

Development of a Novel Knowledge Management Framework for the Hotel Industry: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: This study proposes a global and holistic knowledge management framework (GHKMF) for the hotel industry, particularly focusing on standard-setting hotel companies (SSHCs). The proposed GHKMF is a pioneering effort in the hotel and hospitality sector. It is intended to assist researchers and practitioners in understanding, focusing on and leveraging knowledge management. The study’s comprehensive literature search confirmed the absence of a hotel-specific knowledge management framework (KMF). This finding was reinforced in a second round of searching for publications from the most prolific hospitality and tourism scholars, which confirmed that no prior work on hotel KMFs exists. The most relevant KMF from Meher and Mahajan’s 2016 study was thus selected, and its elements were tabulated to assist in the GHKMF’s development. The proposed framework is based on extensive research and expert hotel industry knowledge. It will be further validated in a forthcoming research paper (based on expert validation survey data). The GHKMF will help increase the awareness of the value of knowledge and industry stakeholders can use it as a strategic asset to improve their performance.

Keywords: Knowledge management, hotel industry, knowledge assets, external knowledge resources, hospitality, knowledge framework.

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Introduction

Knowledge is a key asset that offers opportunities to create a competitive advantage and value. The global hotel industry is valued at hundreds of billions of USD and is a major employer of millions globally. It has significant linkages with other major sectors, including the airlines, agriculture, construction, real estate and banking. Although knowledge management is an important topic, potentially enabling individuals to garner a competitive advantage and create value, literature on hotel-specific knowledge management is lacking (Kim & Zhang, 2008; Lee, 2008; Shaw & Williams, 2009; Voegeli, 2019). The few available research articles on the topic are scattered and unfocused. Another related complication is that the hotel industry and the knowledge management field lack a commonly agreed-upon definition and a clear classification (taxonomy), presenting a serious academia–practitioner gap (Cooper, 2006; Frechtling, 2004; Khan, 2019). This study presents a novel global and holistic knowledge management framework (GHKMF) for standard-setting hotel companies (SSHCs) and potentially for the entire industry, with the aim of constructing a simple yet effective GHKMF that these hotel companies can build upon to fully leverage their knowledge assets. The proposed GHKMF provides a way of filling the knowledge gaps in this industry sector.

Key Knowledge Management Concepts

Knowledge management is a multi-layered concept which draws on many disciplines, such as decision support systems, cognitive science, information management, and artificial intelligence (AI) (Dalkir, 2005; Lambe, 2011). Many definitions of knowledge management have been formulated (Girard & Girard, 2018; O’Dell & Grayson, 1998), with an expanding body of literature providing evidence of the sector’s growth in studies exploring the topic (Lambe, 2014). Owing to the sector’s complexity, special attention and detailed explanations are warranted to ensure all critical elements of knowledge management and knowledge are fully understood.

The often-criticised data, information, knowledge and wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy helps bring structure and order to the knowledge management world. However, this model’s original source is uncertain, and the model is not evidence-based (Williams, 2014). Some sources have credited Zeleny (1987) as the source, but he merely used the model to clarify forms of knowledge (know-nothing, know-what, know-how and know-why). Others have cited Ackoff’s (1989) work, *From Data to Wisdom*, as the source. Nevertheless, the DIKW hierarchy is a widely used knowledge management framework (KMF) highlighting the relationships among its four elements.

Tacit knowledge stocks (Baum, 2006) and flows (Davidson & Voss, 2002) may hold tremendous unleveraged opportunities and hence, should not be neglected in

knowledge management strategy. Acknowledging the various forms of knowledge helps managers access knowledge in the decision-making and strategy-forming processes. Figure 1 highlights that the various forms of knowledge, all of which have a role to play in fostering a complete understanding of the context and therefore, determining the most appropriate actions. Different forms of knowledge are applicable in different situations. For example, tacit knowledge is most valuable for developing human insights and relationships, whereas explicit knowledge is best for documenting policies and procedures.

