



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ITS EFFECT ON FIRMS' COMPETITIVE STRATEGY AND EFFICIENCY IN THE SERVICE SECTORS OF THE NIGERIA ECONOMY

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Cite this article:

Omale, S. A., Gurin, M. I. (2024), Knowledge Management and its Effect on Firms' Competitive Strategy and Efficiency in the Service Sectors of the Nigeria Economy. African Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development 7(4), 336-350. DOI: 10.52589/AJESD-LQ92SU34

Manuscript History

Received: 18 Sep 2024

Accepted: 25 Nov 2024

Published: 10 Dec 2024

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ABSTRACT: *There is an amplified interest in an organisation's competitive strategy and efficiency in performing its functions. Knowledge management (KM) thus, serves as a means of improving an organisation's efficiency. However, it has become increasingly apparent that a lack of knowledge management and resilience in a dynamic and unpredictable corporate environment is a severe business concern that reduces competitive advantage and a firm's performance. This research, therefore, explored knowledge management and its effect on firms' competitive strategy and efficiency in the service sectors of the Nigerian economy to bridge this gap. We used an exploratory study technique, administering a self-designed questionnaire to 386 employees and managers from chosen service organisations. The questionnaire received 333 valid responses, representing 90.5% of the total. A multiple regression approach is used to analyze the information. The research results supported the hypothesis that KM engenders firms' competitive strategy and efficiency through robust reward systems. The results also showed that if employees are satisfied and their interests are safeguarded, acquiring knowledge, preservation, distribution, and utilisation would be easier, which leads to long-term organisational profitability and performance. Organisations should thus link knowledge management with employee interests and build broad strategies while fostering an atmosphere conducive to KM development and utilisation.*

KEYWORDS: Knowledge; management; knowledge management, competitive strategy; organisational efficiency.



INTRODUCTION

The competitive business environment and post-COVID-19 challenges necessitate firms to boost efficiency and maintain competitiveness. Management of knowledge is crucial for firms to access and incorporate relevant information for informed decisions, enhancing organisational efficiency. (Abbasi et al., 2021; Ashok et al., 2021; Fletcher-Brown et al., 2021). Knowledge management focuses on discovering preserving, disseminating, motivating, and effectively integrating identified knowledge for improved job satisfaction and productivity. Knowledge management aims to improve an organisation's efficiency, increase job satisfaction, and maintain knowledge. Mohaghegh et al. (2024) posit that effective knowledge management improves knowledge utilisation and sustainability, ultimately leading to, organisational performance (Omale, 2016).

Abualoush, Masa'deh, Bataineh, and Alrowwad (2018a) opine that, knowledge architecture and key information functions have grown in importance as a foundation component of organisational prosperity based on creativity, proficiency, and expertise, as well as people's ability to create novel knowledge. Human-created and interacted-with knowledge represented by human know-how, morality, perspectives, and ability is one of many effective and crucial factors in managerial processes (Abualoush et al., 2018a).

According to Obeidat et al. (2017), organisational performance is heavily influenced by tangible and intangible resources accessible within the organisation. For example, successful knowledge management focuses on knowledge creation and adoption of superior information sets and examination programs. Business companies increasingly want knowledge-friendly approaches that can help them disseminate and deliver useful information. Interestingly, firms are increasingly implementing valuable procedures and approaches to improve effectiveness, produce new ideas, and boost corporate performance. According to Abualoush et al. (2018a), firm performance has been linked to the ability to apply knowledge and generate and develop new ideas for increased productivity and performance.

Proper management of knowledge can lead to improved efficiency and creativity, resulting in an ongoing competitive edge (Al Rashdi et al., 2019; Asiaei and Bontis, 2019; Dávila and Dos-Anjos, 2021; Joshi and Chawla, 2019; Ngoc-Tan and Gregar, 2018; Thneibat et al., 2022). Payal, Ahmed, and Debnath (2019) state that, knowledge management; tactic, engineering, and process have an important affirmative connection with organisational effectiveness and productivity. Knowledge management enablers nurtured in an organisation positively impact knowledge management procedures. This partly attenuated the link between knowledge management strategy and company productivity, and substantially linked KM engineering and organisational productivity (Payal, Ahmed & Debnath, 2019).

