Intersecta Minds Journal

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

Peer-Reviewed & Open Access Journal

Intersecta Minds Journal

Social Sciences, Management Science
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Intersecta Minds Journal Scopes and Aims

Welcome to *Intersecta Minds Journal*, a multidisciplinary journal platform dedicated to fostering intellectual exploration and advancing knowledge in the realms of Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management, and Education. Our mission is to provide a space for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to share their insights, engage in interdisciplinary discourse, and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of human understanding. Here are the scopes and aims that define our commitment to excellence.

Intersecta Minds Journal is a Peer-Reviewed Journals and Full Open Access journal, published via publisher platforms, in full open access journals by 3 peer reviewers for every article.

Scopes:

1. Interdisciplinary Discourse:

We encourage submissions that bridge the gaps between traditional academic disciplines, fostering a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives. Interdisciplinary research is at the core of our journal, reflecting the interconnected nature of human experience.

2. Social Science Exploration:

Our journal welcomes contributions that delve into the complexities of human societies, exploring topics such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and more. We aim to showcase research that deepens our understanding of societal structures, dynamics, and challenges.

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Intersecta Minds Journal aims to create a dynamic space for scholarly dialogue. We host a platform where authors can engage with their peers, fostering meaningful discussions that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

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1. Interdisciplinary Nexus:

We take pride in being a catalyst for interdisciplinary research, recognizing the interconnected nature of human phenomena. Our platform welcomes contributions that transcend traditional academic silos, encouraging a holistic understanding of complex societal issues.

2. Global Perspectives:

Intersecta Minds Journal serves as a global hub for diverse perspectives. We actively seek submissions that reflect the rich tapestry of global cultures, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges, triumphs, and innovations shaping societies worldwide.

3. Innovative Scholarship:

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4. Engaging Dialogue:

Beyond being a repository of knowledge, Intersecta Minds Journal is a dynamic forum for scholarly dialogue. We foster an environment where authors and readers can engage in meaningful conversations, promoting a culture of collaboration and exchange.

5. Support for Emerging Scholars:

As part of our commitment to nurturing the next generation of thinkers, we actively encourage submissions from emerging scholars and graduate students. We believe in providing a supportive platform for early-career academics to showcase their work and contribute to the academic community.

Our Commitment:

1. Excellence in Publication:

Intersecta Minds Journal upholds rigorous standards of peer review, ensuring that published content meets the highest levels of academic excellence. Our commitment to quality extends to every facet of the publication process.

2. Ethical Scholarship:

We are unwavering in our commitment to upholding the highest ethical standards in research and publication. Authors, reviewers, and editors alike adhere to principles of integrity, transparency, and responsible scholarship.

3. Community Building:

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INTERSECTA
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SOCIAL SCIENCE, ARTS & HUMANITIES,
BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION

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Editor's Introduction

The dynamic world of Intersecta Minds Journal, a scholarly hub committed to intellectual exploration and the advancement of knowledge across the realms of Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management, and Education. In expressing our gratitude for your continued support, we invite you to delve into the distinctive scopes and aims that define our journal. Thank You to Authors, we extend our sincere appreciation to the authors whose rigorous contributions enrich the diverse landscape of Intersecta Minds Journal. Your commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship forms the essence of our vibrant academic community. Thank You to Readers, to our esteemed readers, thank you for choosing Intersecta Minds as your source of knowledge and inspiration. Your engagement and curiosity fuel the transformative power of scholarly dialogue, and we invite you to immerse yourselves in the rich and thought-provoking content that awaits. Thank You to Pre-Reviewers, a special acknowledgment goes to our diligent pre-reviewers. Your meticulous assessments ensure the scholarly excellence that characterizes Intersecta Minds Journal. Your dedication significantly contributes to the high standards we uphold. Scopes and aims of Intersecta Minds Journal is not just a publication; it is a dynamic platform with specific focuses that guide our commitment to excellence.

Intersecta Minds Journal is a collaborative endeavor, and we invite you to be part of this intellectual exploration. As we delve into specific areas of interest, we anticipate a continuing exchange of ideas, insights, and discoveries that will shape the future discourse.

Thank you for being an integral part of Intersecta Minds Journal. Your contributions, engagement, and intellectual curiosity are the cornerstones of our thriving community.

Warm regards,

Asst.Prof.Dr. Pensri Bangbon
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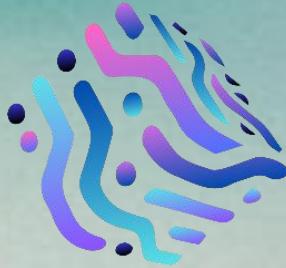
Thích Nhất Hạnh's Interbeing and Mindfulness in the Digital Age: Toward Mindful Technology

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Original Research Articles

Thích Nhất Hạnh's Interbeing and Mindfulness in the Digital Age: Toward Mindful Technology

Hoàng Thị Thùy Dương*

Abstract

In today's digital era, the dominance of the "attention economy" and sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms has posed unprecedented challenges to mental health, leading to fragmented attention and digital stress. This paper investigates the application of the teachings of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh, particularly his engaged Buddhist philosophy, to develop an ethical framework and mindful practices for human–technology interaction. Using a qualitative approach – combining textual analysis with theoretical synthesis – the study proposes a "Mindful Technology" model grounded on two core pillars: the concepts of Interbeing and mindfulness. The findings indicate that restructuring the human–machine relationship through the lens of mindfulness not only mitigates the negative impacts of technology but also guides the development of human-centered AI. This paper contributes a novel perspective on applying Buddhist philosophy to digital wellbeing and advancing a global framework for ethical technology education through the Mindful Technology model.

Keywords: Thích Nhất Hạnh; Interbeing; Mindfulness; Mindful Technology

Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology and artificial intelligence is reshaping human cognitive life in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In this dense digital environment, a notable phenomenon has emerged: "digital mindlessness." This concept describes a state in which individuals interact passively with devices and online content, being constantly influenced by notifications, short videos, and recommendation algorithms. As a result, attention becomes fragmented, the ability to concentrate declines, and psychological issues increase. People gradually lose their sense of agency, becoming objects of the "attention economy." According to

researchers Giraldo-Luque, Aldana Afanador, & Fernández-Rovira (2020): "It is necessary to raise awareness of the dangers of abuse in the consumption of social media for individuals, but above all thinking about the future of people's digital welfare." In Vietnam, the rapid proliferation of the internet and mobile devices has created a digital environment as dense as in other countries:

Vietnam is currently among the countries with the highest internet penetration rates in the world. As of early 2024, the country has 78.44 million internet users, accounting for 79.1% of the population; 96.6% of these users access the internet via mobile phones. The average daily time spent online is 6 hours and 18 minutes, of which 3 hours and 30 minutes are spent using mobile devices. (Minh Hoàng, 2026) Thus, the current context in Vietnam not only reflects the global trend of digital risks but also highlights an urgent need for mindfulness practices and the management of digital interactions: The use of social media is not merely for accessing information but must also be accompanied by the ability to be self-aware of potential risks. Every user, especially adolescents, needs to be equipped with skills to protect themselves and maintain control while using social media. This is the key to fully leveraging its benefits without negatively affecting mental health. (Minh Hoàng, 2026) Although previous studies have discussed mindfulness in the digital age (Berthon & Pitt, 2019; Uthaphan & Phooriko, 2024), most research approaches mindfulness as an attention-management technique designed to reduce distraction or stress when using technology. However, these approaches do not consider mindfulness as a comprehensive philosophical and ethical system. This creates a significant gap: no study has yet shown how Interbeing and mindfulness can transform digital devices into environments that cultivate awareness, rather than merely objects that generate distraction or psychological pressure. In this context, the thought of Thích Nhất Hạnh becomes particularly significant. As one of the most influential contemporary Buddhist monks, Thích Nhất Hạnh developed the philosophy of mindfulness closely linked with interbeing – a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. In the digital era, interbeing provides a cognitive framework that helps us understand how technology, humans, and society interact, influence, and co-construct one another. Mindfulness, in turn, enables users to maintain presence, self-control, and dignity in an environment guided by algorithms. While AI can simulate computational abilities, it cannot replace awareness, compassion, and reflective insight. These values, according to Thích Nhất Hạnh, are at the core of human life. Therefore, approaching technology through the lens of interbeing and mindfulness opens a new path for digital ethics and digital wellbeing. Based on this, the article raises the research question: how can interbeing and mindfulness, as taught by Thích Nhất Hạnh, help people use technology mindfully and protect their mental health? To answer this question, the study draws on Thích Nhất Hạnh's nonfiction prose works, including "The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life" (2023a), "Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children" (2023b), and "No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life" (2024). From these sources, the article proposes a "Mindful Technology" model to help users recognize, adjust, and take ownership of their digital interactions. Mindfulness practice not only helps users become

clearly aware of their behaviors and reactions to information, notifications, or algorithms, but also supports maintaining dignity, humanistic values, and inner peace in the digital environment.

Objective

1. To develop a Mindful Technology model grounded in Thích Nhất Hạnh's concepts of Interbeing and daily mindfulness.

2. To examine how mindfulness and Interbeing reshape ethical human–technology relationships in AI-driven digital ecosystems.

3. To explore how digital devices can be transformed into tools for mindfulness practice and digital wellbeing.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology has profoundly transformed human mental life, particularly the ability to focus, regulate attention, and maintain healthy living habits. Alongside this, mindfulness has been recognized as one of the most effective approaches to cope with these challenges. However, existing studies indicate a lack of a systematic approach grounded in Thích Nhất Hạnh's philosophy of interbeing and mindfulness specifically addressing the issue of technology use in the digital age. The following overview presents two main research directions related to the topic, while also highlighting the current gaps in the literature.

Attention Crisis – Consequences of the Digital Environment

Many studies have shown that digital technology directly impacts human attention capacity. Carr (2010) was among the earliest scholars to warn that the Internet "shallows" thought and fragments focus, making it difficult for users to sustain deep cognitive activities such as comprehension or independent thinking. This line of research has been further developed by McDonald (2025), who analyzed the operation of the "distraction economy," where technology platforms compete to capture and retain users' attention. According to him, care and attention have become scarce resources in cultural and media life. From the perspective of society and mental health, Giraldo-Luque, Aldana Afanador, and Fernández-Rovira (2020) pointed out that the abuse of social media increases stress, leading to psychological fatigue and reduced emotional regulation capacity. In Vietnam, Minh Hoàng (2026) also observed similar effects, particularly the rise of anxiety, depression, and social disconnection among people who excessively use social media. Going beyond individual analysis, recent studies emphasize that digital technology can exacerbate attention-related inequalities. Kärki (2024) argues that people with better living conditions generally have more effective control over their attention, while vulnerable groups become the primary targets of addictive design. Hartford and Stein (2022) refer to this as "attention damage" – a condition in which technology gradually erodes users'

capacity for focus, resulting in new psychological and social inequalities. Overall, studies in this group illuminate the severity of the attention crisis in digital life and underscore the urgent need for methods that restore focus and enhance mindfulness.

Interbeing, Mindfulness in Digital Life, and Buddhist–Technology Discourses

In response to the growing problem of digital distraction, the principles of interbeing and mindfulness have emerged as a means for regulating attention and coping with the pressures of technology. In the fields of business and applied psychology, Berthon and Pitt (2019) categorized forms of mindfulness suited for digital environments, emphasizing that mindfulness can help users recognize attention-invading factors and cultivate genuine presence. In applied Buddhist studies, Uthaphan and Phooriko (2024) proposed the concept of "digital mindfulness," in which Buddhist practices are utilized to help users regulate behavior, emotions, and social media habits. This work provides an important foundation for understanding how Buddhist teachings can support people in online spaces. In Vietnam, Ngô (2021) examined the impact of mindfulness on work performance and noted that practicing mindfulness can reduce stress, increase focus, and improve work quality. Although the study did not directly address digital environments, its results highlight the broad applicability of mindfulness in modern life. From the perspective of Buddhist philosophy and technology, Phrakrusrisitthibandit (2025) explored the relationship between Buddhist teachings and artificial intelligence, focusing on ethical issues, cognition, and the transformation of human experience. This research opens a new approach to how Buddhism can guide life in technological contexts, though it does not delve into mindfulness or the specific practices of Thích Nhất Hạnh. From this literature review, three main observations can be made: (1) Studies on digital distraction have thoroughly analyzed the damage technology causes to attention and mental health; (2) Research on digital mindfulness or mindfulness in digital contexts largely relies on psychological approaches or general Buddhist teachings; (3) No studies have directly applied Thích Nhất Hạnh's principles of interbeing and mindfulness to develop a model for mindful technology use. Thus, while previous research shows growing interest in human–technology engagement and mindfulness in the digital age, most studies approach the topic from generalized or modern psychological perspectives and do not directly investigate Thích Nhất Hạnh's teachings on interbeing and mindfulness. Thích Nhất Hạnh, however, is a widely influential Zen master whose teachings emphasize the indivisible interconnection among humans, society, nature, and technology, as well as full presence in daily life. This provides a particularly suitable foundation for addressing the challenges of the digital era. Currently, the potential application of his thought to contemporary technological issues remains underexplored. This paper aims to fill that gap by: (1) analyzing the core principles of Thích Nhất Hạnh's interbeing and mindfulness; (2) linking these principles to the current state of digital distraction and technology dependence; and (3) proposing a model of "mindful technology use" based on Thích Nhất Hạnh's thought.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, combining text analysis and theoretical synthesis, to examine Thích Nhất Hạnh's philosophy and develop a "Mindful Technology" framework for digital environments. The first step involved textual analysis of Thích Nhất Hạnh's representative non-fiction prose works, including "The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life" (2023a), "Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children" (2023b), and "No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life" (2024). The selection criteria focused on teachings related to interbeing, mindfulness, the interrelation between subject and object, as well as guidance on stopping and deep looking. From this, the study extracted principles applicable to digital environments, where "objects" include digital interfaces and AI algorithms.

The second step used theoretical synthesis to juxtapose these principles with concepts from the attention economy and addictive design, integrating Thích Nhất Hạnh's notions of interbeing and mindfulness. Based on this, the study proposed a three-tier model: philosophy (Interbeing), behavior (Mindful Consumption), and technology application (Mindful Technology Practice).

The research process was carried out in three phases. First, mapping the touchpoints between digital suffering and mindfulness teachings. Next, analytical synthesis was applied to examine the ethical structure within mindfulness practice to establish norms for AI and social media use. Finally, validation compared the proposed model with Digital Wellbeing standards to ensure feasibility, novelty, and practical applicability. This method provides a theoretical foundation that integrates Eastern philosophy with modern technological practice, while also opening avenues for quantitative or empirical research in future studies.

Results

The "Mindful Technology" model is built directly upon two core pillars of Thích Nhất Hạnh's thought: the concept of Interbeing and daily mindfulness. The Interbeing pillar emphasizes the profound interconnectedness between humans and technology, viewing technology not as an "enemy" to be eliminated or resisted. Technology is an inseparable part of the interbeing ecosystem, where all phenomena depend on and nurture one another. The second pillar is daily mindfulness, embodied through practices such as transforming digital devices into tools for mindfulness practice (digital mindfulness tools) and using notifications as "digital mindfulness bells," guiding users to shift from automatic reactions to conscious responses. In this way, the model not only mitigates the negative impacts of the digital age but also opens a human-centered approach, integrating mindfulness and compassion into our relationship with machines and artificial intelligence.

INTERBEING	
Philosophy	Awareness

MINDFUL CONSUMPTION	
Information Flow Control	Intentional Digital Interaction

DIGITAL DEVICES	
Digital Mindfulness Bells	Digital Meditation
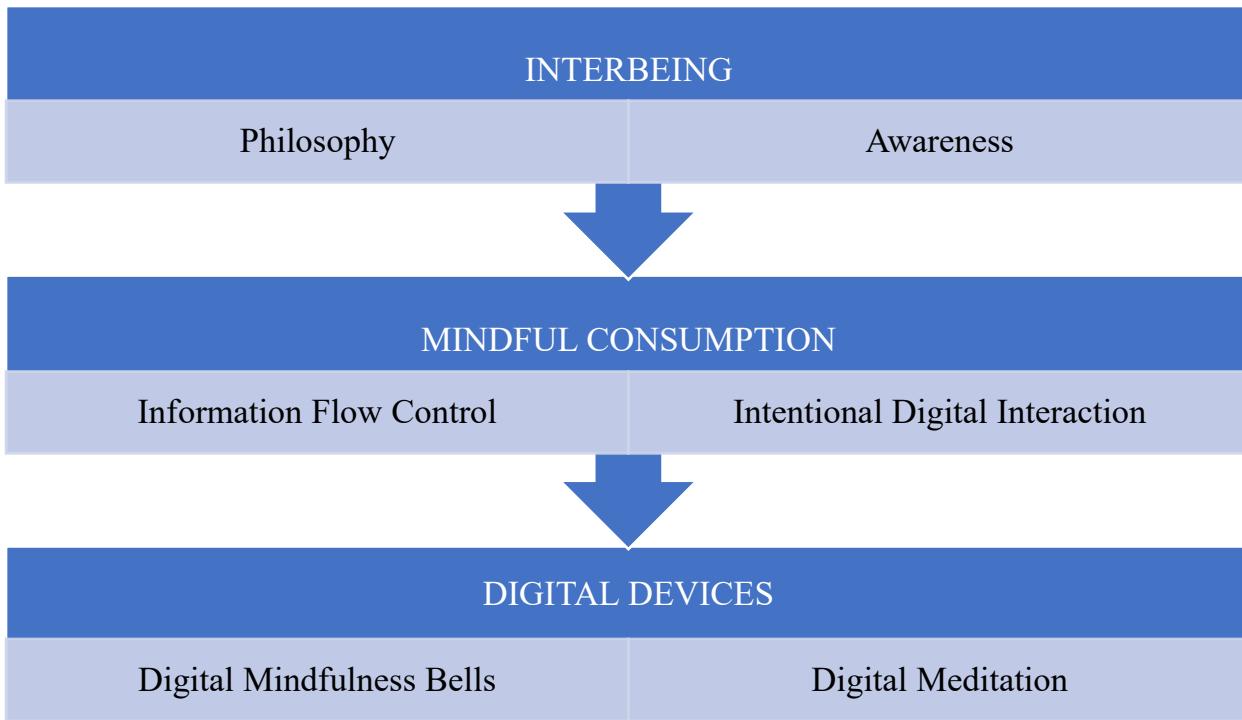
Figure 1. Mindful Technology Famework

The Mindful Technology model, illustrated in Figure 1, is structured around three interrelated layers that explain how mindfulness can be integrated into digital life. The first layer, Interbeing and the digital ecosystem, conceptualizes humans and technology as mutually constitutive, emphasizing interconnectedness and ethical responsibility. The second layer, Mindfulness in data consumption, examines how digital information intake shapes psychological states and behavior, advocating conscious and intentional consumption. The third layer, transforming digital devices into tools for practice, explores how digital technologies can actively support mindfulness practice and mental wellbeing. Unlike prevailing "digital mindfulness" models that focus primarily on attention control or stress reduction (Uthaphan & Phooriko, 2024), the Mindful Technology model is grounded in Thích Nhất Hạnh's teachings on Interbeing. It understands technology as part of an interconnected life-world in which individual actions affect not only personal consciousness but also algorithms, digital ecosystems, and communities. This relational dimension extends mindfulness beyond the individual to encompass social and technological ethics; a perspective largely absents from prior research.

