributing to the country's GDP (Anwar *et al*., 2018) [3]. The application of this competitive advantage certainly requires the development of a strategy to determine the level of socio-cultural and environmental volatility (Bellamy *et al*., 2019) [4]. This study was conducted with the aim of assessing the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi through survey results. The survey subjects are employees of construction firms in Hanoi. We use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research methods were carried out with SPSS software, including independent T tests and ANOVA. Research results show that there is no difference in assessing the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between different subjects in terms of gender, firms' size, job position, seniority, or firms' ages. Based on this result, the study proposes some recommendations for construction firms and employees.

1. Introduction

Economic knowledge is an important element of modern society and an important topic for sociologists interested in the reflexive dimensions of social life. Research in economic sociology has usually considered broader areas, such as civilization. Competitive advantages of firms are a content of economic and sociological knowledge.

It is estimated that in 2020, our country will have about 4.2 million workers with housing needs equivalent to about 33.6 million m2. In which case, it is estimated that our country will need about 430,000 apartments for low-income people, equivalent to 17.8 million m2, and an investment capital of about 100,000–120,000 billion. The economic situation of our country is increasingly improving, along with the support of the government through lowering the basic interest rate and stimulating demand policies. Therefore, construction enterprises in general and construction enterprises in Hanoi in particular will have many opportunities but also many challenges.

Competitive advantage helps firms maintain their position and long-term existence in the market as well as in the hearts of consumers. Help your firm stand out from other competitors. With a competitive advantage, firms will find a foothold in the market and quickly assert their brand to reach the world. Consumers will also put their trust in the company and contribute to increasing the company's profits.

Competitive advantage can increase growth opportunities and optimize profits, contributing to the country's GDP (Anwar *et al*., 2018) [3]. The application of this competitive advantage certainly requires the development of a strategy to determine the level of socio-cultural and environmental volatility (Bellamy *et al*., 2019) [4].

If, in the condition that the economy is not yet developed, construction activities only serve small works with simple and rudimentary forms, if, in the present conditions, the economy develops, construction becomes a major industry in material production important for the economy. From small, scattered enterprises, corporations and large construction groups have been formed.

The construction industry also plays an important role in paying taxes to the State budget, promoting the growth of the economy. It can be said that the construction industry is a premise for other industries because it creates facilities for health care, education, transport, production, etc. development, and at the same time, the mobilization of loans from financial institutions is also more favorable.

Construction production is a special type of industrial production made to order. Construction products are of a single and individual nature. Each construction and installation object is a work item that requires experience, structure, form, and an appropriate construction location, which is specifically determined on each estimate design for each individual object. Due to their unique and individual nature, the costs for the construction and installation of works and structures are not as homogeneous as those for industrial products. Therefore, the capital needs of construction enterprises are very different depending on whether they receive the work or not.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Competitive Advantage
Various indicators to measure competitive advantage were used by various researchers; for example, the study of Liao et al. (2017) [10] presented price/cost, delivery dependability, product innovation, and time to market. Samsir (2018) [14] used resources of value that were not easily imitated and were unlike the others. Abdulameer (2021) [1] used time, cost, quality, and flexibility. Kamukama et al. (2017) [9], Singjai et al. (2018) [15], and Liu and Atuahene-Gima (2018) [11] identified differentiation and cost leadership. Depending on the review of the theoretical literature, this study used differentiation and cost leadership to measure competitive advantage.

Iqbal and Suzianti (2021) [8] explain the limitations of the need to conduct further research on how information technology can create competitive advantage through differentiation, innovation, channel dominance, cost reduction, and efficiency improvement. Companies that can implement their business strategies well can use them as a competitive advantage (Al Khasabah et al., 2022) [2].

A management business strategy is needed by MSMEs to create a competitive advantage (Onufrey & Bergek, 2021) [13].

Competitive advantage can be achieved through four elements: removing barriers to entry, strengthening suppliers, empowering buyers, and being accurate in deciding if something happens (Farida & Sutopo, 2023) [5].