However, one important challenge for institutions and enterprises is effectively managing in-house knowledge and collaborative investment (Beers & Zand 2014), and knowledge spillovers in general. This has been a challenge for stakeholders who perform duties under rigid resource limits (Link & Scott 2019). From an organisational perspective, it gives a complete picture of knowledge management difficulties, root causes, and solutions, since this can help organisations gain a competitive advantage in the knowledge economy. Thus, this research is significant and unique since it studies knowledge management and its impact on organisations' competitive strategy and efficiency in Nigeria's service sector.



Problem Statement/Justification

Technology is constantly developing every day and what was obtainable in the recent past may almost immediately become obsolete. For instance, there was a time when the German company produced a Honda car called Prelude, but as time passed by; they kept improving their product in line with the technological trend, from Prelude to Honda Bullet, from Honda Bullet to Academy, from that to End of Discussion and Discussion continues among others. Visually, the knowledge management system is affected while looking for what is desired and awkward, when preserving information consumes more time than normal, or when workers stay away from using the system all in, as it is antiquated. Measuring the efficacy and inadequacies of knowledge management (KM) initiatives is crucial for validating expenditures (Al-Ahbabi et al., 2019; Yen and Shatta, 2021).

It has become increasingly apparent that an absence of resilience in a self-motivated and unpredictable corporate environment is a severe business concern that reduces competitive advantage (Oladele et al., 2022). Organisations can use KM performance assessments to analyze reports, identify problems, create new targets, and plan for the future, improving decision-making skills and competitive positioning. Notably, the cost of a knowledge management system is determined by how employees intend to disseminate information. As a result, firms consider KM a vital element for achieving an edge over competitors and adjusting to economic changes. Few researchers have examined knowledge management practices' effect on organisational performance in developing nations (Al-Ahbabi et al., 2019; Al-Mulhima, 2020; Yen and Shatta, 2021). Several studies have examined the industrial and technology sectors (Alaaraj et al., 2016; Al-Rashdi et al., 2019; Alzuod, 2020; Jermstittiparsert & Boonratanakittiphumi, 2019) which is different from nations like Nigeria (Al-Mulhima, 2020; Yen & Shatta, 2021).

The service industry distinguished by specific knowledge, can greatly profit from good KM applications. Research on the influence of knowledge management (KM) on competitive strategy and organisational efficiency in the service industry is limited, especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Alaaraj et al., 2016; Al Rashdi et al., 2019; Alzuod, 2020).

Nigeria's service sector has recently received more attention, as it has substantial growth potential and contributes to economic growth. Thus, it's vital to investigate knowledge management and its impact on firms' competitive strategy and organisational efficiency in Nigeria's service sectors. More research is needed to understand how knowledge management (KM) practices might promote service sector novelty and productivity (Al Mulhima, 2020; Areed et al., 2021; Aydın and Erkılıç, 2020). Thus, this research seeks to give substantial insight and practical proof to support the favourable impact of knowledge management systems on several areas of competitive strategy and organisational efficiency. We prioritise competitive advantage, efficiency, and performance through rigorous data analysis and empirical inquiry.



LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Knowledge management (KM) encompasses a variety of tasks commonly referred to as knowledge activities. The successful management and utilisation of these knowledge activities, linked to individual knowledge, generates KM. Several studies have found significant knowledge habits. Examples include knowledge formation; learning; utilisation; integration; selection, and knowledge transfer (Oladele et al., 2022; Oyenuga et al., 2024). Knowledge transmission is the most important of these actions for effective knowledge management in a company.

Interestingly, studies on knowledge management in an organisational context are typically aligned with the formation of knowledge within the organisation and knowledge creation with external associates (for example, suppliers, clients, and institutions of higher learning, among others) (West & Bogers, 2014) and looking for outside information formation for collaboration. Ritala et al. (2015) argue that the benefits and drawbacks, which have been the subject of much intellectual debate, cannot be overstated.

