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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF HOTELS IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Effect of knowledge management on organization's competitive advantage, a study of Small businesses in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state was investigated in this study. Data for the study was collected through primary sources from owners/managers of all the 39 registered small businesses that operate on full time basis in the study area. Regression analysis was used to test the study's hypotheses at 5 % (0.05) significance level. Findings from the study revealed that a positive and sustained relationship exist between the study variables. P-value .000 < α 0.05). The study therefore had no option than to conclude that knowledge management has positive effect on competitive advantage of small businesses in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state. Based on findings of the study, It was recommended that Management of the small businesses should have dwell more on information management strategies to attract more competitive advantage.

Keywords: Knowledge, Knowledge Management, Competitive Advantage, Hotels, Makurdi Metropolis.

Introduction

Today's business environment is filled with setbacks and unexpected challenges so much that and businesses are faced with diverse challenges occasioned by a good number of factors including Globalization, fierce competition, financial crisis, advances in communication, volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and information technology all of which have triggered the emergence of a knowledge-driven economy. Coping with increasing challenges in today's global business world depends in part on the ability of business managers to identify, generate and properly manage knowledge by inferring and identifying uncommon patterns, underlying trends, and exceptions in data or information.

For the hotel industry, the ability to put in place effective knowledge management practices has been confirmed to be effective in improving decision-making and decision quality (Liu & Deng, 2020) which has been confirmed to be a significant and probably one of the most valuable sources of competitive ability. The hotel industry's main function is to offer their guests homes away from homes and provide friendly reception and warm greetings (Winger, 2020). It is made up of businesses that provide lodging, food and other services to travelers, the main components are hotels, motels, inns, resorts and restaurants.

Knowledge is used in hotels as in other businesses to make effective decisions, improve decision-making and decision quality (Liu & Deng, 2020) and has been confirmed to be a significant and probably one of the most valuable sources of competitive ability. The success of a any hotel lies more in its capabilities related to knowledge and learning than in its physical assets (Kambiz, 2019). The competitive nature of Knowledge has made it to be recognized as global economy transformation center (Kakabadse et al., 2003) in addition to its traditional role as an important source of wealth and key for organizations to stay competitive in business environment. Having sufficient knowledge both about the business, market, and contenders and dealing with that is a key factor in the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of any hotel.

Recently the role of organizational knowledge as a fundamental principle of the competitive advantage has been emphasized globally (Tarhini, 2019). To have a sustainable competitive advantage, an organization should realize how to create, distribute and utilize knowledge through an organization and how attach it to organizational process. Basically, business managers should know what kind of knowledge his organization should seek to get sustainable competitive advantage (Mukhtar, Halilu & Rosli, 2015).

Efficiently used knowledge is both an important intellectual asset and an important tool for organizations to compete well to achieve increased levels of market competition (Carneiro, 2000). Drucker (1995) opines that Knowledge has become the key economic resource and the most dominant and even the only-source of comparative advantage. Organizations can enhance the generation of new ideas and/or knowledge, knowledge availability, application of the existing knowledge and communication within knowledge-workers by effectively managing the knowledge (Plessis, 2007). To have a sustainable competitive advantage, an organization should realize how to create, distribute and utilize knowledge through an organization and how attach it to organizational process. Another important thing is a manager should know what kind of knowledge they should seek to enhance organizational activity to get sustainable competitive advantage.

For knowledge to be truly useful in tacking competitions, it must be properly managed. Organizations are able to gain, maintain and leverage their knowledge resources by properly embracing knowledge management initiatives and technologies (Kambiz, 2019). The basic objective of knowledge management (KM) is to enable the organizations to be aware of their knowledge and shape the knowledge, so that they can effectively and efficiently use of knowledge (Tarhini, 2019). The strategy of implementing Knowledge Management can be done through two approaches, namely from the external and internal aspects.

