

Knowledge Management as a Survival Strategy to Enhance Competitive Advantage in the Zimbabwean Tourism and Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

The Tourism and Hospitality industry has been exposed to turbulent business environment as a result of the unstable economic challenges affecting the Zimbabwean economy. In this unpredictable environment, thinking smart creates sustainability hence the study aims to leverage the appropriateness of Knowledge management as a survival strategy to enhance competitive advantage in the Zimbabwean Tourism and Hospitality industry: The research was prompted by the observation that, despite Zimbabwe leapfrogging in the tourism sector from the time of multi currency, the country remains essentially a consumer nation with nothing to show on the knowledge based economy. The researchers used a descriptive research design to systematically examine the significance of incorporating knowledge management concept in human resource policies, culture, structure and ICT systems in the hotel and tourism sector in Zimbabwe. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The main findings are that human resources does not align its policies with knowledge management practices, lack of knowledge management system in the ICT is affecting knowledge sharing and utilisation to take place, bureaucratic organizational structures and individualistic or unsupportive culture are hindering the flow of information from deep smarts to novice. Poor knowledge management comes from lack of clear human resource management procedures, lack of policies for management of intellectual capital and lack of learning culture and organizational structures. The study recommends that human resources should align knowledge management with rewards, support knowledge sharing culture, teamwork and reduce bureaucratic structures. There has be a general shift from traditional information management approach whereby data with no real meaning is stored, shared and captured. A Knowledge Officer to be used. A paradigm shift from tall organizational structures to more flatter and matrix structures so that knowledge can flow freely in the entities

Keywords: Zimbabwe, tourism and hospitality, knowledge management, technology, knowledge bureaucracy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge Management (KM) has established itself as a key part of many organizations, the process of creating value from an organization's intangible assets (Liebowitz, 1999). It deals with how best to leverage knowledge internally in the organization and externally to the customers and stakeholders. The growth of world markets, availability of technology and management know-how, the political and economic integration worldwide has led to increased globalisation of Tourism and Hospitality organisations hence the need to manage knowledge. Globalization of business has made it critically important for organisations to embrace knowledge management as a strategy to build sustainability.

However, there is generally a worldwide view that the Hotel and Tourism Industry has a number of personnel related problems and poor employment practices and conditions. This view is supported by a study of the Hotel and Catering Industry by Keep, E., Mayhew, K. (1999) which revealed that the industry was dogged with problems of low wages, long working hours, unstable shift hours, poor or nonexistent career structures, over reliance on informal recruitment methods, lack of evidence of good human resources practices and high labour turnover. According to *Zimbabwe Tourism Report, (2011)*, the Hotel sectors in African countries have also been negatively affected by poor employment practices which have been exacerbated by economic cycles and fragile political systems. The Zimbabwean Hospitality sector is facing similar challenges. Tourism knowledge is heavily people dependant. The dependency on people is particularly an issue in the Zimbabwean hospitality business, where seasonal workers come in with their tacit knowledge and taking the service knowledge away with them. Sectors with high personnel turnover certainly, the cost of induction and training is one of the critical factors of tourism management. One critical challenge among others in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe is that of bureaucratic structures which are hindering progress. (*Zimbabwe Tourism Authority Internal Documents, 2011*) The Recruitment and selection policies tell a lot about knowledge management as illustrated

below:

Table 1.1 Educational qualifications for six sampled hotels in Masvingo Province as at 31/12/2013

EMPLOYEE DESIGNATION	No. of Personnel	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION
Directors	6	Masters degree(MBA)
Managers	24	First degree
Supervisors	36	Diploma
Waiters	60	General certificate in hotel and catering.
Chefs	30	Diploma and HND in cookery.
Receptionists	12	Diploma(HND).
General Hands and security	60	'O' Level

Source: Survey (2013). Masvingo province hotels.

Table 1:1 above, clearly shows that the organisations are composed of highly educated staff. The information shows that there is a lot of tacit knowledge in the organisations but there is an absence of systems to convert tacit to explicit knowledge. However, knowledge management in these organisations sometimes happens subconsciously, not planned, uncoordinated and even unorganised. Reward and compensation is an important enabler of knowledge management. However, the hospitality policies are silent on critical issues such as incentivising innovation and experimentation to facilitate knowledge creation which is the major pillar of knowledge management. Rather, the policy emphasises on compliance and loyalty (*The Ancient City Lodge: Reward and Compensation policy 2009*).

