

Knowledge Management Implementation in the Nigerian Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

This study focuses on the role of knowledge management in sustaining and enhancing innovation in the hospitality industry. In particular the study seeks to establish a knowledge management model within which the principles of innovation can be incorporated. There is a brief review of knowledge management and hospitality concepts and their respective synergies, and the various definitions mentioned indicated that knowledge management has the potential to be a catalyst for innovation within organizations. The study applied the survey methods where questionnaires were distributed to 240 respondents and analyzed using statistical analysis techniques. Most of the respondents perceived knowledge management as a way to add value. The results indicated that the state of knowledge–management framework implementation in the hospitality industry has been accepted. The study also identified knowledge management as one of the most important resources that contributes to the competitive advantage of an organization. This study provided a better understanding of the determinant factors and variables of knowledge management. The study could assist organizations to better design their knowledge–management schemes and generate fruitful outcomes for both employees and organizations. Our study shed light on the important role of knowledge management and the role of top management in legitimizing and empowering the knowledge management leaders. The study pointed out that future research can focus on the knowledge management leaders and address issues such as the characteristics of effective knowledge-management leaders and how can an organization develop a committed team of knowledge management leaders.

Keywords: Knowledge management practices; Implementation strategies; Hospitality industry; Organizational competence; Strategic planning process

Introduction

The rapid development of the knowledge management practices and other technologies have urged many organizations to actively seek to new ways, ideas and creative solutions in improving their products, process and technology. To survive in this harsh environment, many firms have launched economic models which aims in transforming the firm from the product based towards the knowledge based. Align with this move, understanding the fundamental drivers influencing an organizations ability to innovate successful new products, ideas and system have become a key strategic task for firms to continue to exist in this dynamic market.

The term knowledge management is generally used to refer to the practices, implicit or explicit, used by a firm to acquire new knowledge and to rearrange and diffuse existing knowledge within the firm. It also includes strategies that are intended either to prevent the firm's own knowledge from 'leaking' out or to encourage the diffusion of its knowledge to partner firms and others from whom the firm might benefit in reciprocal knowledge exchange. Today, knowledge management has been recognized as the fundamental activity for obtaining, growing and sustaining intellectual capital in organizations [1].

Previous studies have examined the role of knowledge management as a mediator. Tung's [2] study, evidenced that knowledge management mediates the relationship between an organization's culture and structure and organizational effectiveness. Rastid Alshekaili's [3] study, reveals that knowledge management mediates the relationship between human capital and innovation performance.

To meet the increasing challenges facing the hospitality industry, knowledge management highlights the critical success issues of organizational competence and survival in the face of increasingly

environmental changes and demands in the market. Essentially, it embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technology and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings [4]. Each factor is expected to have in-depth effect on the performance of the industry as a whole. Many analysts of the hospitality industry agreed that the sub-sector has the potential of not only contributing to foreign exchange earnings, but also can aid the reduction of the concentration of foreign exchange sources. In Nigeria, the hospitality industry is not yet operating in an ever increasing knowledge based economy, where hotels have to increase customers satisfaction and retention levels, lower employees turnover rates and operating expenses, maximize profits and strive to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. This study is motivated by the pervasive desire about the changing landscape of the application of knowledge management framework in the Nigeria hospitality industry implementation process and sparse. This study proposes a theoretical framework for understanding how knowledge, workers commitment and motivation affect the use of knowledge management practices and the organizational (Hospitality Industry) performance.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the possible use

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of knowledge management within the Nigeria hospitality as a catalyst or vehicle for increasing innovation and hence competitiveness. Other specific objectives include:

- To detect empirically the presence or absence of knowledge management practices in the Nigeria hospitality industry.
- To explore the readiness of the hospitality industry to implement knowledge management concepts.
- To enhance the understanding of knowledge management practices and its importance in the hospitality industry.
- To provide direction for future hospitality research by identifying and describing published studies, suggestions and implications.
- To examine the impact of knowledge management processes in the hospitality industry.
- Finally, to examine how knowledge management is perceived of the firm in this context.

