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The Impact Of Organizational Factors, Technological Capabilities, And Knowledge Management As Mediators On Customer Relationship Management In Sri Lankan Travel Agencies

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Abstract

The research intends to identify how Knowledge Management (KM) explains the relationship between Organizational Factors (OF), Technological Capabilities (TC) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in travel agencies operating in Sri Lanka. This quantitative study employed simple random sampling, distributing 320 questionnaires to travel agencies and receiving 245 valid responses. The Resource-Based View (RBV), Knowledge Creation Theory (KCT), and IDIC theories and model were used in this study. Statistical tools, including SPSS and AMOS, were used for data analysis, with Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) applied to explore relationships within the data. The study found that OF and TC were both significantly related to KM which greatly influenced the success of CRM. More specifically, KM is found to only partial mediate the relationship between OF and TC and CRM enhancing them, which means that these organizational resources do have a direct effect on improvements of the metrics of CRM. Such strategies for efficiently utilizing internal and external resources are strategies for accumulating of resources without spending on internal developments are employed. It becomes clear that KM strategies need to be part of organizational policies so that CRM systems work better and can be adapted accordingly adding to both theory and practice to the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Finally, it is contended that such travel agencies should make every effort to enhance KM capabilities for better performance and sustaining their competitive edge in dynamic marketing scenarios.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Customer Relationship Management, Organizational Factors, Technological Capabilities, Sri Lankan Travel Agencies, Tourism Industry, Resource-Based View, Knowledge Creation Theory, IDIC Model, Structural Equation Modelling

Introduction

The emergence of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to major disruptions in global businesses, particularly in the tourism sector causing organizations to reconsider and renew their operational strategies (Knoema, 2023; WTTC, 2023). During this uncertain period, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) became an important part of any business that depended a lot on customer engagement such as tourism (Dah et al., 2023; Khanh et al., 2022). In coping with lockdowns and travel bans, firms had to realize the importance of managing customers' relationships through service outcomes that reflect their needs and what they expect for future services (Athambawa et al., 2023; Lianjie et al., 2023; Matikainen et al., 2023) . The country's tourism industry which is a significant contributor to the national economy was also not spared from these challenges facing it; as a result, it experienced huge setbacks including a sharp reduction in international tourist arrivals and its contribution towards world GDP significantly declined (UNWTO, 2022; WTTC, 2019).

In response to these challenges, organizational factors (OF) and technological capabilities (TC) have become key drivers of CRM practices (Dah et al., 2023; Jayasekera et al., 2023). For an organization to effectively use CRM systems, there is need for organizational factors such as leadership culture and internal processes (Stein et al., 2021). Such factors determine how well a firm can adapt to changes while maintaining customer relationships in a fast-moving market (Akasha et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020). Effective leadership has been highlighted as an important guard for the existing

relationship between the work environment and the level of job satisfaction, providing relevant information on the strategies to boost employee involvement and the improvement of CRM practices (Pathiranage et al., 2024; Zia, 2020). Grasping external forces and the intent of management is fundamental to the implementation of sustainable measures in the tourism sector(Wijesundara et al., 2024). Furthermore, capturing customer data by means of advanced technologies like IT infrastructure and data analytics should be done properly to offer individualized responses based on it (Anand et al., 2022; Kaluarachchige et al., 2023; Khashab et al., 2020).

Underpinning this integration is Knowledge Management (KM), which acts as an intermediary between OF like leadership culture etc., TC e.g IT infrastructure etc. Therefore, KM entails structured manipulation of organizational knowledge assets that facilitates innovation and ensures sustainable competitive advantage (Bloem & Salimi, 2023). In travel agencies as one segment of tourism industry explicit plus tacit knowledge must be managed so that new services are created addressing the altered requirements from clients (Chibuzor et al., 2019; Mahmood et al., 2023; Migdadi, 2020). Tacit knowledge, which is composed of employees' experiences or insights, plays a significant role in developing highly differentiated services that are hard to imitate and give the company a competitive edge (Koo et al., 2019; Mahboub et al., 2023).