There is no culture of training and development which enable employees to continuously acquire more knowledge, abilities and experiences; therefore, employees face difficulties to adapt to any changes, challenges or new demands in the organization processes as evidenced by The Flamboyant 2013 end of year Report. Training and development is mainly done for senior staff. Skimmer, (2002) argues that employees need training and development at all levels as it enables and supports effective delivery of organizational mission, learning culture that values the importance of knowledge and encourages innovation by creating an open and transparent environment with good practice, document management and sharing appropriately. It is important to bear in mind that human resources management of any organisation is critical for knowledge creation. HRM is a knowledge facilitator, must ensure alignment with an organization's vision, mission statement, ethics, and policies;

Table 1.2. An overview of Labour Complement of Masvingo hotels as 31/12/2013

Organisation	# OF EMPLOYEES	SKILLED	SEMI SKILLED
Mahenye Safari Lodge	20	8	12
Norma Jeane's Lodge	25	7	18
Flamboyant	80	30	50
Senuko Safari Lodge	38	10	28
The Great Zimbabwe Hotel	64	20	44
Chevron Motel	57	15	42
Ancient City Lodge	34	8	26

Source: Chevron Strategic Plan (2009)

The table above shows more semi-skilled employees within the hotels than the skilled workers. Qualifications are vital in knowledge management. If employees have better qualifications, it allows knowledge to be cultivated and shared in an organisation. The semi-skilled workers usually go away with the knowledge acquired. Hotel industry is a high labour-intensive sector which means that labour turnover is high. When labour turnover is high, it is apparent that there is a need for knowledge to be stored and shared. For knowledge to be easily captured from tacit to explicit, there is a need for proper structures, culture, language, procedures, and technology so that it is captured, stored and utilised.

Knowledge management systems are built around systems which allow efficient categorisation and distribution of knowledge. For example, explicit knowledge itself might be contained in word processing documents, spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, internet pages. To share the knowledge, Knowledge Management Systems would use group collaboration systems such as intranet, of which only 10% of hotels in Masvingo province do have such web mails, Great Zimbabwe Hotel and the Ancient City Hotels. Zimbabwe, as an emerging market and a developing country, is attracting numerous global business corporations and is also gaining extreme importance in the international tourism market. The Hospitality industry could become one of the most prosperous industries in Zimbabwe as the economy grows. (*Zimbabwe Tourism Authority Internal*

Documents, 2012.) However most of the hotels in Masvingo cannot be accessed on the internet, a critical enabler of knowledge management. Hotel bookings are not done online which is increasingly leading to loss of guests and tourists. Hotel industry depends on people and therefore their perceptions should be managed properly if an organisation is to survive. The purpose of this paper is to examine the importance of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge storing and knowledge retrieval in business with particular focus on the hotel and tourism sector. Valuable knowledge is being lost in hotels on a daily basis yet it can be managed for competitive purposes in this global economic crunch. Knowledge is not being fully exploited, Information and data, tied with the potential of people's competencies, skills, intuitions, ideas, enthusiasm and inspiration are not being recognised and valued. As a result the hospitality industry seems stagnant and the researchers seek to examine the adoption of Knowledge Management as a strategic tool for competitive advantage in the tourism and hospitality industry.

1.2 Objectives of the paper

- To examine the factors for Knowledge management.
 - To ascertain the relationship between knowledge management and organisational competitive advantage.
 - To determine the benefits of knowledge management on organisational competitive advantage
- The paper presents literature review that covers: definitions of Knowledge Management, types of Knowledge, factors of Knowledge Management, benefits of Knowledge Management, methodology, results and discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Definitions of Knowledge Management.

There is no consensus on the definition of Knowledge Management. Different authors have different views on what knowledge management is and what its not. The researchers have realized that the different views of KM may be the same reason why the concept is not easily adopted in organisations. Davenport (1994) defines Knowledge management as the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge. The definition as can be visibly seen has the virtue of being simple, stark, and to the point. Dehorn, (1998) described KM as a discipline that promotes an integrated approach in identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, encoded expertise, competencies, stories and experiences in individual workers (Ibid). Both definitions share a very organizational, and corporate orientation. The latter definition outlines the integration aspect of the core pillars of KM. The most central thrust of the researchers in KM is to capture and make available knowledge, so that it can be used by others in the organization, the information and knowledge that is in people's heads as it were, and that has never been explicitly set down which concurs with the above definitions. McCann JE and Buckner M. (2000) argued on the subject that Knowledge Management is one of the hottest topics today in both the industry world and information research world. The argument is that people deal with huge amounts of data and information, which is not knowledge until people know how to dig the value out of it. This is the reason why there is need for knowledge management as business concept that can be applied as a survival and competitive tool.