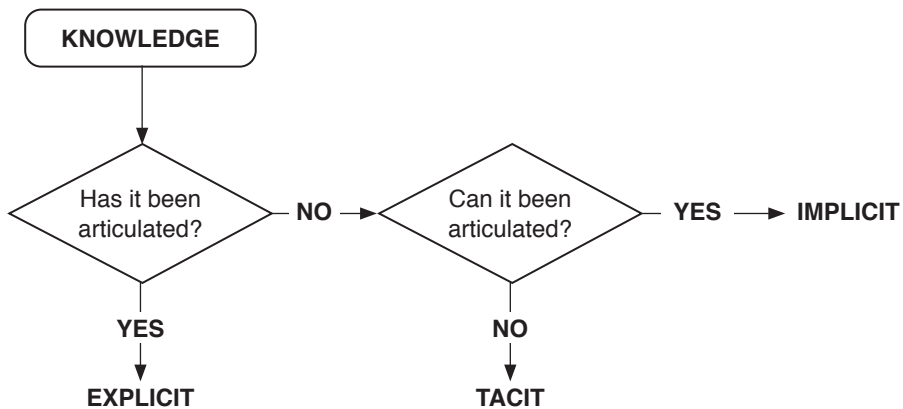


Figure 1. Relationship between explicit, implicit and tacit knowledge by Diugwu (2011)

Hotel Industry Characteristics: Distinguishable Characteristics

Generally, the hotel industry is a sub-segment of the service sector (offering shelter, food and refreshments), which places customers at the centre of their focus. Pizam and Shani (2009) expanded on the guest’s importance, highlighting two aspects:

- 1) Host–guest relationship (outward perspective)
- 2) Teamwork and solidarity (inward perspective)

The authors highlighted a paradox in the host–guest relationship (e.g., staff members work hard to bring guests’ pleasure, which sounds contradictory but is part of a hotel’s day-to-day operations). Singal (2015) as well as Stringam and Partlow (2020) examined hospitality and tourism from the structural and operational perspectives, identifying four structural characteristics that make hospitality and tourism unique:

- 1) Higher leverage
- 2) Higher risk
- 3) Higher capital intensity
- 4) Higher competitive rivalry

Stringam and Partlow (2020) suggested that the following seven operational factors are important:

- 1) Service/product quality and consistency influence human factors (staff internally, guests externally), turning transactions into experiences, emotions and relationships (long-term/loyal guests).
- 2) Labour intensive (high turnover and low engagement)
- 3) Seasonal/cyclical, business capital intensive and high cost of capital with limited availability of capital
- 4) Long-term commitment
- 5) Highly regulated (permits for building, operation, hygiene, safety and security, and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions prohibiting tourists from travelling and using hotels)
- 6) Expansion is regulated and often not easy to navigate: countries have different legal requirements, such as the level of governmental ownership and joint venture or foreign direct investment (FDI, etc.) limits.
- 7) Environmental and sustainability aspects can present a challenge or an opportunity.

The above points indicate that the hotel industry has several distinguishing characteristics, the most prominent of which are the host–guest relationship and the higher capital intensity, with hotels providing a combination of tangible and intangible products and services (Wood & Brotherton, 2008). Hotel room availability is a perishable product that cannot be stored or preserved for another day, so it must be used in the present time frame to generate value. Paradoxically, although the hotel industry is the most global and economically significant, it has no generally accepted definitions (Camilleri, 2018; Medlik, 2003; Ottenbacher et al., 2009; Pizam, 2009). Pizam (2009) discussed this dilemma, highlighting that even experts are unclear about the differences among the hospitality, tourism and travel industries.

According to Pizam (2009), the hotel industry should be considered part of lodging, which sits at the intersection of tourism and hospitality. More specifically, the largest category within lodging (accommodation) is the hotel industry (hotels and resorts). This group also includes other forms of accommodation, such as motels, inns and beds and breakfast, but not long-term or permanent accommodations. Although these forms of accommodation are similar, they are not the same, according to Revfine (2020). Besides the above-mentioned horizontal classification (hotels, motels, inns, etc.), size, function, services, cost and service levels are also used to define vertical categorisation (Lock, 2019).

What ails hospitality and tourism research is the lack of commonly accepted definitions (and categories) and the many disparate approaches and concepts (Ottenbacher et al., 2009; Wood & Brotherton, 2008), making an already difficult domain even more challenging to clearly define and discuss.

A few authors have attempted to anchor hospitality and tourism to the following three philosophical approaches:

- 1) Historical (King, 1995)
- 2) Social (Stringam & Partlow, 2020)
- 3) Operational (Ottenbacher et al., 2009)

However, the extent of their influence and their role in unifying and advancing hospitality and tourism research is uncertain. Thus, the hotel industry's distinct characteristics are evident and must be considered for research and practice.