Research problem

Over the past years, the study of knowledge management practices have expanded tremendously due to economic, social and technological factors. The industry lacked the ability to adjust to trends and factors in knowledge management and has neglected to close the gaps between the industries. In addition, the industry has tended to respond negatively to an adoption, therefore created a hostile environment. This study is intended to close the gap.

Research questions

In an attempt to shed some light on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were propounded:

- What factors are important in knowledge management implementation in the Nigeria hospitality industry?
- What should be done to adapt or initiate knowledge management practices in the hospitality industry.

This study addresses these research questions via adopting quantitative and qualitative field study among the hospitality industry located in Abuja, Federal Capital of Nigeria. The researcher utilized structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview techniques to collect the data for analysis.

Hypotheses of the research

To achieve the purposes of the study, the researcher was guided by the following hypotheses:

- (1) **H₀**: There is a moral relation between the organization factors in the level of hospitality industry and knowledge management.
- (2) **H_o**: There is a moral relationship between the human factors and the explicit knowledge management.

Review of Related Literature

Knowledge management has its origin back in 1959 when Drucker, who was a scientist, Business consultant and teacher created the term “the knowledge work”, in his belief, a knowledge worker is one who works primarily with information or one who develops and uses knowledge in the workplace.

According to Drucker, a knowledge workers helps to develop

business intelligence and increases the significance of intellectual capital. These knowledge workers tend to create an atmosphere in which any company gain insight into customer preferences.

Since 1995, many scholars have published different definitions of knowledge management. One widely used definition of knowledge management is one by Groff and Jones [5].

“...knowledge management is the tools, techniques and strategies to retain, analyze, organize, improve and share business expertise”.

This definition mainly focuses on the information technology and processes that are needed for the company to achieve the capture of explicit knowledge and does not include the human factor.

Another definition of knowledge management by David Skyreme emphasizes the human component in the knowledge management process. Knowledge management is the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge and its associated processes of creation, organization, diffusion, use and exploitation (David Skyrema 2002). This definition explicitly focuses on the human capital and does not incorporate the concept of technology that helps to capture, store and distribute the knowledge within the organization. The most suitable definition for the purpose of this study is one given by Civi Emin [6].

“...that knowledge management caters to the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival and competence in the face of increasing of increasingly discontinuous environmental change”.

This definition supports the idea of combining the human capital and technical aspects in the knowledge management process. The definition not only identify knowledge created by the human capital, but also describe the technical process to capture, store and distribute the gained tacit knowledge in explicit form.

In the past years, knowledge management has been associated with networking systems. Networking is defined as making links from people we know in an organized way, for a specific purpose, while remaining committed to doing our part, expecting nothing in return [7]. This definition emphasizes networking among individuals who communicate through a web of familiar individuals who try to collect information to gain the level of knowledge they are striving for.

Alari Leidner [8], Clark Jones and Armsrong [9], Schultze and Ladnere [10] emphasizes the idea that knowledge management is mainly implemented through knowledge management system that utilizes internet technology and networking by identifying knowledge management as one of the most important organizational resources. Bounchen [11] compared the relevance of knowledge management in the hospitality industry to the importance of knowledge management practices in other industries. The author identified and provided evidence of knowledge and analyses different dimensions/approaches of knowledge management in the hospitality industry. The finding indicated that knowledge management plays a major role in the overall performance of hotel operations and is of great asistance for quality improvement.

Gronau [12] proposed a knowledge management system that assist to gather information from customers and capture this gained information. This knowledge is then stored in knowledge management system called “the knowledge care”. Gronau stated that knowledge management is identified as a key success factor in most industries today. Hattendorf [13] introduced a research study dealing with knowledge supply chain matrix approach for balanced knowledge management. His evaluation showed that most knowledge management projects lack

concepts which over-stresses the importance of one single factor, such as information technology but failed to pay attention to other variables such as structures, strategies and processes. The author portrayed how this tool was incorporated with knowledge management projects in the airline industry.

