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Abstract

This study explored techniques applied in tacit knowledge creation in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County, Kenya. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used, with questionnaires, interview schedules, and secondary sources used to collect data. A sample of 835 respondents was drawn from a population of 5911 participants, which included departmental managers, departmental supervisors, subordinate staff, and hotel guests. The qualitative data obtained was coded, ordered and summarized according to themes per specific objectives. Descriptive analysis was employed on demographic characteristics and related information. Pearson correlation analyses was employed to evaluate the relationships existing between the four predictors and competitive advantage. Multiple regression analyses were employed on moderating variable to investigate its effect on predictors and dependent variable relationship. The findings indicated that there was a positive significant correlation between tacit knowledge creation and competitive advantage in selected classified hotels ($P=0.0001<0.05$). 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 calculated as 0.916, and further indicated a high correlation degree between the Tacit Knowledge Creation and Competitive Advantage. The resulting R² (Square) value obtained was 0.839, which indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 83.9% of Competitive advantage in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County. As a result, other elements not covered by this research accounted for 16.1% of the competitive advantage matrix. In this regard, this study recommended the hotel industry policy makers to propose application of Tacit Knowledge creation techniques as competitiveness strategies.

Keywords: *Techniques, Tacit Knowledge, Creation, Competitive Advantage*

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1.0 Introduction

Tacit-knowledge creation is aided by continuous collaboration among various individuals in the organization (Gichuhi, 2014; Mosha, 2017). This represents the socialization phase of Knowledge Spiral Model posited Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). Rusly, Corner, and Sun (2012) noted that socialization permit individuals' tacit knowledge to be passed to others through imitating, observing, on-the-job training and, practicing. Various methods of tacit knowledge capture featured in the studies by Gichuhi (2014), Ganesh and Kumar (2016) included, surveys, expert interviews, exit interviews, storytelling, instructed learning, focus groups discussion initiatives, brainstorming, or ad-hoc sessions. Barišić, et. al. (2020) study on perspective of knowledge management in Hospitality and Tourism sectors advanced a foundation for knowledge management. Methodology employed in the study comprised of content analysis of previous resources on knowledge management. The research work emphasized the need for the organizations' leadership support on knowledge creation. This would be achieved through formation of cultures, systems, and formal and informal groups that would allow for the emergence of new knowledge. Additionally, Barišić, et al. (2020) further emphasized on the status of communities of knowledge, where the workforce gains critical knowledge from shared perspectives and practices. As opposed to the above research work, the current study will rely on fieldwork whose resultant data will be used to test tacit knowledge concepts.

Creation and transfer of tacit knowledge was also investigated by Eckardt (2014). The study analyzed archival data from 490 lawyers distributed across 63 law firms in the USA. This quantitative study through regression analysis confirmed tacit knowledge inherent in experts could be transferred to other individuals through repeated exposures over a long time (Eckardt, 2014). The study further emphasized that the critical part of tacit knowledge transfer process involved individuals working with mentors and coaches on specific aspects (Eckardt, 2014). The study however, did not investigate how experiential characteristics such as availability of mentors, formal training, and quality of peer group influence the creation of tacit knowledge.

Given that the study was conducted in a legal setting, the replication of its findings in the hospitality industry remain doubtful. Additionally, only 17% of the initial sample yielded usable data implying that the findings may have been different if the majority of the sample responded. Kilili (2020) survey on the knowledge management influence on organization competitiveness used the descriptive design and simple random sampling to a targeted population of 1,492 workers to obtain a sample of 138 respondents. Questionnaires applied for the survey were semi-structured where collected data was analysed through percentages, frequencies, standard deviations, means, correlation and, regression (Kilili, 2020). Study findings revealed that correlation between knowledge creation and organization competitiveness was positively significant.