Barth, S (2001) posits, Knowledge is the mental aspect of saved ideas, realities, concepts, data and techniques in human memory. Its source is the human mind and is based on the information that is obtained through life experiences, beliefs and personal values. The knowledge is transformable in conjunction with decisions and actions that would become more meaningful and fruitful. The researchers justify the need for organisations to have appropriate tools to accomplish Knowledge Management. Newman, B. (2002) offered a more operational definition that "Knowledge Management is the collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge." Knowledge Management is not 'a technology thing' or a 'computer thing' but the entire process of discovery, creation, dissemination, and the utilization of knowledge. The researchers concur that Knowledge Management takes a systems thinking approach to embrace technology, culture, human resources management, learning culture, structure and intellectual capital. Grey, D. (2004) ascertains Knowledge management as the full exploitation of information and data, tied with the potential of people's competencies, intuitions, ideas, enthusiasm and inspiration. In today's knowledge economy, Knowledge is more relevant to sustained business than capital, labour or land. However, it remains the most neglected asset. It is more than justified true belief and is essential for action, performance and adaptation. Knowledge provides the ability to respond to new situations. Knowledge is stored in the individual brain or encoded in organizational processes, documents, products, services, facilities and systems. Knowledge Management acknowledges that employees are the source of organisational knowledge and therefore if not carefully and properly managed KM benefits can never be realized.

2.2 Types of Knowledge

In the KM literature, knowledge is popularly categorised as either explicit knowledge contained in company

mission, vision and policies or tacit knowledge which is in people's heads. However, Groff, T. and Jones, T. (2003) argue that such characterisation is rather too simple, but a more crucial point, and a criticism, is that it is misleading. A much more nuanced and useful characterisation is to describe knowledge as explicit, implicit, and tacit. The researchers see explicit knowledge as tangible knowledge, implicit as knowledge not yet physical and material, tacit as know-how and difficult to articulate. The research uncovers the role that can be played by human resources, culture, processes and ICT to tap out the tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge which is usable and reusable. Usually, the more tacit knowledge is, the more valuable it tends to be. King *et al* (2002) illustrated that the paradox lies within the ideology that the more complicated it is to articulate a concept such as *story*, the more valuable that knowledge may be. This is often witnessed when people make reference to information versus know-how, or knowing versus knowing how to complete a certain task. Dixon (2004) concurred that precious tacit knowledge usually result in some observable action when individuals understand and subsequently make use of knowledge. In addition to that perspective; King (2006) expressed that explicit knowledge tends to represent the final end product whereas tacit knowledge is the know-how or all of the processes that are required in order to produce that final product. In this regard, it is thus essential in this research that organisations in Tourism and Hospitality industry in Zimbabwe need to utilise both tacit and explicit knowledge as a way of gaining competitive advantage. Polanyi (1996) acknowledged that tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific, and therefore hard to formalise and communicate. Lee and Cole (2003) in concurrence highlighted that tacit knowledge is highly ingrained into action. Accordingly, the researchers assume that it is worthy to invest in knowledge management if hotels are to survive competitively. The reason is that once an organisation has created its organisational knowledge it becomes context specific (Polanyi, 1996). When it becomes context specific it means that nobody can use it anywhere else. The risk of brain drain is therefore hedged by knowledge management.

Similarly, Oliver and Kandadi (2006) pointed out that explicit knowledge on the other hand, is knowledge that is captured and communicated in terms of reports, articles, manuals and blueprints. Explicit knowledge should be managed so that references can always be made in the future .If organisations do not manage explicit knowledge carefully they create delays and conflicts in the daily work procedures. In light of the above argument, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) noted that the basic claim is that knowledge creation takes place in two-dimensional space “through the social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge” and takes the form of a spiral that starts at the individual level and expands to larger communities of interaction. Organisations could do this by creating communities of practice, virtual teams and social groups, whereby tacit knowledge interacts with explicit knowledge so that new knowledge is generated. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) believe in the knowledge conversion spiral characterised by socialisation, externalisation, combination, and externalisation (SECI) King (2005) highlighted that socialization describes the kind of learning performed by an apprentice when he/she observes the master in order to acquire skills and technical know-how. It is learning by observing and imitating experiences. The mere transfer of information will often make little sense, if it is abstracted from associated emotions and specific context in which shared experiences are embedded. Once knowledge creation is incorporated in an organisation, the result will be an expanding spiral that starts with the creation of new tacit knowledge by socialization, its externalization to explicit knowledge, its combination with other explicit knowledge and finally back to internalization as individual tacit knowledge. Manifestly, tacit knowledge of individuals is the basis of knowledge creation. This is where the spiral starts. An organization cannot create knowledge by itself. People create knowledge then it becomes organisational memory. Therefore when employees are not given the opportunity to learn, consequently the organisation does not learn as well.