Clark et al. [9] suggested the value of knowledge management as a strategy making process and highlighted the importance of an organization knowledge program in assisting in overall strategic planning process. This study mainly supported the idea of knowledge-management as being the key to a successful strategic planning exercise. Pan, Scolt and Laws [14] addressed the issues involving the creation, definition and the use of knowledge in regards to the Chinese outbound market. Their main goal was to find some suggestions on how knowledge can be produced, where it can be made available and how this knowledge can be shared among members of the tourism industry.

Shaw and Williams [15] evaluated a review on knowledge management and knowledge transfer in the tourism industry. Their goal was to explore some of the most common mechanizing practice in knowledge management and means of knowledge transfer in the tourism industry. In doing so, they explored such concepts as interlocking directorships, communities of practice, learning regions and labour mobility. They emphasizes the importance of innovations in the tourism sector.

Knowledge today is increasingly viewed as one of the most important resources of the organization. According to Satisbury [16] knowledge management is defined as the deployment of the comprehensive system that enhances the growth of an organization's knowledge. In an effort to expand the knowledge management discipline, knowledge management is defined as the management functions that encompasses the creation of knowledge, management of the flow of knowledge within the organization and usage of knowledge in an effective and efficient manner for the long-term benefit of the organization [17].

In comparative studies, many scholars suggested three major components for knowledge management [18,19] and Holsapplet et al. [20]. The first component is knowledge management enablers defined as organizational mechanism for intentionally and consistently developing knowledge. The second component is knowledge management processes such as creation, sharing, stores and use. The third component is organizational performance such as market share and profitability. The framework is shown in Figure 1.

The relationship of these three components can be interpreted by the input-process-output model. The fundamental assumption underlying this model is that the input factors affect performance through some kind of interaction process. Based on this model, we can assume that knowledge management enablers affect organizational performance through knowledge management processes. From the above framework, we could access that knowledge management has the potential of providing the ethos and set of tools for capturing and developing individual and collective knowledge within and between

organizations. Any organization that employ these techniques stand a better chance of promoting innovation through knowledge transfer and continuous learning with the result of increased effectiveness and competitiveness.

To meet the increasing challenges facing the hospitality industry, knowledge management practices highlight the critical success factors of organizational competence and survival in the face of increasingly environmental changes and demands in the market. Malhotra [4] emphasizes that knowledge management embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing, capacity and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings.

Bhatt [21] stated that knowledge management is defined as the collection of process that govern the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge. It is a concept that has emerged explosively in the business community and has been the subject of much discussion over the past years.

Ababneh [22] study, examined the impact of knowledge management and organizational learning on organization innovation. The study shows that knowledge management and organizational learning has a strong positive correlation with organizational innovation.

Sireteanu and Grigorula [23] studied the perspective of knowledge management in the universities. The study found that universities can accomplish their mission as learning organizations and provided curriculum that support models and solutions exploited through knowledge management. Sujatha [24] explored the critical success factors for implementation of knowledge management. The study highlighted the barriers and challenges that come-up while managing knowledge. Murthy [25] study argues that the university system is under great pressure from industry in delivery of such finished products (graduates) from its system so as to be directly absorbed into the industry.

Prusak [26] emphasizes that in knowledge based economy, where generation and exploitation of knowledge play a vital role in the process of wealth creation, the competitive advantage is accrued from unique knowledge and the ability to learn faster than one's competitor.

Drucker [27] emphasizes that organizations have to be prepared to abandon knowledge that has become outdated and learn to create new knowledge through continuing improvement of every new applications from its own successes and continuous innovation as an organized process. Cooper [28] emphasizes that as the information age moves into the knowledge economy, that knowledge has become an essential resources for developing competitive advantage based on the production, distribution and use of information. As a result of an increasing use of technology in the service sector today, learning curves have shortened tremendously. Consequently, innovation activities across all areas of hospitality industry has become common in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Clark and Turner [29] emphasizing that knowledge management has become the focal point for debates on mechanisms to facilitate firms acquiring greater competitive edge in the emerging global information economy. Carlsson [30] defined knowledge management as the process of identifying, managing and leveraging individual and collective knowledge to support the firm becoming more competitive. The definition highlights the primary components of knowledge management in the increasingly competitive world. Growing interest in knowledge management stems from the realization that in the knowledge era,