The findings further indicated that the organization (BRITAM) under study offered opportunities where employees could share new ideas. It also invested in innovation projects to generate new ideas for business development. The organization has demonstrated collaboration with other players to create knowledge through shared practices. It has further developed the use of a reward system to motivate and encourage employees to come up with new ideas and increase efficiency. Kung'u (2016) conducted a study on knowledge management for competitive advantage in Diamond Trust Bank (DTB). Research

questionnaires and case studies were the main data collection tools. The researcher targeted the employees based in the head office of Nairobi, Kenya. A random sample was then taken from selected clusters forming a sample of 100 employees. The percentages, means, and modes were used in data analysis. It is evident, that the bank has strategies to boost the interaction between individuals in creating knowledge. According to Nonaka (1998), socialization can take place through face-to-face meetings and using ICT channels (Kung'u, 2016). Chebii (2017) conducted a study on the impact of knowledge management on commercial state-owned enterprises performance in Kenya. The study aimed at finding whether the creation of tacit knowledge impacted the competitive advantages of the target banks. The survey adopted descriptive and exploratory designs. Data as collected from 55 commercial enterprises from 268 members of top management teams.

A structured questionnaire and secondary data sheet were used. Data were analysed and presented through means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages, correlation, and factor analyses and, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Chebii, 2017). Tacit-knowledge creation was grounded on the availability of formal and informal networks between the organization's employees and external experts; memberships of professional bodies; constant experimentation with new ideas; and employee exchange programs. The results from data analysis showed that knowledge creation was significantly associated with the performance of the targeted enterprises based on their Return on Equity (Chebii, 2017).

2.0 Research Methods

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore four main departments in selected hotels. The study aimed for a well-rounded view by incorporating departmental heads, supervisors, long-term staff, and guests as respondents. Various sampling techniques and formulas were used to select a diverse sample of 343 staff and 385 hotel guests. Data collection involved interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and secondary data sources, designed to complement each other and enhance the reliability and depth of the findings. The study was framed within the constructionism paradigm and pragmatism theoretical perspective, enabling a comprehensive and balanced analysis. 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 analysed 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. The study further noted that to eliminate all flows, 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 study considered both validity and reliability of the data collections instruments to guarantee quality findings that are easy to replicate.

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

S/N	Variables/ Constructs	Cronbach Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha for standardized Items	No. of Items
1	Tacit Knowledge Creation Techniques	0.711	0.712	19
4	Competitive Advantage	0.715	0.718	20
Overall Reliability		0.713	0.715	

Source: Field Data, 2023

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 Creation Techniques (0.711), 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 0.713 reliability coefficient and a standardized Cronbach alpha of 0.715. The coefficient indicated that the two data collection tools were reliable to provide quality information (Mugenda & Mugenda 2008).

3.0 Results

Data analysis established that all the selected classified hotels had tacit knowledge creation mechanism which was implemented in various scales. Knowledge creation through on the job training was effective to a greater extent (79.17%) while knowledge creation through sharing of expert knowledge and mentoring programs had a lower scale of 56.25% for great extent. Imitating unique practices was observed as a way of knowledge creation although 2.08% of the response indicated that it was not applicable. Over 90% of all responses indicated that knowledge creation was from moderate extent (6.25% to 25%), greater extent (56.25% to 79.17%) and very great extent (10.42% to 27.08%). This implied that knowledge creation was an ongoing task with different parameters in place. Focus group discussions (27.08%) and story-telling (27.08%) contributed to a very great extent to two tacit knowledge creation within the selected establishments. In addition, encouraging employees to seek new ideas (8.33%) and Use of surveys (8.33%) resulted to very little extent in tacit knowledge creation. These findings were supported by the departmental managers expressed by departmental manager 2;

“This hotel has put in place mechanisms and strategies for obtaining tacit knowledge from experienced and older staff. We have a mentoring and an on the job training program that helps to pass knowledge from older staff to new employees.”

According to Manager 7, rewarding creative employees and encouraging them to explore new ideas was a strategy applied in tacit knowledge creation as stated below.

“For all our employees, we encourage innovation and creativity in the hotel operations. Any employee who bring forth unique idea is an asset to us. We reward all our employees especially those that contribute heavily to creative ideas.”

