

THE DYNAMICS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE ADOPTION IN THE NIGERIAN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract

With the increasing development in knowledge management, many organizations have benefited by adopting modern orientations and innovation styles in knowledge management and its applications. As the Nigerian hospitality industry is rapidly changing due to acceleration in information technology, and as managers make proactive changes which focuses on customer preferences, quality and technological interfaces in order to stay competitive in such a dynamic environment. These days, travellers are choosing to patronize hotels that offer the best value proposition under existing budgetary constraints. In spite of budgetary constraints, organizations that do not innovate effectively may be destroyed by those who do. Hence, the hospitality industry cannot truly thrive if it does not invest in innovation. This study therefore focuses on the dynamics of the various factors of knowledge management practices, for sustainable adoption in the Nigerian hospitality industry. An exploratory field study utilizing an inductive methodology involving a multiple case study approach was undertaken by conducting interviews with top management cadre of the selected hospitality industry in Abuja, Nigeria. The study offers a comprehensive analysis of future knowledge management research and provides managerial implications for organizations to better realize the worth of knowledge management and the possible impediments involved in the processes of adopting and implementing knowledge management. The study recommended that among other things, that the management of the hospitality industries should tastefully furnish rooms with quality furniture and fixtures and develop the visual appearance of the hotel.

Keywords: Knowledge Management Adoption for Competitive Advantage
in the Hospitality Industry

Background to the study

The trend of globalization does not only provide opportunities for firms to bring products and services to wider market, but also increases the intensity of competition. To survive in such an extremely competitive environment, organizations tend to utilize their knowledge resources effectively for creating competitive advantage and developing a greater ability to act and adapt (Handzic et al 2008). Treating knowledge as significant organization resources, studies in the area

of knowledge management (Km) have grown dramatically over the last decade (Hislop et al 2000, Feng et al 2004). Knowledge management has become the focal point for discussions on mechanisms to facilitate firms acquiring greater competitive edge in the emerging global information economy. Knowledge management in this study is defined as the process of identifying, managing and leveraging individual and collective knowledge to support the firm becoming more competitive. This definition highlights the primary components of knowledge management in the increasing competitive world. The hospitality industry is characterized by its outputs of service products, which primarily satisfy the demand for accommodation, food and beverages (Buttle, 1986). The industry is operating in an ever increasing knowledge-based economy, where hotels have to increase customers' satisfaction and retention levels, lower employees' turnovers rates and operating expenses, maximize profits and strive to gain sustainable competitive advantages. In order words, knowledge management caters to the critical issues of organizational adaptation, survival and competence in the face of increasing discontinuous environmental changes. Essentially, it embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combinations of data and information processing capacity of information technologies and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings (civil 2000). Knowledge management origins dated in 1959 when Peter F. Drucker created the term; "the knowledge workers". Since the 1995, introduction of knowledge management to the business and hospitality industry are used to best describe the main idea of knowledge management. Many Scholars (Groff and Jones, 2003, and Skyreme 1999) have published different definitions of knowledge management and have emphasized the importance of continued knowledge management research. However, there is no clear consensus on the definition of knowledge management as a process nor there is an established theme on knowledge management to describe the direction and impact of findings of published research.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past decades the practice of knowledge management has expanded tremendously due to economic, social, technological factors and trends. The Nigerian hospitality industry lacks the ability to adjust to these trends/factors in knowledge management. Furthermore, Nigerian hospitality industry has responded negatively to the adoption of knowledge management and therefore created a hostile knowledge adoption environment. It is important to emphasize that the attainment of knowledge management through positive interaction of research and hospitality industry would allow closing the gap and opening doors to new applications for the hospitality industry.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to identify whether the Nigerian hospitality industries are able to execute the knowledge management practices in its programs, procedures, and marketing and management operations. Other specific objectives include:

1. To provide an in-depth content analysis of current knowledge management practices.
2. To identify and organize knowledge management research themes in the hospitality industry.
3. To provide direction for further hospitality research.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are proffered to guide the study:

1. Why is knowledge management important in the hospitality industry and the challenges of km applications?
2. What strategic perspective pertaining to views on knowledge management we employ?
3. What are the relevant future research directions?