Interbeing and the Digital Ecosystem

Interbeing, a central concept in Thích Nhất Hạnh's philosophy, expresses the principle of dependent co-arising: no phenomenon exists independently, but only through interdependent conditions. Applied to digital ecosystems, Interbeing reframes the human–technology relationship as a dynamic, reciprocal process in which user behavior, data, and algorithms continuously shape one another. A single digital interaction contributes to broader data patterns and recommendation systems, reinforcing the idea that online actions participate in an extended chain of consequences. This view aligns with the "ecology of attending," in which attention operates within a tightly interconnected body–social–technical network. Recognizing digitalization as an Interbeing system has two implications. First, digital behavior cannot be treated as isolated individual choice, but must be understood as part of a broader ethical and socio-technical cycle. Second, addressing digital stress and dependency requires not only technical or legal solutions, but also mindful and intentional interaction practices. In the Mindful Technology model, Interbeing forms the philosophical foundation for cultivating attentional autonomy, reducing algorithmic dependence, and supporting proactive engagement with technology.

Interbeing, Mindfulness in Digital Life, and Buddhist–Technology Discourses

Mindfulness, in Thích Nhất Hạnh's teaching, is both meditative practice and way of life— an energy of awareness that anchors individuals in the present moment. In digital contexts, information consumption functions as a form of psychological intake. Mindful consumption therefore becomes a key bridge between Interbeing and practice, requiring users to attend to the mental, emotional, and social effects of the content they consume. Passive exposure to harmful or addictive information can destabilize attention and increase digital stress, whereas deliberate selection fosters clarity, emotional balance, and ethical participation. Mindful consumption in the data era involves three dimensions: awareness of content and its psychological impact; deliberate selection aligned with constructive purposes; and recognition of social impact, as individual consumption shapes algorithms and digital communities. Research suggests that mindful information practices reduce digital stress and enhance concentration, supporting the model's emphasis on user behavior as a critical layer linking philosophy and application.

Turning Digital Devices into Mindfulness Practice Tools

The third layer of the model reframes digital devices as potential mindfulness tools. In Buddhist practice, any object can function as a dharma tool if it awakens awareness. Similarly, smartphones, computers, and AI systems can support mindfulness when users intentionally restructure their relationship with technology. Notifications can function as "digital mindfulness

bells," prompting pauses for breathing and reflection rather than automatic reaction. Interactions with AI can become opportunities for ethical intention-setting and reflective engagement.

This approach differs fundamentally from existing digital mindfulness frameworks, which often treat technology as either a problem to manage or a neutral tool for self-regulation. Grounded in Thích Nhất Hạnh's insight, the Mindful Technology model reimagines technology as a meditative environment—one in which digital actions cultivate awareness, compassion, and ethical responsibility. In doing so, it opens a new direction for mindfulness research in the age of AI, integrating personal practice with social and technological transformation.

Discussion

This study set out to explore how the engaged Buddhist philosophy of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh can inform an ethical and mindful framework for human–technology interaction in the contemporary attention economy. The findings demonstrate that the integration of the principles of Interbeing and mindfulness provides a coherent and philosophically grounded response to the psychological and ethical challenges posed by AI-driven digital environments. In doing so, this research advances both theoretical understanding and practical approaches to digital wellbeing and human-centered technology design.

Mindfulness as a Response to the Attention Economy

The results indicate that mindfulness functions as a critical counterbalance to the dynamics of the attention economy, which prioritizes engagement maximization at the expense of users' cognitive and emotional wellbeing. Scholars such as Zuboff (2019) and Harris (2016) have argued that contemporary digital platforms exploit attentional vulnerabilities through algorithmic personalization and persuasive design. The present study extends this critique by demonstrating that mindfulness, as articulated by Thích Nhất Hạnh, does not merely serve as an individual coping strategy but operates as an ethical orientation that reshapes how technology is designed, used, and evaluated. By fostering present-moment awareness and intentional engagement, mindfulness directly addresses issues of fragmented attention, digital addiction, and technology-induced stress documented in prior research (Rosen et al., 2013; Mark et al., 2018). The findings suggest that mindful technology use enables individuals to recognize and disengage from compulsive interaction patterns, thereby restoring agency in human–machine relationships. This aligns with emerging digital wellbeing frameworks but offers a deeper moral and contemplative foundation rooted in Buddhist ethics rather than instrumental self-regulation alone.

Interbeing and the Ethics of Human–Technology Relationships

A key contribution of this study is the application of the concept of Interbeing to the ethics of AI and digital systems. Interbeing, central to Thích Nhất Hạnh's teachings, emphasizes the profound interconnectedness of all phenomena. When applied to technology, this perspective challenges the dominant paradigm that treats AI systems as neutral tools detached from social, psychological, and ecological consequences. The findings suggest that viewing technology through the lens of Interbeing reframes ethical responsibility as collective rather than individual. This resonates with contemporary debates in AI ethics that emphasize relational accountability, social impact, and value-sensitive design (Floridi et al., 2018; Friedman & Hendry, 2019). By recognizing that designers, users, data, and algorithms co-arise within interconnected systems, the Mindful Technology model encourages a shift from extractive technological practices toward compassionate and responsible innovation. Importantly, this relational ethic expands existing human-centered AI frameworks by embedding compassion, non-harm, and awareness into both development and deployment processes. Rather than focusing solely on fairness, transparency, or explainability, the proposed model emphasizes ethical intention and mindful awareness as foundational principles guiding technological ecosystems.

Implications for Human-Centered AI and Digital Wellbeing

The findings further indicate that the Mindful Technology model has significant implications for the development of human-centered AI. Current approaches to ethical AI often remain reactive, addressing harms after deployment. In contrast, the integration of mindfulness and Interbeing offers a preventive ethical orientation, encouraging reflection on purpose, impact, and suffering at the earliest stages of design.

This aligns with calls from scholars and policymakers for AI systems that enhance human flourishing rather than merely optimize efficiency or profit (OECD, 2019). By incorporating contemplative practices and ethical reflection into technology education, the model supports the cultivation of morally aware developers and users alike. This contribution is particularly relevant in global contexts, where cultural and philosophical traditions remain underutilized in dominant Western technology ethics discourse.

Conclusion

This study has explored the relevance and applicability of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh's philosophy of Interbeing and mindfulness in addressing the ethical and psychological challenges of the contemporary digital age. Through qualitative textual analysis and theoretical synthesis, the research proposed a Mindful Technology model that reorients human–technology relationships from attention extraction and instrumental use toward awareness, compassion, and ethical responsibility.

The findings demonstrate that Interbeing provides a powerful philosophical lens for understanding digital ecosystems as relational and co-arising systems, in which users, algorithms, data, and social structures mutually shape one another. Within this framework, mindfulness is not merely a personal technique for stress reduction, but a lived ethical practice that restores agency, attentional sovereignty, and dignity in technology use. By reframing digital devices and AI systems as potential supports for mindfulness practice—rather than sources of distraction alone—the study highlights a constructive path toward digital wellbeing without rejecting technological progress. The Mindful Technology model contributes to digital ethics and human-centered AI discourse by integrating inner awareness and ethical intention alongside external design principles. In doing so, it advances a more holistic understanding of digital wellbeing that bridges contemplative philosophy and contemporary technological realities. Particularly in contexts such as Vietnam, where digital penetration is high and concerns about mental health are growing, this model offers culturally resonant guidance for fostering healthier and more humane digital lives.

Overall, the study affirms that Thích Nhất Hạnh's teachings are not only spiritually significant but also practically relevant to the global challenges of the AI-driven attention economy. Interbeing and mindfulness emerge as vital resources for cultivating ethical, sustainable, and compassionate relationships with technology in the digital era.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be proposed for implementing the Mindful Technology model across individual, educational, and institutional contexts:

1. Integration into Digital Literacy Education Educational institutions may incorporate mindfulness and Interbeing into digital literacy and media education curricula. This integration would help learners develop not only technical skills but also ethical awareness, attentional regulation, and reflective engagement with digital technologies.

2. Mindfulness-Oriented Technology Design Technology developers and designers are encouraged to embed mindful design principles into digital platforms, such as intentional notification systems, usage reflection prompts, and interfaces that support pauses rather than continuous engagement. Such features can transform everyday digital interactions into opportunities for awareness and ethical reflection.

3. Personal Mindful Technology Practices Individuals can apply the model by cultivating mindful digital consumption, including setting conscious intentions before using technology, transforming notifications into moments of mindful breathing, and periodically reflecting on the emotional and cognitive effects of digital content.

4. Organizational and Policy-Level Adoption Organizations, particularly those involved in AI development and digital services, may adopt mindfulness-based ethical training to support responsible innovation. Policymakers can also consider digital wellbeing and mental health as core criteria in technology governance frameworks.

Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides a theoretical foundation, further research is necessary to deepen and expand its contributions:

1. Empirical Validation Future studies could employ quantitative, experimental, or mixed-methods approaches to assess the psychological, behavioral, and cognitive effects of Mindful Technology practices on users in digital environments.

2. Cross-Cultural and Comparative Studies Comparative research may explore how Thích Nhất Hạnh's Buddhist-informed framework aligns with or differs from other philosophical, religious, or indigenous approaches to technology ethics, contributing to pluralistic and globally inclusive models.

3. Application in AI Development Contexts Further research could investigate how mindfulness and Interbeing influence ethical decision-making, bias awareness, and responsibility among AI designers, engineers, and organizational teams.

4. Technological Prototypes and Interventions The development and evaluation of digital tools or applications grounded in the Mindful Technology model would help test its practical feasibility and long-term impact on digital wellbeing.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares that there are no financial, professional, or personal interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based entirely on qualitative textual analysis and theoretical synthesis of published works and does not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental intervention. As such, it does not require institutional ethical approval. All sources have been appropriately cited, and the research adheres to academic standards of integrity, transparency, and scholarly responsibility.

Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any situation in which personal, financial, professional, or institutional relationships could compromise, or be perceived to compromise, the objectivity, integrity, or impartiality of the research process or its outcomes. In the present study, no such conflicts of interest were identified.

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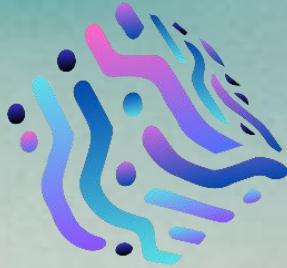
The Role of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Enhancing Competitiveness of Business in the Tourism Industry

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Academic Review Articles

The Role of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Enhancing Competitiveness of Business in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Social competency has become an essential attribute for effective management in complex and diverse organizational environments. This study aims to examine the development of social competency through the integration of Buddhist principles, proposing a five-factor model grounded in both sociological and Buddhist theoretical perspectives. A quantitative survey design was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 240 respondents drawn from a population of approximately 2,500 employees, determined using Yamane's sample size formula. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic characteristics, while inferential statistics, including one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation analysis, were applied to examine relationships among demographic variables and social competency factors. The findings indicate that Buddhist-integrated social competency significantly varies across demographic groups and that all five factors are positively correlated. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on values-based management by demonstrating how Buddhist ethical and psychological principles can enhance social competency development. Practical implications are offered for leadership training and organizational development in culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: Development; Social Competency; Buddhist; Integration

Introduction

The tourism industry has become one of the most dynamic and economically significant sectors worldwide, contributing substantially to employment, gross domestic product (GDP), and international trade (UNWTO, 2019; OECD, 2020). Tourism development not only supports local economies but also stimulates growth in related business sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and service enterprises (Hall, Williams, & Lew, 2014). Despite its economic importance, the tourism industry faces intense competitive pressures and ongoing challenges that require innovative strategies for sustainability and long-term growth (Hjalager, 2010). Research suggests that innovation and entrepreneurial activities are key determinants of

competitiveness and resilience within tourism markets, enabling firms to differentiate their offerings and respond effectively to evolving consumer demands and global market shifts (Schumpeter, 1934; Teece, 2007).

Innovation in tourism has been shown to foster stakeholder collaboration, facilitate the co-creation of travel experiences, and leverage digital technologies to enhance service quality and operational efficiency (Hjalager, 2010; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2015). Such transformative capabilities are vital as destinations and enterprises seek competitive advantage in a crowded global marketplace (Porter, 2008). Additionally, entrepreneurial orientation—particularly among small and medium-sized tourism businesses—contributes to economic diversification and employment generation, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurship education and supportive policy frameworks in shaping future market leaders in tourism (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

This study investigates how innovation and entrepreneurship contribute to business performance in the tourism sector, focusing on both theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from recent academic research. By integrating insights from innovation management and tourism entrepreneurship literature, this research aims to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, business leaders, and educators seeking to strengthen tourism competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global context.

Innova tion as a Source of Competitive Advantage in the Tourism Industry

Innovation has long been recognized as a fundamental driver of competitiveness across industries, and its importance is particularly pronounced in the tourism sector due to rapid changes in consumer preferences, technological advancements, and intensifying global competition. Unlike traditional manufacturing industries, tourism is characterized by high levels of intangibility, perishability, and experiential consumption, which heighten the need for continuous innovation to maintain relevance and competitiveness. As tourists increasingly seek personalized, authentic, and value-rich experiences, tourism businesses are compelled to innovate not only in products and services but also in processes, organizational structures, and business models.

The theoretical foundation of innovation as a source of competitive advantage can be traced to Schumpeter's (1934) theory of economic development, which conceptualizes innovation as a process of "creative destruction." According to Schumpeter, innovation disrupts existing market equilibria by introducing new combinations of resources that render older practices obsolete. These new combinations may take the form of new products, new production methods, new markets, new sources of supply, or new organizational forms. Within this framework, firms that successfully innovate gain temporary monopolistic advantages, enabling them to outperform competitors and shape market dynamics. In the tourism industry, creative destruction is evident in the emergence of digital platforms, sharing-economy models, and

experience-based tourism offerings that have fundamentally altered traditional business practices.

In tourism, innovation extends beyond technological change to encompass service innovation, organizational innovation, marketing innovation, and experience-based innovation (Hjalager, 2010). This broader conceptualization is particularly important given that tourism value creation is heavily reliant on human interaction, service quality, and emotional engagement. Hjalager (2010) argues that tourism innovation should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of tourism systems. As a result, competitiveness in tourism is not solely determined by technological superiority but by the ability of firms to integrate multiple forms of innovation into coherent value propositions.

Empirical research consistently supports the assertion that innovative tourism firms are better positioned to differentiate their offerings and enhance customer satisfaction. Differentiation is especially critical in tourism markets, where many products are easily substitutable and price competition is intense. Through innovation, tourism businesses can create unique experiences that are difficult for competitors to replicate, thereby reducing price sensitivity and increasing customer loyalty. For example, destination-based storytelling, experiential accommodation concepts, and thematic tourism products represent innovative approaches that enhance perceived value and emotional attachment among tourists.

Hjalager (2010) identifies five primary categories of tourism innovation: product innovation, process innovation, managerial innovation, marketing innovation, and institutional innovation. Product innovation refers to the development of new or significantly improved tourism products and services, such as eco-tourism packages, wellness tourism experiences, or cultural immersion programs. Process innovation involves improvements in operational procedures that enhance efficiency, quality, or flexibility, such as online booking systems or automated check-in services. Managerial innovation includes changes in organizational structures, leadership styles, and human resource practices that support creativity and learning. Marketing innovation focuses on new branding strategies, distribution channels, and communication methods, while institutional innovation involves changes in governance structures, regulations, and stakeholder relationships that facilitate tourism development.

Each of these innovation types contributes to improved firm performance by enhancing value creation, cost efficiency, and strategic positioning. Importantly, these innovation forms often interact and reinforce one another. For instance, the introduction of a new tourism product may require changes in organizational routines, marketing strategies, and stakeholder collaboration. This interdependence highlights the systemic nature of innovation in tourism and underscores the need for holistic management approaches.

Technological innovation has received particular attention in tourism research due to the transformative impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin (2015) demonstrate that smart technologies—such as mobile applications, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices—enable tourism businesses

to deliver personalized and immersive experiences. These technologies allow firms to collect and analyze customer data in real time, tailor services to individual preferences, and enhance engagement throughout the customer journey. As a result, technological innovation strengthens customer satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived value.

The rise of digital platforms has also redefined competitive dynamics within the tourism industry. Online travel agencies, peer-to-peer accommodation platforms, and experience-sharing applications have lowered entry barriers and increased transparency, intensified competition while simultaneously creating new opportunities for innovation. Tourism firms that effectively leverage digital technologies can enhance their visibility, optimize pricing strategies, and expand market reach. Conversely, firms that fail to adapt to digital transformation risk marginalization and loss of competitiveness.

These developments align closely with Porter's (2008) competitive advantage framework, which emphasizes differentiation and value creation as key strategic outcomes. According to Porter, firms achieve competitive advantage by performing value-creating activities either more efficiently or in more distinctive ways than competitors. Innovation plays a central role in both strategies by enabling firms to redesign value chains, introduce unique offerings, and improve customer experiences. In tourism, innovation-driven differentiation is often more sustainable than cost leadership, given the sector's reliance on quality, authenticity, and emotional value.

Beyond firm-level competitiveness, innovation also contributes to the long-term sustainability of tourism businesses and destinations. Sustainability has become a critical concern in tourism due to environmental degradation, climate change, and socio-cultural impacts associated with mass tourism. Innovative practices such as eco-friendly accommodation design, renewable energy adoption, waste reduction initiatives, and community-based tourism models help mitigate negative impacts while enhancing destination appeal. Hall, Williams, and Lew (2014) argue that innovation is essential for aligning economic growth with environmental and social sustainability objectives in tourism.

Operational efficiency is another key dimension through which innovation supports sustainability and competitiveness. Process innovations, such as digital inventory management, dynamic pricing systems, and automated customer service solutions, enable tourism firms to optimize resource utilization and reduce operational costs. These efficiencies are particularly important in an industry characterized by fluctuating demand, seasonality, and high fixed costs. By improving adaptability and resilience, innovation helps tourism businesses withstand market volatility and external shocks, such as economic downturns or global crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of innovation in enhancing the resilience of tourism businesses. Firms that rapidly adopted digital solutions, diversified revenue streams, or reconfigured service delivery models were better able to survive and recover. This experience reinforced the notion that innovation is not merely a growth-oriented strategy but a critical mechanism for risk management and crisis response in tourism.

At the destination level, innovation plays a vital role in maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly globalized tourism market. Destinations compete not only on natural and cultural resources but also on their ability to offer innovative experiences, efficient infrastructure, and high-quality services. Destination management organizations increasingly adopt innovation-driven strategies, such as smart tourism initiatives, integrated transport systems, and collaborative branding efforts, to enhance overall destination performance. These initiatives require coordination among multiple stakeholders, further emphasizing the systemic nature of tourism innovation.