3.1 Testing Hypotheses (H_{01} and H_{a1}) using Pearson Correlation

This study further sought to establish the association between techniques applied in tacit knowledge creation and competitive advantage in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County. The formulated null and alternative hypotheses for this study were as follow:

$H_{01}:-\beta_1=0$: There is no significant Correlation between the techniques applied in tacit knowledge creation and competitive advantage gain in selected classified hotels within Mombasa City County.

$H_{a1}:-\beta_1\neq 0$: There is a significant Correlation between the techniques applied in tacit knowledge creation and competitive advantage gain 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 Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation on Tacit Knowledge Creation and Competitive Advantage

		Tacit Creation Techniques	Knowledge Techniques	Competitive Advantage
Tacit Creation Techniques	Pearson Correlation		1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N		278	
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation		0.471"	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001	
	N		278	278

Results showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.471 which indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between Tacit Knowledge Creation Techniques and Competitive Advantage. The level of significance (p-Value) obtained was 0.001. These findings therefore, indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between the study variables of the study ($P=0.001<0.05$). This further implies that competitive advantage may not be fully attained without tacit Knowledge creation within the selected classified hotel in Mombasa City County. The present study employed a moderated multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between the study variables. A moderated multiple

regression analysis was conducted to examine the association between predictor variables and a dependent variable. The study findings were as presented in table 3.

Table 3: Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis on Tacit Knowledge Creation Technique 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	.916 ^a	0.839	0.835	0.41534	0.41531	13.633	4	19	0.0001

a. Predictors (Independent Variables): (Constant), Tacit Knowledge Creation Technique.

b. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Based on the analysis, the resulting R-value denoting the simple correlation value was calculated as 0.916. The R-value (0.916) 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 R² (Square) value obtained was 0.839, which indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 83.9% 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 16.1% of the competitive advantage matrix. Therefore, further research was suggested to be conducted to investigate these other elements (16.1%) of the competitive advantage.

4.0 Summary of Findings

The descriptive analysis showed that Knowledge creation through on the job training was effective to a greater extent (79.17%) while knowledge creation through expert and mentoring programs had a lower scale of 56.25% for great extent. The summary of all the responses indicated that knowledge creation was effective in scale of moderate extent (6.25% to 25%), greater extent (56.25% to 79.17%) and very great extent (10.42% to 27.08%). In addition, 78.82% of the respondents noted that the applied techniques to acquire unique and technical skills were very important and contributed immensely to knowledge creation. This implied that on the job training was the most critical element in knowledge creation while sharing expert knowledge and implementing a mentoring program were lesser effective. Inferential analysis produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.471 which indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation between Tacit Knowledge Creation Techniques and Competitive Advantage with a level of significance (p-Value) as 0.001. The findings indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between the studied variables ($P=0.0001 < 0.05$). Therefore, knowledge creation for competitive advantage within the selected classified hotel in Mombasa City County may not be fully attained without tacit Knowledge creation through on the job-related interactions

5.0 Conclusion

Regarding Tacit Knowledge Creation, the study resolved that the techniques applied were statistically significant to competitive advantage. Knowledge creation through on the job training (79.17%) was found to be the most effective way implemented to a great extent while knowledge creation through imitating unique practices (2.08%) was observed to be the least applicable means. This implied that knowledge creation was an ongoing task with different parameters in place including focus group discussions (27.08%) and story-telling (27.08%). In addition, encouraging employees to seek new ideas (8.33%) and Use of surveys (8.33%) were available although to very little extent. These findings were in line with Micić (2015) that knowledge creation was a major component of competitive advantages in an organization. Therefore, tacit knowledge creation elements should be encouraged and fully implemented as key contributors to competitive advantage within the selected classified hotels in Mombasa City County.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that hotels focus on enhancing tacit knowledge creation to improve their competitive advantage. The study findings showed that Tacit Knowledge Creation Techniques had a significant correlation to competitive advantage within selected classified hotels in Mombasa City County. The policy makers in the hotel industry ought to ensure that knowledge creation policies are crafted, formulated and communicated for effective implementation. This will benefit the hotel operators to take advantage of new knowledge created that will facilitate competitiveness of their establishments. This research results further indicated that the independent (Predictors) variables explained 83.9% 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 16.1% 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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