Review of Literature on KMFs

The terms “model” (a theoretical construct) and “framework” (usually a more practical implementation construct) are often used interchangeably. As they provide reference points and directions (Rycroft-Malone & Bucknall, 2010), they are helpful tools for better understanding theories and approaches. According to Heisig (2009), a KMF's general goal is to provide a guideline for the systematic handling of knowledge that can lead to better results.

KMFs can vary significantly with regard to their levels of abstraction and purposes (Tables 1 and 2). Pawlowski and Bick's (2012) GKMF is an example of a highly complex KMF, whereas the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 30401 standard (ISO, 2018) is a simple “instrument” that leaves room for interpretation, adaptation and the level of intensity. Frameworks can generally appear with narrative, graphical or combined graphical and descriptive content (Meher & Mahajan, 2016). Frameworks are helpful for understanding relationships between critical factors, variables and constructs (Weber et al., 2002, as cited by Heisig, 2009). Fteimi (2015) suggested that frameworks have the following two advantages:

- 1) Provide researchers with guidance and influence on behaviour and research activity (Serenko, 2013, as cited by Fteimi, 2015) and
- 2) Provide businesses (industries) with more consistent methods and approaches to successfully use knowledge management.

These advantages are essential considering knowledge management's lack of uniformity, the absence of a generally accepted framework and, more specifically, the void in the hotel KMF space. In stark contrast with many other scholars, who lamented that knowledge management is still in its infancy, Dalkir (2005) lauded the diligent work on KMFs that helped elevate knowledge management to a well-established scientific field of study. Heisig's (2009) landmark study was an attempt to review the harmonisation of more than 160 KMFs, strongly suggesting that much work still needs to be done to bring knowledge management to a generally unified stage (Heisig et al., 2016).

Maier (2007) suggested three levels: strategic, design (which other researchers called “process”) and operational. However, the current study adopted the perspective

of the other school (Adom et al., 2018), which establishes a clear distinction between a theoretical and a conceptual framework and explains the components and their relationships. The theoretical framework, according to Camp (2001, as cited by Adom et al., 2018), provides a guiding structure for the natural progression phenomena to be researched, with Camp (2001) further stating that: “[i]t is the researcher’s explanation of how their research problem would be explored” (p. 439).

To better understand approaches and possible differences between company (practice) and non-company (academic) frameworks, Meher and Mahajan (2016) studied 18 KMFs, which were used as the current study’s foundation.

Theoretical Foundation

This study’s theoretical foundation stands firmly on the knowledge-based view (KBV), which evolved from the earlier concept of the firm’s resource-based view (RBV). Pereira and Bamel (2021) explained, in simple terms, that a firm is a collection of resources that can be leveraged for growth and a competitive advantage.

Research Methodology

Introduction

Given the knowledge management industry’s challenges and limitations, an exploratory (qualitative) approach (Eisenhardt, 1989), rather than deductive (quantitative) research, was chosen to elicit (known and new) elements, patterns and themes. Partington (2000) argued the importance of qualitative–inductive research to generate useful theories, highlighting the need for “more inductive, theory-building studies, using empirical data to build theories which are useful, relevant and up-to-date” (p. 91).

Research Design

A multi-step research approach was employed to ensure a data-rich, rigorous process and good triangulation for this qualitative study. Data from the earlier literature reviews in this study (Voegeli, 2019) highlighted trends that informed this more in-depth investigation. The following three-phase research approach was implemented to ensure a deep and rigorous methodology:

1. Literature reviews
2. KMF component analysis
3. Generation of the proposed hotel KMF

Literature Reviews

The literature reviews were conducted in two steps as shown in Figure 2. Step 1 was a broad literature review (Google search) of existing KMFs. Step 2 was an analysis of the top

100 hospitality and tourism researchers to assess whether they had published knowledge management–related work. These research activities established the orientation and knowledge foundation on which a hotel industry KMF could be created.

