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Entrepreneurial orientation and competitive intelligence: cultural intelligence as a moderator

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) in promoting competitive intelligence (CI). CI is an organization's capability to acquire and decode competitor information to enhance its competencies for capturing opportunities in the market place. In view of the importance of CI in the organization's growth, organizational factors that leverage CI still have attracted scholarly attention. This research also seeks an understanding into the moderating role of leaders' cultural intelligence (CQ) on the EO–CI relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – The research model was tested on cross-sectional data from 409 respondents from multi-national companies (MNCs) in Vietnam business context.

Findings – Research findings confirmed the moderating role that leaders' CQ plays on the positive effect of EO on CI.

Originality/value – This research contributes to literature through identifying the convergence of entrepreneurship and CI research streams, and the moderation role of CQ on the EO–CI relationship in multi-nationals.

Keywords Vietnam, Entrepreneurial orientation, Competitive intelligence, Cultural intelligence

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Vietnamese firms have been attempting to enhance their competitive advantage for survival as well as sustainable growth (Duy Tien, 2014). Competitive intelligence (CI) or the understanding of competitive forces (Benny, 2013; Halt *et al.*, 2014) has emerged as a mantra for success in today's competitive environment (Agnihotri and Rapp, 2011). CI is precious for the formulation and implementation of business strategies (Dishman and Calof, 2008). Contemporary marketing writings underscore the magnitude of CI in shaping strategic marketing decisions (Kotler and Keller, 2012) and building market-oriented organizations (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993).

Calof and Wright (2008) view CI as an ethical act to increase a firm's dynamic capabilities over its competitors through collecting and decoding competitor information. CI can be increased not only through relational factors such as communication (Rinallo and Borghini, 2003) and trust (Arnett *et al.*, 2000) between the firm and its external stakeholders, but also through sustainable, externally directed forces within the firm.



One of these sustainable, externally directed forces is entrepreneurial orientation (EO) – a firm's degree of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking (Gnizy and Shoham, 2014). According to Davis *et al.* (2009), entrepreneurial firms are more likely to engage in environmental-scanning activities such as gathering competitor information, so that they remain abreast of economic and technological trends more than their competitors. Yet, EO research has not assessed the contribution of EO to CI. Furthermore, EO research has not investigated moderators for the relationship between EO and CI. In culturally diverse settings like multi-national companies (MNCs), expatriate managers' cultural intelligence (CQ) – their understanding of and adaptation to local employees' values – gives rise to trust (Cazier *et al.*, 2007) and commitment (Zhang and Bloemer, 2011). Expatriate managers' CQ also fosters the congruence between organizational and employee values (Adair *et al.*, 2013), through which local employees increase their responsiveness and commitment to their organization's entrepreneurial strategic posture and become more proactive in competitor information search. This interaction pattern of EO and CQ in predicting CI remains a research gap.

Against this background, the current research makes three key contributions to the literature. The primary aim of the research is to assess the contribution of EO to CI (Research Gap 1). The second research aim is to assess the moderation role of CQ on the effect of EO on CI (Research Gap 2). The last aim is to model such assessments in the context of multi-nationals in Vietnam (Research Gap 3).

Constructs and their potential relationships will be reviewed and discussed in the next section and test results for these relationships will be presented in the findings section, from which theoretical and managerial implications emerge.

Literature review and hypotheses development

EO and CI

CI provides a framework for the accumulation and dissection of elements about competitor activities (Wright *et al.*, 2009). CI also alludes to an organization's capability to decode and surmount competency gaps as well as value gaps between itself and its competitors (Luu, 2013a). Calof and Wright (2008) further view CI as an evolving process by which an organization assesses competencies and behaviors of its current and potential competitors for an action plan to increase its competitiveness. With the inclusion of ethics element into this process, CI indicates the legal and ethical collection, analysis and management of competitor information (Benny, 2013; Luu, 2013a, 2013b; Halt *et al.*, 2014).

As Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) maintain, in several industries, it is no longer feasible to think that analytical planning will lead to competitive success, but there is a necessity for much more experimental planning (McGrath and MacMillan, 2000) that EO can promote.