By deploying CRM systems strategically with adequate KM practices and strong technological infrastructure, travel agencies will be able to maintain and enlarge customer loyalty base as such minimizing expenses and earnings (Abdullaeva, 2020; Dudek et al., 2019; Gazi et al., 2024; Karim et al., 2023). These systems can track customers' interactions, analyse their data so that services would be tailored specifically for each individual customer requirement being more crucial in the context of increasing competition within tourism industry and growing expectations from clients (Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; Majeed & Kadhum, 2022). To achieve effective strategies, it is also important to integrate technological capabilities for the enhancement of customer relationship management and trust(Jayathunga et al., 2024). Technological resources and knowledge dissemination can enhance customer relations and loyalty(Herath et al., 2023).

However traditional travel agencies have faced major challenges due to increased use of online platforms and the growth of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs). The rise of OTAs which by 2019 had captured a significant share of global tourism market has made it necessary for conventional travel agencies to embrace CRM and KM for them to be relevant (Botejue & Silva, 2017; Hossain et al., 2023; Munasinghe et al., 2022; Statista, 2022). The lowering cost of switching by customers due to OTAs convenience and accessibility has highlighted even more from superior CRM practices that these companies need to differentiate themselves (Mokhtaruddin et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have proven that corporate elements and tech skills are crucial when it comes to the triumph of CRM. This shows how organizational factors and technological capabilities necessitate effective KM practices for CRM to be successful (Al-Hazmi, 2021; Dah et al., 2023; Deif, 2023; Hashemi et al., 2018; Kocoglu & Kalem, 2020). For instance, Garrido-Moreno and Padilla-Melendez (2011) emphasized that organizational structures which encourage knowledge sharing are fundamental for the fruitful implementation of CRM strategies. Also, by linking CRM systems with KM frameworks, technological capabilities can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty through enabling more customized interactions (Lokesh et al., 2022).

These factors are particularly applicable in the case of Sri Lankan travel agents. The COVID pandemic's effects on this industry ought to encourage more reliance on CRM, backed by strong KM practices and technology tools that can support it. However, despite being recognized as critical, there is an apparent lack of literature examining how organizational factors and technological capabilities mediated by knowledge management affect customer relationship management outcomes within this context. Therefore, this research aims at bridging this gap through investigating these associations and suggesting ways in which Sri Lankan travel agencies might enhance their CRM practices for better overall business performance (Cheung & Lam, 2009; Herath et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2020).

This study will explore how these factors can be utilized to optimize CRM in the Sri Lankan travel trade while also exploring synergies between organizational factors, technological capabilities and KM. In addition, the report will suggest some ways forward for managers of travel companies as well as tourism policymakers regarding how they can blend customer relationship management (CRM), knowledge management (KM) and technology towards gaining sustainable competitive advantage even after the Covid-19 crisis.

Literature review

The role of knowledge management (KM) in improving customer relationship management (CRM) and promoting innovation within firms is gaining increasing prominence. KM systems encompass both tacit and explicit knowledge that should be made readily available to the needy parties (Jayasekera et al., 2022; Kharraz & Seçim, 2023). By being able to utilize information, businesses turn intangibles into tangibles hence fostering the flow of ideas for improvement while remaining competitive in the market (Anand et al., 2023; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2022).

Theoretical Foundations: Resource-Based View (RBV), Knowledge Creation Theory (KCT), and the IDIC Model

Several central theoretical frameworks underpin this research. These are Resource-based view (RBV), Knowledge creation theory (KCT) and IDIC model. Each of these theories and models provides a unique perspective on utilizing resources, knowledge, and customer relationships for sustaining competitive advantage.

Barney's (1991) resource-based view suggests that organizations can achieve a competitive edge through effective management of internal resources which encompass knowledge assets. Barney (1991) posits that RBV emphasizes valuable, rare inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources that can be used as leverage to gain competitive advantage (Barney et al., 2021). Some new studies have pointed out KM as being one strategic resource that fulfils these criteria thus enabling firms to improve their CRM outcomes while fostering innovation in them (González-Ramos et al., 2023). To improve the outcomes of CRM processes, there is a need in the field of hospitality to plan policies, promote them, implement them, and monitor them on a regular basis (Talib et al., 2023) . In relation to Sri Lankan travel agencies, the success of the businesses lies with those who effectively manage their knowledge resources to keep good customer relations and adjust to changes occurring within the market (Ariyawardana, 2021; Kaldeen & Nawaz, 2020; Kaluarachchige et al., 2023).