2.2 The Competitive Advantages via Productivity
Productivity is the performance of the production of a good or service, expressed by some measure. Productivity measurements are usually expressed as the ratio of total output to a single input or total input used in a production process, i.e., output per unit input, usually over a specific time range. Labor productivity can be further broken down by sector to look at labor growth trends, wages, and technological innovation. Corporate profits and shareholder returns are directly related to productivity growth.

Calculation for productivity by dividing a firm's output by the inputs used to produce that output. The most frequently used input is labor hours, while output can be measured in units of production or sales.

Productivity is the main source of economic growth and competitiveness. Productivity norms are value requirements set for the production and business activities of enterprises. It reflects the performance of the business. In their activities, companies always determine performance targets. The measurement and evaluation are based on many factors. With common points, they all affect the results of enterprise productivity.

The yield criterion is a defined value condition for consideration of actual productivity. Includes a system of ratios that need to be established to evaluate the productivity of organizations or firms. Through the identification of factors affecting the results, productivity is reflected. With the needs and requirements set out, enterprises need to determine the ratio limits to be achieved to adjust production and business. Thereby boosting the productivity of the firm. Based on the results of the evaluation, the results of improvement and organizational reform are obtained.

It is possible to consider the criteria defined for a theoretical yield of 100%. However, in reality, shifting and impacting factors make that value not reflectable. These indicators are based on the desired activity content. It is also the state the enterprise can achieve if the factors are effectively adjusted. The nature of reflecting reality is considered to help enterprises determine production and business efficiency. Analyze advantages and challenges. From there, adjust to achieve the desired productivity of the firm.

Vietnam Productivity Center (2009) [16] states that TFP reflects the contribution of intangible factors such as knowledge, experience, labor skills, economic restructuring, goods and services, quality investment capital, and mainly the quality of technological equipment and management skills.

Total factor productivity (TFP) is an indicator reflecting production results brought about by improving the efficiency of capital and labor use, thanks to the impact of factors such as technological innovation, production rationalization, improved management, and improved labor skills.

Total factor Productivity (TFP) is one of the most accurate and general indicators of the efficiency of capital and labor use and an important basis for analyzing the quality of economic growth. Economic assessment of the scientific and technological progress of each industry, each locality, or a country. TFP has been and is an important indicator in the system of economic indicators studied and applied by many countries around the world (Loi & Ha, 2022) [12].

TFP growth, which represents productivity growth without input growth, is the best type of growth to drive output growth. There are many ways to measure the growth of composite factor productivity: growth accounting method, stochastic marginal approach, using a multidimensional index, and growth regression.

3. Methodology
This study was carried out through two methods: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research was used to complete the scale and design the questionnaire. We conduct in-depth interviews with experts and firm managers about competitive advantages via productivity.

Quantitative research is carried out using the technique of "questionnaire-answer". According to Hair et al. (2014) [6], the minimum sample size is calculated according to the ratio 5:1 (number of observations/measured variables); 1 measurement variable needs at least 5 observations. This

study has six observed variables, so the minimum sample size is 6* 5 = 30 observations (questionnaire). Construction firms in the Hanoi area selected for the research sample were selected by a convenient method based on the available data of the author's group.

The number of questionnaires was collected, and the remaining 130 questionnaires were included in the analysis after screening.

Respondents to the questionnaire are employees of the construction firms. Respondents will assess the company's situation and answer contentious questions about competitive advantages via productivity.

The scales of research concepts are all multivariate scales. Observed variables are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). The statements on each scale are based on previous studies. The scale is adjusted to suit the conditions of construction enterprises in Hanoi based on the results of in-depth interviews with experts and firm managers.

Information on the data collected is shown in Table 1. It shows that among the 130 respondents, about 61.5% were working for large-scale enterprises, while the remaining 50 (38.5%) were working for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Of these, 33 of them (or 25.4%) were working for firms that were less than 5 years old; 37 of them (or 28.5%) were working for firms that were from 5 to 10 years old; 35 of them (or 26.9%) were working for firms that were from 10 to 20 years old; and 19.2% of the participants were working for firms that were 20 years old or older.