EO comprises the corporate policies and practices that enable an organization to adopt an entrepreneurial posture toward novel business opportunities (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). EO facilitates organizations' capability to discern new opportunities with potentially large returns, target premium customers and obtain first-mover advantages (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). EO consists of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking (Covin and Slevin, 1989; Frishammar and Åke Hörte, 2007; Gnizy and Shoham, 2014). The proactiveness dimension of entrepreneurial strategic posture is an organization's propensity to take the initiative to compete aggressively with other organizations (Covin

and Slevin, 1989). Risk-taking is its propensity to capture business-related opportunities in the face of uncertainty. Both proactiveness and risk-taking dimensions of EO demand an organization to make rapid decisions and aggressively compete by implementing bold strategies. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) also propose competitive aggressiveness as an aspect of EO. In other words, entrepreneurial organizations may proactively explore competitor information to capture opportunities at a higher speed than their competitors. They also innovate ways to search competitor data, such as through new relationships in the supply chain or the application of new data mining technique.

To capture such opportunities, an organization needs to gather and analyze early signs of a competitor's potential deeds, which is focal for sustaining its competitive advantage (Trim and Lee, 2008). Proactiveness for early competitor information mirrors the orientation toward competitive forces, which Qiu (2008) reports as influencing CI. Therefore, the more entrepreneurial an organization is, the more acutely and earlier it notices opportunities through competitor information, as Baumard (1994, p. 37) highlights "the first step of any intelligence process is not to scan, but to notice".

Moreover, in the light of resource-advantage theory, EO is the resource enabling an organization to outperform its competitors (Phokha and Nonsrimuang, 2013). Proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking of EO (De Clercq *et al.*, 2013) help an organization look out of the box and ahead of its competitors, adopt novel ideas as well as experiment new opportunities. Entrepreneurial organizations thus understand their competitor activities and introduce new products or services ahead of competition (Venkatraman, 1989, p. 949). EO also refers to the strategy-making policies and practices used to identify and launch new ventures (Miller, 2011). In other words, an organization's entrepreneurial deeds seek the greatest opportunity for its outperformance in the marketplace as opposed to more conservative deeds (Covin *et al.*, 2006).

Furthermore, EO with proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking dimensions (Gnizy and Shoham, 2014) may shape speed culture, innovative culture and openness culture, respectively, which Arnett *et al.* (2000) found as environmental factors influencing CI process. Building on this reasoning, we advance the ensuing hypothesis:

H1. EO positively relates to CI.

CQ as a moderator

CQ alludes to an individual's competence to interact optimally in cultural diversity settings (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008; Adair *et al.*, 2013). Managers' CQ reflects their ability to adapt to another culture (Johnson *et al.*, 2006) and engender the congruence between values of the mother company and values of its local individuals for augmented understanding, interaction, trust and collaboration (Schwartz, 2011).

Such a value congruence that managers' CQ cultivates (Lamm *et al.*, 2010) navigates employees who are working under entrepreneurial strategic posture closer to entrepreneurial values, thereby proactively acquiring competitor information. This is in line with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) holding that intangible resources interact with strategic posture to produce superior firm performance (Newbert, 2007). In this case, intangible resources, including capabilities like managers' CQ, are useful in increasing competitive scanning that is associated with entrepreneurial strategic posture.

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) also view CQ cultivation as a panacea for successful interrelationship in the workplace. CQ also promotes trust (Rockstuhl and Ng, 2008) and commitment (Naumann, 1993). In an entrepreneurial organization with managers high in CQ, relationships and trust between employees and their organization reach high levels, giving rise to employees' strong impulse to proactively build the pool of knowledge, with regard to competitors in competitiveness-building process. Furthermore, understanding employees' values enables the transfer of autonomy to them (Humphrey, 2013). In an entrepreneurial organization, autonomous employees tend to be more proactive and innovative in competitor information acquisition process (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Furthermore, as CQ is a set of learning capabilities (Ng *et al.*, 2009), managers tend to learn about their employees. Through understanding the degree of employee value congruence and their self-efficacy to adapt their values to entrepreneurial strategic posture, managers can nurture their entrepreneurial actions, such as their proactive engagement in CI process.