Knowledge management practices have a very strategic importance in developing inimitable capacities for organizations and in providing them with sustainable competitive edge. KM basically involves creation, dissemination, renewal, and application of knowledge towards organizational sustenance and survival. It helps to create and propagate information and knowledge. It also provides a sufficient, effective and efficient use of knowledge in order to provide a strategic competitive advantage for organizations (Loureiro et al., 2015). It also provides the opportunities for the organizations to explore tacit and explicit knowledge of individuals, groups and organizations and convert the acquired knowledge into organizational assets for the use of decision makings.

Knowledge management also helps to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of organization's manpower (Byukusenge et al., 2016). Knowledge management has been confirmed as an important antecedent of firm competitiveness, a value offered by an organization to its clients in a way that at the time, this value is not supplied by the actual or potential competitors. Competitive advantage also refers to the capability that gained through attributes and resources to perform in a higher level than others in the same industry. It basically means that competitive advantage is created when a company offers a different thing that distinguished it from other companies in the same industry. It leads to differences in the characteristics or dimensions of any company that enable it to provide customers with better service worth than its competitors (Sunyoto, 2020).

It is against the above background that this study investigated the effect of knowledge management on organization's competitiveness with the study domiciled in small businesses in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state.

1.2 Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of knowledge management on the competitiveness of hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria.

1.3 Study hypothesis

This study tested the following hypothesis presented in its null form.

Ho: Knowledge management and competitive advantage of hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria.

2. 0 Literature Review

This study presents a review of literature relevant and related to the research theme. The review is presented under the following headings: Conceptual clarification, empirical review and theoretical framework.

2.1 Knowledge Management

Knowledge can be separated into two different types, tacit and explicit knowledge (Alias, 2018). Explicit Knowledge is the type of knowledge which can be documented while Tacit Knowledge is the experience, behavior, and perception that have been gained inside the human (Duffy 2000). On the other hand, tacit or implicit knowledge is the extreme private knowledge that is not easy to verbalize, articulate and transfer, it also cannot be grasp by official training or education and may even be subconscious but it can be documented to become explicit knowledge (Alias, 2018). Several authors state that tacit knowledge is hard to verbalize and is impossible to be directly accessed. It only expressed by procedures, actions and values (von Krogh, 1998). Typically, KM is seen to consist of knowledge processes (such as knowledge creation, sharing, acquisition, transfer and application) together with infrastructures, capabilities and management activities that support and enhance the knowledge processes (Aino, 2016). The ability to manage knowledge is becoming increasingly more crucial in today's knowledge economy (Alias, 2018).

Knowledge Management (KM) has been defined as a process of creating, collecting and identifying valuable information (i.e., knowledge acquisition), enabling employees to recover organizational knowledge (i.e., organizing knowledge), exploiting and beneficially applying knowledge (i.e., knowledge leverage), disseminating it through the whole organization (i.e., Knowledge sharing) and storing the knowledge in a repository (i.e., organizational memory). Shawaqfeh, Alqaied and Jaradat, (2019) stressed the importance of identifying, sharing, creating and storing of knowledge in pursuit of organizational learning and identified the main purpose of Knowledge Management as to effectively maintain and transfer important knowledge to employees. Tarhini, (2019) sees knowledge management as a planning, organizing, motivating, and supervising people, processes and systems in an organization to ensure that assets and potential associated with knowledge can be used effectively and can also be increased. It is considered as an important asset along with other resources such as land, employment and capital ((Kambiz, 2019).

To effectively attract sustained competitive advantage in these challenging time, businesses need to develop the ability to harness knowledge management and to continuous learn from the external environment (Waddell & Stewart, 2008). The intangible nature of knowledge, its rareness, valuable and non-imitable characteristics has all it takes to create a differential satisfaction in the market place (Sharkie, 2003) especially as products and services are fast becoming more similar. Development in today's business world has undisputedly ushered in a shift from less emphasis on tangible assets to more emphasis on intangible assets which contributes to the foundation of the knowledge revolution (Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009). In the views of Hussi (2004), knowledge revolution is a source of new organizational wealth that responds to the growing dominance of knowledgeable consumers in the market place.

