Application of Tacit Knowledge Management Styles Towards Sustainability in Selected Classified Hotels in Mombasa City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Tacit knowledge management creates unique products and procedures that differentiate an organization from its competition. This study investigated the adoption of tacit knowledge management styles on competitive advantage in classified hotels. Cross-sectional descriptive survey design was employed with questionnaires, interview Schedules and secondary sources as data collection tools. Target population was 5911 participants involving managers, supervisors, subordinate staff and guests, where a sample of 835 respondents was drawn. The was summarized into themes per specific objectives and descriptive analysis employed on demographic characteristics. Pearson correlation analyses evaluated the relationships between the variables. Multiple regression evaluated moderating variable effect on predictor and dependent variables relationship. The findings indicated a positive significant correlation between tacit knowledge creation and competitive advantage ($P=0.0001<0.05$). The F-calculated for the two models was higher than the F-critical, where model 1 was $F=11.475 > 2.45$ and model 2 was $F=6.247 > 2.18$. These models produced strong fits for the study data and hence could be applied in forecasting the moderating effect of organizational factors on the association between tacit knowledge management and competitive advantage. The resulting R-value was 0.927, and further indicated a high correlation degree between the Tacit Knowledge Creation and Competitive Advantage. The resulting R2 (Square) value obtained was 0.859, indicating that the predictors explained 85.9% of Competitive advantage. Therefore, this meant that other elements which were not covered by this research accounted for 14.1%of the competitive advantage matrix. The study recommended that the policy makers propose application of these techniques for competitiveness.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, knowledge management styles, selected classified hotels, competitive advantage.

1.0 Introduction

In modern work environment, tacit knowledge includes the applied know-how that is specific to an enterprise. In hospitality industry, it involves specific technical and human skills required to make sales and navigate the customers' needs and requirements promptly. Murat & Fulya (2020) described explicit knowledge as one that can be codified, allowing it to be transferred by oral and written communication. Polanyi (2013) described tacit as undocumented, hard-to-articulate knowledge that resides in the employees' subconscious (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). It cannot also be easily automated and codified making it difficult to be readily transferred from person to person. Polanyi (2013) and, Vygotsky and Luria (1994) implied that it is almost impossible to transfer tacit knowledge because it is embedded in the holder's social and personality traits.

Huie, Cassaberry, & Rivera (2020) note that management styles are important in forming environments of confidence and readiness to share tacit knowledge. Survey by Bass (1985) observed that multifactor management models are important in leading organizations (Huie et al., 2020). The transactional style of management is defined by the idea of reward and discipline; which is usually monetary or punishment (Farooqi et al., 2017). Transformational style of management entails individual, inspirational, idealized, and intellectual influence. All these provide environments for collaborations between employees and their firms (Hassan, Hamzah, Mohd, & Kamaluddin, 2019). The Laissez-faire management style is whereby complete autonomy is given to the workers with the leader delegating authority to the workers. This permits them to make decisions in the workplace without much guidance or control.

This informs the management in incentivizing knowledgeable individuals to manifest their tacit knowledge for the firms' competitive advantages (Huie et al., 2020). Bass (1985) compared transactional leaders to transformational leaders and found them contrasting in degrees of motivation for employees and relationships among them. The transformational leaders engendered a learning organization that ultimately translated into superior performance and profitability. Hayat, Hasanvand, Nikakhlag, & Dehghani (2015)' survey established that there was a correlation between transformational management and the creation, sharing, storage, and exploitation of tacit knowledge.

Mungai (2014)'s study findings on public institutions Tacit Knowledge Management in Kenya revealed that leadership was a vital component in knowledge management. The study population consisted of 60 research and administration staff at KIPPRA (Mungai, 2014). The study used a qualitative study method in where interview schedule guides were employed in data collection. Study results showed that 80% of the staff believed that their leadership had created an environment that cultivated tacit knowledge through a participative management style (Mungai, 2014). Results also suggested that KIPPRA had both knowledge givers and hoarders and this can be attributed to the unavailability of team bonding initiatives (Mungai, 2014). The incentives at KIPPRA are insufficient in encouraging tacit knowledge sharing. Kilili (2020)'s research

contributions noted that transformational management inspires the building of associations that facilitate knowledge sharing within the organization.

2.0 Methods

For this study, a descriptive cross-sectional survey design was applied, involving the application of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Morse & Niehaus, 2016). In this study, the quantitative approaches were employed to measure the aspects of the targeted concepts while the qualitative approach aided in describing the aspects of the target concepts that could not be measured (Morse & Niehaus, 2016). According to Munyiri, (2015) the selected design offsets the weaknesses of either approaches thus making it ideal for this research study. Therefore, the constructionism paradigm was the ideal approach for this study since it permitted triangulation of the data. The study further adopted a pragmatism theoretical perspective which provided a philosophical framework for mixed methods research (Kariuki, 2014).