Knowledge Creation Theory is Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1996) concept for studying how companies form, share and use information (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1996). The SECI model ("Socialization", "Externalization", "Combination" & "Internalization") forms the basis of KCT by defining steps taken when transforming tacit knowledge (personal or context specific knowledge) into explicit one (formal or codified knowledge). For innovation purposes and organizational learning too an ongoing cycle of turning over of knowledge is essential (Nonaka et al., 2006; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1996). Recent empirical evidence has shown that significant gains are still evident because there is a strong relationship between knowledge creation practices and better customer service delivery leading to improved CRM functions inside companies today (Bloem & Salimi, 2023; Chibuzor et al., 2019; Rao et al., 2023; Yeh et al., 2019). To travel agencies; KCT helps understand how knowledge can be applied to meet the changing needs of customers in addition to developing innovative service models.

Peppers and Rogers (2004) developed the IDIC Model which outlines customer relations management through four steps: Identify, Differentiate, Interact and Customize. This model underscores the significance of understanding individual customer needs and preferences needed for long-term relationships (Peppers & Rogers, 2016, 2017). By identifying key customers, differentiating their needs, interacting effectively and customizing offerings, organizations can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Peppers & Rogers, 2004). The IDIC model is widely used in CRM practice with empirical evidence showing its effectiveness across various sectors including tourism (Khashab et al., 2020; Wong, 2020). Within Sri Lankan travel agencies, this approach allows them to follow a more systematic way in terms of managing customer relationships through using KM practices so that personalized services are produced.

Empirical Evidence and Application in the Tourism Industry

The integration of these theoretical frameworks—RBV, KCT, and the IDIC model—provides a comprehensive understanding of how KM, organizational factors (OF), and technological capabilities (TC) influence CRM outcomes. Tacit knowledge within the tourism business is important because it represents deeply embedded experiences and insights held by employees as well as consumers (Cooper, 2018; Garrick & Chan, 2017; Jayasekera et al., 2022; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2022). To realize such expectations therefore it is critical that this knowledge be effectively managed internally or shared externally hence leading to new products or services aimed at meeting customer demands as well as improving overall corporate performance in line with these requirements (Cooper, 2018; Degbey & Pelto, 2021).

Knowledge management practices and customer relationship management (CRM) success are said to be influenced heavily by organizational factors as per empirical studies. A good example is the Mendoza et al. (2022) study that found firms with strong leaders who encourage sharing knowledge among its members have higher chances of succeeding in their CRM implementation efforts. Moreover, organizations can improve their ability to collect and use client information when they employ advanced IT systems for data analytics purposes among others; thus, leading into better outcomes in terms of CRM (Rao et al., 2023). These results hold true especially within travel agencies operating within Sri Lanka since such establishments need effective knowledge control systems coupled with technological capabilities if they are to compete effectively within fast changing markets.

The socialization, externalization, combination, internalization (SECI) four-stage process of the SECI model helps move tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and vice versa thereby promoting continuous innovation within companies (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1996). This capacity for innovation is crucial in an industry like tourism where there is constantly changing consumer taste preferences if one is to stay ahead of rivals. Recent research has shown the relevancy of the SECI

model in tourism sector by illustrating how efficient management of information leads to development of new products and services that meet special customer needs (Avdimiotis et al., 2022; Farnese et al., 2019; Jayasekera et al., 2022; Martínez-Martínez et al., 2015).