CQ comprises four dimensions – metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral (Earley and Ang, 2003; Adair *et al.*, 2013). Metacognitive CQ reflects managers' relevant cultural capabilities, including planning, monitoring and adapting mental models of cultural norms and beliefs for their employees (Ang *et al.*, 2007) as well as helping them adapt their mental models. Therefore, if employee values display low congruence with entrepreneurial values of the organization, then managers high in metacognitive CQ will make investment in adapting employees' mental models to entrepreneurial values, with which they proactively engage in CI process.

Cognitive CQ reflects mental maps of cultural values, norms and practices, acquired from educational and personal experiences. Managers high in cognitive CQ have sufficient knowledge about similarities and differences across cultures (Brislin *et al.*, 2006), and such knowledge is key for an effective act to reduce the gap between employee values and the organization's entrepreneurial values. Cognitive CQ also produces shared conversations (Choo, 2000), through which the interpretation and construction of beliefs take place, such as beliefs about the role of proactive search for competitor information in building the organization's competitive advantage.

Managers who are high in motivational CQ exhibit intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy in their cross-cultural settings (Bandura, 2002). They are, hence, inspired for cultural exposure and experiences (Mirvis *et al.*, 2010). When managers enjoy successful intercultural interactions with other members (due in part to high motivational CQ), they are likely to support their proactive opportunity scanning.

Behavioral CQ mirrors intercultural communication sensitivity as well as flexibility in interaction with others (Ang *et al.*, 2007). Behavioral CQ indicates the competence of displaying appropriate verbal and non-verbal deeds in the process of interacting with individuals from different cultures (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2013). This is the outermost layer of CQ which reflects strong inner cognitive and affective drives of CQ. Managers' behavioral CQ also entails their interpersonal skills and the capability in cross-cultural encounters to engage in quality social reciprocal activities (Ang *et al.*, 2006), leading to effective communications with local stakeholders for competitor information. Following this logic, CQ is posited to play an intensifying role in the relationship between EO and CI.

H2. CQ positively moderates the relationship between EO and CI.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among all variables in the research model.

Research methodology

Sampling and data collection

Data were collected between November 2013 and February 2014. Through introductions from our manager training classes, respondents’ co-operation was initially elicited through telephone calls, not through the nomination of their superiors. Middle-level members were recruited as they are key respondents of data on organizational attributes and organizational changes (Glick *et al.*, 1990) such as through entrepreneurial deeds. Beresford and Michels (2014) also view the meso-level managers as key enablers in the entrepreneurial process.

The self-administered questionnaire and its cover letter were then emailed to each manager. A reminder email was sent to non-respondents after ten days. Respondents were encouraged to relay the email to other managers who also belonged to the target population of interest (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). Respondents came from 132 MNCs from diverse industries in Vietnam business setting. Such diversity is vital for testing research hypotheses which are posited to be applicable across different organizational contexts. Of the respondents, 39.36 per cent were female; their average age was 37.4 years (SD = 8.7); they had an average job tenure of 9.6 years (SD = 1.2); and they were employed as chief accountants (10.02 per cent), HR managers (11.98 per cent), operations managers (31.05 per cent), marketing managers (19.07 per cent), sales managers (22.98 per cent) and others (4.89 per cent).

From the 660 questionnaires, 467 responses were returned, among which 58 (12.42 per cent) contained missing data. From Hair *et al.*’s (2006, p. 55) standpoint, “missing data under 10 per cent for an individual case or observation can generally be ignored”; hence, albeit the data are missing at random (Little MCAR test: Chi-square = 848.27, df = 273, sig = 0.208), responses with missing data rates higher than 10 per cent were removed, resulting in 409 responses appropriate for analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2006), a usable response rate of 61.97 per cent.

Measures

Respondents indicated their perceptions on items measuring EO, CI and CQ on a five-point Likert scale of 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”.