Despite its recognized importance, innovation in tourism faces several challenges. Tourism businesses—particularly small and medium-sized enterprises—often lack financial resources, technological expertise, and managerial capabilities necessary to implement innovation effectively. Risk aversion, limited access to knowledge networks, and regulatory constraints may further hinder innovation adoption. These challenges underscore the need for supportive policy frameworks, capacity-building initiatives, and collaborative networks that facilitate knowledge sharing and experimentation.

From a theoretical perspective, the tourism innovation literature increasingly emphasizes dynamic capabilities as a key explanatory mechanism. Dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to sense opportunities, seize them through strategic investments, and reconfigure resources in response to environmental change. In tourism, dynamic capabilities enable firms to integrate innovation into ongoing operations and adapt continuously to shifting market conditions. This perspective complements Schumpeterian innovation theory by highlighting the organizational processes that sustain competitive advantage over time.

In summary, innovation constitutes a central pillar of competitiveness in the tourism industry. Rooted in Schumpeter's (1934) theory of creative destruction, innovation enables tourism firms to differentiate offerings, enhance customer satisfaction, improve operational efficiency, and respond proactively to environmental and market challenges. Empirical evidence demonstrates that multiple forms of innovation—technological, organizational, marketing, and institutional—jointly contribute to superior performance and long-term sustainability. Supported by Porter's (2008) competitive advantage framework and contemporary tourism research, innovation emerges not only as a strategic tool for gaining market advantage but also as a critical mechanism for sustaining growth and resilience in an increasingly complex and competitive tourism environment.

Entrepreneurial Orientation and Business Performance in Tourism Enterprises

Entrepreneurship plays a central role in shaping competitiveness within the tourism industry, which is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Unlike capital-intensive industries, tourism relies heavily on entrepreneurial initiative, creativity, and localized knowledge to create value and respond to rapidly changing market conditions. As tourism

markets become increasingly competitive and uncertain, entrepreneurial behavior has emerged as a critical determinant of firm survival and growth. Within this context, the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding how entrepreneurial behaviors influence business performance and competitiveness.

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) define entrepreneurial orientation as a multidimensional construct comprising innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness. These dimensions collectively describe a firm's strategic posture toward entrepreneurship and opportunity exploitation. Firms with a strong EO are characterized by a willingness to innovate, take calculated risks, anticipate future market trends, and act decisively ahead of competitors. This strategic orientation is particularly relevant to the tourism industry, where demand volatility, seasonality, and experiential consumption create constant pressure for adaptation and differentiation.

The theoretical roots of EO are closely linked to strategic management and entrepreneurship theories that emphasize the role of firm-level behavior in shaping competitive outcomes. While traditional economic perspectives view entrepreneurship primarily as an individual-level phenomenon, EO shifts the focus to organizational-level processes and decision-making patterns. This perspective is especially valuable in tourism research, where organizational behavior often determines how effectively firms leverage resources, engage stakeholders, and deliver value to tourists.

In the tourism context, entrepreneurial orientation has been consistently associated with innovation capability and superior business performance. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) conceptualize entrepreneurship as the process through which opportunities are discovered, evaluated, and exploited. Tourism markets, characterized by evolving consumer preferences, cultural trends, and technological disruption, provide fertile ground for opportunity recognition. Firms with a strong EO are better equipped to sense emerging opportunities—such as niche tourism segments, experiential travel, or sustainable tourism—and transform them into viable business models.

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence supporting the positive relationship between EO and performance in tourism enterprises. Vigliarolo et al. (2020) find that tourism SMEs exhibiting high levels of entrepreneurial orientation demonstrate greater resilience, adaptability, and growth potential. These firms are more likely to innovate, diversify their offerings, and adjust operational strategies in response to external shocks. This adaptability is particularly important in tourism, where external factors such as economic fluctuations, political instability, and health crises can dramatically impact demand.

The innovativeness dimension of EO plays a central role in shaping tourism firm performance. Innovativeness reflects a firm's tendency to engage in creativity, experimentation, and the development of new products or services. In tourism, innovativeness manifests in the creation of unique experiences, thematic offerings, and customized services that enhance customer satisfaction and differentiation. Innovative tourism firms are more likely to adopt new

technologies, experiment with alternative service delivery models, and co-create value with customers. These practices contribute to enhanced brand reputation and long-term competitiveness.

Risk-taking, another core dimension of EO, refers to a firm's willingness to commit resources to uncertain ventures. Tourism entrepreneurship inherently involves risk due to demand uncertainty, seasonality, and high dependence on external conditions. Firms with a strong risk-taking orientation are more likely to invest in new markets, adopt emerging technologies, or introduce unconventional tourism products. While excessive risk-taking can threaten firm survival, calculated risk-taking enables tourism businesses to seize first-mover advantages and capture new market segments.

Proactiveness reflects a firm's forward-looking perspective and its ability to anticipate and act on future market trends. In tourism, proactive firms engage in continuous market scanning, trend analysis, and strategic planning to stay ahead of competitors. Proactiveness enables tourism enterprises to respond to changing consumer expectations, such as increased demand for sustainable tourism, wellness experiences, or digital engagement. Empirical evidence suggests that proactive tourism firms outperform reactive competitors by shaping market dynamics rather than merely responding to them.

Autonomy, as a dimension of EO, refers to the degree of independence granted to individuals or teams within an organization to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives. In tourism SMEs, autonomy often plays a critical role due to flatter organizational structures and closer proximity between decision-makers and customers. Autonomous decision-making facilitates rapid innovation, experimentation, and responsiveness to customer feedback. This flexibility allows tourism firms to tailor offerings to specific market niches and adapt quickly to changing conditions.

Competitive aggressiveness, the final dimension of EO, describes a firm's intensity in challenging competitors and defending market position. In highly competitive tourism destinations, firms must actively differentiate themselves through branding, pricing strategies, and service quality. Competitive aggressiveness encourages tourism enterprises to pursue bold strategies, such as entering new markets, enhancing service standards, or leveraging digital marketing platforms to increase visibility. When combined with innovation and proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness strengthens a firm's strategic positioning.

Beyond individual EO dimensions, research highlights the importance of EO as a holistic strategic orientation. The interaction among EO dimensions creates synergies that enhance firm performance. For example, innovativeness combined with proactiveness enables firms to introduce new offerings ahead of competitors, while risk-taking supported by autonomy facilitates experimentation and learning. This integrated view of EO aligns with dynamic capability theory, which emphasizes a firm's ability to reconfigure resources in response to environmental change.

Entrepreneurial orientation also fosters a culture of learning and experimentation within tourism enterprises. Learning orientation is critical in an industry where customer preferences, technologies, and regulatory environments evolve rapidly. Firms with strong EO encourage knowledge sharing, employee involvement, and continuous improvement, creating an organizational climate conducive to innovation. This learning-driven approach enhances absorptive capacity—the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply new knowledge—which is essential for sustained competitiveness.

The relationship between EO and innovation is particularly salient in tourism research. EO acts as an antecedent to innovation by shaping managerial attitudes toward change and experimentation. Firms with strong EO are more likely to invest in research and development, collaborate with external partners, and adopt new technologies. As a result, EO indirectly influences business performance through its impact on innovation outcomes. This relationship reinforces the argument that entrepreneurship and innovation are mutually reinforcing drivers of competitiveness in tourism.

Contextual factors further moderate the relationship between EO and performance in tourism enterprises. Market turbulence, competitive intensity, and environmental uncertainty influence the effectiveness of entrepreneurial strategies. In highly dynamic environments, the benefits of EO are more pronounced, as proactive and innovative behaviors enable firms to cope with uncertainty. Conversely, in stable markets, excessive entrepreneurial activity may lead to inefficiencies or strategic misalignment. This suggests that the performance impact of EO is contingent upon environmental conditions.

Firm size and resource availability also shape how EO translates into performance outcomes. While SMEs often benefit from flexibility and agility, they may face constraints related to financial capital, managerial expertise, and access to technology. These limitations can restrict the scope of entrepreneurial initiatives and increase vulnerability to failure. However, research suggests that strong EO can help SMEs overcome resource constraints by encouraging creative problem-solving, networking, and opportunity-driven strategies.

In tourism destinations characterized by strong competition and saturation, EO plays a crucial role in differentiation and niche development. Entrepreneurial tourism firms often identify underserved market segments or develop specialized offerings, such as cultural tourism, adventure tourism, or eco-tourism. By targeting niche markets, these firms reduce direct competition and enhance perceived value. This strategic focus aligns with the resource-based view of the firm, which emphasizes the importance of unique and difficult-to-imitate capabilities in achieving competitive advantage.

Entrepreneurial orientation also contributes to destination-level competitiveness by fostering innovation ecosystems and collaborative networks. Entrepreneurial tourism firms often engage in partnerships with local communities, suppliers, and destination management organizations to co-create experiences and share resources. These collaborations enhance

knowledge exchange, reduce risk, and support collective innovation. As such, EO extends beyond firm-level outcomes to influence broader tourism development processes.

From a policy perspective, the importance of EO in tourism underscores the need for supportive institutional environments. Entrepreneurship education, access to finance, business incubators, and innovation support programs can enhance entrepreneurial capabilities and encourage risk-taking. Policymakers play a critical role in reducing regulatory barriers and creating conditions conducive to entrepreneurship. In destinations where supportive policies are in place, tourism firms are more likely to adopt entrepreneurial strategies and achieve sustainable growth.

The role of EO in crisis management has gained increased attention in recent years. Tourism crises—such as economic downturns, natural disasters, or global pandemics—expose the vulnerability of tourism enterprises. Research suggests that firms with strong EO are better equipped to respond to crises by rapidly adapting business models, exploring alternative revenue streams, and leveraging digital technologies. This resilience highlights EO as a strategic resource not only for growth but also for survival in turbulent environments.

Despite extensive empirical support for the EO–performance relationship, the literature also highlights several challenges and limitations. Measuring EO consistently across contexts remains a methodological concern, as cultural and institutional differences influence entrepreneurial behavior. Additionally, the optimal level of EO may vary depending on firm characteristics and environmental conditions. Excessive risk-taking or competitive aggressiveness may undermine long-term performance if not balanced with strategic planning and resource management.

Future research increasingly emphasizes the need to integrate EO with other theoretical perspectives, such as innovation capability, dynamic capabilities, and stakeholder theory. This integrative approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurial behavior translates into sustainable competitive advantage in tourism. By examining the interactions among EO, innovation, and collaboration, scholars can better explain performance differences among tourism enterprises.

In summary, entrepreneurial orientation represents a critical strategic posture that shapes business performance and competitiveness in the tourism industry. Grounded in the multidimensional framework proposed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996), EO captures key entrepreneurial behaviors that enable firms to identify opportunities, innovate, and adapt to uncertainty. Empirical evidence demonstrates that tourism enterprises with strong EO exhibit superior innovation capability, resilience, and growth potential. By fostering learning, experimentation, and proactive market engagement, EO strengthens the competitive position of tourism firms and contributes to long-term sustainability in an increasingly dynamic global tourism environment.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Innovation Ecosystems in Tourism

Tourism operates within complex and highly interconnected systems involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including tourism businesses, government agencies, destination management organizations, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and tourists themselves. Unlike industries characterized by linear value chains, tourism functions as a networked system in which value is co-created through interactions among multiple actors. This interdependence makes stakeholder collaboration a central element in fostering innovation, enhancing destination competitiveness, and achieving sustainable tourism development.

Stakeholder theory, as proposed by Freeman (1984), provides a foundational framework for understanding the importance of collaboration in tourism systems. According to this theory, organizational success depends on the effective management of relationships with all stakeholders who influence or are influenced by organizational activities. Rather than prioritizing shareholders alone, stakeholder theory emphasizes the creation of shared value through inclusive decision-making and mutual engagement. In tourism, where the quality of the visitor experience is shaped by the collective actions of multiple actors, stakeholder alignment is particularly critical.

The application of stakeholder theory to tourism highlights the need for cooperation among public and private actors to deliver cohesive and competitive tourism experiences. Tourism businesses rely on infrastructure, regulations, cultural resources, and community support, while destinations depend on private enterprises to translate resources into marketable products. Misalignment among stakeholders can result in fragmented offerings, reduced service quality, and diminished destination competitiveness. Conversely, effective collaboration enhances coordination, trust, and innovation capacity across the tourism system.

Innovation in tourism increasingly occurs at the network or ecosystem level rather than within isolated firms. Innovation ecosystems refer to interconnected networks of organizations and individuals that collectively create, diffuse, and apply knowledge to generate innovative outcomes. In tourism, these ecosystems involve interactions among accommodation providers, tour operators, technology firms, cultural institutions, policymakers, and local communities. Such ecosystems enable the pooling of resources, sharing of knowledge, and co-creation of value, thereby accelerating innovation and strengthening competitive advantage.

Research suggests that strong networks and partnerships facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and co-creation of tourism experiences. Buhalis and Law (2008) highlight the transformative role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in connecting tourism stakeholders and enabling coordinated destination management. Digital platforms support information exchange, collaboration, and integration across the tourism value system, allowing stakeholders to align strategies, optimize resource use, and enhance visitor experiences. These networks contribute to innovation diffusion and improve the overall competitiveness of tourism destinations.

The emergence of digital ecosystems has significantly altered the structure of tourism collaboration. Online platforms, destination management systems, and social media channels enable real-time interaction among stakeholders and facilitate collaborative marketing, data sharing, and service innovation. Through digital connectivity, small tourism enterprises gain access to broader markets and knowledge networks that were previously unavailable. This democratization of access enhances innovation potential and reduces structural inequalities within tourism systems.

Chesbrough's (2003) open innovation framework further reinforces the importance of external knowledge flows in driving innovation outcomes. Open innovation challenges the traditional closed model of innovation by emphasizing the use of external ideas, technologies, and partnerships to complement internal capabilities. In tourism, open innovation is particularly relevant due to the sector's reliance on diverse knowledge sources, including customer feedback, cultural traditions, and technological developments. By engaging external stakeholders, tourism firms can access new ideas, reduce innovation costs, and accelerate time-to-market.

Open innovation practices in tourism often involve collaboration with customers, communities, and technology providers. Co-creation of experiences with tourists, for example, enables firms to tailor offerings to specific preferences and enhance perceived authenticity. Similarly, partnerships with technology companies facilitate the adoption of digital solutions such as smart tourism applications, virtual reality experiences, and data-driven personalization. These collaborative arrangements expand innovation capacity and support differentiation in competitive markets.

Collaborative innovation ecosystems also play a critical role in destination-level competitiveness. Destinations are not single entities but complex systems in which multiple stakeholders jointly shape the visitor experience. Effective destination management requires coordination among accommodation providers, transport services, attractions, public authorities, and local communities. When stakeholders collaborate strategically, destinations can develop coherent branding, improve service quality, and enhance overall competitiveness.

Destination management organizations (DMOs) often serve as key coordinators within tourism innovation ecosystems. DMOs facilitate stakeholder engagement, support joint marketing initiatives, and promote innovation through capacity-building programs and partnerships. By acting as intermediaries, DMOs help align stakeholder interests and reduce coordination failures. Research suggests that destinations with strong collaborative governance structures are better positioned to innovate and adapt to changing market conditions.

Sustainability challenges further underscore the importance of stakeholder collaboration in tourism. Environmental degradation, climate change, and social impacts associated with tourism growth require collective action across sectors. Hall, Williams, and Lew (2014) argue that innovation is essential for achieving sustainable tourism development and that such innovation often emerges from collaborative processes. Sustainable tourism initiatives—such as eco-

certification schemes, community-based tourism, and low-carbon transport solutions—depend on coordinated efforts among businesses, governments, and communities.

Collaborative innovation ecosystems enable tourism stakeholders to address sustainability challenges by integrating economic, environmental, and social objectives. For example, partnerships between tourism firms and local communities can promote inclusive development and cultural preservation, while collaborations with environmental organizations support conservation efforts. These initiatives not only mitigate negative impacts but also enhance destination appeal among environmentally conscious tourists, thereby contributing to long-term competitiveness.

The interaction between entrepreneurship and stakeholder collaboration is particularly evident in tourism clusters and regional innovation systems. Geographic clustering of tourism enterprises, support institutions, and knowledge organizations facilitates informal knowledge exchange and collective learning. These clusters enhance innovation capacity by fostering trust, shared norms, and collaborative problem-solving. Empirical studies suggest that tourism clusters with strong stakeholder networks exhibit higher levels of innovation and competitiveness.

Knowledge sharing is a central mechanism through which stakeholder collaboration enhances innovation outcomes. Tourism knowledge is often tacit, experiential, and context-specific, making it difficult to codify and transfer through formal channels. Collaborative networks facilitate the exchange of tacit knowledge through face-to-face interactions, joint projects, and shared experiences. This knowledge exchange supports incremental and radical innovation, enabling tourism stakeholders to continuously improve offerings and processes.

The role of tourists as active stakeholders in innovation ecosystems has gained increasing attention in tourism research. Tourists are no longer passive consumers but active co-creators of experiences. Through feedback, online reviews, social media engagement, and participatory activities, tourists contribute valuable insights that inform innovation processes. Engaging tourists as stakeholders enhances responsiveness to market demands and supports the development of customer-centric innovations.

Despite the recognized benefits of stakeholder collaboration, several challenges hinder effective collaboration in tourism innovation ecosystems. Divergent interests, power imbalances, and lack of trust among stakeholders can impede cooperation. Small tourism enterprises may lack the resources or capabilities to engage fully in collaborative initiatives, while public-sector actors may face bureaucratic constraints. Additionally, coordination costs and information asymmetries can limit the effectiveness of collaborative arrangements.

Governance structures play a critical role in overcoming these challenges and enabling successful collaboration. Transparent decision-making processes, clear roles and responsibilities, and inclusive participation mechanisms enhance trust and commitment among stakeholders. Governance models that balance public leadership with private-sector initiative are particularly effective in fostering innovation ecosystems. These models encourage shared ownership of outcomes and align incentives across stakeholders.

Policy interventions are also essential in supporting stakeholder collaboration and innovation ecosystems in tourism. Governments can facilitate collaboration by investing in infrastructure, supporting knowledge-sharing platforms, and providing incentives for joint innovation projects. Policy frameworks that promote public–private partnerships and reduce regulatory barriers enhance the capacity of tourism systems to innovate. In regions where supportive policies are in place, tourism innovation ecosystems are more likely to thrive.

The importance of stakeholder collaboration became especially evident during periods of crisis, such as global economic downturns or health emergencies. Crises disrupt tourism systems and expose vulnerabilities in fragmented or poorly coordinated destinations. Research indicates that destinations with strong collaborative networks are more resilient and better able to coordinate crisis responses, share resources, and adapt strategies. This resilience reinforces the strategic value of collaboration beyond routine operations.