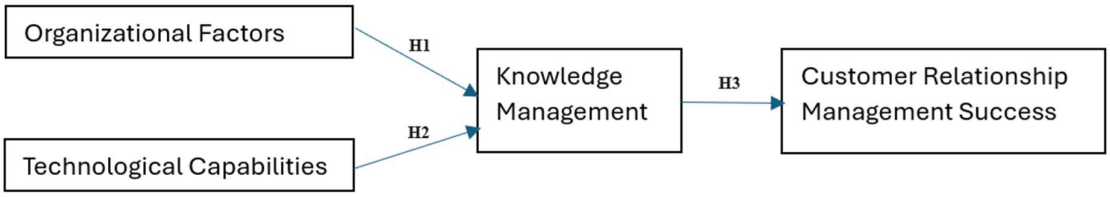
Furthermore, customization is a key aspect addressed in IDIC model when it comes to travel agencies which must distinguish themselves from other operators in a very crowded market. By utilizing KM to understand individual customers' requirements and tastes; agencies can deliver custom-made services that augment client satisfaction as well as loyalty. This argument is supported by current studies showing that firms with good, personalized customer relationship management practices tend to experience long-term accomplishments (Arslan, 2020; Dudek et al., 2019; Khashab et al., 2020)

This review emphasizes the necessity for fusing KM with CRM strategic plans to boost tourism sector performance. A key objective of this research is therefore, investigating whether knowledge management has any mediating role between organizational factors, technology capabilities and CRM outcomes to suggest possible ways through which Sri Lankan Travel Agencies can enhance their performance during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

This study integrates RBV, KCT, and IDIC models thus postulating several hypotheses on organizational factors, technological capabilities, KM's influence on this relationship and CRM success within Sri Lankan travel agencies.

H_1: Organizational Factors affects the level of KM of travel agencies based in Sri Lanka.
H_2: Technological capabilities affect the level of KM of travel agencies based in Sri Lanka.
H_3 KM enhances the success of customer relationship management in the travel agencies that are based in Sri Lanka.
H_4 There is a relationship between customer orientation and success in CRM, with KM acting as a mediation in the travel agencies based in Sri Lanka.
H_5 KM stands in between technological capabilities, and the customer relationship management success of travel agencies based in Sri Lanka.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors 'own elaboration

Methodology

This quantitative study investigates how Knowledge Management (KM) mediates the link between organizational factors and technological capabilities on one side, and customer relationship management (CRM) in Sri Lankan travel agencies. The research followed a systematic approach to data collection and analysis that guaranteed the dependability and validity of findings. A simple random sampling technique was employed to choose participants for this study. This method gives an equal opportunity for every registered travel agency within Western province to be included in the research, thus increasing its generalisability. Western province was selected since it is considered as that represent more than 75% travel agencies of Sri Lanka(SLTDA, 2023). Structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for collecting data about CRM practices, KM strategies, organizational factors and technological capabilities. The questions were adopted from validated instruments used in previous studies to ensure comprehensiveness and relevance of questions towards achieving research objectives. A pilot test was conducted before actual data collection exercise using small sample size to check for clarity and face validity; necessary adjustments were made accordingly. The final version of self-administered questionnaires was distributed among 320 travel agencies within western province where 245 responses were collected representing approximately 76.6% response rate. Mean imputation was applied to two incomplete questionnaires in order have complete dataset for analysis after dealing with missing data. Descriptive statistics will be calculated using SPSS inferential statistics will be measured by means of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via AMOS package software program. SEM is a powerful tool which enables simultaneous testing complex relationships involving many variables at once; hence it is best suited for mediating role testing like Knowledge Management in this study according to (Azam et al., 2021). In addition, SEM allows direct effects evaluation model fit assessment measurement errors accommodation therefore providing robust analytical framework (Zainudin, 2016).

Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) is mainly used to validate theoretical constructs as well as hypothesis testing thus it is confirmatory in nature. CB-SEM is well suited where there exist strong theories that have been established already or when the theory needs to be tested rigorously (Hair et al., 2021). On the other hand, Variance-Based SEM (VB-SEM) is more appropriate for exploratory research or when developing new theories are the main aims instead of verifying existing ones. The present study opted for CB-SEM since its purpose was to confirm theoretical constructs associated with KM and CRM within Sri Lankan travel agencies. Moreover, CB-SEM can deal with complicated models and has good strength in terms of theory confirmation through testing such as those involving organizational factors, technological capabilities, KM and CRM together (Henseler et al., 2016). Therefore, CB-SEM fits best considering that our focus was on confirming whether KM mediates between already established theoretical relationships. To conduct the analysis, SPSS was used for inferential statistics including descriptive analysis, reliability tests and exploratory factor analysis. AMOS software is a widely acknowledged program for CB-SEM which was used in this study for SEM. It allows more detailed examination of structural relationships between variables (Byrne, 2016).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table I. Descriptive statistics