2.2 Sampling Techniques

This study was conducted in the four main departments in the selected classified hotels. Respondents included departmental heads, departmental supervisors, subordinate staff, and guests. The first two levels of respondents were obtained through a census of all 52 departmental managers and all 55 supervisors. The next level of respondents were the subordinate staff who had been employed in the selected hotels for at least five years. According to Agumba (2021), hotels on the coast of Kenya have each employed at least over 200 staff and have a combined capacity of 3428 rooms. However, from the Human Resources data (2022), the twelve hotels yielded a total of 2376 permanent employees distributed in the four main divisions; Human Resources, Food and Beverage Operations, Room Division and, Front Office departments. A sample was determined using Fisher's formula as posited by (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) to obtain 343 Respondents

The fourth level of respondents were the hotel guests. Therefore, Fisher, Laing, and Steckel (1983) formula was used to get the sample size of the guests as 385 Respondents.

The survey utilized interview schedule guide, semi-structured questionnaires and *Secondary Data Sources for Content Analysis* to collect the data. The blending of research tools complemented each and thus helped to eliminate the weaknesses (Murungi, 2013). These tools offered the researcher an opportunity to probe the respondents conclusively (Neelankavil, 2007). Smith (2010) added that the results obtained from personal interviews provided insights richer than all the other tools. These two data collection tools were employed to aid triangulation as prescribed by Lawlor, Tilling and Smith (2016) and Kothari (2012). These instruments also improved certainty of ample data collection as well as validated the respondents' information (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013).

2.3 Pretesting, Validity and Reliability

Pre-testing was conducted in the area of study whereby 2-two-star rated hotels within Mombasa City County was selected. The pre-testing results were used to correct errors in the instruments and further helped to give insight on expected study response rates. The responses were

analyzed and checked against the specific objectives to eliminate flows and make them easier for the participants to understand and comprehend the questions in the final tools. According to Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson and Gayet-Ageron (2015) pretesting ensures that the participants have a clear and easy understanding of the questions in research instruments.

Ambiguous questions were eliminated from the instruments, reliability tested and response rate established for quality assurance. According to Perneger, *et al* (2015) a sample size of 32 survey participants a study is an acceptable measure to achieve 80% power for the study problem at 0.005 significance level and, pre-testing exercise should consider a sample size of 1% to 10% of the participants. Therefore, the study utilized 9.58% of the participants (80 out of 835) in instruments pretesting where 2 interviews for Managers,3 questionnaires for supervisors, 40 questionnaires for subordinate staff and, 35 questionnaires for guests were considered.

The researcher sought the supervisors' validation and six experts from the classified hotels who were excluded from the study. Internal consistency technique was applied in assessing the data collection tools applicability and validity. Pretesting assisted in establishing the content validity in addition to experts' opinion. Responses were further checked against the specific objectives and conceptual framework to validate the tested variables. The engaged research assistants for data gathering exercise were trained on accurate procedures These involved interpersonal skills when making clarifications, crafting suggestions and observations for useful inputs. The pretesting exercise was conducted as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Instruments Reliability Tests

Reliability Statistics

S/N	Variables/ Constructs	Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha for standardized Items	No. of Items
1	Tacit Knowledge Management Styles	0.745	0.748	22
4	Competitive Advantage	0.715	0.718	20
	Overall Reliability	**0.730**	**0.733**	**42**

These reliability coefficients assisted in determining and maximizing the internal consistencies of the study variables. The study variables' Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated as; Tacit Knowledge management styles (0.745), and competitive advantage (0.715) where variables had alpha coefficients greater than 0.7 thus indicated a strong-reliability level. The pretesting exercise produced a Cronbach alpha of 0.730 reliability coefficient and a standardized Cronbach alpha of 0.733. The coefficient indicated that the two data collection tools were reliable to provide quality information (Mugenda & Mugenda 2008).

3.0 Results

Data was analyzed to investigate Tacit Knowledge Management Styles in place in selected classified hotels. The findings showed that 62.50% to 79.17% of respondents indicated that tacit knowledge management styles in place were implemented to a great extent while 10.42% to

27.08% indicated very great extent. Additionally, 2.08% to 14.58% of the respondents reported that tacit knowledge management styles were implemented to a moderate extent. These findings triangulated with departmental manager number 8 responses that;

"Management has identified individuals with special knowledge in all departments within the hotel. These individuals are assets to us and we rely on them to train new employees. In this hotel, our talent and training manager is one unique case."