From a theoretical perspective, the ecosystem approach integrates stakeholder theory, open innovation, and systems thinking to provide a comprehensive understanding of tourism innovation. Rather than viewing innovation as a firm-level activity, the ecosystem perspective emphasizes collective value creation and interdependence. This shift aligns with contemporary views of competitiveness as a systemic outcome shaped by interactions among multiple actors.

The integration of digital technologies further strengthens tourism innovation ecosystems by enabling connectivity, data sharing, and real-time coordination. Smart tourism initiatives, which integrate ICTs with destination management, exemplify the potential of digital ecosystems to enhance innovation and competitiveness. These initiatives rely on collaboration among technology providers, tourism businesses, and public authorities, illustrating the convergence of digitalization and stakeholder engagement.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of innovation ecosystems, empirical research remains fragmented, and measurement challenges persist. Future studies should explore the dynamics of stakeholder collaboration across different cultural, institutional, and destination contexts. Longitudinal research designs can provide deeper insights into how innovation ecosystems evolve over time and how collaboration influences long-term competitiveness.

In summary, stakeholder collaboration and innovation ecosystems constitute a critical foundation for competitiveness in the tourism industry. Grounded in stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and open innovation principles (Chesbrough, 2003), collaborative networks enable tourism stakeholders to share knowledge, pool resources, and co-create value. Empirical evidence demonstrates that destinations and enterprises embedded in strong innovation ecosystems are better positioned to innovate, adapt to change, and address sustainability challenges. By integrating entrepreneurship, innovation, and collaboration, tourism innovation ecosystems enhance both firm-level performance and destination-level competitiveness in an increasingly complex and interconnected global tourism environment.

Body of Knowledge

1. Evolution of Tourism Competitiveness Early tourism research focused on demand, destination attractiveness, and economic impacts. Contemporary scholarship views tourism as a dynamic, knowledge-intensive system. Competitiveness is now understood as a function of strategic capabilities, innovation, organizational behavior, and collaboration, rather than solely natural or cultural resources.

2. Innovation as a Driver of Competitiveness Grounded in Schumpeter's (1934) theory of creative destruction. Tourism innovation includes technological, service, organizational, marketing, and institutional forms. Empirical studies show innovation enhances customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, adaptability, sustainability, and resilience.

3. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) Rooted in strategic entrepreneurship theory. EO dimensions—innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking—are critical in tourism SMEs. EO strengthens opportunity recognition, innovation capacity, adaptability, and growth in uncertain and competitive environments.

4. Stakeholder Collaboration and Innovation Ecosystems Informed by stakeholder theory and open innovation. Tourism destinations function as ecosystems involving firms, governments, communities, and tourists. Networks, partnerships, and digital platforms facilitate knowledge sharing, coordination, and innovation diffusion.

Taken together, the existing body of knowledge suggests that tourism competitiveness is a multidimensional and systemic phenomenon. Innovation provides the mechanisms for differentiation and adaptation; entrepreneurial orientation supplies the behavioral and strategic drivers of opportunity exploitation; and stakeholder collaboration creates the enabling environment in which innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish. Integrating these perspectives offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how tourism businesses and destinations achieve sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly complex global environment.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in enhancing the competitiveness of businesses in the tourism industry by synthesizing insights from innovation theory, entrepreneurial orientation, and stakeholder collaboration literature. The findings from the reviewed literature clearly indicate that tourism competitiveness is a multidimensional and systemic phenomenon that cannot be achieved through isolated firm-level strategies alone. Instead, sustained competitive advantage emerges from the dynamic interaction between innovative capabilities, entrepreneurial behavior, and collaborative innovation ecosystems. Innovation was identified as a core mechanism through which tourism enterprises differentiate their offerings, enhance service quality, and improve operational efficiency. Rooted in Schumpeter's concept of creative destruction, innovation in tourism extends beyond

technological advancement to include service, organizational, marketing, and experiential innovations. These diverse forms of innovation enable tourism firms to respond effectively to changing consumer preferences, technological disruptions, and external shocks, thereby strengthening resilience and long-term performance. Entrepreneurial orientation further reinforces tourism competitiveness by shaping firms' strategic posture toward opportunity recognition, risk-taking, and proactive market engagement. Tourism enterprises with strong entrepreneurial orientation demonstrate higher levels of innovation, adaptability, and growth, particularly in volatile and competitive environments. Entrepreneurship thus functions as a catalyst that transforms innovation into measurable performance outcomes and supports firm survival during periods of uncertainty. At the system level, stakeholder collaboration and innovation ecosystems provide the enabling environment in which innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish. Tourism destinations operate as interconnected networks where value is co-created through cooperation among businesses, governments, communities, and tourists. Effective governance structures, open innovation practices, and digital platforms enhance knowledge sharing, coordination, and collective problem-solving, contributing to both firm-level and destination-level competitiveness.

In conclusion, this study highlights that the integration of innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, and stakeholder collaboration offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing competitiveness in the tourism industry. Adopting a holistic and system-based approach is essential for achieving sustainable growth, resilience, and long-term competitive advantage in an increasingly complex global tourism environment.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Tourism businesses should prioritize continuous investment in both technological and non-technological innovation to strengthen differentiation and responsiveness to market changes. This includes adopting digital technologies, developing experience-based products, improving service processes, and fostering organizational cultures that support creativity and learning. Managers should actively promote entrepreneurial orientation by encouraging proactive decision-making, calculated risk-taking, and employee autonomy, particularly within small and medium-sized tourism enterprises.

Destination managers and policymakers should focus on strengthening stakeholder collaboration through inclusive governance mechanisms and public–private partnerships. Establishing digital platforms, innovation hubs, and knowledge-sharing networks can facilitate coordination and innovation diffusion across tourism systems. Policymakers are also encouraged to reduce regulatory barriers, improve access to finance, and support entrepreneurship education and training programs to enhance innovation capacity, especially among SMEs.

From a sustainability perspective, innovation and collaboration should be leveraged to promote eco-innovation and responsible tourism practices. Tourism stakeholders should work collectively to implement environmentally friendly technologies, community-based tourism initiatives, and sustainable destination management strategies. Developing collaborative crisis-management frameworks can further enhance destination resilience and preparedness for future disruptions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should adopt integrative and longitudinal research designs to better capture the dynamic interactions among innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, and stakeholder collaboration over time. Long-term studies would provide deeper insights into how tourism innovation ecosystems evolve and how competitive advantages are sustained in changing environments.

Comparative studies across different countries, regions, or destination types would help clarify the influence of cultural, institutional, and economic contexts on tourism competitiveness. Additionally, mixed-method approaches combining quantitative analysis with qualitative case studies could enrich understanding of governance mechanisms, collaboration processes, and innovation outcomes within tourism ecosystems.

Further research is also encouraged to explore the mediating and moderating roles of factors such as digitalization, sustainability orientation, and crisis resilience in the relationship between entrepreneurship, innovation, and performance. Such studies would contribute to theory development and provide more actionable guidance for practitioners and policymakers.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares that there are no financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the research reported in this paper.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based on a review and synthesis of existing academic literature. As such, it did not involve human participants, primary data collection, or experimental procedures. All sources used in the study have been appropriately cited and acknowledged in accordance with academic integrity and ethical research standards.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any situation in which an author's personal, financial, or professional relationships could inappropriately influence, or be perceived to influence, the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of research findings. In the context of this study, no such conflicts of interest were identified.

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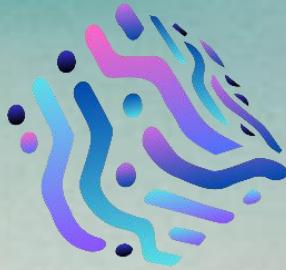
The Journey of Awakening in Jorge Luis Borges's The Circular Ruins Through the Lens of The Five Stages of Vijñaptimātra

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Original Research Articles

The Journey of Awakening in Jorge Luis Borges's

The Circular Ruins Through the Lens of The Five Stages of Vijñaptimātra

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Abstract

Amidst the blurring boundaries between reality and virtuality driven by AI technology, this study deciphers Jorge Luis Borges's short story, The Circular Ruins (Las ruinas circulares), through the framework of the Five Stages of Vijñaptimātra. The research investigates whether the magician's endeavor to dream a human being into existence can be interpreted as a spiritual cultivation process that reveals the illusory nature of reality. Utilizing systematic and psychological methodologies, the study identifies a profound parallel between the protagonist's psychological evolution and the five classical stages: the Stage of Provision (Sambhāramārgah), the Stage of Application (Prayogamārgah), the Stage of Vision (Darśanamārgah), the Stage of Cultivation (Niṣṭhāmārgah), and the Ultimate Stage (Niṣṭhā-avasthā). The findings indicate that the character, initially trapped in the duality of "subject and object" (grāhaka and grāhya), gradually achieves detachment, leading to a profound "transformation of the basis" (āśraya). The pivotal moment where the magician realizes he is merely a phantom dreamed by another signifies the ultimate awakening to Anatman and Nirvana. This research suggests that Vijñaptimātra serves as a potent tool for exploring ontological layers in modern literature and offers new directions for literary education centered on consciousness experiences in the era of simulation.

Keywords: Borges; Vijñaptimātrasiddhi; Las Ruinas Circulares; Buddhist Studies

Introduction

As the boundary between reality and illusion becomes increasingly fragile amidst the rise of Artificial Intelligence, reflections on the nature of existence appear to become more challenging and thought-provoking. In the imaginary world of Jorge Luis Borges, the frontier between East and West seems to dissolve; while he writes in Spanish and cites the Bible and Plato, his thinking resonates with the Eastern tones of meditation, non-self, and illusion. Borges once recounted the story of Zhuangzi's dream during a discussion and expressed great appreciation for the image of the butterfly that Zhuangzi chose. The sage shared: "A butterfly has something delicate and evanescent about it. If we are dreams, the true way to suggest this is with a butterfly and not a tiger." (Borges, 2000, 29). That fragile, ambiguous spirit latent in Borges's works creates a labyrinth with no exit, yet no exit is needed, for the very act of wandering within that dream is the ultimate destination. The dream state that Borges wrote of was observed by Alazraki Jaime in the publication La prosa narrativa de Jorge Luis Borges; temas, estilo: "The Circular Ruins expresses the Buddhist idea of the world as a dream, or in other words, the illusory nature of the world as desired by idealist philosophers " (1968, 67).

The inquiry into the nature of reality, illusion, and existence in relation to dreams is a recurring theme in the short story The Circular Ruins. This remains an unanswered question in any era and becomes even more haunting when placed in a context where humanity is striving to generate virtual entities through technology. Carolina Coppens's research works Las ruinas circulares y la poética del margen (1999) elucidates the connection between space and identity, as well as the moment when space begins to become a metaphor in speaking of distinct identities. Marta Gallo's El Tiempo en "Las Ruinas Circulares" de Jorge Luis Borges (1970) explores how the boundary between the dreamer and the dreamed is completely obliterated, affirming the illusory nature of existence. Several other works continue this issue, such as Guillermo Arango's (1973) La Función del Sueño en "Las Ruinas Circulares" de Jorge Luis Borges (The Function of the Dream in "The Circular Ruins" by Jorge Luis Borges), Carmen R. Rabell's (1988) "Las ruinas circulares" una reflexión sobre la literatura, etc.

What creates the philosophical depth in Borges's writing lies in the way he questions and inverts the concept of time to reveal an illusory world, a characteristic similar to the non-linear nature of time in a simulated environment. Albert and Bagby noted Borges's concept of time in his works in the publication The concept of time of Jorge Luis Borges, stating: "We make time and by consequence it is a subjective projection of our will, of our very being. Time is an intellectual reaction of our subconscious and all we are able to project is the "right now" (the present)" (1965, 105).

The concept of the "present" as the sole converging point of existence has become a challenge to the Western rationalist conception of time as a universal flow. In an interview, Borges also shared his feelings while writing the short story The Circular Ruins: "but all the time I felt that life was unreal. What was really near to me was that story I was writing" (Borges, 1969,

73) That statement clearly demonstrates a priority for fiction, and the story being written is the only flow of existence.

Precisely because the philosophical thought in Borges's literature carries, to some extent, an Eastern resonance, applying a Buddhist theory to the analysis of his literature is not impossible, especially when contrasting the character's journey of creation with principles of consciousness. The research work O budismo literário de Jorge Luis Borges by Antonio Carlos de Melo Magalhães and Paullina Lígia Silva Carvalho reached a conclusion: "The Circular Ruins' is above all a metaphor for time; in its ceaseless rotation, time both creates and transforms everything, while simultaneously always being a sign of finitude and the exposure of the hallucination of existence " (2014, 331).

This observation aligns closely with the theoretical system of the Yogācāra school in Mahayana Buddhism, founded by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. This is Consciousness-Only, often assessed as one of the most complex and inaccessible systems of thought among Mahayana Buddhist schools, especially when compared to the simple, inspiring direct intuition of Zen or the sharp negation of Madhyamaka. The reason is that Consciousness-Only constructs a highly systematic academic structure, with concepts such as the eight consciousnesses, the three natures, the three transformations of consciousness, and the five paths, along with a subtle system of analysis regarding phenomena and consciousness. However, it remains an important subject in Buddhist academia and practice with prominent spiritual practical value. This is also because Consciousness-Only provides a concise and persuasive model of how human consciousness constructs the world. The "Five Paths of Consciousness-Only" are stages of practice and realization in Consciousness-Only, outlining a systematic path of cultivation from the initial steps of faith and understanding, to practice, until penetrating the principle of true emptiness, eliminating obstacles, and finally attaining the fruit of omniscient Buddhahood. That is also the manifestation of the transformation of mind into wisdom, leading to complete understanding and enlightenment regarding the truth that "all phenomena are consciousness-only." The "consciousness-only" perspective can open a methodological approach to many phenomena, in which both reality and the so-called "I" are products of an impermanent process of consciousness transformation without inherent self-nature. From this viewpoint, Consciousness-Only has the capacity to transcend the scope of pure Buddhology to become a tool for literary approach in order to explore inner depth and ontological structure in modern and postmodern literature. Here, the objective world is not a fixed anchor, while the self-shatters into narrative fragments, and it is a place where dreams and illusions frequently swap roles with reality. Applying Consciousness-Only to literary analysis both brings a fresh reading and creates an opportunity for intersection between Eastern thought and Western philosophical and cultural trends. This is particularly relevant when applied to a special case like Borges, who walks within the labyrinth of meditation and the beginningless and endless dreams of the East.

Although there have been many studies recognizing the Buddhist resonance in Borges's works, focusing on a single journey still allows for further analysis. This research hopes to evoke

the possibility of an East-West cultural dialogue, thereby suggesting a way to decode literature through applied Buddhism and expanding literary education content towards the direction of experiential consciousness. From Borges's affinity with Eastern materials, the topic poses the question: When reading the work The Circular Ruins by Jorge Luis Borges, can the stages in the character's journey of dream-creation be analyzed as a journey of self-cultivation and realization to thereby reveal the philosophical depth of the work? To address the above question, the research focuses on clarifying the stages in the character's journey of awakening, the meaning of each stage, and how the stages in the "Five Paths of Consciousness-Only" help the work create depth in the human process of understanding the self.

Objective

1. To analyze the protagonist's journey of awakening in The Circular Ruins as a structured spiritual process, articulated through the stages of self-knowledge, self-destruction, and self-liberation, and corresponding levels of cognition (dualism, monism, and interpenetration).

2. To examine how the narrative progression parallels the Yogācāra (Consciousness-Only) path of cultivation, namely the Paths of Accumulation, Preparation, Vision, Meditation, and Completion, functioning as a spiritual map within the text.

3. To interpret the transformation of subject–object relations through Consciousness-Only doctrine, with emphasis on the dissolution of the two graspings (grāhaka–grāhya) and the realization of āśrayaparāvṛtti.

4. To investigate the symbolic role of fire as a trans-cultural metaphysical motif, representing wisdom, purification, and Thusness, and mediating Borges's convergence with Buddhist non-dual epistemology.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Borges, Reality, and Ontological Illusion

Jorge Luis Borges's The Circular Ruins has long been recognized as a paradigmatic text for exploring the instability of reality, authorship, and selfhood. Borges scholarship frequently situates the story within metaphysical, idealist, and post-structuralist traditions, emphasizing recursive creation, infinite regress, and the illusory nature of identity. Critics such as Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Beatriz Sarlo have argued that Borges dismantles realist ontology by replacing it with self-referential systems in which existence is contingent upon narrative or cognition. Philosophical readings often draw upon Western frameworks, including Berkeleyan idealism, Cartesian skepticism, and Schopenhauer's metaphysics of representation. From this perspective, the magician's act of dreaming a man into existence symbolizes the mind's power to constitute reality, while the final revelation—that the magician himself is dreamed—collapses the distinction between creator and created. However, such readings, while insightful, tend to

remain within Eurocentric metaphysical paradigms and often overlook non-Western epistemologies that resonate strongly with Borges's ontological concerns.

Psychological and Consciousness-Oriented Interpretations

A second strand of scholarship approaches The Circular Ruins through psychological and phenomenological lenses. Influenced by Jungian psychology, some scholars interpret the dreamed man as an archetypal projection of the unconscious, with the magician representing the ego's attempt to impose form and coherence upon psychic contents. Others draw upon phenomenology to analyze the progressive dissolution of subject-object boundaries, emphasizing consciousness as a constitutive force rather than a passive mirror of reality. Yet, these interpretations frequently stop short of articulating a systematic developmental model of consciousness. While they recognize transformation, they lack a clearly articulated teleology explaining how illusion gives way to awakening or insight. This gap invites engagement with philosophical systems that explicitly theorize stages of cognitive and spiritual transformation.

Buddhist Philosophy and Literary Studies

In recent decades, Buddhist philosophy—particularly concepts such as emptiness (śūnyatā), non-self (anatman), and dependent origination—has increasingly been applied to literary analysis. Scholars working within Buddhist literary criticism argue that literature can function as a site for experiential insight into the constructed nature of reality. Yogācāra (Vijñaptimātra) philosophy, with its emphasis on consciousness-only and the transformation of cognition, has proven especially productive for analyzing narrative illusion, dream imagery, and reflexive selfhood. However, applications of Vijñaptimātra to modern Western literature remain relatively limited and often focus on thematic parallels rather than structural or developmental correspondences. Few studies systematically map literary narratives onto the classical stages of Yogācāra spiritual cultivation. Consequently, The Circular Ruins has not yet been fully examined as a narrative embodiment of the Vijñaptimātra path, despite its striking alignment with Yogācāra doctrines concerning dream, projection, and awakening.