Entrepreneurial orientation. Adapted from instruments by Covin and Slevin (1989) and Miller and Friesen (1982), the eight-item EO scale comprises the three dimensions: proactiveness with two items (e.g. Our organization is typically the first to initiate actions to competitors, for which the competitors then respond), innovativeness with three items (e.g. Our organization has introduced a lot of new products or services in the

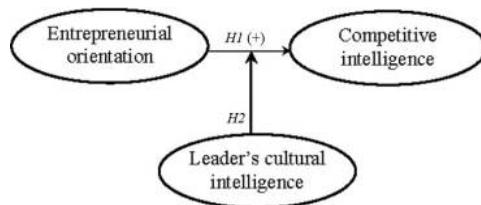


Figure 1.
The research model

past five years) and risk-taking with three items (e.g. Our organization has a strong propensity toward getting involved in high-risk projects (with a chance for high yield)).

Competitive intelligence. CI was gauged through a 27-item scale adapted from [Beal \(2000\)](#), which examines how extensively and frequently respondents scan information from six market sectors: customer (three items), competitor (five items), supplier (three items), corporate resources (six items), technology (two items) and socioeconomic (eight items) sectors.

Cultural intelligence. This was measured through the 20-item CQ Scale (CQS) of [Ang and Van Dyne \(2008\)](#), which encompasses four metacognitive items (e.g. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me), six cognitive items (e.g. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures), five motivational items (e.g. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures) and five behavioral items (e.g. I change my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when cross-cultural interaction requires it). Overall CQ score was computed from the weighted scores based on the number of items in each of the factors: Overall CQ = metacognitive CQ/4 + cognitive CQ/6 + motivational CQ/5 + behavioral CQ/5.

Control variables. Organizational size and organizational age were controlled due to their inclination to produce organizational inertia, which may reduce the likelihood of change ([Tushman and Romanelli, 1985](#)) such as through EO. Besides, organizational age is to some extent associated with the level of managerial innovativeness competencies ([Huergo and Jaumandreu, 2004](#)) and, thus, influences EO. Larger organizations also tend to possess necessary resources to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities ([Bantel and Jackson, 1989](#)). Organizational size was measured by the natural log of the total number of employees and organizational age in years as establishment ([Brettel et al., 2011](#)).

Findings

Validity and reliability

The descriptive statistics of the constructs is displayed in [Table I](#). The scales' reliability was potentially enhanced from the use of multiple-item scales ([Neuman, 2000](#)). The reliability of each construct and its specific dimensions was gauged through Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The composite reliability of each research variable ranges from 0.72 to 0.81, above 0.6 as proposed by [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) and [Bagozzi and Yi \(1988\)](#). Convergent validity was also attained as the resulting average variance extracted for each scale ranges from 0.517 to 0.661, above 0.5 from [Fornell and Larcker's \(1981\)](#)

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	CCR	AVE
Organizational size ^a	5.68	0.72							
Organizational age	23.7	11.4	0.06						
EO	3.74	0.49	0.03	0.06	(0.81)			0.76	0.662
Competitive intelligence	3.57	0.51	0.02	0.03	0.36***	(0.79)		0.72	0.619
CQ	3.68	0.54	0.03	0.01	0.31**	0.16*	(0.71)	0.81	0.504

Notes: CCR = composite construct reliability, AVE = average variance extracted; values in parentheses display the square root of the average variance extracted; standardized correlations reported * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; ^a value is the natural logarithm

Table I.
Construct inter-correlations for the confirmatory factor analysis

perspective. As displayed on the diagonal in Table I, the square root of the average variance extracted for each construct exceeds the standardized correlation between the construct and each of the other constructs, which denotes the Fornell and Larcker's (1981) test is met for all pairs of constructs or discriminant validity is attained. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) established construct validity. Table I portrays correlations among the latent constructs in the CFA. Chi-square statistics and three fit indices were used to assess two main components – the overall acceptability of the measurement model and the significance of the factor loadings for each item. Such indices as non-normed fit index (NNFI), Tucker–Lewis coefficient (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were utilized to assess the model. The fit indices with NNFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.96; CFI = 0.95, which surpass the 0.90 benchmark (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001), indicate the data-model fit. Likewise, the level of misfit was tolerable, with RMSEA = 0.04, under the relevant benchmark of 0.10 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Besides, model fit is further fortified through $\chi^2/df = 319.74/172 = 1.86$ which is under 2 (Carmines and McIver, 1981).