According to Demircioglu et al. (2019), there is practical and theoretical evidence that knowledge production and management can occur within an organisation or through external partners. Thus, in-house knowledge assets are required to enable novelty and productivity. Hence, organisations will develop people to achieve the critical group of thoughts needed to preserve entrepreneurial access.

This study is anchored on the knowledge-based view theory, an extension of the resource-based view (RBV), which considers knowledge one of the company's most valuable resources. According to Denford and Ferriss (2018), businesses seek to extract information and skills from people and other resources to establish superior capabilities and processes for value creation and organisational trust (Omale, 2015). As a result, researchers argue that effectively generating, sharing, storing, and applying knowledge is critical for gaining strategic competitive advantages (Oladele et al., 2022; Zaim et al., 2019), improving overall profitability (Dzenopoljac et al., 2018), and assisting organisations in achieving their long-term goals (Sapta et al., 2021; Oyenuga et al., 2024).

Knowledge Management and Competitive Strategy

To remain viable, organisations must choose the right strategies to maximize environmentally friendly possibilities grounded on their strengths and shortcomings (Marfou & Shakeri, 2018). Choosing the right strategy for an organisation is crucial, as having a comparable approach to competitors might be detrimental (Švárová & Vrchota, 2014). A strategy is a plan to achieve the organisation's desired outcomes. As a result, knowledge management is seen as a competitive strategy for maintaining market share (Razak et al., 2016).

As a result, in modern-day knowledge-driven economies, knowledge has grown into the most valuable competitive tool for businesses (Mengqi & Weiguo, 2019). Thus, learning has emerged as a feasible strategy for the survival of dynamic and inventive organisations (Omale et al., 2024, Nazari et al. 2022), and the ability to participate in markets and business is dependent on the accumulation, advancement, and integration of personal and corporate expertise (Oladele & Omale, 2022).



Firms' propensity to learn and transfer knowledge can give them an ongoing efficiency and competitive edge (Ekambaram et al., 2018). As a result, knowledge and its management are critical success elements in fashioning and preserving organisational competitiveness (Ha et al., 2016). To get a competitive advantage, businesses must employ a variety of techniques. As a result, choosing the appropriate strategy that influences competitive advantage and organisational efficiency is critical. Thus, the following theory is proposed:

Hi1: Knowledge Management positively Influences Firm Competitive Strategy.

Knowledge Management and Organisational Efficiency

Organisations across all industries identify knowledge as their most important and strategic asset. Focusing on organisational efficiency has thus been critical in implementing strategies to improve competitiveness and profitability. Knowledge management implementation ensures organisational success and the long-term operation of their businesses (El-Massi, & Hamri, 2023). Without efficient knowledge management, responding to the always-changing market demands is difficult.

According to Koohang et al. (2017), performance at work serves as a criterion for assessing an organisation's progress and growth. Ngah and Ibrahim (2010) defined organisational efficiency as evaluating predicted results to actual outcomes, investigating deviations from stated plans, measuring individual performance, and examining progress toward goals. According to scholars such as Akhavan et al. (2014), evaluating an organisation's goals while assessing its efficiency and performance is critical.

Scholars have argued that knowledge management contributes to good organisational efficiency, based on the assumption that knowledge is a critical organisational resource. Nonetheless, this impact has not been rigorously supported (Omale et al., 2024; Masa'deh, 2019). We hope to offer fresh ideas and clarify the links between knowledge management and organisational efficiency by integrating existing research on knowledge management and expanding earlier studies. We hope that our efforts will contribute significantly to knowledge management development. Consequently, the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hi2: Knowledge Management is positively related to the Efficiency of Service Firms in Nigeria

The Role of Knowledge Management on Competitive Strategy and Organisational Performance

Ogunkoya et al. (2023) argue that knowledge management is vital for organisational competitiveness and that knowledge generation impacts organisational performance. Knowledge management enables workers to conduct routine tasks while leveraging inherent knowledge to achieve outstanding performance. KM assists the organisation in developing and altering critical information and capacities essential to various organisational tasks, including problem-solving, training, making decisions, and strategy planning (Omale et al., 2021). Shujahat et al. (2019) suggested that knowledge management methods include knowledge production, sharing, and exploitation. Similarly, Obeidat et al. (2016) considered knowledge management from three primary aspects. This encompasses the dissemination, application, and exploitation of knowledge.