Research Methodology

The article addresses the object of study as the journey of awakening, while the research scope focuses on the short story The Circular Ruins by Jorge Luis Borges, published in the collection Ficciones (translated by Nguyen An Ly). To approach the topic comprehensively and effectively, this study employs a combination of three methods: the systemic method, poetics, and the psychological method. Each method plays an essential role in ensuring the scientific nature, depth, and openness of the interdisciplinary research process between literature and Buddhist philosophy. First, to answer the question "What stages does the character go through

in the journey of awakening?", the article applies the systemic method as a logical organizational framework, illuminating the entire sequence of events through the Buddhist model of the Five Paths of Consciousness-Only. Thereby, the process of awakening is arranged in the sequence of accumulation – preparation – vision – meditation – completion, thereby highlighting the dichotomous characteristic between dream and reality that dominates the entire plot. Second, to clarify "What is the significance of each stage?", the research uses the psychological method, focusing on analyzing inner states and the process of transformation from delusion to awakening. Through this, the article highlights the monistic characteristic in the character's thinking and consciousness, corresponding to the deep operation of the character arc. Finally, to answer the question "How do the Five Paths of Consciousness-Only help the work create philosophical depth?", the article deploys the method of poetics, focusing on the artistic symbol of fire. This symbol creates an interpenetration between layers of reality and highlights the central theme: awakening and the realization of the illusory nature of the self and the world.

Results

The Stages in the Character's Journey of Awakening

The character's journey in The Circular Ruins, starting from leaving the South with the intense desire to create a human being in a dream until realizing that he himself is merely the product of another dream, can be structured as a spiritual process comprising three stages: faith and understanding, practice and realization, and quiescence. This division demonstrates three levels of the character's cognition in the story: dualism (dream and reality still separated), monism (merging into one with the dream flow), and interpenetration (dissolving all cognitive boundaries) through the operation of consciousness according to the depth of Consciousness-Only. This serves as the basis for approaching the story as a spiritual map, where the process of awakening takes place according to the cycle of self-knowledge – self-destruction – self-liberation. This process is illustrated in the table below:

Table 1. The Character's Process of Awakening

Stage	Position (Path)	Main Characteristics	Purpose	Character Manifestation
Self-knowledge	Path of Accumulation *(Sambhāramārgah)*	Seeking to abide in the nature of consciousness-only. Cannot yet suppress or eliminate the latent tendencies *(anuśaya)* of the two graspings (grasper and grasped).	Cultivating provisions (merit and wisdom). Also known as the Aids to Liberation *(Mokṣabhāgīya)*.	Seeking a place uncontaminated by the Greek language and arriving at the sacred temple to execute the purpose of creating a human being in a dream.
	Path of Preparation *(Prayogamārgah)*	Practicing the four dharmas: Heat, Summit, Patience, and Supreme Mundane Dharmas to suppress the two graspings. Impressions and traces	Leading to a clear determination of reality. Also known as the Aids to Penetration *(Nirvedhabhāgīya)*.	Persistently screening the students in the dream to search for a growing intelligence worthy of being granted life.

Stage	Position (Path)	Main Characteristics	Purpose	Character Manifestation
		remain; not yet truly abiding.		
Self-destruction	Path of Vision *(Darśanamārgah)*	Non-discriminating wisdom does not grasp the object of cognition at all; has departed from the appearance of the two graspings.	Realizing Thusness. Seeing the truth for the first time. Eliminating the latent tendencies of the two hindrances belonging to the type of discrimination; entering the Path of Seeing (First Ground - Joyous).	Changing the method by purifying oneself, waiting for the full moon, and concentrating high willpower to dream of a beating heart.
	Path of Meditation *(Bhāvanāmārgah)*	Frequently practicing non-discriminating wisdom. Eliminating the remaining coarse and heavy parts.	Attaining the Great Transformation of the Basis *(Āśrayaparāvṛtti)*, transforming defilement into purity. The stage of the Ten	Perceiving sounds and images in the universe as somewhat faded; living in a sensation

Stage	Position (Path)	Main Characteristics	Purpose	Character Manifestation
			Grounds, from the First to the Tenth Ground.	resembling bliss.
Self-liberation	Path of Completion *(Niṣṭhāmārga)*	Escaping all hindrances, attaining perfect clarity. Abiding in Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment.	Becoming a Buddha. Attaining the Dharma Body *(Dharmakāya)*.	Final enlightenment, realizing that he himself is also a person created from a dream.

Dualism: From the Dream of Completion to the Rage of Failure

The protagonist of The Circular Ruins believes he can dream a complete human being into reality—one who possesses autonomous thought rather than being a projection of the dreamer's will. Unlike ordinary dreams, his goal is to create a being who experiences itself as real. This reflects Borges's recurring idea that reality itself may be a dream, resonating with the Consciousness-Only doctrine that all phenomena arise from mind. Yet, at this initial stage, the magician remains trapped in dualism: although he intellectually grasps that all is consciousness, he still clings to distinctions between subject and object, dream and reality. This stage parallels the Path of Accumulation in Consciousness-Only Buddhism, where aspiration for awakening arises but attachment and conceptual grasping persist. The magician's total absorption in the project—forgetting his own identity and withdrawing from ordinary life—reveals deep attachment to both self and phenomena. His dreams are chaotic and unproductive because his practice is driven by desire for attainment rather than direct realization. Thus, despite understanding the theory that reality is mind-made, his behavior continues to treat phenomena as independently real.

To support his inward project, the magician isolates himself in the ruins, minimizing sensory engagement with the external world. His exclusive focus on dreaming reflects an attempt to construct a purely internal reality. However, his effort to control and possess the dreamed child exposes a subtler form of grasping. Even when he narrows his focus to a single student, marking a transition akin to the Path of Preparation, he remains bound by the object he has selected. Although his concentration deepens and chaos subsides, he still reifies the dream-child as something to be achieved. This culminates in rage and failure, showing that refined method alone cannot overcome grasping; progress rooted in attachment only produces subtler delusion.

Monism: Dreaming in Accord with Nature

After repeated failure, the magician abandons deliberate control and allows dreaming to arise naturally. This shift embodies equanimity (upekṣā), a key mental factor in Consciousness-Only practice. By relinquishing attachment to results, he permits the seeds of consciousness to manifest spontaneously. This marks a movement toward non-duality, resembling the Path of Vision, where neither subject nor object is grasped as real. In this state, the magician creates the human systematically and effortlessly, beginning with the heart and observing its development without interference. His ability to enter and leave the dream at will reflects meditative stability and harmony with the dream process. However, the created being remains lifeless. Recognizing his own limitation, the magician turns to greater forces and receives guidance from the Fire God, confirming his latent capacity while revealing that realization requires further cultivation.

This stage corresponds to the Path of Meditation, where realization depends on sustained practice rather than sudden attainment. As in Buddhist cultivation, enlightenment requires traversing successive stages, confronting hindrances, and refining wisdom. Borges thus presents creation not as an act of domination but as alignment with the natural operation of consciousness—a shift from dualistic striving to non-attached participation in the dream of reality.

Table 2. System in the Path of Meditation

Stage (Ground)	Cultivation (Perfection)	Elimination (Heavy Hindrance)	Result (Thusness)	Purpose
1. Joyous Ground *(Pramuditā)*	Giving Pāramitā *(Dāna)*	Hindrance of ordinary nature *(pṛthagjanatva)*	Omnipresent Thusness	Breaking the view of the ordinary person: Meaning abandoning the habit of believing that there is a separate "I" (Self) and that things (Phenomena) are real.
2.Immaculate Ground *(Vimalā)*	Precepts Pāramitā *(Śīla)*	Hindrance of wrong conduct	Supreme Thusness	Eliminating subtle errors: Overcoming minor faults in actions and thoughts that were previously unrecognized.

Stage (Ground)	Cultivation (Perfection)	Elimination (Heavy Hindrance)	Result (Thusness)	Purpose
3. Luminous Ground *(Prabhākarī)*	Patience Pāramitā *(Kṣānti)*	Hindrance of dullness	Current-flowing Thusness	Overcoming darkness and forgetfulness: Eliminating the state of being quick to forget, failing to remember the learned teachings, so that wisdom may be enlightened.
4. Radiant Ground *(Arciṣmatī)*	Effort Pāramitā *(Vīrya)*	Hindrance of subtle current manifest afflictions	Non-appropriating Thusness	Dropping emotional attachment: No longer sinking into the feeling of bliss during meditation (attachment to concentration) or clinging too much to doctrine (attachment to Dharma).

Stage (Ground)	Cultivation (Perfection)	Elimination (Heavy Hindrance)	Result (Thusness)	Purpose
5. Difficult-to-Conquer Ground *(Sudurjayā)*	Meditation Pāramitā *(Dhyāna)*	Hindrance of lower vehicle Nirvana	Indistinct Thusness	Overcoming the psychology of escape: Abandoning the thought of wanting to enjoy Nirvana alone. Returning to save beings, enduring suffering with the world while the mind remains settled.
6. Manifest Ground *(Abhimukhī)*	Wisdom Pāramitā *(Prajñā)*	Hindrance of coarse manifest appearances	Non-defiled Thusness	Eliminating dualistic thinking: No longer distinguishing clearly or rigidly. Seeing the true nature of phenomena.

Stage (Ground)	Cultivation (Perfection)	Elimination (Heavy Hindrance)	Result (Thusness)	Purpose
7. Far-Reaching Ground *(Dūraṃgamā)*	Means Pāramitā *(Upāya)*	Hindrance of subtle manifest appearances	Non-differentiated Thusness	Overcoming the view of arising and ceasing: Penetrating the principle of "no birth, no death," so that even the most minute appearances of arising and ceasing are no longer seen as real.
8. Immovable Ground *(Acalā)*	Vows Pāramitā *(Praṇidhāna)*	Hindrance of striving in the signless	Neither increasing nor decreasing Thusness	Eliminating "effort": Shifting from a state of needing to "apply effort" to be settled, to a state of "effortless action" (naturally settled, without needing to try).

Stage (Ground)	Cultivation (Perfection)	Elimination (Heavy Hindrance)	Result (Thusness)	Purpose
9. Good Intelligence Ground *(Sādhumatī)*	Power Pāramitā *(Bala)*	Hindrance of not wanting to act for others' benefit	Wisdom-mastery basis Thusness	Breaking the fear of difficulty: Possessing wisdom but must arouse the mind to use it to plunge into life, benefiting sentient beings tirelessly.
10. Cloud of Dharma Ground *(Dharmameghā)*	Knowledge Pāramitā *(Jñāna)*	Hindrance of not being master of dharmas	Karma-mastery basis Thusness	Eliminating the final limitation: Attaining absolute freedom, with miraculous powers transforming without obstruction like auspicious clouds covering the entire sky.

To reach this stage, the practitioner must deeply understand the arduous Bodhisattva path. The magician enters the cultivation of cause when he implores the effigy for help (Borges, 2023, p. 72), abandoning dualistic grasping and devoting himself to ritual practice, much like stepping onto the Joyous Ground. Under the Fire God's guidance, he patiently follows each instruction,

achieving insight through disciplined perseverance and transmission of ritual knowledge (Borges, 2023, p. 73). This process reflects Borges's understanding of Nirvana, echoing the Buddha's teaching that liberation lies in knowing the path rather than the totality of truth (Borges & Jurado, 1991, p. 90). While Borges does not advocate a specific religious doctrine, the magician's journey resonates with the Bodhisattva ideal: cultivation aims not at sanctification but inner peace. Although the son's creation nears completion, the magician experiences attachment and reluctance to let go (Borges, 2023, p. 74). Ultimately, he relinquishes control, erasing the son's awareness of his illusory origin, mirroring the Bodhisattva's selfless act of placing others' liberation above personal desire.

Interpenetration: Awakening to realize one is also a shadow in another dream

When the magician realizes that he himself is also a shadow, this can be seen as a powerful reflection of Consciousness-Only theory: that not only the object (the grasped condition) is manifested by consciousness, but even the perceiving subject (the grasping condition) is illusory, lying within a deeper layer of manifestation corresponding to the Path of Completion. In reality, his realization that he himself was also a shadow in another person's dream had been foreshadowed in the previous stage. When he taught the son the rituals so the child could step into reality, "At times, he was troubled by the impression that all this had happened before" (Borges, 2023, p. 73). His premonition arose from a feeling of familiarity because he himself might have been instructed in the things he was instructing his son. It is like a seed in the Storehouse Consciousness, inherently there and waiting for conditions to arise. This is precisely what Consciousness-Only aims for, not to deny that everything we see in this world is false, but for us to understand "observing the mind to liberate from birth and death, not that the internal realm also does not exist at all like the external realm" (Xuanzang, 2024, p. 701). The magician himself also felt that death was no longer something that frightened him, so instead of fleeing into the water to protect himself from the fire, he accepted it with the mindset of "understanding that death was coming to crown his old age and absolve him of his labors" (Borges, 2023, p. 76). This stage is perhaps when he stepped into the Outflow-free realm (Anāsrava-dhātu), which is a completely pure world, no longer having any entanglements. Attaining that realm means having eliminated everything; we can look back at that journey in the following diagram:

Source | **The Five Wisdoms & Manifestation** | **Result**

The Five Sense-Consciousnesses (1st-5th)
- Eye
- Ear
- Nose
- Tongue
- Body

1. All-Accomplishing Wisdom → Nirmanakaya (Transformation Body)

Mental Consciousness (6th Consciousness)

Manas Consciousness (7th Consciousness)

Alaya Consciousness (8th Consciousness)

Transformation

2. Wisdom of Profound Observation

3. Wisdom of Equality

4. Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom

5. Dharmadhatu Wisdom

Sambhogakaya (Enjoyment Body)

Dharmakaya (Truth Body)

Diagram 1. The Correlation between the Five Dharmas, Four Wisdoms, and Three Bodies

It is precisely because the magician realized the nature of death and let go of anxious thoughts regarding the stories he heard others report about his son as a man who walked through fire without being burned that he was able to perceive a higher realm. Realizing that he himself is a shadow is the act of shattering the false self that is manifesting, eliminating attachment to the self when attaining the Transformation of the Basis (āśrayaparāvṛtti), and achieving liberation from fundamental delusions regarding the existence of a self. This is complete enlightenment, cognizant that all present phenomena are created by the eight consciousnesses and are not real. This enlightenment leads him to a new vision, like the wisdom of one who is sovereign, transcending all limits of ordinary cognition. And perhaps, the son he projected will also soon realize this reality just as he has perceived it. Re-reading the first detail that Borges cited from another work to serve as the epigraph for his short story - "And if he left off dreaming about you... Through the Looking-Glass, VI" (Borges, 2023, p.67) we see even more clearly the similarity in the concept that the world we live in is merely a world of images or reflections in a mirror, which both Borges and Consciousness-Only aim towards. And we, perhaps, are those sleeping in a dream, unaware that we are still within the great birth and death.

The Art of Constructing the Journey through the Symbol of Fire

In the story, the image appears from the initial stage to the end of the magician's journey to realize his goal, and is simultaneously a symbol connecting East and West cultures. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant: "Fire is the principal divine symbol of Mazdeism. The protection of the sacred fire extends from ancient Rome to Angkor. The symbol of purifying and regenerating fire develops from the West to Japan" (Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A., 1997, 545).

In the Consciousness-Only system, fire bears profound metaphysical meaning as it symbolizes the wisdom that burns away afflictions in the Radiant Ground (Arciṣmatī), an important stage on the path to enlightenment. The Fire God in the story is the only entity that knows the magician's son is merely a phantom, establishing an asymmetric power relationship between the creator and the energy source maintaining that creation. The magician teaching his son to worship Fire is not a voluntary choice but a mandatory submission to the knowledge that transcends illusion. Here, the Fire God represents Thusness (Tathatā) in Consciousness-Only, the only entity that sees through the illusory nature of the dream world.

The ultimate purpose of Consciousness-Only is to cause humans to realize and enter the Nature of Consciousness-Only which is neither existent nor non-existent, to destroy the two attachments of Superimposition and Denigration, that is, to transcend the dualism of existence and non-existence. The ending scene of the story clearly demonstrates this philosophy when the magician has fulfilled his life's purpose creating a person in a dream and faces death. The detail that the fire "did not bite his flesh, they caressed him and engulfed him without heat and without combustion" (Borges, 2023, 76), if viewed as a human feeling when perceiving a noble truth, is a sensation of lightness, not painful as we usually think. Through the fire symbol, Buddhist thought flows naturally as Borges expresses his idea on the illusory nature of reality, and that transcending all attachments is the only path to enlightenment.

Discussion

This study set out to examine how Jorge Luis Borges's narrative strategies anticipate and resonate with postmodern theories of representation and simulation, while also revealing striking conceptual affinities with Yogācāra Buddhist accounts of consciousness and reality construction. The results demonstrate that Borges's fiction not only destabilizes conventional realist ontology but also foregrounds epistemological and phenomenological concerns that parallel both Western poststructuralist thought and classical Buddhist philosophy.

First, the findings confirm that Borges's narrative prose systematically undermines the assumption of a stable, referential reality. As Alazraki (1968) and Sarlo (1993) have argued, Borges's stories replace mimetic realism with speculative architectures in which texts generate other texts, and signs refer primarily to other signs rather than to an external world. This is particularly evident in Ficciones (Borges, 1962), where labyrinths, infinite libraries, and fictive encyclopedias dramatize the collapse of origin and authority. These results align closely with Baudrillard's (1994) concept of simulacra, in which representation precedes and ultimately replaces the real. Borges's imagined worlds thus function not as metaphors of reality but as self-sustaining systems, anticipating the postmodern condition described by McHale (1987).

Second, the analysis supports Balderston's (1986) claim that Borges's manipulation of historical reference produces a deliberate "out-of-context" effect that destabilizes historical truth. Rather than grounding narratives in verifiable history, Borges inserts fabricated sources alongside authentic ones, blurring the boundary between archive and invention. This strategy

echoes Derrida's (1978) critique of logocentrism, wherein meaning is endlessly deferred through différance. The results suggest that Borges's fiction performs deconstruction avant la lettre by exposing how textual authority is constructed through repetition and citation rather than origin.

Moreover, the study's findings reveal strong conceptual parallels between Borges's narrative epistemology and Yogācāra Buddhist philosophy. Yogācāra's doctrine of vijñaptimātra (mere consciousness) holds that perceived reality arises from cognitive constructions rather than independent external objects (Asaṅga, 2001; Xuanzang, 1999). Borges's fictional universes, particularly those governed by idealist metaphysics, mirror this view by presenting worlds that exist only insofar as they are conceived, narrated, or remembered. This correspondence supports Lusthaus's (2002) and Kochumuttom's (1982) interpretations of Yogācāra as a phenomenological investigation of experience rather than a metaphysical idealism.

The concept of ālayavijñāna (storehouse consciousness) further illuminates Borges's recurring motifs of memory, repetition, and infinite regress. As Schmithausen (1987) and Vasubandhu (1984) explain, the ālayavijñāna functions as a repository of latent impressions that condition perception and cognition. Borges's fascination with total memory, most famously exemplified in "Funes the Memorious," can be read as a literary exploration of the burden and instability of such a storehouse. Rather than granting epistemic mastery, total recall results in paralysis, reinforcing Garfield's (2002) argument that attachment to conceptual reification leads to suffering and incoherence.