2.3 Knowledge management enablers

Bhojaraju (2005) acknowledged that it is of paramount importance that knowledge is viewed as a social creation emerging at the interface between people and information especially within communities engaged in communication, knowledge creation, and knowledge sharing and learning. Furthermore, King (2006) highlighted that from an operational perspective, KM can be described as the systematic processes by which an organization identifies, creates, captures, acquires, shares and leverages knowledge. There is a greater need for organisations in Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Zimbabwe to take into practice creation, capturing and sharing knowledge which can be used as a survival strategy to gain competitive advantage.

In expressions of the HRM role, the rise of the so-called knowledge economy has had a major impact, with a considerable shift from HRM as a bureaucratic ‘personnel management’ operation to the development of discrete HRM functions over the past few decades (King *et al*, 2002). It has been accompanied by the integration of these functions to support competitive advantage and a more strategic thrust. Stewart (1997), Ulrich (1999), Saint-Onge (2001), Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall (2003) HRM gurus concurred to warn that HRM faces extinction if it does not respond to changes brought about by the shift from a traditional philosophy to a knowledge based economy. It is essential to note that this knowledge based economy is also lacking in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, failure to add value under these conditions, the HRM function is perceived to be under extreme threat (Stewart,(1997)and Stone,(2002). There has been

suggestions that one way for HRM to reinvent itself is its contribution to effective linkages between human capital management and knowledge management within organizations (Saint-Onge, (2001) Chatzkel, (2002) Gloet, (2004). On the other hand, Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall (2003) noted that the rapid escalation of technology has led to an economy where competitive advantage is progressively more placed on the successful application of knowledge. They further noted that the traditional HRM functioned under narrow operational boundaries; in the knowledge economy, the role of HRM needs to expand, looking both within and outside the organization (ibid). The primitive focus on managing people has been broadened to managing organizational capabilities, managing relationships and managing learning and knowledge (Ulrich, 1997; Saint-Onge, 2001; Coates, 2001; Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 2003). Tourism and Hospitality organisations in Zimbabwe are failing to manage learning as well as knowledge which is a critical component for gaining competitive advantage. Nevertheless, the prominence on discrete HRM practice is broadening to a focus on developing themes and creating environments conducive to learning, as well as to the acquisition, sharing and dissemination of knowledge within organizations (Dixon, 2004). More so; Oliver and Kandadi (2006) maintain that rejuvenation of the HRM function is to respond to the demands of the knowledge economy and to develop linkages with KM requires major changes across four key areas; roles, responsibilities, strategic focus and learning.

Davenport and Prusak (2000) illustrated that the field knowledge management promote an all-inclusive approach to identifying, capturing, retrieving, sharing, and evaluating an enterprise's information assets. They added that these information assets may include databases, documents, policies, and procedures as well as tacit expertise and experience resident in individual workers. Maintaining the same view, King and Ko (2001) maintained that the resource based view of the firm suggest that organisations need to be able to combine distinctive, sustainable and superior assets, including sources of knowledge and information, with complementary competencies in leadership and human resource management and development to fully realize the value of their knowledge. In this view the researchers assume that issues of HRM may include how organizations should be structured to promote knowledge creation, mobilization, and how to develop a culture and set of HRM policies, practices that harness knowledge and leverage it to meet strategic organizational objectives.

2.3.1 HRM as enabler for knowledge management

Lee and Cole (2003) pointed out that HRM must ensure alignment among an organization's mission statement, ethics, and policies: These should all be directed toward creating an environment of sharing and using knowledge with full understanding of the competitive consequences. Resultantly HRM must nourish a culture that embraces getting the right information to the right people at the right time. Earl (2001) suggested that "HRM should create the ultimate employee experience." This can be achieved through transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through education programmes, building employee skills, competencies, careers and creating bench marks (King, 2005). Organisations can take advantage of the combination of traditional training and development responsibilities of HRM with the new responsibilities of human capital steward, using all of the organization's resources to create strategic capability. Organization's new staff orientation, which emphasizes the firm's mission, values, and history, is an example of this process of making tacit knowledge more visible. The research emphasizes on the strategies on how to make this a reality rather than jumping into the final product.