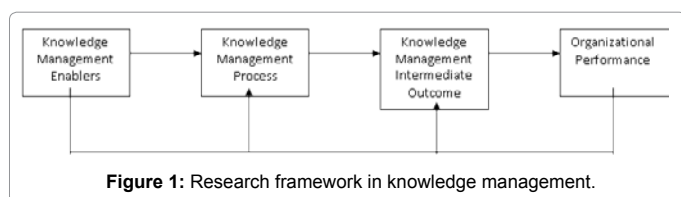


Figure 1: Research framework in knowledge management.

organizational knowledge is a strategic corporate asset that needs to be garnered, retained, updated, disseminated and applied to future organizational problems. At the same time, Churchman [31] explicated that knowledge does not reside in the collection of information and underscored the importance of humans in the process of knowledge creation. Churchman's emphasizes on the human nature of knowledge creation seems more pertinent now than it was three decades ago, given the increasingly "wicked" environment characterized by discontinuous change and wide range of potential surprises.

Earl [32] emphasizes that knowledge management as a concept is derived from the intellectual capital, focusing on sharing and earning the knowledge. This definition expanded to include the possibilities of the intellectual capital, technology, process and the possibility to reuse it, protect it, structure the knowledge, create and develop the intellectual capital.

Yun [33] pointed that knowledge management practices represent the concept which expresses process, tools and the behaviors which the users of the systems share in desiring and applying it to have, save, distribute the knowledge and reflect it in the business process to have the best applications for the long-term competition. Malhotra [34] described knowledge management as an intellectual development which moved from the common idea of the information value chain to the chain of knowledge value. Wick [35] indicated that knowledge management is extraction the knowledge from the individual, analyzing, forming and developing it to printed or electric documents to be easy for others to understand and apply it.

In addition, hospitality industry in Nigeria has been growing exponentially and playing significant role in the service sector organizations. Due to the enormity and the associated social responsibility, the industry aim at providing better professional knowledge and services to achieve superseding competitive advantage. The industry is an example of a knowledge based industry with its main products being provision of excellent hotel accommodations, beverages and drinks, which are commitments supported by professional knowledge and services. Nonetheless, the industry has been facing numerous problems involved in dealing with issues of customer's demand for rapid and quality services. The adoption of the knowledge practices have not been explored empirically by Nigerian researchers. Therefore, this study attempt to fill this gap.

Research Methodology

This study was based on literature analysis and field survey to investigate the general perception and acceptance of the people towards the knowledge management implementation. The literature analysis covered the study of several knowledge management frameworks that have been introduced in previous studies. From the studies that have been done, knowledge management framework that has similarity was chosen as a benchmark and baseline for the study. Then a questionnaire was designed based on the selected knowledge management framework.

The population of the study was made of selected staff members of hospitality industry located in Abuja, Federal Capital of Nigeria with a population of 300 staff. The sample size determination was carried out consisting of 240 respondents. The field survey consisted of three main phases, namely data gathering, data analysis and result/discussion of the research findings. The data for the study was collected using questionnaire, which was categorized based on knowledge management framework and analyzed using statistical tools for social sciences (SPSS). From the analysis, results were interpreted.

The questionnaire was used as a method in collecting data. The set of questionnaire consisted of several sections. Each question in each section required respondents to tick one appropriate response. Likert scales were used for developing the questionnaire that based on the development of people's attitude towards knowledge management framework. The scale was ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1 to 5) and each range was weighed by interval value.

Data analysis methods

The statistical technique that was applied in analyzing the data consisted of descriptive statistics, frequency distribution and cross tabulation statistic. The descriptive analysis was used to indicate the central tendency of the data. Generally, it provided the mean, medium, mode standard deviation and the variance, frequency distribution was used to look at the distribution of data in term of frequency and percentage, while cross tabulation was used in order to test and measure the association of two-way tables. In other words, it was used to indicate the relationship of two variables.