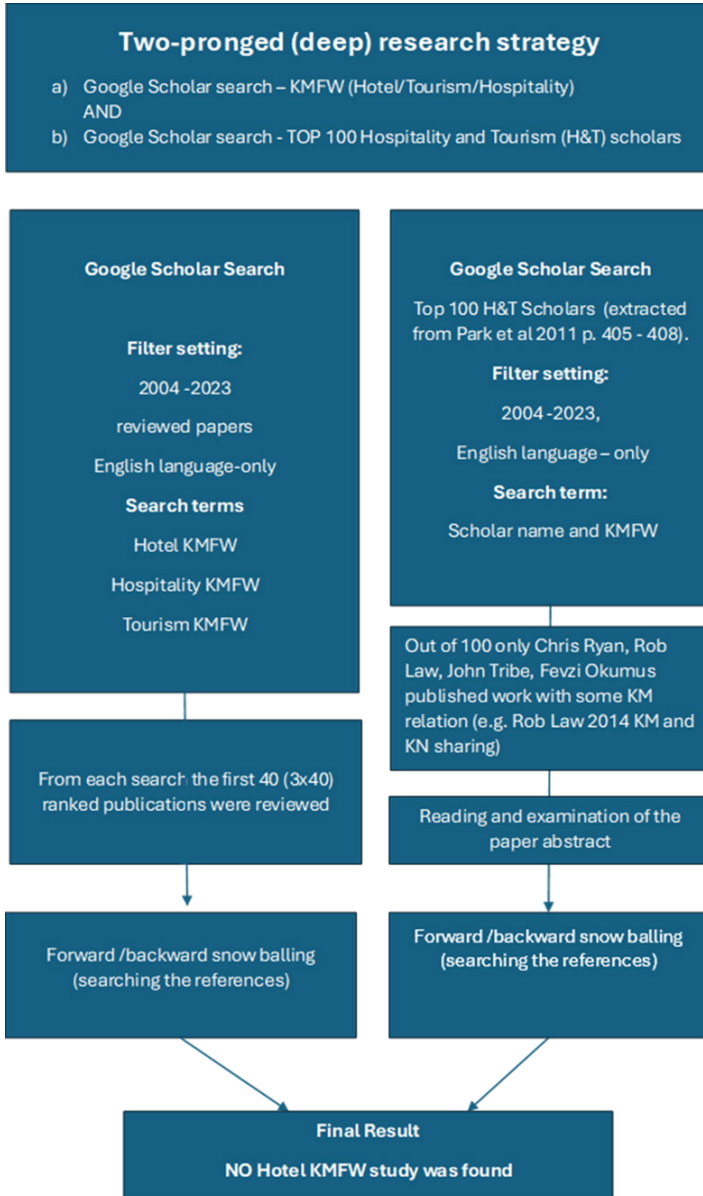


Figure 2. Two-step literature review process by the author

Two-Step Literature Review Process

The above search activity yielded one source (Meher & Mahajan, 2016) with relevant information. A detailed analysis was conducted to assess which components of the six most appropriate frameworks were most applicable to the hotel industry. An iterative refinement approach was taken, with each step incorporating additional data.

Generation of the Proposed GHKMF

The iterations and refinements of the first two phases informed the formation of the proposed hotel industry KMF. The aim was to create a simplified set of foundations that this industry could use to start knowledge management initiatives, enabling the focus to be on the industry's most important components.

Research Data Analyses

This study needed a qualitative–inductive research approach as no framework was available for the industry. The aim was to propose a novel framework that met the hotel industry's needs by considering frameworks in other industries. Symon and Cassel (1998) suggested that only qualitative research could provide in-depth exploratory instruments to achieve a clear picture in such situations. Similarly, Collis and Hussey (2003) argued that qualitative research is a stronger tool, as analysis and interpretation are grounded in the natural environment. Several scholars (Harris, 2003; Myers, 2009; Shelley, 2014) have supported research that generates theory from experiences, text and data.

Findings

This study confirmed that hotel-specific knowledge management literature is largely lacking. In the absence of an existing hotel KMF, knowledge from the mainstream knowledge management literature and hotel literature have been combined to develop a proposed KMF specific to the hotel industry. Combined with analysis and the comparison of a broad body of literature on KMFs, these insights generated a KMF specific to the hotel industry. This underscores the importance of a KMF for the hotel industry, for academics and practitioners alike, to advance the understanding and management of knowledge for strategic decision-making across the industry.