Additionally, the results demonstrate that Borges's fiction anticipates contemporary debates in cognitive philosophy. Clark's (2008) theory of the extended mind and Hayles's (1999) account of posthuman subjectivity provide a useful framework for understanding Borges's portrayal of cognition as distributed across texts, symbols, and external systems. The infinite library, the encyclopedia, and the map that replaces territory all suggest that thought is not confined to the individual mind but emerges through interaction with symbolic environments. This reinforces Foucault's (1977) view of discourse as a practice that produces subjects rather than merely expressing them.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Borges occupies a critical position at the intersection of literature, philosophy, and cognitive theory. His fiction does not merely illustrate philosophical ideas but actively theorizes the conditions of meaning, perception, and reality. By placing Borges in dialogue with postmodern theory and Yogācāra Buddhism, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how literary texts can function as sites of cross-cultural philosophical inquiry. The discussion thus supports the view that Borges's work remains not only aesthetically innovative but also philosophically generative, offering enduring insights into the constructed nature of reality and consciousness.

Conclusion

This study has examined Jorge Luis Borges's The Circular Ruins through the theoretical framework of the Five Stages of Vijñaptimātra, demonstrating that the protagonist's narrative trajectory can be coherently interpreted as a structured journey of spiritual cultivation and awakening. By employing a combination of systemic, psychological, and poetic methods, the article has shown that the magician's attempt to dream a human being into existence is not merely a metaphysical conceit, but a literary enactment of the Consciousness-Only path from delusion to liberation.

The analysis reveals a progressive transformation of cognition corresponding to the Paths of Accumulation, Preparation, Vision, Meditation, and Completion. Initially, the protagonist remains confined within subject–object dualism, clinging to the distinction between dream and reality. Through sustained discipline, relinquishment of control, and repeated confrontation with failure, he gradually dissolves these cognitive boundaries, culminating in the realization of āśrayaparāvṛtti—the transformation of the basis of consciousness. The climactic recognition that he himself is a dreamed being signifies the full penetration of non-self (anatman) and the illusory nature of all phenomena, aligning with the Yogācāra understanding of Nirvāṇa as the cessation of fundamental ignorance rather than annihilation.

Furthermore, the study highlights the central role of fire as a trans-cultural and metaphysical symbol that bridges Borges's literary imagination with Yogācāra epistemology. Fire functions not only as an artistic motif but also as an embodiment of non-discriminating wisdom, purifying attachments and revealing Thusness (tathatā). Through this symbol, Borges articulates an experiential insight into awakening that resonates strongly with Buddhist non-dual philosophy while remaining independent of doctrinal assertion.

Within its defined scope, this research has focused primarily on the Five Paths of Consciousness-Only, without exhaustively engaging related Yogācāra concepts such as the eight consciousnesses or the three natures. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that Vijñaptimātra offers a powerful interpretive model for decoding ontological instability, recursive creation, and consciousness-based realities in modern literature. By situating Borges within an East–West philosophical dialogue, the study contributes to both Borges scholarship and Buddhist literary studies, opening new possibilities for literary education oriented toward experiential awareness and consciousness inquiry in an era increasingly shaped by simulation and virtuality.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Based on the findings of this study, several practical implications can be drawn for literary education, cultural reflection, and interdisciplinary pedagogy:

1. Integration into Literary Education Educators may incorporate Yogācāra-based frameworks into the teaching of modern and postmodern literature to help students critically engage with questions of selfhood, perception, and reality. The Circular Ruins can serve as a case study for exploring consciousness as a constructive process rather than a passive reflection of the world.

2. Cultivating Reflective Reading Practices Literature may be approached not only as an object of analysis but also as a contemplative practice. Encouraging readers to reflect on narrative illusion, recursive authorship, and dream logic can foster awareness of how identities—both textual and personal—are mentally constructed and maintained.

3. Application to Contemporary Digital Contexts The Consciousness-Only interpretation of Borges's story offers valuable insight into contemporary experiences shaped by digital avatars, virtual identities, and AI-generated agents. Recognizing the parallels between fictional dream-creations and technologically mediated selves can support more critical and mindful engagement with digital environments.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Comparative Textual Expansion Future studies may apply the Five Stages of Vijñaptimātra to other works by Jorge Luis Borges, such as Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius or The Library of Babel, to further examine how recursive ontology and consciousness-based reality function across his oeuvre. Comparative analysis with authors such as Philip K. Dick, Italo Calvino, or Haruki Murakami may also reveal broader patterns of consciousness-oriented narrative structures in global literature.

2. AI, Simulation, and Consciousness Studies Interdisciplinary research could explore the relationship between Yogācāra notions of constructed consciousness and contemporary developments in artificial intelligence. Such studies may investigate whether AI-generated entities can be meaningfully analyzed through Buddhist theories of cognition, projection, and illusion, thereby extending literary analysis into techno-philosophical inquiry.

3. Empirical Literary Psychology and Reader Response Future research may empirically examine how readers cognitively and emotionally respond to narratives that dissolve subject–object boundaries. Integrating cognitive science, phenomenology, and Buddhist psychology could deepen understanding of how literary texts influence perception, identity formation, and experiential awareness.

Declaration of Interests

The author declares that there are no known financial, professional, or personal interests that could have appeared to influence the research reported in this article.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based solely on textual analysis of published literary and philosophical works. It does not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures. Therefore, no ethical approval was required. All sources have been appropriately cited in accordance with academic standards, and the research adheres to principles of academic integrity and scholarly responsibility.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any situation in which an author's financial, institutional, or personal relationships could potentially influence, or be perceived to influence, the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of the research. In the present study, no such conflicts exist.

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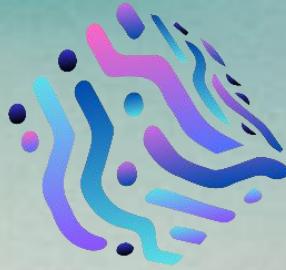
The Role of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös in Establishing the Foundations for the Dissemination of Vajrayāna Buddhism

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Original Research Articles

The Role of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös in Establishing the Foundations for the Dissemination of Vajrayāna Buddhism

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Abstract

This study investigates the intellectual contributions of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös to the understanding, systematization, and dissemination of Vajrayana Buddhism, with particular attention to his role as a non-religious European scholar who bridged Eastern and Western intellectual traditions in the nineteenth century. While Tibetan Buddhism and Vajrayana thought have been widely examined, Csoma's pioneering philological and translational efforts especially his systematic codification of Tibetan Buddhist terminology remains comparatively underexplored within Buddhist studies scholarship. The research aims to analyze Csoma's scholarly methodology and assess its impact on the global reception of Vajrayana Buddhism. Employing a qualitative historical-research design, the study utilizes historical-critical analysis, comparative textual study, and philosophical hermeneutics as its principal analytical frameworks. The primary research materials consist of Csoma's Tibetan-English dictionaries, grammatical treatises, translations of Vajrayana texts, personal correspondences, and contemporaneous academic records. These sources are examined in comparison with traditional Tibetan monastic interpretations to identify methodological innovations and intercultural dynamics. The findings reveal that Csoma developed a rigorous, systematic, and culturally sensitive approach to Buddhist scholarship, combining Western philological precision with deep engagement in Tibetan monastic learning environments. His work not only established foundational tools for Tibetan and Vajrayana studies but also facilitated cross-cultural knowledge transmission without religious proselytization. The study contributes scholarly value by enriching the historiography of Buddhist studies and re-evaluating the role of secular scholars in religious knowledge production. Practically, the findings offer insights for intercultural education, translation studies, and contemporary Vajrayana scholarship, highlighting Csoma de Kőrös's enduring influence on global Buddhist intellectual history.

Introduction

If Xuanzang (Tran Huyen Trang) traversed 19,000 km over 17 years (627–645 CE) from Chang'an across the Gobi and Tian Shan to Bodh Gaya, thereby forging a symbolic legend in Buddhist, literary, and cultural history, then the 23-year odyssey (1819–1842) of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös—covering nearly 14,000 km from Hungary through Iran, Afghanistan, Lahore, to Ladakh (Zangla Monastery)—likewise merits recognition. Enduring war zones and epidemics in the Middle East and Central Asia, Csoma produced the first Tibetan dictionary and grammar for the West, sought the origins of the Hungarian people, and founded modern Tibetology. Yet his achievements remain less celebrated, owing to the turbulent nineteenth-century context, the austere conditions of remote monastic research, and his ascetic lifestyle among Tibetan cloisters. As a secular scientist and linguist, Csoma operated with systematic, modern methods distinct from indigenous monastic and scholarly traditions. He was too pioneering to be fully acknowledged in his era, yet insufficiently synthesized to transcend temporal constraints and profoundly influence contemporary Tibetology. Consequently, while Tibetan Buddhist studies have flourished, Csoma's role as a non-religious scholar who systematized Vajrayāna knowledge – particularly his fusion of Buddhist philosophy with Western scientific method – remains underexplored.

This investigation into Sándor Csoma de Kőrös's foundational role in disseminating Vajrayāna Buddhism carries profound scientific, practical, and educational significance. First, it re-evaluates Csoma's contributions to shaping Vajrayāna scholarship – not merely through translation but by constructing scholarly tools (dictionaries, grammars) that integrate linguistics and philosophy in an interdisciplinary manner, laying groundwork for modern Buddhist and Vajrayāna studies. Second, it provides a framework for intercultural education programmes, promoting Vajrayāna as a globally relevant cultural heritage with substantial impact on psychology and contemporary philosophy. Finally, from an educational perspective, Csoma's legacy inspires perseverance and creativity in cross-cultural exploration, particularly through authentic, effective fieldwork in divergent cultural contexts.

The research object comprises Csoma's characteristics and contributions to Vajrayāna study and dissemination via translations, dictionaries, and intercultural engagement. The spatial scope centers on Csoma's activities in Tibet and India, especially Ladakh and Zangla monasteries, where he engaged the Vajrayāna spiritual milieu. The temporal scope is confined to 1819–1842, the period of his seminal works. The textual scope is delimited to three core publications: Dictionary Tibetan and English (1834) – the first bilingual lexicon, enabling access to Vajrayāna terminology; Analysis of Dulva Portion of Kah-gyur (1836) – an examination of the Vinaya section of the Kangyur , offering insight into tantric doctrine and ritual; and Sanskrit-Tibetan-English Vocabulary: Being an Edition and Translation of the Mahāvyutpatti (1984) – a trilingual lexicon

systematising terminology. These works not only established foundations for Vajrayāna research beyond Tibet but also reflect Csoma's visionary scope, facilitating deeper academic exploration of the tradition. The research aim is to elucidate Csoma's methodological characteristics in systematising and disseminating Vajrayāna knowledge through philology and cultural interchange, transforming esoteric wisdom into academic discourse and forging an East–West bridge via unique fieldwork. This aim entails analysing his translations and dictionaries, identifying shared traits, evaluating strengths and limitations, and assessing his impact on Buddhist scholarship.

Objective

1. Csoma applied creative philology to translate Vajrayāna texts, influenced by the Vajrayāna philosophical milieu.
2. Csoma rigorously systematised Vajrayāna texts, ensuring accuracy, within the Tibetan monastic environment.
3. Csoma connected East–West through an intercultural approach shaped by the Vajrayāna spiritual milieu.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Kőrösi Csoma Sándor (1784–1842), a Transylvanian-Hungarian scholar born into a Szekler family in Kőrös, devoted his life to tracing Hungarian ethnogenesis through an extensive Asian journey. After studying languages and history at Göttingen University, he departed in 1819, traversing the Balkans, Middle East, Iran, and Afghanistan to reach India and Tibet. There, he lived ascetically in monasteries, mastered Tibetan, compiled the first Tibetan – English dictionary and grammar, and studied local Buddhism before dying in Darjeeling en route to Lhasa. Csoma's biography, multilingual autodidacticism (over 20 languages), and pioneering Tibetology have attracted substantial scholarship. Biographical and linguistic studies underscore Csoma's foundational role in Tibetology. Theodore Duka's Life and Works of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1885) employs biographical and textual analysis to chronicle Csoma's journey and works such as the Tibetan-English Dictionary, hailing him as a pioneering Orientalist yet without detailed analysis of his engagement with Vajrayāna philosophy. Bettina Zeisler's "Alexander Csoma de Kőrös' contribution to Tibetan studies" (2015) evaluates his linguistic contributions, emphasising the dictionary and grammar as templates for subsequent scholarship due to their consistent structure. De Somogyi's "Alexander Csoma de Kőrös" (1935) summarises the linguist's life and Tibetological primacy but lacks depth and contemporary contextualisation. Overall, this cluster prioritises biographical and philological history; its strength lies in rich documentation, but a gap persists in interdisciplinary comparative analysis (e.g., linguistic, and literary Buddhist heritage). This informs Hypothesis 1 (H1): Csoma employed creative philology to translate Vajrayāna texts, influenced by the Vajrayāna philosophical milieu.

Csoma's study of Vajrayāna texts such as the Kangyur and Tengyur in Ladakh and Zangla spurred research into Tibetan tantric preservation and translation, enhancing European understanding of Buddhism. The landmark volume Tibetan and Buddhist Studies: Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1984, ed. Louis Ligeti) compiles international conference papers from Budapest, addressing Tibetan linguistics, Tibetan Buddhist history, and Csoma's legacy, with in-depth analyses of his dictionary, Indo-Tibetan journey, and influence on modern Tibetology. The Dalai Lama XIV's The World of Tibetan Buddhism (1995), applying philosophical and canonical exegesis, lucidly presents core Vajrayāna concepts – compassion, tantra, guru-yoga – for novice audiences. These studies provide robust theoretical frameworks for Vajrayāna but omit Csoma's scholarly role; this gap necessitates examining non-religious Orientalists, supporting Hypothesis 2 (H2): Csoma rigorously systematised Vajrayāna texts, ensuring accuracy within the Tibetan monastic environment.

Finally, Csoma's itinerary and collaboration with the Asiatic Society of Bengal have inspired research on East–West intellectual bridging and Vajrayāna dissemination in Europe. Géza Bethlenfalvy's "The Founder of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies – Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842)" (2009) offers an accessible biographical overview within East–West cultural exchange yet lacks technical linguistic analysis. Atilla K.'s "History of Hungarian Buddhism and the Influences of Buddhism in Hungary until the 1920s" (2017) surveys nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Hungarian Buddhism, spotlighting Csoma as a cultural interchange icon via his quest for Hungarian origins through Asian linguistics and culture. Collectively, these works illuminate dissemination processes but neglect Csoma's intercultural methodology; this informs Hypothesis 3 (H3): Csoma forged East–West connections through an intercultural approach shaped by the Vajrayāna spiritual environment.

Research Methodology

This article adopts a Buddhist-critical approach – examining the interplay and transformation between literature and Buddhist studies (Nguyen Thanh Trung, 2022) – integrating three specialised methods: cultural-historical analysis, textual comparison, and philosophical hermeneutics.

1. Cultural-historical analysis investigates cultural phenomena within historical contexts, stressing interactions among culture, society, and history, as exemplified in Bethlenfalvy (2009) on Csoma's East–West role through Tibetan linguistics and Vajrayāna. Procedures include data collection, contextual analysis, cultural factor identification, source comparison, and cultural-historical conclusion to verify textual authenticity and historical significance. This method provides multidimensional perspectives but risks lacking indigenous critique and demands extensive documentation. It is applied to Csoma's notes and translations to discern his Vajrayāna engagement within Tibetan monastic settings.

2. Textual comparison analyses manuscripts to identify similarities and differences in content, structure, and context. Procedures encompass manuscript selection, content/context analysis, meaning comparison, and cultural impact conclusion. This evaluates Csoma's accuracy and creativity in translating Vajrayāna concepts.

3. Philosophical hermeneutics, developed by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1960), interprets textual meaning through cultural context. By analysing Vajrayāna philosophy in Csoma's translations, it elucidates his rendering of concepts such as mantra, tantra, and mandala within Vajrayāna cultural space, probing philosophical depth. Based on the research object, hypotheses, and methods, the study model is presented below:

Table 1. Research Model

Research Hypothesis	Approach	Specialised Method	Object Characteristics	Research Aspect	Theoretical Literary Significance
H1. Csoma applied creative philology to translate Vajrayāna texts, influenced by the Vajrayāna philosophical milieu.	Buddhist Criticism	Textual comparison	Creativity	Philology	Expands philological approaches in Buddhist studies
H2. Csoma rigorously systematised Vajrayāna texts, ensuring accuracy, within the Tibetan monastic environment.		Historical-critical analysis	Rigour	Text systematization	Establishes foundations for Buddhist textual scholarship

Research Hypothesis	Approach	Specialised Method	Object Characteristics	Research Aspect	Theoretical Literary Significance
H3. Csoma connected East–West through an intercultural approach shaped by the Vajrayāna spiritual milieu.		Philosophical hermeneutics	Interculturality	Cultural exchange	Promotes intercultural dialogue in academia

Results

This study aimed to examine the scholarly methodology of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös in his engagement with Tibetan Buddhism—particularly Vajrayāna—by analysing three defining research characteristics: creativity, rigour, and interculturality. The findings demonstrate that Csoma's long-term residence and scholarship in Ladakh and Zangla monasteries generated a foundational model for Western Buddhist studies that was both scientifically systematic and culturally embedded.

Creativity in Knowledge Production and Conceptual Translation

The findings reveal that creativity constituted a central dimension of Csoma's research practice. This creativity is most clearly evidenced in his simultaneous compilation of Tibetan grammar and the Tibetan–English Dictionary (1834), which established the first comprehensive scholarly infrastructure for Western engagement with Tibetan language and culture. Csoma explicitly articulated this objective, noting that these works would secure "the foundation of a knowledge of the Tibetan language" for future scholars. Beyond linguistic documentation, Csoma demonstrated creative innovation by transforming Vajrayāna esoteric knowledge into academically legible forms. Through close collaboration with a Zangla lama, he standardised religious and esoteric terminology into systematic academic signs. For example, honorific language—integral to Tibetan religious discourse—was marked with the symbol h. in the dictionary, enabling Western readers to decode hierarchical and ritual layers of meaning previously inaccessible. Creativity is further reflected in Csoma's thematic rather than alphabetical organisation of the dictionary. Words were grouped into semantic classes, a structure that prioritised conceptual relationships over lexical convenience. This approach

facilitated philosophical interpretation and connected philology directly with Vajrayāna doctrinal systems. Additionally, Csoma's treatment of Buddhist narrative sources demonstrates creative integration of mystical elements—dreams, omens, and miraculous signs—within academic biography. In his account of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, dream symbolism and bodily marks are presented not as folklore but as meaningful cultural indicators of spiritual attainment. This approach reflects Vajrayāna epistemology, in which dreams and extraordinary signs function as legitimate modes of knowledge, and illustrates Csoma's ability to incorporate indigenous spiritual frameworks into scholarly discourse without dismissing their intellectual value.