From departmental manager number 13, the interview response indicated that training managers were responsible for tacit knowledge management.

"Our training manager identifies special and talented individuals who are rewarded for their unique knowledge sharing."

These findings implied that tacit knowledge management styles were vital components of competitive advantage and were well implemented in majority (95.17%) of the selected classified hotels.

3.1 Summary of the Tacit Knowledge Management Styles

The summary of Tacit Knowledge Management Styles for Competitive Advantage was done through descriptive statistics as presented in figure1.
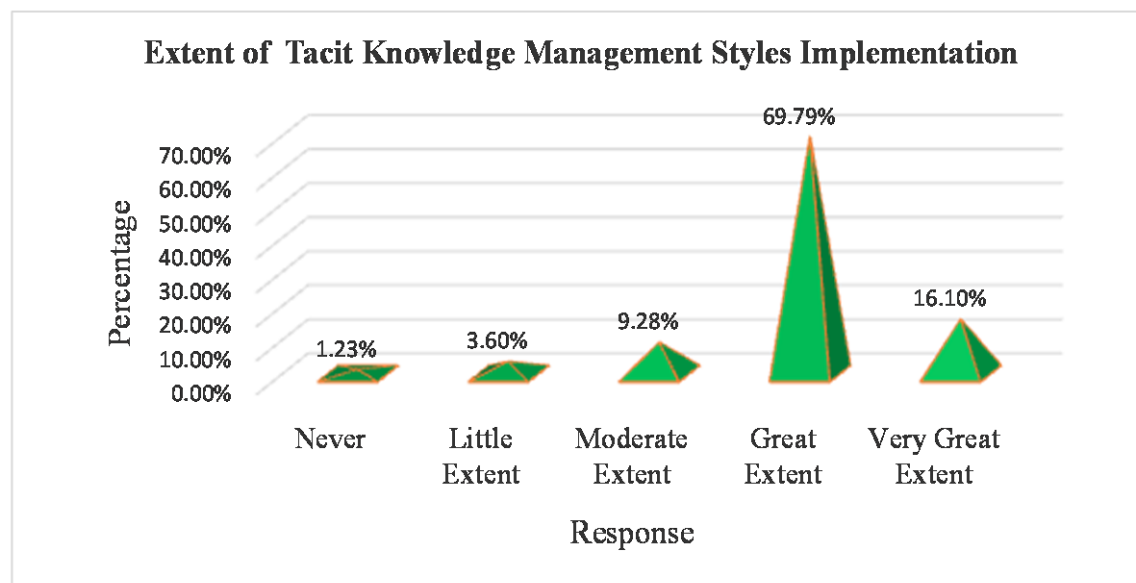

Figure 1: Tacit Knowledge Management Styles Implementation

Overall responses indicated that tacit knowledge management styles were never implemented by 1.23% of respondents, 3.60% noted they were implemented to a little extent and 9.28% noted moderate extent implementation. Further to this, respondents indicated that tacit knowledge was implemented to a great extent and very great extent at 69.79% and 16.10% respectively. These findings were in line with Ribeiro (2012) study results which showed that 92% of the service industry organizations had implemented tacit knowledge management styles in their practices. Nguyen (2017) noted that hospitality industry as a human labor dependent sector had crafted tacit

knowledge management styles for effective operations

3.2 Elements Management Styles for Competitive Advantage
Further analyses of the Tacit Knowledge Management Styles elements in selected classified hotels were conducted. From the analyses, 'Management make knowledge workers to be comfortable' around them (Mean=4.548) and 'Management's communication is clear on how the activities are and should be done' (Mean=4.442) were the major elements in tacit knowledge management styles. Additionally, 'Management get knowledge workers to reimagine ideas not converted before for application' (Mean=4.161) was the least tacit knowledge management styles. These findings were similar to Massingham (2014) and Blood good, (2012) who noted that a successful Tacit Knowledge Management styles utilize knowledge workers to create, transfer and impart knowledge within the organizations. According to departmental manager number 26, tacit knowledge management is an expensive exercise albeit an important ingredient for business success.

  "Generally, knowledge is a vital resource in an organization. However, its management process requires necessary investments in human and technology. Some hotels may look at it as a liability, although it is indeed an asset."

A Study by Barišić, et. al. (2020) observed that tacit knowledge management styles may not be effective means to impart skills for competitive advantage in all organizations. This argument is drawn from the fact that tacit knowledge management is resource intensive and hence viewed as a liability by those who overlook the benefits (Massingham, 2014).