Phase 1: Search of the Literature

The study's search criteria, "knowledge management literature review", yielded 4,680,000 hits, demonstrating that this is an active area of research. However, most studies (e.g., Durst & Edvardsson, 2012; Liao, 2003; Massaro et al., 2015; Ooi, 2009) did not focus on the knowledge management general perspective, but instead

on specific aspects in their literature reviews. Liao (2003) focused on technology and applications, whereas the other cited researchers focused on knowledge management in relation to total quality management (TQM), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or the public sector. However, two literature reviews took more comprehensive approaches to knowledge management (Fteimi, 2015; Serenko & Bontis, 2004).

Upon analysing these sources, a key group of authors emerged as the most influential in critical knowledge management research, most notably Wiig, Davenport, Prusak, Liebowitz, Wong, Aspinwall, Nonaka and Takeuchi, McElroy, Alavi, Leidner, Grant, Spender, Sveiby, Edvinsson, Bukowitz, Williams, Holsapple and Joshi. These authors have conveyed various theories and perspectives by looking at knowledge management from different angles. Despite their diverse perspectives, two general understandings about knowledge management emerged: (1) knowledge needs to be managed so organisations can utilise it optimally, and (2) key generic knowledge management processor steps can be identified, as listed in Table 2. Due to variations in terminology, slight differences are found in the actual terms, but the meaning is essentially the same. For example, “finding” knowledge may be called “identifying”, “creating”, “acquiring”, “collecting”, “capturing”, etc. (with the succeeding steps following a similar pattern). Most scholars have also supported the view that knowledge management must use a combination of technology, process and human aspects.

In recent years, some hotel industry-specific studies have emerged in fields such as market, business and guest/customer intelligence (Köseoglu et al., 2021). Anand et al.’s (2022) literature review covered numerous theories (e.g., cluster cognitive, technology, resource, knowledge-based view). Although they acknowledged that knowledge management is multidimensional and complex, they suggested further research to cover new research themes, making a complex subject even more complicated, rather than aiming for a focused breakthrough solution.

Similarly, Ogutu et al. (2023) emphasised the need to integrate the many theories and approaches into knowledge management and recommended hypothetical exploration. Criteria are typically seen and researched as stand-alone aspects, rather than being related to knowledge management or included in a holistic KMF. However, these fields are closely related to knowledge management (MacFarlane, 2013), especially in the fast-changing hotel industry, where customer and market insights drive decision-making. Leveraging these components as core aspects of a hotel KMF would improve knowledge management initiative outcomes.

Phase 2: Component Analysis of Six KMFs

This phase of the study’s analysis began with a broad search to identify available KMFs (in descriptive and graphical form). The keyword combination “knowledge

management framework study” yielded 727 million related hits. Most articles were removed to prioritise the most relevant hits to comprehensive KMFs.

KMF Comparison and Analysis Tabulation

Table 1 lists the primary components of the six selected KMFs to enable a high-level comparison. Table 2 breaks down the investigation results into common KMF components at a more in-depth level to determine those useful for incorporation into a hotel industry KMF.

Table 1. Comparison of six selected KMFs

KMF Source	Author	Items/Elements	Relational Linkages^a	Complexity: Application Difficulty
Global KMFW	Pawlowski and Bick (2012)	5 main categories and over 60 sub-categories	20	High
APO	N/A	23	5	High
ILO	N/A	10	6	Low
Lafarge	Company	8	4	Low
British Petroleum	Company	5	3	Medium
Lotus/IBM)	Company	7	12	Low

Note: ^aRelational linkages indicate the number of connections between the elements and to the framework’s complexity

Table 2. Comparison of components common across selected KMFs

Item	BP	Lafarge^b	Lotus/IBM	GKMFW^c	APO	ILO	Total
Technology		X		X	X	X (systems)	4
Leadership	X Environment				X	X	3
Culture		X		X		X	3
Strategy		X		X		X	3
Individuals	X			X	X Capability		3
Knowledge	X captured			X		X	3
Process				X	X	X	3
Team	X				X Capability		

Table 2. (con't)

Item	BP	Lafarge ^b	Lotus/ IBM	GKMFW ^c	APO	ILO	Total
Learning	X				X		2
Organisation				X	X Capability		2
Innovation			X		X		2
Enablers				X		X	2
Identify					X	X	2
Share					X	X	2
Results	X			X			2

Note: Besides elements that occurred in two or more KMFs (listed in Table 2), many other elements were unique to individual frameworks. For completeness, elements only listed in one framework are listed here: governance, stakeholders, people, collaboration, infrastructure, competency, responsiveness, productivity, vision, mission, tools, capture organise create, apply store, use, performance, productivity, growth, quality, profitability, society and goals.