Table 1: Respondents by size and age

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Firms' size			
Large-scale enterprises (LSEs)	80	61.5	61.5
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	50	38.5	100.0
Firms' age			
Less than 5 years old	33	25.4	25.4
From 5 to 10 years old	37	28.5	53.8
From 10 to 20 years old	35	26.9	80.8
20 years old or older	25	19.2	
Total	130	100.0	

4. Result

4.1 Independent T-Test: Different Genders

A comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi with participants of different genders (male and female) can be seen in Table 2. According to the results shown in Table 2, sig Levene's test is respectively 0.318, and 0.569, which is more than 0.05. The variance between males and females is not different. Moreover, the sig value t-test is respectively 0.465, and 0.593, which is more than 0.05, which means that there is no statistically significant difference in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between these different genders (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

Table 2: Differences in competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi with participants of different genders - Independent Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
LP	Equal variances assumed	1.005	0.318	0.732	128	0.465	0.11735	0.16023	-0.19970	0.43439
	Equal variances not assumed			0.767	57.257	0.446	0.11735	0.15293	-0.18886	0.42355
TFP	Equal variances assumed	0.326	0.569	0.537	128	0.593	0.08886	0.16562	-0.23885	0.41657
	Equal variances not assumed			0.499	47.128	0.620	0.08886	0.17824	-0.26969	0.44741

4.2 Independent T-Test: Firms' Size

A comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi with participants of different firms' sizes that they were working for (large-scale enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises) can be seen in Table 3. According to the results shown in Table 3:

For LP, sig Levene's test is 0.038 which is less than 0.05. The variance between large-scale enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises is different. Moreover, the sig value t-test is 0.798, which is more than 0.05, which means that there is no statistically significant difference in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction

firms in Hanoi between these different firms' sizes that they were working for (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

For TFP, sig Levene's test is 0.623 which is more than 0.05. The variance between large-scale enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises is not different. Moreover, the sig value t-test is 0.304, which is more than 0.05, which means that there is no statistically significant difference in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between these different firms' sizes that they were working for (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

Table 3: Differences in competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi with participants of different firms' sizes that they were working for - Independent Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-Test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
LP	Equal variances assumed	4.389	0,038	0.246	128	0.806	0.03500	0.14214	-0.24625	0.31625
	Equal variances not assumed			0.257	118.045	0.798	0.03500	0.13615	-0.23462	0.30462
TFP	Equal variances assumed	0.243	0.623	-1.032	128	0.304	-0.15083	0.14621	-0.44013	0.13846
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.039	106.492	0.301	-0.15083	0.14520	-0.43869	0.13703

4.3 ANOVA-Job Position

An ANOVA test was needed to make a comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the three subjects, including participants who are the team captain, participants who are in the planned economy department, and participants who are in the business department. Table 4 shows that the sig Levene statistic, respectively 0.967 and 0.206, is greater than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis of homogeneity of variance among the variable value groups (different job positions) has not been violated. Table 5 shows that sig. is respectively 0.144 and 0.111, which is more than 0.05, which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the mentioned three groups of job positions (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

Table 4: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Descriptions	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
LP				
Based on Mean	0.033	2	127	0.967
Based on Median	0.134	2	127	0.875
Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.134	2	115.187	0.875
Based on trimmed mean	0.058	2	127	0.943
TFP				
Based on Mean	1.598	2	127	0.206
Based on Median	1.523	2	127	0.222
Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.523	2	112.528	0.222
Based on trimmed mean	1.572	2	127	0.212

Table 5: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LP					
Between Groups	2.389	2	1.195	1.965	0.144
Within Groups	77.219	127	0.608		
Total	79.608	129			
TFP					
Between Groups	2.892	2	1.446	2.240	0.111
Within Groups	81.997	127	0.646		
Total	84.890	129			