Knowledge management (KM) has emerged as a vital component of modern businesses since the capacity to absorb and share ideas has immediate effects on performance and long-term competitive advantage. Knowledge management (KM) plays a crucial role in businesses by facilitating change adaptation, increasing productivity, and fostering innovation (Ekambaram et al., 2018). Knowledge management (KM) has gained widespread recognition as an essential component of planning, producing new products and services, and supervising managerial processes (Mardani et al., 2018; Qasrawi et al., 2017). Organisations face several hurdles to outperform competitors and gain customers, including the possibility of client defection. Businesses' inability to adapt to changing consumer demands, and ineffective knowledge management, contribute significantly to these issues. Based on the assumption above, the following hypothesis emerges:

H₃: Knowledge Management Mediates the relationship between Competitive Strategy and organisational performance in the environment.

Research Model/Conceptual Framework

This paper presents a conceptual model that illustrates the relationship between knowledge management (KM) and an organisation's efficiency. It explores how KM interacts with and integrates environmental variables or factors, including technology, organisational structure, strategy, trust, and leadership, to thrive in a turbulent environment, enhancing workplace efficiency and organisational performance. These components imply or predict that environmental knowledge and good knowledge management significantly impact organisational performance, efficiency, and company competitiveness.

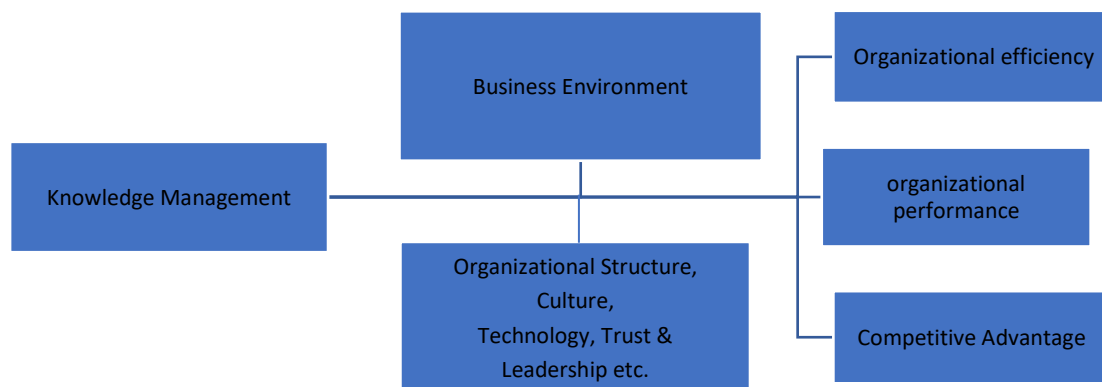


Fig.1: Conceptual Model of Knowledge Management

Source: *Researcher's Conceptual Model*



METHODOLOGY

The research methods describe the precise procedures used to collect data, test it, and describe the empirical relationship between the three study variables: knowledge management, competitive strategy, and efficiency. We used an exploratory study technique, administering a self-designed questionnaire to 386 employees and managers from chosen service organisations in Nigeria's North Central Zone. The questionnaire received 333 valid responses, representing 90.5% of the total. The sample size is determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. The responses to each study variable were assessed using a five-point Likert scale derived from Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001). The researchers used multiple regression analysis to analyze the data. The regression analysis is a set of statistical techniques that allow researchers to investigate the relationships between variables.