The reviewed KMFs revealed their similarities and differences at first glance. The diversity of components across the various KMFs showed the broad scope of knowledge management across different research fields and contexts. This also explains why creating a single framework for knowledge management across many industries is challenging. It also reinforced why it makes sense to create a hotel-specific KMF including the most appropriate components for the hotel industry, drawn from these insights.

The three non-company KMFs (APO, GKMFW and ILO) showed a higher level of complexity and a graphical circular shape at the centre of the model, indicative of fluid and iterative processes. The three company-specific KMFs (Lafarge, BP and Lotus/IBM), on the other hand, emphasised simplicity, which may reflect a more practical application of the concepts compared with the more theoretical constructs of non-commercial organisations.

Across these KMFs, many interdependent connections were found among the components listed. The connections include, for example: (1) individuals, people, teams, stakeholders, leadership and culture and (2) collaboration, sharing, process, teams, learning and people. These interdependencies are a feature of holistic knowledge management programs, where each aspect of the complex relationships influences each of the other aspects. Maintaining the balance across these aspects is critical to the overall program's success and sustainability (Shelley, 2017). This was a consideration when this study drew insights from this analysis and in the proposed hotel KMF's formation.

Phase 3: Creating a Proposed KMF for the Hotel Industry

The absence of an existing KMF for the hotel industry highlights an opportunity to propose a framework considering this industry’s unique aspects. The current study analysed and combined the best aspects of other frameworks, going through a three-step refinement process (refer to Figure 3) while considering hotel industry requirements. This proposal is therefore based on an in-depth analysis of the literature on the hotel industry and knowledge management. The proposed GHKMF, as shown in Figure 4, comprises three core elements (guest intelligence, stakeholder intelligence and market intelligence). A strong knowledge of all three elements and how they impact one another is critical to understanding the most relevant knowledge for providing superior service, gaining a competitive advantage and achieving overall performance.

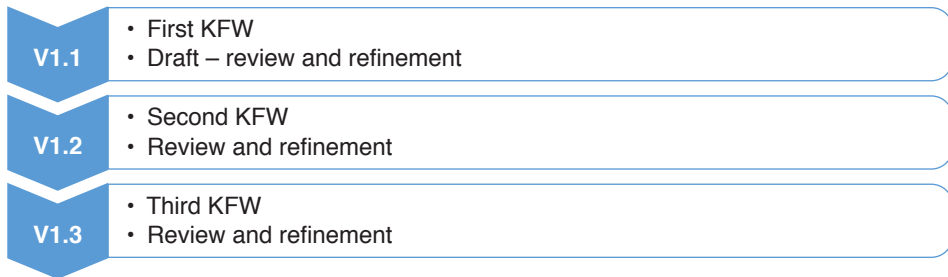


Figure 3. Iterative KMF refinement process (note: KFW=knowledge framework)



Figure 4. Proposed (novel) KMF for the hotel industry

Surrounding these core elements are five supporting elements that drive the strategic cycles of knowledge flow within organisations and across the hotel industry. These elements align with various other frameworks but have been prioritised and refined for the hotel industry's specific and unique requirements. The knowledge flow starts with **leadership**, which generates a knowledge-aware **culture**. In the hotel context, this leads to the **structures** and **processes** required to provide services to customers and stakeholders across all levels. Delivering the highest level of performance in such a complex social and commercial environment requires **collaboration** at all levels. Collaboration on lessons learned in each strategic cycle generates new knowledge and insights from within the organisation and from the external market. This informs the next strategic planning cycle. A foundation of enabling **technologies** supports these elements to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

This highly interdependent representation of knowledge flow is for a specific industry, which demonstrates knowledge management immaturity. Each element and sub-element influence each other. Focusing on any single element will not generate the desired performance improvement outcomes, with success requiring an understanding of the flow and balance of all elements as a complex system. Each element has been further broken down so that a few key sub-elements to be taken into account can be listed. With its eight elements, the entire framework is supported by technological tools that enable it to be implemented most efficiently. Of course, many other factors that may assist in knowledge flow could be listed, such as many of those in Table 2. However, the knowledge management-immature hotel industry would benefit from focusing on fewer higher-priority elements, as these would provide the most momentum and value for establishing a KMF and generating a self-sustaining set of initiatives over time.