2.3.2 HRM as facilitator for knowledge sharing

Human resource management should integrate effective knowledge sharing and usage into daily life (King *et al*, 2002). What this means is that, knowledge sharing must be expected, recognized, and rewarded. This reverses the conventional relationship between knowledge and power. Only good human relations can make this possible. Often, the common pattern in the Hotel and Tourism sector is to hoard knowledge because it makes an individual more valuable and more difficult to replace. Menon and Pfeffer (2003) posit that effective knowledge management requires this trend to be overturned and require those with information to become teachers and mentors to ensure that others in the firm know what they know. Obviously, teaching must become part of everyone's job. Clearly, for such a cultural shift to take place in Zimbabwe, HRM must overhaul selection, appraisal, and compensation practices as well as creating a learning culture. Human resource management has the capabilities for creating, measuring, and reinforcing a knowledge-sharing expectation.

2.3.3 Information communication technology as enabler of KM

Research recognises the role that ICT play in order to make possible to convert knowledge from tacit-tacit ,tacit-explicit, explicit-explicit and finally explicit to tacit in order to create organisational memory which is a competitive tool for survival. The development of KM was driven by Information Technology derived from the metaphor "by the internet out of intellectual capital" (Duhon, C.J and Fonseca, F.V.1998)Businesses jumped at the new capabilities provided by the Internet, realizing that if they shared knowledge across their organizations more effectively, then they could avoid reinventing the wheel, underbid their competitors, and make more profit. The first use of the term Knowledge Management in the new context appears to have been at McKinsey

Consultancy. They realized quickly that they had a compelling new product. Ernst and Young organized the first conference on KM in 1992 in Boston (Prusak, 1999). The salient point is that the first stage of KM was about how to deploy that new technology to accomplish more effective use of information and knowledge. Pedersen (2003) says that Information Communication and Technology adoption has generally taken three possible approaches; diffusion approach, adoption approach and domestication approach. Change of any type is bound to encounter some form of resistance. The technology adoption approach had less buy-in over its perceived usefulness, ease of use, external variables and intention/ attitudes of users (Cloete and Courtney, 2002). The researchers are of the opinion that individuals need to be educated on technology use and operation so that they have an inward "love" for technology. Having advanced technology without the knowledge to operate that technology does not make business or economic sense either. The Domestication Approach to ICT facilitate knowledge sharing. King and Lekse (2006) maintain that this approach focuses on the process in which technology becomes an integral part of everyday habits and conceptual context

2.3.4 Organizational Culture as enabler of KM

Davidson & Voss (2002) suggest that effective knowledge management is at the heart of organizational performance and enables organizations to realise the value of human capital. The importance of culture and structure in the knowledge management domain is widely recognized De Long,(1997),Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, (2001, Kayworth & Leidner,(2003). Nonetheless, organizational culture underpins knowledge management by influencing how members learn and share knowledge. Organizational culture is the main impediment to knowledge management (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003) and it is vital to note that organizational culture contributes significantly to or impedes knowledge management. Contrary, Marr (2003) believes Organisational culture has a fundamental role in knowledge management. Organizations tend to develop dominant organizational cultures over time as the organizations adapt and respond to the challenges and changes in the environment (Schein 1985). In light of the above, culture and structure could be essential or major setback in knowledge management for organisations in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Gold et.al (2003) concluded that organizations which show more supportive and open value tendencies have more potential to show behaviours which would result in knowledge creation. Jarvenpaa and Staples (2001) who studied university staff established that shared and common organizational values would affect personnel's perception of knowledge possession. Following that argument, organisations in Zimbabwe are not an exception if they do not share common values and norms. Appropriate culture can provide the situation for appropriate knowledge management in an organization (Luin and Mullin 1996)

2.3.5 Organizational Learning as enabler of KM

Grant (2000) pointed out that competitive success is governed by the capability of organizations to develop new knowledge-based assets that create core competencies.Pemberton and Stonehouse (2002) add although knowledge-based assets exist in many forms ,organizational learning is an integral part of any learning organization that effectively utilize its knowledge resources to generate superior performances. Indeed, for organisations in Tourism and Hospitality to be successful learning organizations they need to create an organizational environment that combines organizational learning with culture, human resources, structure and ICT. Easter-Smith and Lykes (2003) postulate that organizational learning should be understood as either a technical or a social process. The technical view assumes that organizational learning is about the effective processing, interpretation and response to information both inside and outside the organization (Dixon, 2004).On the other hand King (2005) weighed in with the social perspective on organizational learning focusing on the way people make sense of their experiences at work. Argyris and Schon (1999) identified three types of organizational learning namely single-loop, double-loop and triple-loop learning. Single-loop learning happens when an organization is responding to changes in the environment without changing the core set of its organizational norms and practices and involves detection and correction of errors. Basically, an employee or organization realizes a disparity between performance and desired goals and take corrective action. Double-loop learning on the other hand entails responding to changes in the environment by changing the core set of organizational norms and assumptions (Bierly *et al.*, 2000). Organizations need to engage in triple-loop learning which continuously challenge their mission, vision, strategies and culture and constantly question existing products, processes, structures and systems in view of future market place (Wang and Ahmed, 2003).Such organizations should operate continuous learning cycles where knowledge is constantly being acquired, created, shared and implemented (Sambrook and Stewart, 2000)