Category	Category Option	Frequency	Percent
Length of company operation	5 years and below	70	28.6
	06 - 10 years	75	30.6
	11 - 15 years	92	37.6
	16 - 20 years	6	2.4
	Above 20 years	2	0.8
No of Employees	Less than 10	47	19.2
	10-25	144	58.8
	26 - 50	39	15.9
	51 - 75	11	4.5
	Above 75	4	1.6
Service in the company	5 years and below	157	64.1
	06 - 10 years	71	29
	11 - 15 years	15	6.1
	16 - 20 years	1	0.4
	Above 20 years	1	0.4
Business Type	Travel Agency	245	100
Age	18 - 30 years	34	13.9
	31- 40 years	109	44.5
	41- 50 years	77	31.4
	51- 60 years	22	9
	Above 60 years	3	1.2
Gender	Female	83	33.9
	Male	162	66.1

Source: Authors

Most travel agencies surveyed have been in business for 6 to 15 years, with 37.6% operating between 11 and 15 years, and another 30.6% running for 6-10 years. This means that most establishments are established but not very old; few (0.8%) can be considered as having existed above twenty years only. In terms of employees' numbers, it was found out that most firms employ small and medium workforce sizes, where about fifty-nine percent (58.8%) hire between ten to twenty-five people while some agencies (19.2%) have less than ten members showing limited scales of operations which is common among many regional travel agents.

Also, what is noticeable at this point is the relative newness of their staffs since sixty-four percent (64.1%) of workers have spent five or fewer years within these travel agencies- a sign of either high job rotations or recent rapid growth rates in personnel numbers.

From a demographic perspective majority belong to age bracket between 31 to 40 years accounting for 44.5%, closely followed by those aged between 41– 50-year-olds at 31.4%), this may imply most leaders or managers are middle aged

people. On gender issue it seems males dominate the sector since 66.1% percent of male respondents were recorded against women's representation which stood at 33.9% percent but still these figures could be taken as reflection broader trends within the industry taking into consideration cultural factors within region also affect equality levels experienced across different sectors including CRM & KM within these agencies as well.

Data validity and reliability

Reliability and validity were examined in order to ensure the data collected is robust. To measure sample adequacy, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was used which returned 0.859 indicating that sampling adequacy was good (Hair et al., 2015). For example, if KMO is above 0.8 it indicates that the sample size for factor analysis used was appropriate. The extraction method used in this study was Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which provided a cumulative total variance of 64.204% across four identified components. These extracted components are significant and will explain a lot of variations among data points (Hair et al., 2016). Taken together, these measures confirm the reliability and validity of the dataset thus ensuring robustness of further analyses.

Table II. Explanation of Total Variance

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.127	28.481	28.481	5.127	28.481	28.481	3.319	18.439	18.439
2	2.682	14.900	43.381	2.682	14.900	43.381	3.266	18.142	36.581
3	1.962	10.901	54.282	1.962	10.901	54.282	2.601	14.451	51.032
4	1.786	9.922	64.204	1.786	9.922	64.204	2.371	13.172	64.204