Common method issue

Potential common method variance (CMV) bias was addressed, as constructs were concrete, externally verifiable and reached highly experienced respondents (Rindfleisch *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, CMV bias risk was also assessed through Harmon's one-factor test (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), in which all of the items for our latent variables were entered into a single factor using CFA procedures. The poor model fit ($\chi^2 = 514.29$, $df = 172$, NNFI = 0.67; TLI = 0.69; CFI = 0.65, RMSEA = 0.19) depicted no general factor accounting for the preponderance of covariance across the variables.

Aggregation

The appropriateness of aggregating individual scores of EO to the group level (i.e. organizational level) was assessed through between-group differences and within-group agreement. Two intra-class correlations (ICCs) for assessing agreement among group members were resorted to. The ICC1 indicates the level of agreement among ratings from members of the same group. ICC2, on the other hand, depicts whether groups can be differentiated on the variables under study. The ICC1 and ICC2 for EO were 0.18 and 0.79, respectively. The F-value for ANOVA tests was all significant ($p < 0.01$). The r_{wg} average value was furthermore calculated (James *et al.*, 1984). The r_{wg} average value was 0.82 for EO ranging between 0.73 and 0.86, all meeting the recommended cutoff value of 0.70 (Klein *et al.*, 2001). These findings demonstrate the appropriateness for analysis of the data at the organizational level.

Hypotheses tests

The hypotheses were tested through hierarchical multiple regression analysis following Cohen *et al.*'s (2003) procedures. The testing process commenced with the estimation of a model with a simple effect (without the CQ interaction effect), plus the effects of the control variables (Model 1 in Table II). The hypothesized model (Model 2 in Table II), which incorporates the CQ interaction effect, was then estimated. The addition of the hypothesized interaction significantly improved model fit (Satorra–Bentler scaled chi-square difference test (Satorra and Bentler, 2001): $\Delta \chi^2_{SB} = 13.108$, $p < 0.01$). The R^2 values also unveil that the model expounds a large proportion of variance in the endogenous variables (EO = 31.8 per cent and CI = 16.2 per cent) (Figure 2).

Model paths	Model 1 (baseline)	Model 2 (hypothesized)
<i>Competitive intelligence</i>		
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.546 (0.044)***	0.544 (0.042)***
Cultural intelligence	0.145 (0.036)*	0.143 (0.034)*
EO × Cultural intelligence	–	0.281 (0.037)**
<i>Control variables</i>		
Organizational size	0.053 (0.026)	0.053 (0.023)
Organizational age	0.032 (0.011)	0.032 (0.011)
<i>Model characteristics</i>		
Log-likelihood	–11,028.215	–11,024.217
Scaling factor	1.246	1.243
Free parameters	168	171

Table II.
Estimated
unstandardized path
coefficients (standard
errors)

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

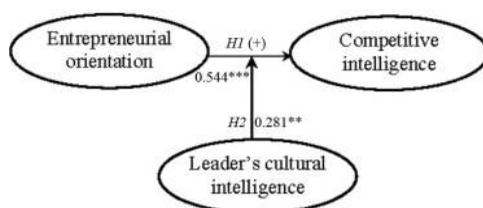


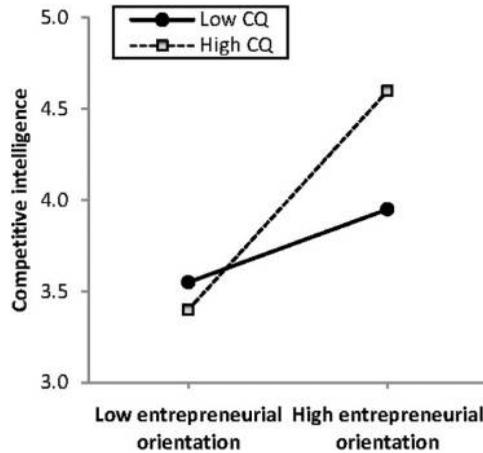
Figure 2.
Model estimation
results

By entering control variables (organizational size and organizational age) as a single block in the first step, their effects were examined. The first step of the hierarchical regression analysis denotes that organizational size ($\beta = 0.053$, $p > 0.10$) and organizational age ($\beta = 0.032$, $p > 0.10$) have no significant correlation with the degree of CI. The control variables together accounted for 1.7 per cent of the variance in CI ($R^2 = 0.017$, $p > 0.10$).