Rigour in Philological Methodology and Canonical Analysis

The results also confirm a high degree of methodological rigour in Csoma's scholarship. The Tibetan–English Dictionary (1834) demonstrates systematic lexical organisation, semantic precision, and grammatical validation achieved through sustained collaboration with Tibetan monastic scholars. This partnership ensured linguistic accuracy under traditional Tibetan academic standards and produced reference works that remain authoritative in Tibetan Buddhist studies. Csoma's rigour is explicitly articulated in his assessment of Tibetan literature as a corpus of faithful Sanskrit Buddhist translations dating from the seventh century CE. He positions Tibetan as a scholarly "vehicle" for accessing ancient Indian Buddhist knowledge, drawing a direct analogy with Latin's role in medieval Europe. Unlike European languages that borrowed technical vocabulary, Tibetan rendered Sanskrit philosophical, scientific, and religious terms through systematic translation, reinforcing its analytical coherence. His long-term residence in monasteries enabled Csoma to read and catalogue the entire Kangyur (100 volumes) and Tengyur (240 volumes). The findings show that he classified the Kangyur into seven major divisions, adapting the Tripitaka framework while incorporating tantric materials. This classificatory work reflects both fidelity to Indian canonical structures and responsiveness to Tibetan Vajrayāna developments. The Analysis of the Dulva (1836) exemplifies Csoma's perseverance and scholarly precision. Rather than merely listing texts, he analysed meanings, traced Sanskrit origins, and cross-referenced canonical structures. Frequent references to manuscript "leaves" indicate direct engagement with handwritten and woodblock sources, highlighting meticulous attention to textual detail under conditions of extreme material scarcity. This depth of fieldwork confirms a rigorous research methodology grounded in immersive textual analysis.

Interculturality and Conceptual Mediation Between Traditions

The third major finding concerns interculturality, manifested in Csoma's sustained integration into Tibetan monastic life and his ability to mediate between Vajrayāna thought and Western intellectual frameworks. His translations and definitions reveal a deliberate strategy to render Tibetan Buddhist concepts intelligible within European scholarly language without erasing their indigenous specificity. For example, meditation (བསམ་, bsam) is defined as "thought; a

thinking, meditating on," while the verbal form (བསམ་པ་, bsam pa) is translated as "to think, meditate, muse on; to consider." By expanding "meditation" to include "musing" and "consideration," Csoma reframes Vajrayāna contemplative practices as cognitive and analytical processes, making them accessible to Western psychology and philosophy. The equivalence of "meditation" with "contemplation" further bridges Tibetan Buddhist practice with Western contemplative traditions rooted in Latin contemplatio. Csoma's intercultural mediation extends to his treatment of the indigenous Bon religion, which he defines as a "religious sect" with "customs and rites," employing terminology analogous to Christian denominations ("Pon church"). By situating Bon within a European chronological framework ("till the ninth century of our era"), he renders Tibetan religious history intelligible to Western readers while preserving its distinct ritual character. In Analysis of the Dulva (1836), Csoma further employs terms such as "priest" and comparative references to Indian traditions (e.g., Sanskrit Ṛddhika) to integrate Tibetan monastic structures into familiar Western religious categories. These translational choices demonstrate a deliberate intercultural strategy aimed at fostering mutual intelligibility rather than cultural reduction.

Collectively, the results demonstrate that Csoma de Kőrös' scholarship was not merely descriptive but methodologically innovative, rigorously systematic, and interculturally transformative. His work established enduring foundations for Tibetan Buddhist studies by combining creative conceptual translation, rigorous philological analysis, and deep intercultural engagement within Vajrayāna spiritual environments.

Discussion

Hungarian Cultural Context: Foundations and Objectives

Csoma's creativity stemmed from his passion to trace Hungarian origins, believing the Szekely descended from Huns and Central Asian tribes. This drive propelled him from humble beginnings – self-funded travel and learning – to scholarly mastery of 13 languages at Göttingen (1816–1818). His adaptability enabled assimilation as a Persian native, monastic practice as a Tibetan monk, and pedestrian traversal of the Middle East, India, and Himalayas for national and scientific ends. Csoma epitomized Hungarian exploratory spirit; his homeland honored him by renaming Kőrös village Csomakőrös (1904), establishing the Kőrösi Csoma Society (1920) to foster intercultural research, and reinforcing Hungarian identity as a European nation with Asian roots.

Csoma's rigour resulted from Göttingen education fused with Zangla and Phuktal monastic spiritual ambience; his dictionary compilation involved Buddhist textual cross-verification. His journey elevated Hungarian scholarship, advancing Oriental and Tibetological studies. Nationally recognized via postage stamps (1932, 1984) and a memorial park (1992), Csoma bolstered Hungary's image as an intellectual, resilient Euro-Asian community.

Csoma's interculturality emerged amid nineteenth-century Austro-Hungarian subjugation, failed revolutions (1848–1849), World War I misalliances, and territorial loss post-Trianon (1920).

Rejecting Finno-Ugric theory (aligning Hungary with peaceful Uralic Finns and Estonians), Hungarians embraced Asian nomadic warrior descent (Ural-Altaic). Csoma's ethnic quest transcended narrow nationalism, opening Eastern cultural portals via Vajrayāna rituals, mantras, and symbols. His Tibetan sojourn forged an East–West bridge: collaboration with William Moorcroft (1822 sponsor) and a local lama; integration of Western scholarship into monastic life; translation of tantric texts in European idiom. This enriched Hungarian culture, broadening national identity to emphasize Euro-Asian connectivity. Csoma's intercultural achievements transcended Hungary – venerated as a bodhisattva in Japan (1933), memorialized at Tokyo Buddhist University; the Kőrösi Csoma Society continues global exchange. Through Csoma, Hungary became an East–West cultural conduit within the European Union.

Contributions to Buddhist Studies, Philology, and Vajrayāna

Csoma's findings deepen Vajrayāna comprehension by converting monastic esoteric concepts into Western academic forms. He systematized Tibetan Buddhist terminology – largely Sanskrit translations – clarifying meditation, mantra, and ritual terms. Dictionary entries include བསམ་གཏན་ (bsam gtan, "meditation, contemplation") and བསམ་པ་ (bsam pa, "to think, meditate, muse on") (Csoma de Kőrös, 1834, 125 – 126), directly relating to vipassanā and śamatha in Vajrayāna. སྔགས་ (sngags, "mantra, incantation") is rendered "religious formula or incantation" (p. 228), reflecting mantra's role in summoning enlightenment energy within tantric practice. "Bla ma" is translated "a master, spiritual guide" (18). In Vajrayāna, the lama is central to guru yoga visualisation of the teacher as the enlightened essence for empowerment transmission. Csoma's rendering clarifies bla ma as both knowledge master and spiritual guide conducting esoteric rites (abhiṣeka, mantra).

From a philological-literary perspective, Csoma's work highlights Vajrayāna textual academization. The Tibetan-English Dictionary (1834) upholds grammatical classification, distinguishing parts of speech, tenses, and contexts (p. x); seamlessly linking philosophy and psychology in definitions like "rational," "inconceivable," rendering "meditate" a cognitive process aligned with nineteenth-century Western psychology, achieving relative accuracy and objectivity. Analysis of the Dulva (1836) opened Western scholarly access to hitherto esoteric Tibetan Buddhist literature. Cataloguing and analysing the Kangyur Vinaya section provide the ethical foundation (śīla) for Vajrayāna practices such as empowerment and mantra.

Issues for Further Discussion

Despite monumental contributions, Csoma's works are constrained by volume, contemporaneity, and Eurocentric source culture. For Dharmachakra ("chos kyi 'khor lo," ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ ལོ)—comprising "chos" (dharma), genitive "kyi," and "'khor lo" (wheel)—symbolizing the Buddha's teaching propagation, Csoma translates: "manners or morals of the Buddhists; the Buddhistical

sect" (1834, 78). This emphasizes socio-ethical and sectarian aspects, framing dharma as practical morality rather than profound philosophical layers, reflecting nineteenth-century European views of Buddhism as an ethical "sect" akin to Christianity. Using Latin-derived moral terminology familiarized dharma yet curtailed its symbolic depth.

Csoma's Kangyur classification in Analysis of the Kanjur (1836) merits deeper scrutiny. He divides it into seven sections (Vinaya 13 vols, Prajñāpāramitā 21, Avataṃsaka 6, Ratnakūṭa 6, Sūtra 30, Nirvāṇa 2, Tantra 22) under "De-not-sum" (Tripitaka), treating Tantra (Gyut, 22 vols) as a Sūtra extension rather than an independent "fourth basket." However, Butön Rinchen Drup (1290–1364) separates Tantra (rgyud) from Sūtra, underscoring its centrality in tantric practice (mantra, visualization, empowerment). Csoma's integration diminishes Tantra's autonomy in Vajrayāna, possibly due to reliance on local editions and limited exposure to full tantric transmission, applying Theravāda/Mahāyāna Indian Tripitaka frameworks rather than Tibetan tantric developments.

Moreover, the gap between theoretical lexicography and Vajrayāna praxis remains wide. Csoma defines mandala as "a circle or any plan designed for performing mystical ceremonies" broad and imprecise. In Sanskrit, mandala denotes a sacred circle or cosmogram; Csoma stresses "designed plan" while omitting its microcosmic representation of the five wisdoms (pañca-jñāna) and pure realms, functioning as a transformative device for siddhi. Similarly, mantra as "a mystical hymn of praise, prayer, formula", approximates Christian prayer, missing its tantric role as sacred sound activating mahāmudrā or elemental control (dhātu).

Conclusion

This study has examined the foundational role of Sándor Csoma de Kőrös in the establishment and global dissemination of Vajrayāna Buddhism through a detailed analysis of his philological creativity, methodological rigour, and intercultural engagement. By situating Csoma within Tibetan monastic environments while employing Western scholarly techniques, the research demonstrates that his contributions extended far beyond linguistic translation to include the systematic reconfiguration of Vajrayāna knowledge into academically accessible forms.

The findings confirm that Csoma's creative philology enabled the transformation of esoteric Buddhist concepts into structured terminological systems without stripping them of cultural meaning. His rigorous engagement with canonical sources—particularly the Kangyur and Tengyur—laid the groundwork for modern Tibetan and Vajrayāna studies by establishing reliable grammatical, lexical, and classificatory frameworks. Moreover, his intercultural methodology functioned as an intellectual bridge between Eastern spiritual epistemologies and Western academic rationalism, facilitating cross-cultural understanding without religious proselytization.

The study thus affirms the three proposed hypotheses, demonstrating that Csoma's scholarship was shaped by Vajrayāna philosophical environments, executed with exceptional philological discipline, and oriented toward intercultural mediation. His legacy challenges

conventional narratives that privilege religious insiders as sole authorities in Buddhist knowledge production and highlight the crucial role of secular scholars in preserving, systematising, and transmitting religious traditions.

Despite these contributions, the research acknowledges limitations arising from restricted access to unpublished archival materials and the historical constraints of nineteenth-century Orientalist discourse. Nevertheless, Csoma de Kőrös emerges as a seminal figure whose work continues to inform contemporary Buddhist studies, intercultural education, and translation theory. His life and scholarship exemplify a model of immersive, respectful, and methodologically sound cross-cultural research that remains highly relevant in an increasingly globalised academic landscape.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Implementation

Based on the findings of this study, several practical implementations are recommended for academic, educational, and cultural institutions:

1. Curricular Integration Universities and research institutes should incorporate Csoma de Kőrös's dictionaries, grammatical works, and translations into curricula for Buddhist studies, Tibetan studies, translation studies, and intercultural humanities, recognising them as foundational scholarly resources.

2. Intercultural Research Training Csoma's immersive monastic fieldwork model may serve as a pedagogical example for training scholars in culturally sensitive research methodologies, particularly in religious and area studies.

3. Translation and Lexicography Practice Contemporary translators of Buddhist and religious texts may adopt Csoma's systematic approach to terminology, balancing philological precision with philosophical interpretation to avoid reductive or overly literal renderings.

4. Public Humanities and Cultural Dialogue Museums, cultural centres, and Buddhist organisations may utilise Csoma's intellectual legacy to promote informed public understanding of Vajrayāna Buddhism as a global cultural heritage rather than a purely esoteric or sectarian tradition.

Suggestions for Future Research

To extend and refine the insights generated by this study, future research may pursue the following directions:

1. Comparative Scholarly Analysis Comparative studies between Sándor Csoma de Kőrös and other early Western Buddhist scholars—such as Eugène Burnouf or Brian Houghton Hodgson—could clarify distinct methodological trajectories in nineteenth-century Buddhist studies.

2. Monastic Reception Studies Ethnographic and textual research examining contemporary Tibetan monastic assessments of Csoma's translations would contribute valuable indigenous perspectives to his scholarly legacy.

3. Archival and Manuscript Research Further investigation into unpublished manuscripts, personal correspondence, and lesser-known notes preserved in European and Asian archives may yield deeper insight into Csoma's engagement with Vajrayāna practice and philosophy.

4. Digital Humanities Applications Digitisation and computational analysis of Csoma's dictionaries and translations could enhance accessibility, facilitate terminological mapping, and support interdisciplinary research across linguistics, philosophy, and religious studies.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or personal interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based entirely on historical texts, published materials, and archival sources. It does not involve human participants, living subjects, or sensitive personal data. All sources have been cited in accordance with academic standards, and the research was conducted with respect for Tibetan Buddhist traditions and cultural heritage. No ethical approval was required for this study.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any situation in which personal, financial, professional, or institutional relationships could reasonably be perceived to influence the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of research outcomes. In the context of this study, no such conflicts exist.

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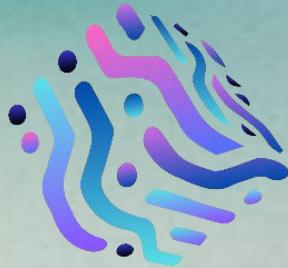
The Development of Social Competency Based on Buddhist Integration

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Original Research Articles

The Development of Social Competency Based on Buddhist Integration

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Abstract

Social competency has become an essential attribute for effective management in complex and diverse organizational environments. This study aims to examine the development of social competency through the integration of Buddhist principles, proposing a five-factor model grounded in both sociological and Buddhist theoretical perspectives. A quantitative survey design was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 240 respondents drawn from a population of approximately 2,500 employees, determined using Yamane's sample size formula. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographic characteristics, while inferential statistics, including one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation analysis, were applied to examine relationships among demographic variables and social competency factors. The findings indicate that Buddhist-integrated social competency significantly varies across demographic groups and that all five factors are positively correlated. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on values-based management by demonstrating how Buddhist ethical and psychological principles can enhance social competency development. Practical implications are offered for leadership training and organizational development in culturally diverse contexts.

Keywords: Development; Social Competency; Buddhist; Integration

Introduction

In contemporary organizational and managerial contexts, social competency has emerged as a critical capability that extends beyond technical expertise and cognitive intelligence. Social competency generally refers to an individual's capacity to interact effectively with others through communication, empathy, emotional regulation, ethical awareness, and cooperative behavior. Prior research has demonstrated that social competency is associated with leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, and organizational performance (Boyatzis, 2009;

Goleman, 1998). From a sociological perspective, social competency is not merely an individual trait but a socially constructed capacity shaped by cultural values, social norms, and moral frameworks within specific social contexts (Bourdieu, 1986).

Within this context, ethical and value-based perspectives have gained increasing attention in the study of social competency. Buddhist philosophy offers a comprehensive ethical and psychological framework that closely aligns with core components of social competency. Central Buddhist teachings—including mindfulness (Sati), compassion (Karuna), loving-kindness (Metta), right speech, and mental discipline (Samadhi)—emphasize self-awareness (Suebkrapan, et al., 2025), emotional regulation, ethical communication, and harmonious social relationships (Harvey, 2013; Rahula, 1974). These principles provide a holistic approach to social behavior that integrates individual self-development with collective well-being, making them particularly relevant to contemporary organizational and managerial challenges.

In recent years, management and organizational studies have increasingly incorporated Buddhist-inspired concepts, particularly mindfulness, to enhance leadership effectiveness and employee well-being (Grossman, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013). However, much of this literature focuses narrowly on mindfulness as a psychological technique, often detached from its broader ethical and relational foundations. As a result, existing studies tend to overlook the integrative nature of Buddhist philosophy, which emphasizes the interdependence of awareness, compassion, ethical conduct, emotional regulation, and social harmony.

Moreover, empirical research that systematically operationalizes Buddhist principles into measurable dimensions of social competency remains limited. Few studies have developed and tested comprehensive models that integrate multiple Buddhist concepts into a unified framework of social competency, particularly within sociological and management research contexts in Asian societies where Buddhist values continue to influence social norms and organizational behavior. This lack of empirically validated, culturally grounded models represent a significant gap in the literature.

To address this gap, the present study develops and empirically examines a five-factor model of social competency based on Buddhist integration. By combining sociological theory, management research, and Buddhist philosophical principles, this study seeks to contribute a culturally informed framework for understanding and enhancing social competency in organizational contexts.

Objective

1. To develop a five-factor model of social competency based on Buddhist integration.
2. To analyze differences in social competency across demographic variables.
3. To investigate relationships among the five factors of Buddhist-integrated social competency.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Social competency has been widely examined in sociology, psychology, and management studies as a multidimensional construct encompassing interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, ethical behavior, and the capacity to function effectively within social systems (Boyatzis, 2009; Goleman, 1998). From a sociological perspective, social competency is understood as a socially constructed capability shaped by cultural norms, moral values, and relational structures within specific social contexts (Bourdieu, 1986). These perspectives emphasize that effective social functioning depends not only on individual skills but also on ethical awareness and culturally grounded modes of interaction.

Buddhist philosophy, particularly as articulated in the Theravāda Pāli Tipiṭaka, offers a comprehensive ethical and psychological framework that closely corresponds with contemporary notions of social competency. The Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga) provides foundational guidance for socially competent behavior through principles such as Right Speech (Sammā Vācā), Right Action (Sammā Kammanta), and Right Mindfulness (Sammā Sati). Right Speech emphasizes abstaining from false, harsh, divisive, and idle speech, thereby promoting truthful, respectful, and harmonious communication (Majjhima Nikāya [MN] 141; Dīgha Nikāya [DN] 22). These teachings directly align with ethical communication and responsible social interaction.

The cultivation of mindfulness (Sati) is central to Buddhist psychology and social conduct. Mindfulness is described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as continuous awareness of body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena, enabling individuals to recognize internal states and respond skillfully in social situations (DN 22; MN 10). This mindful awareness supports emotional regulation and self-control, which are essential components of social competency. Buddhist teachings further explain that mental discipline (Samādhi) enables individuals to restrain impulsive reactions and maintain emotional balance during interpersonal interactions (Saṃyutta Nikāya [SN] 45.8).

Compassion (Karunā) and loving-kindness (Mettā) are repeatedly emphasized in the Pāli Canon as essential qualities for harmonious social relationships (Thepa, 2022). The Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta instructs individuals to cultivate unconditional goodwill toward all beings, promoting cooperation, non-harm, and social harmony (Sutta Nipāta [Sn] 1.8). Similarly, compassion is described as the empathetic response to others' suffering and a motivating force for ethical and supportive behavior (SN 46.54). These teachings highlight the relational and prosocial dimensions of Buddhist ethics, which are directly relevant to social competency in organizational and communal contexts.