A number of studies have noted the relationship between KM and organizational learning. Lopez *et al* (2004) perceive KM as a process that facilitates knowledge sharing and exchange and establishes learning as a continuous process within the organization. Similarly, Firestone and McElroy (2004) concur organizational learning as the organizational processes through which individuals, groups, teams and the organization learn. Finally, the cognitive model of KM dealing with socialization, externalization, combination and internalization is linked with Kim's (1993) integrated model of organizational learning. The author claims that making mental model explicit is crucial to developing new, shared mental models, which is where most of the organization's

knowledge resides. Clearly, knowledge management will thus transform organisations in Tourism and Hospitality Industry to use it as a survival strategy to gain competitive advantage. The researchers are of the opinion that a systems thinking approach can build mental models that are positive towards team learning in the Hospitality industry.

3.4 Importance of KM.

Broadbent (1997) acknowledges that the ability to manage knowledge is crucial in today's knowledge economy. The creation and diffusion of knowledge has become gradually more important in competitiveness. Similarly, King (2001) pointed out that more and more, knowledge is being thought of as valuable commodity that is embedded in products (especially high-technology products) and in the tacit knowledge of highly mobile employees. The author further highlighted that while knowledge is increasingly being viewed as a commodity or intellectual asset, there are some paradoxical characteristics of knowledge that are radically different from other valuable commodities that is, using knowledge does not consume it, transferring knowledge does not result in losing it, knowledge is abundant, the ability to use it is scarce and much of an organization's valuable knowledge flies out of the window at the end of the day. Organizations should be made aware of the value knowledge management has for the survival of an entity. Lee and Cole (2003), concur that an organization in the knowledge age is one that learns, remembers, and acts based on the best available information, knowledge, and know-how. All of these developments have created a strong need for a deliberate and systematic approach to cultivating and sharing a company's knowledge base one populated with valid and valuable lessons learned and best practiced. In other words, success comes from learning from past errors and not reinventing the wheel.

In sequence with the above assertions; Dixon (2004) argues that organizational knowledge is not intended to replace individual knowledge but to complement it by making it stronger, more coherent, and more broadly applied. The researchers are of the opinion that the existence of KM in human resource policies and manual of procedures and ICT creates a base for KM. Knowledge management promotes innovation and creativity. Huber (2001) acknowledges that knowledge itself is not of any value to an organization unless these contextual aspects are clearly understood. Much of the knowledge, both tacit and explicit remains largely untapped in most organizations; without a thorough understanding of context, it is impossible for KM to support the development of management and leadership capabilities to support innovation and creativity. Most importantly is to see innovation as more dynamic and fluid, allowing for groups, individuals and collaborative partners to differ in their perceptions and interpretations of events.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a descriptive research design. According to Alreck & Settle (1985), a descriptive research is designed to describe, rather than explain a set of conditions, characteristics, or attributes of people in a population based on measurement of a sample. According to Babbie (1995), descriptive research methods range from the survey which describes the status quo of variables, to the co-relational study, which investigates the relationship between variables. Isaac and Michael (1981) contend that the descriptive research is often used to describe existing phenomena, identify problems, or justify current conditions and practices. All the above factors were clearly the focus of this research study, hence the design was considered relevant. The descriptive research design was chosen for this study because it helped the researchers to gain insight into the human resources policies, human capital, workflow processes and ICT in Zimbabwean hotels. A descriptive study helped in identifying common missing KM tools and other pressing problems in current practice. The latter constituted one of the major goals of the study. The research design also provided the researchers with the opportunity to evaluate KM as a competitive strategic tool which hotels could adopt as a survival strategy. It must also be born in mind that the research study utilised qualitative data although there was little use of quantitative data. The population for this study comprised top management, middle management and general employees. The total population was 571 respondents. The researchers used stratified random sampling complemented by convenience sampling targeted at personnel whose work involved knowledge management activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data collected using questionnaires and interviews. Data presentation was done using tables, to give a vivid impression and facilitate easy of analysis. The response rate signified gender imbalance where 55% of the respondents were male while 45% were female. This response structure also signified the general employment trend on the ground where there are more male employees than female employees at sampled Hotels. The research sought to examine the impact of academic qualifications on knowledge creation, usage and transfer in the Tourism and Hospitality sector.