KM embraces the concepts of explicit (documented), and tacit (subjective) knowledge (Kambiz, 2019). Explicit knowledge can be traced in tangible written or oral forms such as procedures, policies, rules and regulations, and is therefore easily acquired, transferred and shared. On the other hand, tacit knowledge, also termed embrained knowledge and procedural knowledge (Shawaqfeh, Alqaied & Jaradat, 2019) which force organizations to depart from traditional perspectives on dealing with human resources and adopt a knowledge management approach. Knowledge management (KM) focuses on identifying, sharing,

creating and storing of knowledge in pursuit of organizational learning (Rowley, 2000). To obtain competitive advantages in any business, knowledge is very important. In order to enhance its competitive advantage in the enterprise knowledge has to be treated as a basic source of competitive

Recently the role of organizational knowledge as a fundamental principle of the competitive advantage has been emphasized. Nowadays the success of enterprises in the competitive market place relies mostly on the quality of knowledge, which is applied by enterprises to their key business processes..To have a sustainable competitive advantage, an organization should realize how to create, distribute and utilize knowledge through an organization and how attach it to organizational process. Basically, business managers should know what kind of knowledge they should seek to enhance organizational activity to get sustainable competitive advantage.

2.2 Hotel

A hotel is a room, place, building, location or an area where service like accommodation, food, leisure etc are provide for people (guest) who are usually away from home. Hotels are well recognized as a peoples industry since it is extremely reliant on the service delivery and performance of its employees. it is an important venue for events and a provider of accommodation. Services required in hotels require instantaneously creation and provision for the customer. Besides selling an actual tangible product such as lodging, hotels have a main focus on providing intangible service, where service delivery for example impacts perception and understanding which are rather subjective and highly reliant on the patron expectations (Angelo and Vladimir, 2011). The hotels sector is one in the service industry and one of the fastest developing sectors of the international economy. It is important to note that hotel products cannot be kept so unless disbursed when planned, they are becoming waste (Jaume, 2013). In order to remain competitive in the global business environment must effectively acquire and manage available information before them (Swanger & Gursoy, 2010).

2.3 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a term that refers to the ability gained through attributes and relevant resources to perform at a higher level than others in the same industry or market (Josiah, 2013). Competitive advantage shows that direct relation of costumer's desired values, companies supplied values and values supplied by the company's competitors will determine requirements and dimensions of competitive advantage. Porter (2008) reveals that competition is at the core of a company's success or failure. This implies that failure depends on the courage of the company to compete, it is impossible to achieve success. Competition determines the accuracy of a company's activities that can support its performance, such as innovation, cohesive culture or good practice. A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential player (Barney, 1991).

Competitive advantage is a concept that is based on economic theories on competitiveness of organizations, emphasizing their particular value in resources that they dispose of, as well as the products and services offered in the market. Ansoff, (1984) defines it as characteristics of unique opportunities within the field define by the product-market scope and the growth vector. Sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved when the marketing intelligent

capabilities is creative enough to hold the competition imitate and is also capable of creating competition in a long time (Byukusenge, Munene & Orobia, 2016).

Two important points should be considered in the creation of competitive advantage: First, the path is a continuing process that will lead to higher performance and competitiveness of the organization. This means that if an organization due to its competence, can create a sustainable competitive advantage which is valuable to customers, and will always be superior than competitors, it has actually left a proper function and brought competitiveness. Second, because of the increasing complexity of the environment and competition severity, the competitive advantage is easily imitated by competitors or paled in customers' view and should soon be replaced with new advantages. Accordingly, organizations should be thinking about finding its competitive advantage (Sadri & Lees, 2001).

2.5 Knowledge management and competitive advantage

The relationship between Knowledge management and competitive advantage has attracted a lot of studies from researchers far and wide with many of them concluding that in this era of knowledge revolution (shifting from the traditional industrial society to a knowledge society), knowledge has become increasingly associated with superior competitiveness because of its invisibility and inimitability making it a valuable asset.