4.4 ANOVA-Seniority

An ANOVA test was needed to make a comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the three subjects, including participants who have worked for 5 to 10 years, participants who have worked for less than 5 years, and participants who have worked for 10 years or longer. Table 6 shows that the sig Levene statistic, respectively 0.786 and 0.370, is greater than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis of homogeneity of variance among the variable value groups (different seniority) has not been violated. Table 7 shows that sig. is respectively 0.227 and 0.620, which is more than 0.05, which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the mentioned three groups of seniority (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

Table 6: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Descriptions	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
LP				
Based on Mean	0.241	2	127	0.786
Based on Median	0.099	2	127	0.905
Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.099	2	108.054	0.905
Based on trimmed mean	0.196	2	127	0.822
TFP				
Based on Mean	1.001	2	127	0.370
Based on Median	0.967	2	127	0.383
Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.967	2	114.651	0.383
Based on trimmed mean	1.052	2	127	0.352

Table 7: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LP					
Between Groups	1.594	2	0.797	1.297	0.277
Within Groups	78.014	127	0.614		
Total	79.608	129			
TFP					
Between Groups	0.636	2	0.318	0.480	0.620
Within Groups	84.253	127	0.663		
Total	84.890	129			

4.5 ANOVA-Firms' Age

An ANOVA test was needed to make a comparison of the results of the evaluation of the differences in the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the four subjects, including participants who were working for firms that were less than 5 years old, participants who were working for firms that were from 5 to 10 years old, participants who were working for firms that were from 10 to 20 years old, and participants who were working for firms that were 20 years old or older. Table 8 shows that the sig Levene statistic, respectively 0.702 and

0.668, is greater than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis of homogeneity of variance among the variable value groups (different firms' ages) has not been violated. Table 9 shows that sig. is respectively 0.821 and 0.926, which is more than 0.05, which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi between the mentioned four groups of firms' ages (Hoang & Chu, 2008; Hair *et al*., 2014) [7, 6].

Table 8: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Descriptions	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
LP				
Based on Mean	0.472	3	126	0.702
Based on Median	0.267	3	126	0.849
Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.267	3	116.717	0.849
Based on trimmed mean	0.441	3	126	0.724
TFP				
Based on Mean	0.521	3	126	0.668
Based on Median	0.394	3	126	0.758
Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.394	3	114.798	0.758
Based on trimmed mean	0.463	3	126	0.709

Table 9: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LP					
Between Groups	0.577	3	0.192	0.307	0.821
Within Groups	79.031	126	0.627		
Total	79.608	129			
TFP					
Between Groups	0.313	3	0.104	0.156	0.926
Within Groups	84.576	126	0.671		
Total	84.890	129			

4.6 The Relationship between the Competitive Advantages via Productivity of Construction Firms in Hanoi
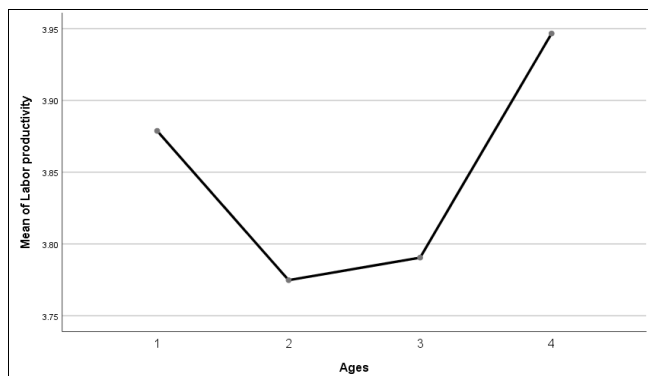**4.6.1 Labor Productivity (LP): Firms' Age**

Fig 1: The line graph shows the relationship between the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi: Labor productivity (LP) and firms' age

The line graph shows the relationship between the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi: Labor productivity (LP) and firms' age (Fig 1). Fig 1 shows that this line tends to go down when the respondents were working for firms that were from 5 to 10 years old. But this line tends to go up when the respondents were working for firms that were from 10 to 20 years old

and 20 years old or longer, showing that the competitive advantage via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi, labor productivity (LP), is highly valued by the respondents who were working for firms that were from 10 to 20 years old and 20 years old or longer.