The results are presented in Table 4.1 below;

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Ordinary Level	9	31%
Diploma Level	10	35%
Degree	9	31%
Post- grad/Masters level	1	3%

The research data as presented in Table 4.1 show that the majority of the respondents had Diplomas which is represented by 35%. The findings also show that 31% of the respondents had Ordinary level and Degrees respectively. However only 3% of the respondents had Post-graduate qualifications which show low levels of education in the Hotel Industry due to the systems and procedures which do not support learning. The above findings support what has been obtained from the Chevron Hotel Strategic plan (2009) which presented that the hotel constitutes a greater number of semi-skilled workers than skilled workers. The researchers went on to look at the length of service for the hotel employees to ascertain knowledge generation and storage in companies and the results were presented in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2 Length of tenure

Period in organisation	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 5 years	10	35%
6 - 10 years	14	48%
11 - 15 years	3	10%
16 - above	2	7%
Total	29	100%

Source: Survey data (2014)

The longer the tenure the better the knowledge assets of an organisation. Research data presented in Table 4.2 show that 35% of the respondents have been in these organisations for a period between 0 - 5years. The majority which constitute 48% highlighted that they had been in the organisation for a period between 6 - 10 years. 10% noted that they had been in the organisation for 11- 15years while only 7% had 16 years and above. This shows that the organisations have short tenure systems which have an impact on performance of employees. The researchers went on to find out the relationship between Human Resource policies and Knowledge Management. The data shows that 52% of the respondents highlighted that there was poor alignment between HR policies and organisation's mission. However, only 48% of the respondents believe that the alignment was satisfactory. Alignment of HR policies to the organisational mission and value show the importance of knowledge management in an organisation. In this case where there is no alignment of these policies, it shows the absence of knowledge management. Further inquiry from the interviews show that this misalignment of policies is a result of lack of top management support to review mission and policies from time to time. Knowledge management in essence ensures sharing and storage of new ideas. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) good HR policies must allow creation, sharing and storage of new knowledge in an organisation. The role of HR in building employee experience is through building employee competencies, other respondents emphasised that employee experience is built through building employee skills, educational programmes and career development. According to King (2005) organisations can take advantage of the combination of traditional training and development, responsibilities of HRM with the new responsibilities of human capital steward, using all of the organization's resources to create experienced employees.

Whilst Knowledge Management is not all about ICT, it plays a pivotal role in knowledge dissemination, The respondents pointed out that the distribution of computers which arguably should be the major driver for KM is not effective. Only 5% of the respondents felt that the distribution of computers is excellent. Contrastingly 51% which is the highest response show that computers are not evenly distributed. Further investigation from an interview with an informant revealed that the status quo is as a result of financial constraints so the distribution is a strategic arrangement. The managers argued that the economic situation in Zimbabwe calls for organisations to minimise costs by whichever means possible. The informant pointed out that other departments need more computers than others would. Nevertheless, Knowledge management philosophers King et al(2007) state that , "the computer is arguably the main technology which should drive KM processes in organisations ,so that knowledge is created, shared and retrieved for competitive and strategic purposes.

The researchers sought to establish the mode of communication used in the Hospitality industry to support knowledge creation, utilisation and transfer and responses are presented in the table 4.3 below;

Mode	Rating (Frequency) (1, 2, 3, 4,5)	Percentage
Webmail	1	6%
Intranet	3	4%
Social networks	3	10%
Memos	5	30%
Telephone(extension)	4	20%

Source: Survey (2014)

The data shows that the traditional modes are popular with 30% respondents citing Memos as most frequently used, 20% of the respondents showed that telephone extensions were also frequently used as a mode of communication. Technology modes seem not frequently used as the highest mode was weighed at 10% of the respondents. This shows that organisations still believe in their old modes of communication as effective. In an in-depth interview with one informant from the hotels, explained that Web mails, intranets and social networks are not effective communication channels. The informant argued that you cannot really know whether an employee received certain message on time due to network problems and other internet challenges. Traditional models are said to be more effective, harmonious and reliable.