These questions were addressed in this study.

Research Hypothesis

In the course of this study, the following hypotheses were proposed to guide the study.

- 1) Ho: There is no significant positive relationship between team collectivism to adopt knowledge management in the Nigerian hospitality industry.
- 2) Ho: There is no significant positive relationship between quality of life to adopt knowledge management in hospitality industry of Nigeria”.
- 3) Ho: There is no significant positive relationship between employees orientation to adopt knowledge management in hospitality industry of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Knowledge management has its origin back in 1959 when Peter F. Drucker created the term “the knowledge workers”. In his belief, a knowledge worker is one who works primarily with information or one who develops and uses knowledge in the work place. A knowledge worker helps to develop business intelligence and increases the significance of intellectual capital. According to Drucker (1993), these knowledge workers created an atmosphere in which any company can gain insight into customer preferences. In order to further understand the roots of knowledge management as a process, one need to explore intangible assets of an organization. Karl Erik, Sveiby (1997) introduced three families of intangible assets, namely internal structure, external structure and individual competence. The term internal structure deals with five main components, namely, computers, patents, concepts, models and administrative system. All five components are utilized by the employees and are owned by the company. Both the employees (human capital) and the internal structure represent what is generally called the organization.

The component of the external structure consists of brand names, trade-marks and company reputation (image) and the relationship between customers and suppliers. Lastly, the term

individual competence describes the ability of employees to act and react effectively in adverse service encounters. Individual competence consists of work related skills, values, education, experience and social skills. These components of competence cannot be owned by any company but can be contributed by any employee who possesses them. As stated by Sveliby (1997), people are the only true agents in business. All assets and structures whether tangible, physical products or intangible relations are the result of human action and depended ultimately on people for their continued existence. The focus on competence, skills, human capital and the learning organization lead to a growing emphasis on organizational knowledge and the management of expertise. Bouncken (2002) compared the relevance of knowledge management in the hospitality industry to the importance of knowledge management practice in other industries. The author identified and provided evidence of knowledge and analyses different dimensions/approaches of knowledge management in the hospital industry. The findings indicated that knowledge management plays a major role in the overall performance of hotel operations and is of great assistance for quality improvements for hotels.

Gronen (2002) proposed a knowledge management system that might assist to gather information from customers and captured this information (tacit knowledge). This knowledge is then stored in knowledge management system which is called "the knowledge café. He stated that knowledge management is identified as a key success factor in most industries. Scott and Laws (2006) stated that knowledge sharing is a means by which new ideas and competitive advantage is created or brought into new ways of functioning. Their study clearly identified new directions for future research. Such as understanding the power of knowledge sharing in the hospitality industry and how tacit knowledge can be localized. Woods and Deegan (2006) based their study on the statement that quality has become the main sources for competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. Zehrer and Pench Laner (2006) addressed the issue of knowledge management by accessing information through e-mail inquiries. They found that advancements in information technologies allowed hospitality industries to access relevant information via internet. Gathering important information through the internet play a major factor in the long-term success of hospitality industry.

Shaw and Williams (2008) evaluated a review on current knowledge management and knowledge transfer in the hospitality industry. The aim was to explore some of the most common mechanism/practices in knowledge management and means of knowledge transfer in the hospitality industry. In doing so, they explored such concepts as interlocking directorships, communities of practice, learning regions and labour mobility. Hallin and Marnburg (2008) emphasizes that knowledge management (km) has emerged over the last decade to become one of the most debated management concepts, but in the hospitality industry, km has not achieved the same scale of application and empirical research as in other fields. According to Davenport and

Prusak (1998) knowledge is a fluid of framed experience, values, contextual information and expert sight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information.