Although contemporary management and organizational studies have increasingly incorporated Buddhist-inspired concepts—particularly mindfulness—to enhance leadership effectiveness, ethical decision-making, and employee well-being (Grossman, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013), much of this literature adopts a decontextualized or instrumental approach. Mindfulness

is often treated as a value-neutral psychological technique, detached from its ethical foundations and relational aims emphasized in the Pāli Tipiṭaka. Consequently, the broader integration of mindfulness, compassion, ethical speech, emotional regulation, and social harmony as an interconnected system of social competency remains underexplored.

Importantly, empirical research that systematically operationalizes core Buddhist principles from the Theravāda canon into measurable dimensions of social competency is limited. Few studies have developed comprehensive, culturally grounded models that translate canonical Buddhist teachings into empirically testable constructs within sociological and management research. This gap is particularly evident in Asian organizational contexts, where Buddhist values continue to shape social norms, ethical expectations, and interpersonal behavior.

Conceptual Framework and Significance of the Study

Conceptual Framework

Grounded in the Theravāda Pāli Tipiṭaka and contemporary social competency theory, this study proposes a five-factor model of Buddhist-integrated social competency:

1. Mindfulness Awareness (Sati) – conscious awareness of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in social interactions (DN 22; MN 10).

2. Compassion and Empathy (Karunā) – sensitivity to others' suffering and emotional states, motivating ethical and supportive responses (SN 46.54).

3. Ethical Communication (Right Speech / Sammā Vācā) – truthful, respectful, and non-harmful communication that fosters trust and harmony (MN 141).

4. Emotional Regulation (Samādhi) – mental discipline and emotional balance that prevent impulsive and harmful reactions (SN 45.8).

5. Social Harmony and Cooperation (Mettā) – promotion of goodwill, cooperation, and collective well-being in social and organizational life (Sn 1.8).

Together, these factors represent an integrated framework in which internal awareness, ethical intention, emotional discipline, and prosocial behavior operate holistically to support effective social functioning (Miseliunaite, et al., 2022) and ethical management behavior. By grounding social competency in original Theravāda sources, this study contributes a culturally authentic and theoretically robust model that bridges Buddhist philosophy and contemporary organizational research.

Significance of the Study

This study advances sociological and management research by integrating Buddhist philosophy into social competency development. It provides a culturally grounded model that can inform leadership development, organizational training programs, and ethical management practices, particularly in Asian and multicultural contexts.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Social competency levels differ significantly across demographic variables (gender, age, education, work experience).

H2: There are significant positive correlations among the five factors of Buddhist-integrated social competency.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine social competency based on Buddhist integration among employees in Thailand. Data were collected at a single point in time to capture respondents' perceptions of Buddhist-integrated social competency and its dimensions. The quantitative approach enabled statistical analysis of patterns, differences, and relationships among variables in a systematic and objective manner.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of approximately 2,500 employees. Sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: N = 2,500 and e = 0.05 as

$$n = \frac{2500}{1 + 2500(0.05)^2}$$
$$n = 240$$

Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling was used to select participants from the target population, ensuring that each individual had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. This sampling technique was chosen to minimize selection bias and to enhance the representativeness and generalizability of the findings to the broader population.

Research Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire with 35 items measured the five factors using a 5-point Likert scale. The research instrument used in this study was a structured, self-administered questionnaire designed to measure social competency based on Buddhist integration. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items, divided equally into five factors, with seven items per factor. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree (Hatchinson, & Chyung,2023). The instrument was developed based on relevant literature in social competency, sociology, and Buddhist studies. Content validity was assessed by three experts in sociology and Buddhist philosophy, and minor revisions were made according to their recommendations consist of Mindfulness Awareness (7 items), Compassion and Empathy (7 items), Ethical Communication (7 items), Emotional Regulation (7 items), Social Harmony (7 items)

Factor 1: Mindfulness Awareness (Sati)

(Awareness of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in social interactions)

MA1. I am aware of my thoughts when interacting with others.

MA2. I notice my emotional reactions during social situations.

MA3. I remain attentive when listening to others speak.

MA4. I am conscious of how my behavior affects people around me.

MA5. I reflect on my actions after social interactions.

MA6. I remain mentally present during discussions and meetings.

MA7. I recognize stress or tension within myself during interactions.

Factor 2: Compassion and Empathy (Karuna)

(Sensitivity to others' feelings, perspectives, and difficulties)

CE1. I try to understand others' feelings before responding.

CE2. I show concern when others experience difficulties.

CE3. I am patient with people who make mistakes.

CE4. I consider others' perspectives even when I disagree.

CE5. I feel motivated to help others when they are struggling.

CE6. I treat others with kindness regardless of their position.

CE7. I am sensitive to emotional changes in people around me.

Factor 3: Ethical Communication (Right Speech)

(Truthful, respectful, and non-harmful communication)

EC1. I communicate honestly in my interactions with others.

EC2. I avoid using harsh or offensive language.

EC3. I speak in a respectful manner even in difficult situations.

EC4. I consider the impact of my words before speaking.

EC5. I avoid gossip or harmful talk about others.

EC6. I express disagreement without causing conflict.

EC7. I communicate in ways that promote mutual understanding.

Factor 4: Emotional Regulation (Samadhi)

(Ability to manage emotions and impulses in social contexts)

ER1. I am able to control my emotions during stressful interactions.

ER2. I remain calm when facing criticism from others.

ER3. I can manage anger during disagreements.

ER4. I recover quickly after emotionally challenging situations.

ER5. I avoid reacting impulsively when emotions arise.

ER6. I maintain emotional balance in high-pressure situations.

ER7. I can separate personal feelings from professional interactions.

Factor 5: Social Harmony and Cooperation (Metta)

(Promotion of cooperation, respect, and collective well-being)

SH1. I work cooperatively with others to achieve common goals.

SH2. I value harmonious relationships in my work environment.

SH3. I respect differences among individuals.

SH4. I contribute to a positive and supportive social atmosphere.

SH5. I resolve conflicts in a peaceful and constructive manner.

SH6. I encourage teamwork and mutual support.

SH7. I prioritize collective well-being over personal gain.

Validity and Reliability

Validity Content Validity (Kappa Coefficient) of the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts with expertise in sociology and Buddhist studies. The experts assessed each item for relevance, clarity, and consistency with the intended construct using a dichotomous scale (relevant = 1, not relevant = 0). Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to determine the level of agreement among experts beyond chance. The results indicated a high level of inter-rater agreement, with an overall Kappa coefficient of 0.86, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.75 and indicates excellent content validity (Fleiss, Levin, & Paik, 2013). Therefore, all questionnaire items were considered appropriate and relevant for measuring Buddhist-integrated social competency.

Table 1 Content Validity Assessment Using Kappa Coefficient

Factor	Number of Items	Kappa (κ)	Interpretation
Mindfulness Awareness	7	0.85	Excellent agreement
Compassion and Empathy	7	0.88	Excellent agreement
Ethical Communication	7	0.84	Excellent agreement
Emotional Regulation	7	0.86	Excellent agreement
Social Harmony and Cooperation	7	0.87	Excellent agreement
Overall Scale	**35**	**0.86**	**Excellent content validity**

Note. Kappa values ≥ 0.75 indicate excellent agreement beyond chance.

Reliability The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results indicated that all five factors demonstrated acceptable to excellent reliability, with alpha values ranging from 0.82 to 0.91, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Holmbeck, & Devine, 2009). This confirms that the instrument is reliable and suitable for data collection.

Table 2 Reliability Coefficients of the Buddhist-Integrated Social Competency Questionnaire

Factor	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Interpretation
Mindfulness Awareness	7	0.88	Good reliability
Compassion and Empathy	7	0.91	Excellent reliability
Ethical Communication	7	0.86	Good reliability
Emotional Regulation	7	0.84	Good reliability
Social Harmony and Cooperation	7	0.82	Acceptable reliability
Overall Scale	35	0.89	Good reliability

Note. Cronbach's alpha values ≥ 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to describe the overall levels of Buddhist-integrated social competency and its five dimensions.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine differences in social competency scores across demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and work experience. When statistically significant differences were identified, results were interpreted at a significance level of $p < .05$.

Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the five factors of Buddhist-integrated social competency. Correlation coefficients were interpreted to determine the strength and direction of relationships, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$ and $p < .01$.

Results

Results Related to Objective 1: Development of a Five-Factor Model of Social Competency

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the overall level of Buddhist-integrated social competency and its five dimensions. The results indicate that respondents reported high levels of social competency across all five factors. Among the dimensions, Social Harmony and Cooperation (Metta) demonstrated the highest mean score, followed by Compassion and Empathy (Karuna) and Mindfulness Awareness (Sati). Ethical Communication (Right Speech) and Emotional Regulation (Samadhi) also showed high mean values, indicating that respondents generally perceived themselves as socially competent in accordance with Buddhist-integrated principles.

These findings support the proposed five-factor model of Buddhist-integrated social competency, confirming that mindfulness, compassion, ethical communication, emotional regulation, and social harmony are salient and measurable dimensions of social competency in the studied context.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Buddhist-Integrated Social Competency Factors (n = 240)

Factor	Mean	SD	Level
Mindfulness Awareness	4.12	0.46	High
Compassion and Empathy	4.25	0.44	High
Ethical Communication	4.08	0.48	High
Emotional Regulation	4.01	0.52	High
Social Harmony and Cooperation	4.32	0.41	High
Overall Social Competency	4.16	0.46	High

Results Related to Objective 2 and Hypothesis 1: Differences Across Demographic Variables

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine differences in overall social competency scores across demographic variables, including gender, age, education level, and work experience. The results revealed statistically significant differences in social competency across age groups and work experience, while no statistically significant differences were found for gender and education level. Respondents with higher age and longer work experience reported significantly higher levels of Buddhist-integrated social competency. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported, as social competency differed significantly across certain demographic variables.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA Results for Demographic Variables and Social Competency

Demographic Variable	F	p-value	Result
Gender	1.24	0.267	Not significant
Age	4.27	0.015	Significant
Education Level	1.89	0.132	Not significant
Work Experience	5.11	0.007	Significant

Note. Statistical significance at $p < .05$.

Results Related to Objective 3 and Hypothesis 2: Relationships Among the Five Factors

Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the five factors of Buddhist-integrated social competency. The results indicate that all five factors were positively and significantly correlated with one another at the .01 significance level. The strongest correlation was observed between Compassion and Empathy and Social Harmony and Cooperation, while Mindfulness Awareness showed strong positive correlations with

Emotional Regulation and Ethical Communication. These findings confirm that the five dimensions function as interrelated components of a coherent social competency framework.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 was fully supported, indicating significant positive relationships among all five factors of Buddhist-integrated social competency.

Table 5 Pearson Correlation Matrix of Buddhist-Integrated Social Competency Factors

Factor	MA	CE	EC	ER	SH
Mindfulness Awareness (MA)	1				
Compassion and Empathy (CE)	.62**	1			
Ethical Communication (EC)	.58**	.66**	1		
Emotional Regulation (ER)	.61**	.59**	.63**	1	
Social Harmony and Cooperation (SH)	.67**	.71**	.69**	.65**	1

Note. $p < .01$

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

H1: Social competency levels differ significantly across demographic variables to Partially supported (age and work experience).

H2: There are significant positive correlations among the five factors to Fully supported.

Discussion

Discussion of the Five-Factor Model of Buddhist-Integrated Social Competency

The findings related to Objective 1 demonstrate that the proposed five-factor model—Mindfulness Awareness, Compassion and Empathy, Ethical Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Social Harmony and Cooperation—is empirically supported. Respondents reported high levels across all five dimensions, suggesting that Buddhist-integrated social competency represents a coherent and meaningful construct within the studied context. This result aligns with sociological perspectives that emphasize the role of cultural and ethical frameworks in shaping social behavior and interpersonal competence (Bourdieu, 1986). The highest mean score observed for Social Harmony and Cooperation (Metta) reflects the central importance of harmonious social relationships in Buddhist philosophy. Metta emphasizes goodwill, cooperation, and the pursuit of collective well-being, which are foundational to socially competent behavior in organizational and community contexts (Harvey, 2013). This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that prosocial orientation and cooperative values are critical predictors of effective social functioning and leadership effectiveness (Boyatzis, 2009).

Similarly, high scores for Compassion and Empathy (Karuna) and Mindfulness Awareness (Sati) support existing literature suggesting that mindfulness and compassion enhance interpersonal sensitivity, ethical awareness, and emotional balance (Grossman, 2015; Goleman, 1998). Buddhist teachings emphasize that awareness of one's internal states and sensitivity to

others' suffering are prerequisites for ethical and socially responsible action (Rahula, 1974). Therefore, the present findings confirm that Buddhist principles can be operationalized into measurable dimensions of social competency.

Discussion of Demographic Differences in Social Competency

In relation to Objective 2 and Hypothesis 1, the results indicate that social competency differed significantly across age and work experience, while no significant differences were found for gender and education level. The partial support for Hypothesis 1 suggests that social competency development is influenced more strongly by life experience and prolonged social exposure than by formal educational attainment or gender-based differences.

The finding that older respondents and those with longer work experience exhibited higher levels of Buddhist-integrated social competency is consistent with sociological theories of social learning and moral development, which propose that ethical awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competence evolve through accumulated social experience (Bandura, 1986). From a Buddhist perspective, maturity and sustained practice of mindfulness and ethical conduct are understood as gradual developmental processes rather than innate traits (Harvey, 2013).

The absence of significant gender differences aligns with previous studies suggesting that when ethical and relational competencies are framed as universal human capacities rather than gendered traits, differences tend to diminish (Goleman, 1998). Likewise, the lack of significant differences across education levels may indicate that Buddhist-integrated social competency is cultivated primarily through experiential learning and reflective practice rather than formal academic instruction alone.

Discussion of Relationships Among the Five Factors

Regarding Objective 3 and Hypothesis 2, the correlation analysis revealed strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships among all five factors, providing full support for Hypothesis 2. These findings indicate that the dimensions of Buddhist-integrated social competency are interdependent and mutually reinforcing rather than independent constructs. The strong correlation between Compassion and Empathy (Karuna) and Social Harmony and Cooperation (Metta) reflects core Buddhist teachings, which emphasize that compassionate awareness naturally leads to harmonious social relationships (Rahula, 1974). This relationship also aligns with contemporary management research suggesting that empathy fosters trust, cooperation, and collective effectiveness within organizations (Boyatzis, 2009). Additionally, the significant associations between Mindfulness Awareness and both Emotional Regulation and Ethical Communication support prior research demonstrating that mindfulness enhances self-regulation and ethical decision-making (Grossman, 2015; Purser & Loy, 2013). Buddhist psychology emphasizes that mindful awareness serves as the foundation for mental discipline (Samadhi) and right speech, reinforcing ethical interaction and emotional balance. Collectively,

these interrelationships confirm that Buddhist-integrated social competency functions as a holistic system in which internal awareness, ethical intention, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior operate together to support socially competent action.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to sociological and management literature by demonstrating that Buddhist philosophy provides a robust theoretical foundation for social competency development. The validated five-factor model offers a culturally grounded framework that integrates Eastern ethical traditions with contemporary social competency theory.

Practically, the results suggest that leadership development and organizational training programs may benefit from incorporating mindfulness practices, compassion-based learning, and ethical communication training. Such approaches are particularly relevant in Asian and multicultural contexts, where Buddhist-influenced values continue to shape social norms and organizational behavior.

Conclusion

This study examined the development of social competency through the integration of Buddhist philosophy and empirically validated a five-factor model consisting of Mindfulness Awareness (Sati), Compassion and Empathy (Karunā), Ethical Communication (Right Speech), Emotional Regulation (Samādhi), and Social Harmony and Cooperation (Mettā). The findings demonstrate that Buddhist-integrated social competency is a coherent, measurable, and meaningful construct within contemporary organizational contexts.

The results revealed that respondents exhibited high levels of social competency across all five dimensions, indicating that Buddhist ethical and psychological principles remain highly relevant to modern social and organizational life. Significant differences were found across age and work experience, suggesting that social competency grounded in Buddhist integration develops progressively through accumulated life experience and sustained social practice. In contrast, no significant differences were observed across gender and education level, reinforcing the view that socially competent behavior rooted in ethical awareness and mindfulness is a universal human capacity rather than a demographic-specific trait.

Furthermore, the strong and positive correlations among all five factors confirm that Buddhist-integrated social competency functions as a holistic and interdependent system. Mindfulness supports emotional regulation and ethical communication; compassion fosters social harmony; and loving-kindness reinforces cooperative behavior and collective well-being. These findings align closely with both sociological theory and canonical Buddhist teachings, highlighting the inseparable relationship between internal mental cultivation and external social conduct.

Overall, this study contributes a culturally grounded and empirically supported framework that bridges Buddhist philosophy with contemporary social competency and management research. The model offers valuable insights for leadership development, organizational training, and ethical management practices, particularly in Asian and multicultural contexts where Buddhist values continue to shape social norms and interpersonal behavior.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following suggestions are offered for both practical implementation and future research.

Suggestions for Implementation

Organizations, educational institutions, and leadership development programs are encouraged to integrate Buddhist-informed social competency training into their human resource development initiatives. Training programs may incorporate mindfulness practices, compassion-based learning activities, ethical communication workshops, and emotional regulation techniques grounded in Buddhist principles.

Leaders and managers should be encouraged to model socially competent behavior by practicing mindful awareness, compassionate decision-making, and ethical communication in daily interactions. Such role modeling can foster a culture of trust, cooperation, and social harmony within organizations.

Additionally, organizational policies and performance evaluation systems may include social competency indicators aligned with the five-factor model. This approach can support sustainable organizational development by promoting ethical conduct, emotional balance, and collaborative work environments.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies may employ longitudinal research designs to examine how Buddhist-integrated social competency develops over time and how sustained mindfulness and ethical practice influence long-term social behavior and leadership effectiveness.

Cross-cultural research is also recommended to compare Buddhist-integrated social competency with other value-based or religiously informed social competency frameworks across different cultural and organizational contexts.

Moreover, qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, case studies, or phenomenological research could provide deeper insights into individuals' lived experiences of cultivating social competency through Buddhist practice. Future research may also explore the application of this model in specific sectors, such as education, healthcare, public administration, or monastic and lay Buddhist organizations.

Declaration of Interests

The authors declare that there are no financial, personal, or professional interests that could have influenced the research process, data analysis, or interpretation of the findings presented in this study.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical standards for social science research. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics review board prior to data collection. All participants were clearly informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participation. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were strictly protected, and no personally identifiable information was collected. All data were used solely for academic purposes and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest refers to any financial, personal, institutional, or professional relationship that could potentially influence, or be perceived to influence, the objectivity, integrity, or interpretation of research findings. The authors confirm that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study.

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