Organisational structure and culture is a critical tool for knowledge management The research data showed that 46% of the respondents pointed out that their organisations have either horizontal or tall structures. Only 8% of the respondents said that their organisations had matrix reporting structures. McElroy (2000) highlighted that a learning organisation is one which has a flat structure which does not hinder flow of knowledge. The research data showed that 40% of the respondents pointed out that a culture of fear dominate in hotels. 30% respondents believe the culture is individualistic. However, other respondents believe that a matrix (logical) and collective culture should be the ideal culture showing 10% and 20% acceptance rate respectively. To further understand this concept, a manager from one of the hotels explained that organisational culture should be managed carefully as it has a great impact on the overall performance of an entity. The manager's reasons were that if a culture is too flexible (matrix) it can prove to be very difficult to monitor. The manager explained that a too flexible culture is bad as it lacks transparency and honesty. The manager believed that even 'smallest' decisions should be made by management for easier management. The argument was that if every employee is given trust to make decisions its only one day, when he/she makes a catastrophic irreversible decision which can have severe negative consequences to the organisation. Contrary to the questionnaire responses an in-depth interview revealed that it is not the culture which is the culprit but inefficient supporting structures which hinder KM activities to be successful such as structure and IT.

The researchers sought to discover the benefits of knowledge management as highlighted in the table 4.4 below;

Benefit	Frequency Rating (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	Percentage
Knowledge creation	5	38%
Organisational renewal	4	14%
Easy problem solving	2	28%
Competitive advantage	4	20%
Total		100%

Source: Survey data (2013)

The research data showed that 38% respondents pointed out that the main benefit is knowledge creation. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) highlighted that knowledge management results in generation of new knowledge. On the other hand 28% respondents pointed out that knowledge management enables easy problem solving. In addition 20% of the respondents noted that knowledge management creates competitive advantage while only 14% of the respondents highlighted that knowledge management results in organisational renewal. Follow up interviews revealed that practicing knowledge management is an ideal business concept mainly for easy problem solving and organisational renewal. It was highlighted in the interviews that without knowledge management running costs of a business entity will be high. Further clarity on the benefits of knowledge management revealed that problems will always happen in business but solving them is the issue. The interviewee highlighted that when knowledge is managed properly problem solving becomes faster and less costly hence competitive advantage of an entity. The interviewee elaborated that the costs of managing knowledge are less than the cost of not managing it. By not managing knowledge, according to the interviews change and organisational renewal will not happen. Further inquiry from the interviews show that corporate

entrepreneurship is a brain child of knowledge management.

CONCLUSIONS

The research study aimed at looking at knowledge management as a survival strategy to enhance competitive advantage in the tourism and hospitality industry. The research findings brought out the following conclusions;

Human resources policies and manual procedures do not support knowledge management systems in tourism and hospitality industry. Human Resource policies are meant only to control human capital as a source of labour rather than a valuable asset to the organization. The information technology systems are not properly structured in order to support knowledge management. The infrastructures available are meant to support the traditional communication modes.

Organisations in the hotel sector are dominated by tall structures which frustrate employees to share knowledge and worse still retrieve knowledge for problem solving.

There is too much power distance between management and employees, management are the custodian of knowledge creation and transfer, decision making is the sole responsibility of the top hierarchy, therefore there is a dominant culture of knowledge is power in hospitality industry. The research concluded that KM is a major benefit to problem solving and organizational renewal. The conclusion was that managing knowledge was less costly than failing to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend HRM policies to create the ultimate employee experience. This can be achieved through transformation of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through education programmes, building employee skills, competencies, careers and creating bench marks. Human resource management should integrate effective knowledge sharing and usage into daily routines. What this means is that, knowledge sharing must be expected, recognized, and rewarded.

Organisations should ensure that effective knowledge management to happen requires those with information to become teachers and mentors to ensure that others in the firm know what they know. This could be done through team learning that promotes synergy and larger intelligence.

Hotels may well ensure that Human Resources align its objectives/policies to the overall organisation's mission statement, ethics and vision. To encourage knowledge management, organizations should employ staff who desire career success. Human resources may perhaps make the manuals of procedures more flexible to allow knowledge creation and sharing which will result in a learning organisation.

Human resources departments should recognize the unique attributes and value of chief knowledge workers.

Hotels can invest in ICT especially department computers to ease intranet and extranet communication.

Hotels may replace the fierce bureaucratic culture with a trusting and forgiving culture that allows people to be logical and innovative if they are to improve customer service. A knowledge sharing culture can only find fertile ground if top management support it, showing benefits, incentives and rewards to those who do it. The researchers therefore recommend taking a holistic approach to knowledge generation, sharing and utilization.

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