As depicted in Table II and Figure 3, $H1$ on the linkage between EO and CI was confirmed on the premise of the positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.544$, $p < 0.001$). $H2$ posited that CQ positively moderates the effect of EO on CI. For investigating EO by CQ interaction, their product term was added to the baseline model. EO by CQ interaction term was significant ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.01$). The nature of the interaction was further assessed by plotting the relation between EO and CI at high and low levels of CQ (defined as $+1/-1$ standard deviation from the mean [Aiken and West, 1991]). Figure 2 unveils that the interconnection between EO and CI was stronger when CQ was high (simple slope = 1.2, $p < 0.01$) versus low (simple slope = 0.4, $p < 0.01$), confirming $H2$.

To increase the credibility of research results, an alternative model was fit to the data. The alternative model is a model in which CI precedes EO. The fit of this model was worse than the fit of the hypothesized model: $\chi^2 = 469.53$, $df = 172$, $p < 0.01$, NNFI = 0.87, TLI = 0.84, CFI = 0.85, RMSEA = 0.11, and the difference between the two models was significant: $\Delta \chi^2 = 149.79$, $p < 0.01$.

Figure 3.
Moderating effect of
CQ



Discussion

Theoretical implications

This research produces numerous theoretical contributions. It extends CI research by assessing the predictive role of EO for CI. Besides, through the role of EO as an antecedent of CI, the current research has integrated contextual factors and relational factors, whose predictive roles for CI have been separately investigated in empirical studies, into the concept “EO”. Prior studies have reported some contextual factors for CI, such as speed culture, innovative culture and openness culture, and relational factors for CI, such as communication and trust (Rinallo and Borghini, 2003; Arnett *et al.*, 2000). Yet, such contextual factors and relational factors are reflected in the concept “EO”. EO reflects high levels of communication and trust (Hill and Wright, 2000; De Clercq and Rius, 2007). The components of EO – proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking (Gnizy and Shoham, 2014) – also correspond to the nature of speed culture, innovative culture and openness culture, as proactiveness indicates an organization’s higher speed in identifying or creating opportunities than its competitors, and risk-taking indicates its openness to and experimentation of the newness (Covin and Slevin, 1989).

The current research thus adds richness to EO literature through this convergence between EO and marketing research in general and CI research in particular. This research opens new research directions on the relationships between EO and marketing-related outcomes, such as customer satisfaction and brand extensions. The relationship between EO and CI also denotes the role of change forces inside the organization such as EO in cultivating externally oriented forces, such as interactions with external stakeholders for competitor data acquisition. This point distinguishes the current research from other studies that have tended to focus on the role of external forces in building change forces inside the organization. Another convergence between EO and CI research is that through the bridge between EO and CI, “ethics” element in EO (Dunham, 2010) can be transferred to CI which entails ethical winning in the marketplace through the sustainable creation of new strengths and opportunities rather than through the exploitation of co-players’ weaknesses (Luu, 2013a, 2013b).

The moderating role of CQ on the effect of EO on CI broadens CQ research. CQ literature has revolved around its predictive role for individual performance in MNCs,

including employee satisfaction, communication effectiveness (Bücker *et al.*, 2014) and commitment (Naumann, 1993). As such, CQ research has covered the effects of CQ on employee variables, but has not discerned the role of leaders' CQ – an essential attribute of their leadership (Kessler and Wong-Mingji, 2009) – in intensifying the relationship between EO and CI. This research can be deemed among the pioneers to discern CQ as a moderator rather than an antecedent of employee outcomes. In an MNC with high rather than low CQ levels of managers, employees demonstrate high commitment to entrepreneurial strategic posture by building competitors' profiles for opportunity identification. Furthermore, the interaction between CQ and EO in this research model also indicates the convergence between CQ and EO research. Expatriate leaders' empathy toward employees that CQ promotes (Thomas *et al.*, 2008) can interact with employee empathy toward other stakeholders embedded in EO (Harris *et al.*, 2009) in strengthening the effect of EO on proactive impulse to explore the competitive landscape.