3.3 Testing Hypothesis (H_{04} and H_{a4}) using Pearson Correlation.
This study sought to investigate the relationships between tacit knowledge-management styles and competitive advantage creation in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County. The formulated null and alternative hypotheses for this study were as follow;

H_{04}:-β4=0: There is no significant relationships between tacit knowledge management styles and competitive advantage in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County.

H_{a4}:-β4≠0: There is no significant relationships between tacit knowledge management styles and competitive advantage in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County.

Therefore. a Pearson correlation analysis was done on the variables and the results were presented as shown in table2.

Table 2: Tacit Knowledge Management Styles and Competitive Advantage

		Tacit Knowledge Management Styles	Competitive Advantage
Tacit Knowledge Management Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	471"
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	278	278
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	471"	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0001	
	N	278	278

Results produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.471 which indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between Tacit Knowledge Management Styles and Competitive Advantage. The level of significance (p-Value) obtained was 0.000. These findings therefore, indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between the variables of the study. (P=0.000<0.05). This further implied that competitive advantage may not be attained without application of Tacit Knowledge Management Styles hence it should be implemented in classified hotels. These findings affirm Kilili (2020) survey which found out that competitiveness in organization was a product of knowledge management. The findings concurred with Chebii (2017) study on the impact of knowledge management on commercial state-owned enterprises performance in Kenya that tacit knowledge management impacted the competitive advantages of the target banks.

3.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was done to determine the relationship between predictors and dependent variable through a moderated multiple regression. The study findings were as presented in table 3.

Table 3: Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis on Tacit Knowledge Management Styles and Competitive Advantage

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F Change
1	.927ᵃ	0.859	0.860	0.43554	0.42983	13.336	4	22	0.000

a. Predictors (Independent Variables): (Constant), Tacit Knowledge Management Styles.
b. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Based on the analysis, the resulting R-value denoting the simple correlation value was calculated as 0.927. The R-value (0.927) obtained further indicated a high correlation degree between the Tacit Knowledge Creation Technique, Tacit Knowledge Transfer, Extent of Tacit Knowledge Retention, Tacit Knowledge Management Styles and Competitive Advantage. The resulting R^2 (Square) value obtained was 0.859, which indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 85.9% of Competitive. advantage in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County. Therefore, this mean that other elements which were not studied or covered by this research accounted for 14.1% of the competitive advantage matrix. Therefore, further research was suggested to be conducted to investigate these other elements (14.1%)of the competitive advantage.

4.0 Discussion

The findings showed that 62.50% to 79.17% of respondents indicated that tacit knowledge management styles in place were implemented to a great extent and 10.42% to 27.08% indicated very great extent. In addition, 2.08% to 14.58% of the respondents reported that tacit knowledge management styles were implemented to a moderate extent. This indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between Tacit Knowledge Management Styles were implemented in majority (95.17%) of the selected classified hotels as components of competitive advantage

Inferential statistics showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.471 with a level of significance (p-Value) of 0.000. These findings therefore, indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between the variables of the study (P=0.0001<0.05). This further implied that competitive advantage may not be attained without application of Tacit Knowledge Management Styles hence it should be implemented in classified hotels. This implied that tacit knowledge management styles were vital components of competitive advantage. From the researcher's perspectives, tacit knowledge management is a multi-phased process that is achieved through the interaction of knowledge creation, transfer, storage and sharing.

Regarding tacit knowledge management styles, this study resolved that tacit knowledge management process had significance correlation to competitive advantage among the selected hotels. The findings showed that 62.50% to 79.17% of respondents indicated that tacit

knowledge management styles in place were implemented to a great extent, 10.42% to 27.08% indicated very great extent while 2.08% to 14.58% of the respondents reported **a** moderate extent. This implied that tacit knowledge management styles were vital components of competitive advantage and were well implemented in majority (95.17%) of the selected hotels. From the researcher's view, when the tacit knowledge management process is put in place, the establishments gain competitive edge over their peers.

The study concluded that Tacit Knowledge Management Styles had a significant correlation to competitive advantage within selected classified hotels in Mombasa City County. In this regard, this study recommends the hotel industry policy makers to propose application of Tacit Knowledge Management Styles, policies and techniques as competitiveness strategies. This research results indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 85.9% of Competitive advantage in selected classified hotels Within Mombasa City County. Therefore, this mean that other elements which were not studied or covered by this research accounted for 14.1% of the competitive advantage matrix. Therefore, further research was suggested to be conducted to investigate these other elements (16.1%)of the competitive advantage.

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