Source: Authors

Table III. Rotated Component Matrix

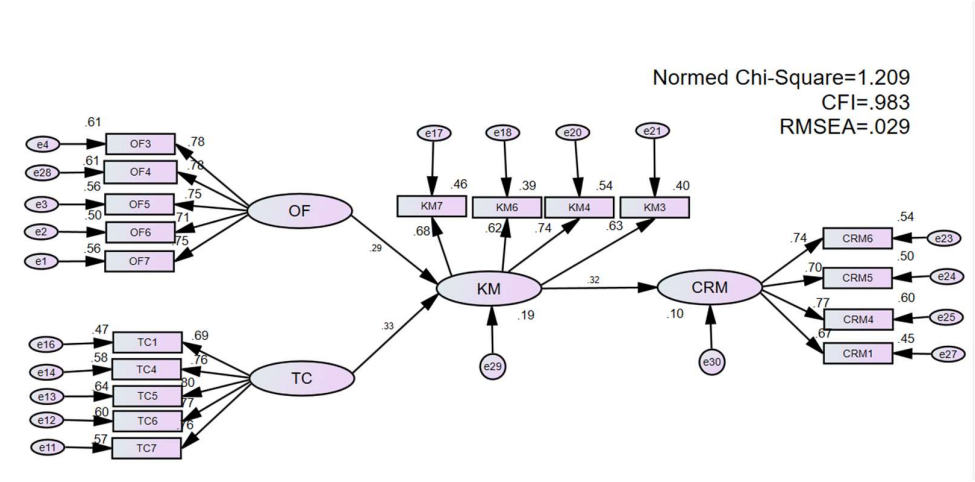
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
TC5	.830			
TC6	.818			
TC4	.807			
TC7	.772			
TC1	.746			
OF3		.819		
OF4		.810		
OF5		.792		
OF7		.773		
OF6		.771		
CRM4			.808	
CRM5			.798	
CRM6			.773	
CRM1			.750	
KM4				.788
KM6				.743
KM7				.741
KM3				.714

Source: AuthorsAs depicted by the Rotated Component Matrix, all four constructs had strong loadings on their respective components attaining values above 0.7, which is above the acceptable threshold for internal consistency of constructs (Hair et al., 2015). Specifically, there was strong loading on the first component with respect to technological capabilities (TC) items with loadings ranging from 0.746 to 0.830. For the second component, organizational factors (OF) had a significant loading of between 0.771 and 0.819 as shown by this study. Hence, customer relationship management (CRM) items were captured in the third component having loadings that varied from 0.750 to 0.808 while knowledge management

(KM) items loaded on the fourth component within a range of 0.714 to 0.788.To indicate that every item has high correlation with its intended construct thereby confirming its construct validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2016), these high loads are further supported by other studies . In addition, it can be concluded that such an approach also ensures that measurement model's faultless reliability and suitability for subsequent analysis since these high factor loadings validate proper quantification of constructs and their relevance based on theory underlying them in such measures (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; J. Hair et al., 2015).

SEM Analysis

Figure 2 Structural Equational Model (SEM)



Source: Authors

Table IV. Reliability of Measurement Model

Construct	No of Items	Alpha	CR	AVE	Normed Chi-Square	CFI	RMSEA
Organizational Factors	05	0.867	0.894	0.629	1.889	0.992	0.060
Technological Capabilities	05	0.768	0.895	0.631	2.347	0.988	0.074
Knowledge Management	04	0.765	0.834	0.557	1.224	0.997	0.038
Customer Relationship Management	04	0.815	0.863	0.612	2.134	0.989	0.068

Source: Authors

The Cronbach's Alpha was above 0.7 in every single case, varying between 0.765 to 0.867 which showed that enumerated constructs were very reliable (Hair et al., 2015). On the other hand, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were all above the acceptable threshold of .5 with AVE ranging from 0.557-0631 implying an adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These fit indices include Normed Chi-Square (ranging between 1.224 – 2.347), Comparative Fit Index (CFI values between .988-.997) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA values between .038-074) which are all within acceptable ranges suggesting a good fit of the model to data (Hair et al., 2015; Hu & Bentler, 1999). These indicators collectively confirm that this measurement model is reliable and valid in examining organizational factors, technological capabilities, knowledge management and customer relationship management relationships.

From the standardized regression weights, it is possible to determine how strong the influence and the direction in which the variables in the research study relate. For instance, it was found that the organizational factors OF had a positive influence and yet strong effect on the KM with a standard estimate of 0.272, which means that when there are changes towards enhancing organizational factors, such modifications positively improve KM practices (Hair et al., 2015). In comparison, that is lesser than the effect that technological capabilities TC has on KM which has an effect size of 0.313, thus emphasizing the importance of technological resources when it comes to the effectiveness of knowledge management practices (Ringle et al., 2022).