Another study by Sunyoto, (2020) submits that knowledge is an asset that is most significant strategic resource that has all it takes to generate possible competitive advantages. The study concluded that Companies that have more knowledge are surely successful, but companies that use their knowledge in the right way and know what is in terms of strategy significant to the organization could be successful and competitive. In a similar submission Kiseli, (2016) concluded that success of enterprises in the competitive market place relies mostly on the quality of knowledge, which is applied by enterprises to their key business processes.

Majority of studies on the subject matter agree about that correlation between KM and sustainable competitive advantage is very positive (Rahimli, 2012). Studies agreed upon that knowledge management process lead to improve the competitive advantage which lead to improve the organizational performance by improving managing of corporate knowledge (Ghannay & Zeineb, 2012).

The above submissions and numerous similar other ones implies that when an organization develops knowledge management into a distinctive competence, it is expected to work as an antecedent to superior competitive advantage in the marketplace. It is this competence that will unlock personalized knowledge and be able to codify it for organizational utilization. This is in line with Kiseli, (2016) who contend that knowledge management is seen as the vehicle for organizational effectiveness and competitiveness. However, the possibility of knowledge management to influence the competitive ability of an enterprise depends on how successfully the enterprise applies different knowledge types

3.0 Methodology

A survey design was adopted for this study. This method was considered appropriate since different opinions were collected from the respondents who are key employees of the organization studied. The elements in this research were not under the control of the

researcher. Also, the adoption of a survey research design allowed the researcher to use the questionnaire for data collection in order to achieve objectives of the study.

The area of study for this work is Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. The population of this study consists of a manager or owner of the 39 small businesses studied. The study focused only on this class of respondents since they are in a better position to provide appropriate answers to the topic under investigation. The data for this study were collected through the use of questionnaire.

3.1 Variable/Model Specification

3.1.1 Variable Specification

The variables used in this study are Knowledge management (independent variable) and competitive advantage (dependent variable).

3.1.2 Model Specification

In this study, the regression model states that competitive advantage is a function of Knowledge management and this is presented as follows:

$$COA=f(KNM) \quad (1)$$

where:

COA = Competitive Advantage

KNM= Knowledge Management

The explicit form of the model can be stated as follows:

$$COA= \beta o + \beta_1 (KNM) + e \quad (2)$$

where:

B_o = constant of the model.

B_1= coefficients of the model.

e = disturbance terms or error term.

It is assumed to be normally distributed with a mean of zero.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were collected in quantitative form through questionnaire and subjected to relevant analysis. Regression analysis was used for test of hypotheses at 5 % (0.05) significance level. For ease of analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used.

Decision Rule

The decision rule is to accept the null hypothesis (Ho), if the P-value (sig) is greater than 0.05 ($P > \alpha$ or 0.05) and reject the alternative hypothesis (Ha). However, if the P – value (sig) is less than 0.05 (i.e. $P < \alpha$ or 0.05), the null hypothesis (Ho) will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) will be accepted.

Table 7: Respondents Views on knowledge management

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	ST.D
My Hotel properly engages in Knowledge management to attract needed competitive advantage.	39	1	4	2.86	1.161
knowledge management effectively influence the competitive ability of my Hotel.	39	1	4	3.20	1.010
My hotel take advantage of its employees, knowledge, develop it, organize and apply in the creation of new products innovation and business decisions.	39	1	4	3.42	0.702
both the elements of knowledge management and the knowledge conversion process are significant for the competitive ability of my Hotel.	39	1	4	3.36	0.693

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The responses collected from the respondents on items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were presented using mean scores and standard deviation. The result as presented in Table 1 indicates that the respondents agreed with all statements which showed that physical distribution management affects organizational performance. The mean scores range from 2.86 to 3.42 and were all above 2.50 cut-off point. This implies that knowledge management has significantly and sustained effect on competitive advantage of hotels in the study area.