DATA ANALYSIS

A measurable strategy was taken, which included employing organized instruments to assess data collected from respondents and testing the study's initial hypotheses. The data was evaluated with regression and descriptive statistics.

Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Results

The hypotheses are provided in null and alternative versions for the convenience of reference.

Hi₁: Knowledge management positively influences firm competitive strategy.

Ho₁: Knowledge management does not positively influence a firm's competitive strategy.

Hi₂: Knowledge management is positively related to the efficiency of service firms in Nigeria

Ho₂: Knowledge management is not positively connected to the efficiency of service firms in Nigeria

Hi₃: Knowledge management mediates the relationship between competitive strategy and organisational performance

Ho₃: Knowledge management does not mediate the relationship between competitive strategy and organisational performance in the environment

Test of Hypotheses

Each of the three theories proposed for the present investigation is examined below using multiple regression analysis at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. The choice rule highlights the limitations of statistical analyses. If the P-value is smaller than the level of significance (≤ 0.05), there is strong evidence against the null hypothesis, and we reject it. However, if the P-value is ≥ 0.05 , the is bound to accept the null hypothesis.



Table 1: Regression Analysis model summary of hypothesis one ($F1 = 6.3 + 0.142 F2 + 0.802 F3$)

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	6.25	19.21	0.33	0.766
F2	0.1421	0.4994	0.28	0.795
F3	0.8016	0.5267	1.52	0.225

S = 32.1444 R-Sq = 95.0% R-Sq(adj) = 91.6%

Table 2: Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	2	58598	29299	28.36	0.011
Residual Error	3	3100	1033		
Total	5	61698			

DISCUSSION

The correlation value in the analysis is $R = 95\%$, indicating a significant beneficial link. The coefficient variable $R^2 = 91.6\%$, meaning that knowledge management positively influences firm competitive strategy. Therefore, 91.6% of the change in knowledge management can be explained by competitive strategy. The P-value (0.011) is < 0.05 , indicating that knowledge management positively impacts a firm competitive advantage. The p-value is less than 0.05 at the level of confidence of 95%, indicating statistical significance. Thus, the hypothesis suggested during the investigation favoured the alternate hypothesis which supports the findings of (Al Rashdi et al., 2019; Dávila and Dos-Anjos, 2021; Joshi and Chawla, 2019; Thneibat et al., 2022) that maintained that proper management of knowledge lead to improved efficiency and creativity, resulting in an ongoing competitive edge.

Table 3: Regression Analysis model summary of hypothesis two. The regression equation is: $F2 = - 3.8 + 0.185 F1 + 0.849 F3$

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	-3.78	22.20	-0.17	0.876
F1	0.1849	0.6500	0.28	0.795
F3	0.8491	0.6321	1.34	0.272

S = 36.6729 R-Sq = 94.4% R-Sq(adj) = 90.7%

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	2	68547	34274	25.48	0.013
Residual Error	3	4035	1345		
Total	5	72582			



Discussion

The analysis shows a correlation value of $R = 94\%$, indicating a significant positive link. The coefficient of an indicator: $R^2 = 90.7\%$, meaning that knowledge management is positively related to the efficiency of service firms in Nigeria which aligns with the finding of Dzenopoljac et al., (2018), who posit that Knowledge management improves overall profitability and efficiency and assists organisations in achieving their long-term goals (Sapta et al., 2021; Oyenuga et al., 2024). The P-value (0.013) is < 0.05 , which indicates that knowledge management leads to the efficiency of service firms in Nigeria and thus, facilitates work fulfilment and organisational efficiency in service firms. The projection is significant since the p-value is smaller than the alpha of 0.05 at 95% confidence. As a result, the theory offered for this study favoured the alternate hypothesis. As a result, knowledge and its management are essential success factors for establishing and maintaining organisational competitiveness (Ha et al., 2016).