Bollinger and Smith (2001) described knowledge as the understanding, awareness or familiarity acquired through study, investigation, observation or experience over the course of time, that is, knowledge is an individual's interpretation of information based on personal experiences, skills and competencies. Knowledge management has also been defined in numerous ways depending on the purpose of research. Alavi and Leidner (1999) defined knowledge management as a systematic 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. Duffy (1999) described km as a process capitalizing on organizational intellect and experience to drive innovations. The American productivity and Quality Centre (2007) advocates that km is the strategies and processes of identifying, capturing and leveraging knowledge to assist the firm compete. Earl (2001) suggested that km can be viewed from seven dimensions with their focuses as follows; system technology, cartographic maps, engineering processes, commercial, organizational spatial space and strategic mind-set. Gloria (2008) suggested that managing knowledge well can develop new opportunities, creating value for customers, obtaining competitive advantage or improving performance.

According to Dayon and Evans (2006) emphasizes that the activities of knowledge management include knowledge capture, documentation, retrieval and reuse, creation, transfer and sharing of its knowledge asserts integrated in its operational and business processes. In essence, the processes of knowledge management adoption and practice involve the systematic organization, planning, scheduling, monitoring and deployment of people, processes, technology and environment, with appropriate targets and feedback mechanisms to facilitate the 'retention sharing, identification, acquisition, utilization of knowledge and new ideas in order to achieve strategic aims. Over the past two decades, the world's economy has been marked by a steady shift in emphasis from the production of goods to that of services, thus becoming predominantly a service economy. Gustafson and Johnson (2003) stated that services now accounts for more than half of both employment and output in most industrial nations. This is an important reason why as Osborne (1998) studies indicated that services have tended to have a strong socio-political orientation. Enz and Signaw (2003) suggested that managers should learn from the successes of proven leaders in the hospitality industry and that the most successful practices, could serve as bench marks, guiding and inspiring other innovators. Chan and Pine (1998) found that hotel, restaurant and tourism businesses skill tend to focus on quality improvement rather than innovations.

In essence, hospitality industry which includes the restaurant, accommodation, and entertainment and transportation business faces increasing competition. Those who are working in this industry

should be able to keep and attract new customers by satisfying their increasingly sophisticated demands. To meet these new challenges, there has been more emphasis on knowledge sharing in the hospitality industry and even on the notion of team-work. The importance of knowledge management (km) and knowledge sharing (ks) have been firmly established. Many studies have recognized the importance of km and in supporting innovations in the hospitality industry (Finnegan and Willcocks 2006). Organizations 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. Further review shows that the hospitality industry is one of the largest users of information technology (IT), that the industry is knowledge-intensive as a result of the nature of the service product, where the service delivery occurs as a result of interaction between customers and employees and where it is required that employees are knowledgeable of customers need in order to achieve customer satisfaction (Kolter, Bowen and Makens 1999). Studies by Bounchen and Pyo (2002) shows that hospitality management considers knowledge management and information to be relevant concepts, but are confronted with too many unclear knowledge management strategies, activities and implementation techniques. This findings was confirmed by Yun (2004) who argued that the tourism and hospitality industries adopts slowly to km strategies due to the complexity of the concepts, which requires certain skills in data mining, statistical analysis and substantial knowledge of tourism and hospitality management.

Methodology

The research sample consisted of the high quality hotels located in Abuja, Nigeria. The hotels totalled 5 were randomly selected. The research sample represented with the general managers of the selected hotels, assistant managers and the department heads and their assistance. The research sample consist a total number of 150 respondents as shown below in table 1.