Reliability test

Reliability test is the assessment of the degree of consistency between multiply measurements of the variable. In other words, we performed reliability test for internal consistency. The cronbach alpha coefficient was used to estimate the internal consistency and reliability of measures. A generally agreed lower limit of the cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.70 and tables (Tables 1-5) presents all the alpha

Factors	Numbers of items in the Questionnaire	Cronbach's alpha
Knowledge Acquisition	8	0.852
Knowledge conversion	8	0.846
Knowledge Application	7	0.825
Knowledge protection	7	0.817
Organizational Performance	6	0.803

*Source: Data Analysis Result.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	135	56.25%
Female	105	43.75%
	240	100

Table 2: The profiles of the respondents.

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
School Certificate	25	53
OND/NCE	53	22.08
B.Sc/HND	98	40.83
MBA/M.Sc.	48	20.00
Ph.D	6	2.50
Others	10	4.16
	240	100

Table 3: Educational Qualification of the respondents.

Period	Frequency	%
1-5 years	15	6.25
6-11	36	15.00
12-17	89	37.08
18- 23	82	34.17
24+above	18	7.50
	240	100

Table 4: Number of Years in Operation.

Position	Frequency	Percentage
First line Employees	54	22.50
Supervisors	45	18.75
Outlet managers	86	35.83
Department managers	39	16.25
General Managers	16	6.67
	240	100

Table 5: Job Title of the respondents.

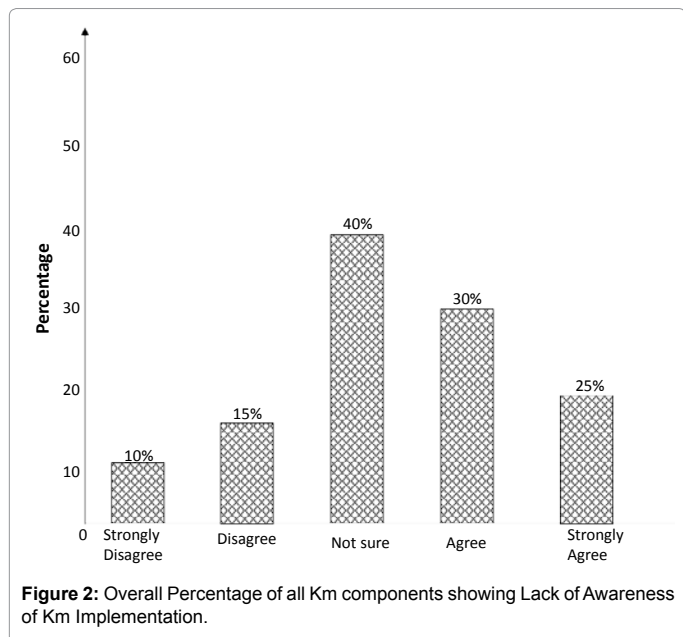


Figure 2: Overall Percentage of all Km components showing Lack of Awareness of Km Implementation.

	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5
1. KAC	4.83	0.72	1.00				
2. KCV	4.75	0.68	0.53**	1.00			
3. KPP	4.72	0.65	0.52**	0.510*	1.00		
4. KPT	4.68	0.63	0.512**	0.510**	0.50**	1.00	
5. OPT	4.62	0.61	0.511**	0.509**	0.506**	0.504**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (one failed)

*Source: Survey Data

Note: KAC denotes knowledge Acquisition
 KCV denotes Knowledge Conversion
 KPP denotes Knowledge Application
 KPT denotes knowledge Protection
 OPT denotes Organizational Performance

Table 6: Inter-Correlation Matrix.

coefficeinct that were above the required level of 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally [36].

The participants were primarily male (56.25%). Most of the respondents held B.Sc/HND (40.83%) as the highest educational level and most of the respondents have worked in the industry between 12 to 17 years (37.08%). The table above demonstrates the characteristics of the respondents.

In addition, three main elements were identified from the data analysis process. The elements were lack of awareness of knowledge management implementation, cost of knowledge implementation and lack of incentives and rewards (Figure 2 and Table 6).