Table V. Estimates of the Structural Model

H	Relationship	Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Value
H1	Direct	KM	<--	OF	0.223	0.060	3.869	***
H2	Direct	KM	<--	TC	0.261	0.060	4.331	***
H3	Direct	CRM	<--	KM	0.392	0.098	3.996	***
Mediation Analysis								
H4	Indirect	KM	<--	OF	0.264	0.063	4.173	***
		CRM	<--	KM	0.234	0.100	2.331	0.020
	Direct	CRM	<--	OF	0.270	0.079	3.438	***
H5	Indirect	KM	<--	TC	0.289	0.063	4.597	***
		CRM	<--	KM	0.227	0.101	2.250	0.024
	Direct	CRM	<--	TC	0.250	0.078	3.181	.001

Source: AuthorsThe findings show that Organizational Factors (OF) and Technological Capabilities (TC) induce the direct impact on Knowledge Management (KM). The results of the analysis indicate that the path coefficient of OF and KM (H1) is 0.223, standard error (SE) 0.060, critical ratio (C.R) 3.869 at the level of significance *** ($P < 0.001$). This means that the improvement in the organizational factors will help greatly improve the KM practices in the travel and allied agencies. Likewise, the relationship with the path from TC to KM (H2) reveals also significant influence at 0.261 (SE = 0.060, C.R. = 4.331), significant at the level ***, emphasizing particularly the value that the technological capacities add towards successful management of knowledge (Hair et al., 2016).

The direct effect of KM on CRM (H3) is also significant, with a path coefficient of 0.392 (SE = 0.098, C.R. = 3.996). This means that when knowledge management function is well improved then the customer relationship management success is rated high. Such relationship emphasizes the centrality of effective knowledge management practices to the attainment of desirable customer relationship management, affirming that customer relationships can only be sustained if the right resources regarding knowledge are managed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis additionally seeks to identify which indirect effects the OF and TC exert on CRM via KM. For the mediation OF→KM→CRM (H4), For KM's regression on OF, the results show that the coefficient is 0.264 (SE =0.063, C.R. =4.173, $P < .001$) followed by the regression of CRM on KM with a coefficient of 0.234 (SE = .100, C.R. = 2.331, P = .020). Thus, there is ample evidence to believe that KM has a partial mediation effect towards the OF and CRM link. So, whoever is responsible for the CRM can also do so indirectly as a function of KM improvements due to the organizational factors (Aghazadeh et al., 2022; Sapta et al., 2021).

The mediation effect pointed out previously, i.e., TC's impact on CRM through KM is also confirmed. In this case, the estimation of the path leading to KM from the TC was 0.289 (SE = 0.063, C.R. = 4.597, $P < 0.001$), this parameter was lower for the next path leading to CRM, 0.227 (SE = 0.101, C. R. = 2.250, P = 0.024). In other words, KM also works as a partial mediator for the effect of technological capabilities on CRM, which means that the influence of such technologies on the management of customer relationships is largely dependent on how effective the KM in the firm is (Heredia et al., 2022; Sejana Jose & Varghese, 2023; Tarighi et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This paper provides evidence of the importance of Organizational Factors and Technological Capabilities in achieving proper Knowledge Management (KM) that enhances efficacy in Sri Lanka travel agencies' Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The integration of RBV, KCT, and the IDIC model into the analysis also helps to explain the way in which travel agencies could exploit their resources and knowledge effectively to be useful in gaining a competitive advantage in CRM. These results not only provide an empirical basis for further the academic development of KM and CRM, but also provide practical knowledge for the practitioners in the travel business and the tourism authority in Sri Lanka. If the Sri Lankan travel companies promote a knowledge sharing culture, implement efficient KM systems and provide their staff with the right tools and instructions, they will tremendously improve their customer orientation and technological competencies. This strategic fit will further empower them to cultivate better customer relationships, appropriately respond to market needs and achieve sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly customer-centric

marketplace. Strategic CRM deployment, KM practices, and technological infrastructure can enhance customer loyalty, minimize expenses, and improve service quality in the tourism industry.

Lastly, this study is about the integration of practical and theoretical knowledge and emphasizes the importance of improving the KM concepts to achieve success in CRM operations within the dynamic and competitive travel business in Sri Lanka.

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