Table 1, Representatives from the Hotels

Hotels	Respondents
1	30
2	30
3	30
4	30
5	30
	150

Source: Survey Result

The study used personal interviews with the executives to know the degree of using the knowledge management and its renewed applications in the hotel business. In addition, we distributed questionnaire to the selected respondents to know the degree of the interaction between the departments and the consequently positions of using the knowledge management concepts. Dixon (2000) in his study emphasizes that many of the international companies as the Finnish Communication Company (Nokia), the British Oil Company (BP), the American Contracting Company (Bechtel) reduced its expenses and increases the procedures of knowledge management which enable them to enhance their abilities and possibilities to compete and stay in the international markets.

Data Analysis and Results

Data analysis was performed in two stages. In the first stage, reliability analysis was conducted using SPSS to evaluate the stability and consistency of the measured items. Second, data reduction was conducted to convert the items into a single composite score. The items were subjected to principal component analysis in order to examine their under personality. Overall results of the factor analysis appeared satisfactory and most measurement items loaded strongly onto the constructs. The results showed that the Cronbach's (α) for the constructs surpassed the threshold point of 0.79 (0.82 to 0.94) as suggested by annually (1978). The analysis shows that if the hospital industry continues to develop soft factors that seem to lie beyond the scope of management, this might likely encourage further innovation. Our findings confirmed the claim of other researchers (Prajogo and Ahmed 2006) that soft organizational structures are more important than hard ones, as shown in table two.

Table 2: mean, standard deviation and inter -correlation variables.

	Variables	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Age	25.08	7.82	(0.85)					
2.	Number of years working	3.53	0.28	0.08	(0.88)				
3.	Employee Quality of life	5.32	0.73	0.66	0.45	(0.84)			
4.	Team collectivism	4.57	0.78	0.44	0.58	0.62	(0.87)		
5.	Employee Orientation	4.68	0.79	0.58	0.64	0.75	0.82	(0.85)	
6.	New service development	4.03	0.72	0.74	0.72	0.78	0.74	0.76	(0.93)

Note: value in Parenthese are Cronbech's (α) coefficients

P. > 0.05

In this study, as indicated before, the reliability analysis was used to evaluate the stability and consistency of the measured items in each latent construct. The Pearson correlation between the variable as well as Cronbach's (α) for the study also shown on the table above. Values in the parenthesis are the Cronbach's (α) coefficient. All the hypotheses stated were significant. The collinearity statistics indicated that it is appropriate to carry out regression analysis. The regression analysis implying that employee collectivism, quality life and employee orientation did affect intention to adopt knowledge management practices in Nigerian hospitality industry. For employee collectivism to be significant is the keeping with the need for collaboration for effective knowledge management. This is evident especially when knowledge sharing process is considered. As shown in table 2, SPSS software was used to perform descriptive statistics as well as tests of significance, multivariate analysis of correlation and regression was also carried out. Reliability of the measure was achieved by ensuring that the construct of the study were firmly rooted in literature. In table 3, we identify the characteristics of respondents as used in the study.

Table 3: Characteristics of Respondents

1	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	90	60.00
	Female	60	40.00
	Total	150	100
2.	Educational		
	Secondary School	28	18.66
	NCE/OND	39	26.00
	B.Sc/HND	58	38.66
	M.B.A/M.Sc	20	13.33
	Ph.D	--	--
	Others	5	3.33
	Total	150	100
3.	Marital Status		
	Married	23	15.33
	Single	125	83.33
	Divorced	2	1.33
	Total	150	100
4.	Hotel Departments		
	Food and beverages	108	72.00
	Rooms	27	18.00
	Others	15	10.00
	Total	150	100

5.	Job Title		
	First-line employee	64	42.66
	Supervisors	48	32.00
	Outlet managers	12	8.00
	Department manager	21	14.00
	General manager	5	3.35
	Total	150	100
6.	Organizational Tenure		
	Under 3 years	16	10.67
	3 – 6	22	14.67
	6 – 9	38	25.33
	9 – 12	29	19.33
	12 – 15	26	17.33
	15 – 18	12	8.00
	18 – above	7	4.67
		150	100

Source: Survey Results

The participants were primarily male (60%) with the organizational tenure ranging from 6 – 9 years (25.33%). The first-line employees constituted 42.66%, while supervisors (32%), assistant managers (8%) and department managers (14%).