From the overall percentage of knowledge management components, it shows that not sure (40%) gained highest attention from the respondents. Not sure means that the respondents were not sure where the knowledge management were implemented in the Nigeria hospitality industry. The data revealed that there is lack of awareness of knowledge management framework and its implementation in the industry. Because of lack of awareness, the employees did not know how to help in order to improve the knowledge management implementation in the industry. Descriptive statistics such as the inter-correlations of the study variables are shown in Table 3, above. The table indicates that all knowledge management framework and it organization performance are significant and positive. All the problems identified in the study could be solved by successfully implementing awareness of the knowledge management practices. The awareness could be created through training and learning. Training and learning could be provided to the users to ensure that knowledge management is fully utilized. Indeed, knowledge management practices have been found to have an important influence on service innovation performance. The research framework developed in this study was tested by selected 240 respondents of the hospitality industry located in Abuja, Nigeria. The survey responses indicated that there exist strong positive relationships between the knowledge management variables and organizational performance. The results of this study offer several suggestions to the management of hospitality industries to focus in training program and that employees under taken the training programs are expected to apply the knowledge acquired on the task and job assigned. We also found that higher levels of implementation of training and flow of information will increase organizational learning and instill new ideas, leading to innovations in the industry (Table 6).

Limitations

Inspite of the interesting implications, this study has several limitations. First our data was cross-sectional which constraints our inability to make causal interference. Second, the study was limited to selected hospitality industries located in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. Third, we tried to avoid response bias through careful questionnaire design. We were not totally free from such bias.

The findings obtained may not be generalized to other samples across other states or regions. Future research could be duplicated with large sample from different region within the same industry which would improve the generality of the findings. In addition, future research in this area may be expanded to other service sectors in order to generalize the results reported here.

Conclusion

Knowledge management has been defined in numerous ways depending on the purpose of research. Alavi and Leidner [37] define it as a systemic and organizationally specified process for acquiring, organizing and communicating both tacit and explicit knowledge for employees so that other employees may make use of it to be more effective and productive at work. Duff [38] describes knowledge management as a process capitalizing on organizational intellect and experience to drive innovations. This study offers a comprehensive model for future knowledge management research and provides management implications for organizations, particularly hospitality industries to better realize the worth of it and the possible impediments involved in the process of implementing knowledge management practices.

Our empirical findings provided several managerial implications, first, managers could strive to improve on staff performance by

providing adequate training program related to product technology knowledge on an ongoing basis. Second, managers should prepare a path to enable employees to acquire and integrate different sources and types of knowledge from other business partners as well as internal and external training programs. Managers should also establish a trail to enable knowledge to be shared and transferred from the organization to an individual, from an individual to an individual and from the individual back to the organization. With proper facilitation, the employees could be able to use and apply the knowledge to improve efficiently and solve problems. Hence, the enhancement of knowledge management effectiveness through adequate and proper training, organizational performance could be increased.

In other words, Oxford dictionary define hospitality industry as a process of entertaining the visitors, guests or foreigners and giving them the feeling of freedom. In essence, hospitality industry represent group of business that provide foreigners and others with the services such as sleeping and residing or food and drink services. The industry is part of a wider group of economical activities known as tourism. Nigeria's commitment in the hospitality industry are expected to benefit efficient suppliers of hospitality services. The sub-sector has the potential of not only contributing to foreign exchange earnings but also, can aid the reduction of the concentration of foreign exchange sources.

Recommendations

Hospitality industry is considered as one of the most important and vital industries for presenting services to the people. It is considered as an important source of the national income. At the same time, knowledge management represents an intellectual development and an organizational culture which interest in diagnosing the knowledge, determining its goals, distributing and applying it.

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The management of the hospitality industries should endeavour to improve the services and work conditions, organize and increase the level of the workers and keep up with technical development and the styles of their industries.

- Top management should invest the knowledge management process explicit or tacit, should enhance the creative abilities of the workers, encourage them to show their abilities through dialogue, training and support.

- The management should provide direction for future hospitality research in knowledge management by identifying studies, suggestions and implications.

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