Table 2: Respondents Views on Competitive Advantage

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	ST.D
My Hotel records competitive advantage as a result of proper knowledge management	39	1	4	3.14	1.050
Competitive advantage is Increasingly considered to be one of the key drivers of long-term success in my Hotel	39	1	4	3.56	0.705
The return on assets of my Hotel has grown fast because the company has competitive advantage occasioned by good knowledge management.	39	1	4	3.22	1.148

Because of good knowledge Management, There is improvement in product and process quality of offered by my Hotel	39	1	4	3.38	0.750
My hotel competitively records increase in sale of products because of proper Knowledge management activities	39	1	4	3.53	0.712

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The responses collected from the respondents on items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were presented using mean scores and standard deviation. The result in Table 8 indicates that the respondents agreed with all statements which showed that knowledge management influences Competitive advantage in the organizations studied. The mean scores range from 3.14 to 3.56 and they were all above 2.50 cut-off point. This implies that there is established competitive advantage in the hotels studied which is occasioned by knowledge management.

Table 3: Model Summary

R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.655[a]	.429	.337	.593	.731

a. Predictors (Constant), knowledge Management,
b. Dependent Variable: Competitive advantage

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result from Table 3 shows that coefficient of determination (R square) explains the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. The R square value of .429 is an indication that there was variation of 42.9% in competitive advantage due to changes in knowledge management at 95% confidence interval. Also, the value of R (.655) from Table 3 shows that there was a strong relationship between the study variables.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6.585	4	1.6464.687	.006[b]	
Residual	8.782	34	.351		
Total	15.367	38			

a. Dependent Variable: competitive advantage

b. Predictors (Constant), Knowledge Management,

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The result from the ANOVA statistics in Table 4 indicates that the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of .000 which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value) is less than 5%. This implies that knowledge Managements has significant effect on competitive advantage of hotels studied. The significance value was less than 0.05 which indicates that the model was statistically significant (F =4.687, P = .000 < 0.05).

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.746	1.353		- .772	.447
Knowledge management	.467	.043	.549	10.895	.000

a. Dependent Variable: competitive advantage

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

From the data in the Table 5 the established regression equation is presented thus:
Competitive advantage = .746 +.467(knowledge management). The regression equation above revealed that, a unit increase in competitive advantage would increase the knowledge management by 46.7% . The study also found that the p-values for knowledge management, (...000) was less than 0.05 which is an indication the variable has a positive effect on competitive advantage of the hotels studied.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

4.2.1 Test of hypothesis

This study investigated the effect of knowledge management on competitive advantage of hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria. The study hypothesis formulated for the study states that knowledge management has no significant effect on competitive advantage of small businesses in the study area. To test this hypothesis, the strength of the effect of knowledge management on the competitive advantage of the hotels studied was measured by the calculated p-value = .000 at a significance level (α) of 0.05. Since the computed p-value is less than the significance level (α) of 0.05 (*p-value* .000 < α 0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the study had no other option than to conclude that knowledge management has significant effect on the competitive advantage of hotels in the study area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Effect of knowledge management on competitive advantage of hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria was empirically investigated in this study. Findings from the analysis of the study indicated that there is a significant positive effect from knowledge management on the competitive advantage of Hotels studied in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria was empirically investigated in this study. Regression statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was found to be lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$. This result is in phase with a similar result by Kiseli, (2016) whose study on Effect of knowledge management capabilities on competitive advantage of hospitality industry in Kenya, East Africa showed positive relationship between the variables.

Another study by: whose study showed significant relationship between physical distribution and management and firm performance. A study by Kambiz (2019) on the impact of Knowledge Management on competitive advantage: An Empirical Study of Asia also found a significant effect on competitive advantage of the variables studied.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This section explained the summary of findings, conclusion drawn from the findings, recommendations, limitations of the study and suggestion for further studies.

5.1 Summary

This study examined the effect of knowledge management of competitive advantage of hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that knowledge management has significant effect on the competitive advantage of the hotels studied (P-value $.000 < \alpha$ 0.05).

5.2 Conclusion

The study examined the effect of knowledge management on competitive advantage of Hotels in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that knowledge management has effect on competitive advantage of small businesses studied.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, the study recommended that Management of Hotels should have dwell more on information management strategies to attract more competitive advantage.

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