Managerial implications

The current research indicates that CI should be promoted by proactive, externally directed forces, such as EO. MNC leaders should therefore inspire “external proactiveness” (Annandale, 2000), which steers employees to interact proactively with customers or suppliers for competitor information.

Furthermore, on account of the moderating role of CQ, expatriate managers need to self-train (from expatriate predecessors in the same branch company or from expatriate managers in branch companies of similar culture) and undergo training to increase their cultural awareness of the place where they are going to work, as well as incessantly increase their cultural awareness through their cultural exposure to local culture and people living in it, especially employees and customers.

Albeit a local culture may contain some weak values, expatriate managers should first accommodate to local employees' values, then stretch their value set incrementally to strong values of the MNC such as entrepreneurial values. Bridges (1991) highlights that the transitional phase from old values to new values is needed to reduce employee frustration and resistance that tend to arise in case of radical unfreezing of old values from the local culture.

MNC leaders should integrate entrepreneurial posture into corporate strategies as well as human resource practices, especially training. Expatriate managers with high CQ understand the gap between employees' value set and the organization's entrepreneurial value set, thereby designing an appropriate value training program for employees. Training should be combined with coaching and mentoring to infuse entrepreneurial values into employees' daily actions. Managers should mentor and encourage risk-taking or display their tolerance of certain errors that may come from the experimentation of new ideas as well as may provoke ideas for new solutions. Such a mentoring act is in line with Pascale and Sternin's (2005) view that employees tend to act into a new way of thinking. Mentoring employees to act entrepreneurially in their daily activities may gradually cultivate their entrepreneurial thinking.

Leaders should role-model and inspire employees to be “intrapreneurs” (Guerrero and Peña-Legazkue, 2013) in their daily activities as well as in creating new approaches to garner competitor information. Entrepreneurial acts should be “refreezed” (Lewin,

Limitations and future research direction

Limitations should be addressed for future appropriate use of research findings. The constructs in our research were gauged through perceptual measures which may not be observable in the workplace. The changes in the degree of CI that EO yields should be longitudinally observed, rather than through a single cross-sectional study. Due to the susceptibility of cross-sectional, self-report data to CMV bias, Harmon's one-factor test was conducted (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) to verify that CMV bias was not a grave threat in our research. In addition, CMV bias was reduced through data collection at different points in time (time separation) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Because Western theories underpin our current research, a sample of MNCs in the Vietnamese context can be deemed to be a forte of this research. Nonetheless, our generalizability may be limited to companies in which Vietnamese local culture exists. Moreover, due to the effect of companies' sub-national embeddedness on sub-national business and employment systems (Almond, 2011), our research results should be replicated in companies which have extended their investments to provinces with different cultural values from their original locations. Findings should also be tested in industries, such as primary health care services, whose less flexible culture may impede proactiveness and innovativeness.

Because data on competitor activities is accessible via relationships with customers or suppliers (Helms *et al.*, 2000), supply chain integration, which builds bonds and information sharing between the organization and business partners (Liu *et al.*, 2013; Eksoz *et al.*, 2014), may influence competitor information collection. A novel research path should thus investigate the predictive role of supply chain integration for CI.

Additionally, organizations which engender high commitment in employees tend to drive them to entrepreneurially explore competitor information. Contextual factors that enhance employee commitment, such as perceived organizational support (Caesens *et al.*, 2014) or procedural justice (Moon *et al.*, 2014), may play a moderating role for the relationship between EO and CI in a new research model.

Furthermore, learning promotes CI, as it augments the competence to collect and decipher information about current and future behaviors of competitors (Vedder and Guynes, 2002). Meanwhile, EO influences not solely learning orientation (Real *et al.*, 2012) but, more specifically, acquisitive and experimental learning (Kreiser, 2011) as well. The mediating role of learning between EO and CI thus may be of interest to management scholars.

Conclusion

Through the effect of EO on CI, this research underscores the role of internal forces in the organization such as EO in cultivating CI. In addition to advancing EO, CI and CQ literature, the current research suggests managers in MNCs enhance their CQ – a crucial component of their leadership especially in culturally diverse settings – which helps intensify the relationship between EO and CI.

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