Table 5: Regression Analysis model summary of hypothesis three. The regression equation is: $F3 = 1.6 + 0.543 F1 + 0.442 F2$

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	1.58	16.07	-0.10	0.928
F1	0.5435	0.3571	1.52	0.225
F2	0.4423	0.3293	1.34	0.272

S = 26.4685 R-Sq = 96.8% R-Sq(adj) = 94.6%

Table 6: Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	2	63132	31566	45.06	0.006
Residual Error	3	2102	701		
Total	5	65234			

Discussion

The coefficient of correlation used in the analysis is $R = 96.8\%$, indicating a significant beneficial link. The coefficient variable $R^2 = 94.6\%$, meaning that knowledge management mediates the relationship between competitive strategy and organisational performance. The P-value (0.006) is < 0.05 , which shows that knowledge management positively correlates with firms' competitive strategy and corporate effectiveness. The prediction is considered significant considering the p-value is less than 0.05 at the 95% confidence level. Thus, the hypothesis proposed for the investigation favoured the alternate hypothesis. Consequently, in collaboration with the study of Ekambaram et al. (2018), knowledge management (KM) plays a crucial role in businesses by facilitating change adaptation, increasing productivity, and fostering innovation and sustainability, ultimately leading to, organisational performance (Omale, 2016). Effective management of the knowledge base puts firms in an advantageous position and propels organisational performance in the long run in the business environment.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article provided insight into knowledge management and its effect on an organisation's competitive strategy and efficiency. The knowledge management approach helps to achieve the organisation's knowledge strategy, create value between the firm and its customers, and improve long-term organisational performance. Drawing on the belief that knowledge is an important enterprise asset, one might argue that knowledge management contributes to improved organisational performance. However, organisational learning, knowledge utilisation, and knowledge sharing are important aspects of individuals' competency development and organisational performance. Thus, being sensitive and having adequate knowledge of the business environment is crucial for its success. In conclusion, sustainable knowledge management demands a solid supporting technology-driven philosophy and organisation framework. This gives a solid theoretical basis for understanding critical aspects of knowledge efficacy within an organisation. Organisations should link knowledge management with employee interests and build broad strategies while fostering an atmosphere conducive to KM development and utilisation. This will engender productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational efficiency in the long run.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Little has been learned about knowledge management (KM) and its impact on a firm's competitive strategy and efficiency in Nigeria's service sector. This research produced important contributions to knowledge, practice, and policy. It expanded prior ideas by relating knowledge management to competitive advantage and organisational efficiency, offered managers useful insights into boosting efficiency through strong reward systems, and proposed policies that promote knowledge-driven enterprises.

The study also demonstrated its relevance and applicability in effective knowledge management by explaining how the theory of knowledge-based view might predict employee behaviour. As a result, improving an organisation's performance and competitive strategy through knowledge management would be beneficial. A robust knowledge-sharing management initiative and the construction of well-designed incentive system facilities that foster a knowledge-sharing mindset among employees while keeping organisational core values are among the policy initiatives recommended to boost company profitability and performance. Top executives and decision-makers will safeguard the economy's survival by focusing on the knowledge management program.

From a strategic standpoint, firms should link knowledge management with employee interests and build broad strategies while fostering an atmosphere conducive to KM development and utilisation. Also, the uniqueness and value of this study fill a gap in the literature by giving empirical proof of many aspects of knowledge management that are currently lacking. Practically, the findings emphasize the need to examine KM practices and their impact on a company's competitive strategy and efficiency.



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research open up various areas for future investigation. As a result, future research could focus on sectors other than services and have a broader scope to generalize the findings of this study to Nigeria and other developing countries. Furthermore, upcoming studies can expand on this study by looking into the effects of KM on firm competitive advantage and organisational performance in service businesses. In addition, questionnaires were employed as the major data collection instrument. Future studies could involve performing qualitative research.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks and admiration to our respondents for their excellent comments and our reviewers, including the editor-in-chief, who diligently reviewed this piece. May God bless everyone.

Conflict of interest

There are currently no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data availability

The research data gathered and evaluated during the present work are not freely accessible; however, they are accessible from the corresponding author upon an acceptable request.

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