Research Implications

This study has shown the importance of the employees in the service firms. It is clear that to achieve high innovation that hospitality industries need to develop and ensure adequate knowledge management behaviour and team culture. Because team cultures are based on co-operation, firm support and cohesiveness tend to stimulate greater knowledge management practices in the industry. It also motivates and empowers the individuals in the industry to innovate. If managers focus more on individual team members in hospitality industry, then all team members (employees) might be encouraged to satisfy all the services needed of their organization. Furthermore, it is important that all managerial actions should consistently show management concern for both employees and customers

Area for Further Studies

To expand on these findings, future research may focus on two specific areas. First and in connection with the previous discussion, the variables incorporated in the study were deliberately limited in scope in order to facilitate testing. Therefore, further studies investigating the complexity of hard and soft aspects of service innovation management could profitably incorporate more explanatory variables including controlling and moderating variables such as organizational

environment. Second, this study does not prescribe actual methods of developing the managerial practices that can create the organizational cultural environment it describes. This is another area that future studies may want to pursue. Such investigation would require longitudinal designs in order to test the nature of the relationships if they hoped to yield very useful insights

Conclusion

The changing dynamics in the field of knowledge management has become one of the most rising and promising concepts in the business world and also has become one of the most important concepts in the hospitality industry. From the study, we found that knowledge management has become the deciding factor in achieving competitive advantage. In order to do so, knowledge has to be identified, captured, transferred and shared. In developed economies, hospitality industry has continued to contribute to economic growth, whereas, in the developing economics, hospitality industry assists to redistribute income among the workforce. The redistribution is through tipping, profit sharing schemes, compensation plan, benefits and others. Hospitality industry is knowledge intensive; thereby stand to benefit extensively from the provisions of information technology. For example, knowledge sharing which is a key knowledge management (km) process has the potential of providing the ethos and a set of tools as well as practices for capturing and developing individual and collective knowledge within and between organizations. Organizations 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.

The review of the theoretical content of knowledge management contributions in the hospitality sector revealed that research on knowledge processes are scarce and dim, implying a great research potential. The review revealed that there is a great need for empirical knowledge management studies in the hospitality context founded on a sound and proper research design and implies satisfactory testability and generalization and thus contribute to an overall and comprehensive research debate of knowledge management in the hospitality industry.

Recommendations

The hospitality industries which consist of hotels, bars, restaurants, rely on information to provide services to their customers. The industry need to know the changing preferences of their customers more so as the internet is giving customers quick and current market information. The knowledge intensity of the hospitality industry necessitates knowledge management adoption especially with its knowledge sharing process. Hence, there is a need for establishing a knowledge Centre of the hospitality industry which interest is collection of information, saving it and present the offer to help those who desire to enter the industry. Based on this, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The management of the hospitality industries has to improve the services and work conditions and increase the level of the workers and keep up with technical development in the industry.
2. The management should enhance the creative abilities of the workers; encourage them to show their abilities through dialogue and training.
3. There is need for co-operation between the university and the hospitality industries to benefit from the special university experiences in this field to build strong knowledge base which will orient the management and the employees about the styles and the means which might assist the industry to develop.
4. Management should reward employees who are prepared to sacrifice to increase group knowledge capital.
5. Tastefully furnish rooms with quality furniture and fixtures.
6. Devise and implement a marketing plan that suits the hotel.
7. Develop the visual appeal for the hotel.
8. Re-orientation and training of hotel staff.
9. Consider amenities that will make the hotel competitive.

The hospitality industry has become very competitive; hence it is imperative for the hotel management to work up new ways to increase their guest patronage.

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