4.6.2 Total Factor Productivity (TFP): Firms' Age
The line graph shows the relationship between the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi: Total factor productivity (TFP) and firms' age (Fig 2). Fig 2 shows that this line tends to go down when the respondents were working for firms that were 10 to 20 years old. But this line tends to go up when the respondents were working for firms that were 20 years old or older, showing that the competitive advantage via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi, total factor productivity (TFP), is highly valued by the respondents who were working for firms that were 20 years old or older.
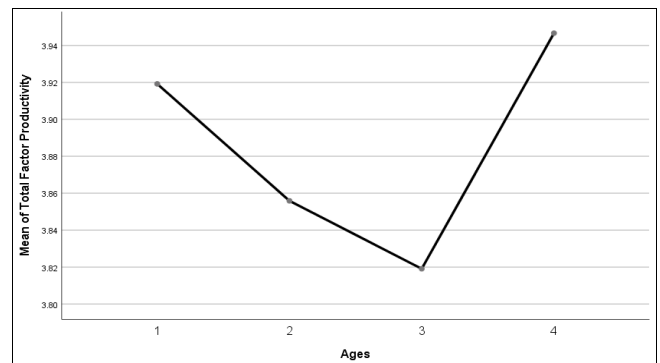

Fig 2: The line graph shows the relationship between the competitive advantages via productivity of construction firms in Hanoi: total factor productivity (TFP): and firms' age

5. Discussion and Implications
The production process of the construction industry often takes place outdoors, under the influence of direct environmental factors, so construction and installation are seasonal. These environmental factors affect construction techniques and progress, and contractors must also pay attention to measures to manage construction machines and outdoor materials. The construction takes a long time, and outdoor construction also creates unexpected damages, which is also a risk in the construction business. In addition, construction production is carried out in volatile locations. Construction products are fixed in nature and attached to the construction site. During the construction process, contractors must change locations frequently, thereby incurring a number of necessary costs. Risks typical of the construction industry. Moreover, construction activities are usually concentrated in the second half of the year and are influenced by Vietnamese habits.

Regarding the form of consumption, the products of construction firms are different from other goods because they are a single product that is consumed in its own way. For normal goods, after production, enterprises have to worry about consumption, but for construction products, they are often produced according to orders. After winning the construction contract, the unit will sign a construction contract with the investor and then execute according to the available drawings, so the properties of the construction products are not clearly shown because the Construction products are special goods.

Due to the above-mentioned product characteristics, in a construction firm, the recovery of capital depends greatly on the construction progress and payment technical stops in the signed contract. During the construction process, due to many reasons, both subjective and objective, such as making the wrong design, having to demolish it over and over again, unfavorable weather for construction, slow site clearance, and scarcity of materials, unsatisfactory construction progress affects the acceptance and capital recovery of the enterprise. Therefore, the mobilization of capital must also be flexible to meet the requirements of the proposed construction schedule. In addition, the characteristics of the construction industry are greatly affected by natural disasters and weather, especially for businesses that construct infrastructure and roads, so construction businesses also need to flexibly respond to weather conditions and climate by stretching or rushing construction. Therefore, capital mobilization also needs to be flexible and timely.

Enterprises should develop risk management policies and improve their financial risk management. Since then, increasing debt to change the new capital structure has been safe, reducing the risk of financial breakdown and increasing liquidity.

Building a database of firm activities, the market, and operating internal control and audit departments to assess the current state of business activities of enterprises thereby building investment plans and allocating financial resources more effectively. Focusing on market research and taking advantage of support funds from the government and foreign organizations to access preferential capital sources. In addition, join affiliate networks in production and business to take advantage of resources from the network of enterprises in the industry.

Construction enterprises should create a habit of accessing information through the media, websites of the Government, ministries, and agencies, seminars, training, etc. to catch up with changes in policy mechanisms, information from the Government, ministries, and branches, credit institutions, preferential packages to support firms in each period, as well as information on the consumption market.

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