The three KMF core elements are as follows:

Customer intelligence is at the very heart of the hotel industry. It deserves its place as the industry's focus, as it is the primary source of income and business growth. Customer experiences determine repeat business and reputation, and a strong knowledge of customer expectations and desires is the secret to ensuring positive experiences.

Stakeholder intelligence expands beyond the customer to all other stakeholders in this complex industry. Hotel assets and franchises can be highly convoluted arrangements involving the owners of the physical buildings, the brands, the hotel operators, the agencies and other hospitality providers, such as tour operators and airlines ("Why hotel chains", 2009). Meeting all stakeholders' expectations can be challenging. Thus, knowing their desires and requirements is critical for the hotel operator's and/or franchisee's success. Competitors are also stakeholders, as they affect a hotel's performance, just as a specific hotel's performance influences its competitors'.

Market intelligence is a knowledge of the past, present and future state of play across the entire market. This includes understanding the market sector in which a hotel is operating and competing, as well as understanding how to engage with stakeholders and customers in that sector. The hotel market is rapidly changing, affecting customers' and other stakeholders' expectations. Competition from alternative service providers, such as Airbnb and virtual experiences, is changing how hotel companies interact with their customers and their services. Indeed, knowledge of the market and the ability to get ahead of customers' changing expectations are critical for strategic decision-makers.

The following five elements and supporting technology support these three core elements.

Leadership

Literature shows that the organisation's leadership must be aware of and actively involved in knowledge generation and application. This is one of the key requirements of the ISO 30401 knowledge management standard (ISO, 2018).

Key leadership sub-elements include strategy and commitment. To use knowledge effectively, the organisation should take a strategic view and be committed to applying knowledge to optimise the value generated. Each strategic planning cycle (typically an annual process in the hotel industry) is informed by the new knowledge gained from the previous cycle, generating continuous performance improvement.

Culture

Building a culture that is aware of the importance of knowledge in the organisation and how the flow of knowledge is managed to optimise outcomes is critical to performance. A strong collaborative culture within the organisation results in a strong competitive capability outside the organisation (Shelley, 2021).

Key culture sub-elements include people, relationships and capability development. People will develop relationships with people they trust and avoid sharing insights and knowledge with those they do not trust. The interdependencies with culture are evident here. Investing in developing trusted partnerships within and across organisations accelerates the flow of knowledge and the co-creation of new knowledge, which fuels leadership decision-making. The more that collaborative teams share this knowledge, the faster individuals, teams and organisations develop their capabilities (Shelley, 2017).

Structures

Structures are key organisational assets which people can leverage to generate value. In the hotel industry, this includes facilities and partnerships. The key sub-elements

of structures include physical and human structures. Technological tools are also significant structures and will be discussed as another supporting element below. The hotel industry has many physical assets to manage, including buildings, facilities and transport investment. All these structures play a significant role in the customer experience and relationships within the industry. Standard-setting hotel companies (SSHCs) must ensure that their structures are functional, meet customer and stakeholder expectations and are maintained in a way that sets them apart. Guests, stakeholders and the market provide significant knowledge about how these assets can be operated most effectively (quality of service and experience) and efficiently (return on investment). The human structures in place around these physical structures, such as the hotel hierarchy, the budget management framework and decision-making processes, influence how these structures perform.

Processes

Processes refer to how things are done, and they can change quickly as guest and stakeholder expectations shift in response to market offerings. Through its innovation in services and product offerings, an SSHC should lead market expectations. Knowledge flow from both internal and external sources stimulates creativity and innovation. Key process sub-elements include operating procedures and communication. Operating procedures are the key to consistency and efficiency; when well documented and implemented, they are a form of knowledge flow, or communication, to people across the entire organisation. However, how relevant information is communicated across the organisation is critical enough to be highlighted on its own as an important sub-element. Poor communication is often cited as a leading cause of poor performance (Antony & Gupta, 2019; Durdyev & Hosseini, 2019).

Collaboration

How and why people work together is the essential glue of an organisation that connects the whole framework. In a highly competitive world, creating a culture of collaboration within teams and across the organisation is challenging. Ironically, strong internal collaboration generates a more competitive organisation in the external market (Shelley, 2021). Getting people to engage constructively with each other generates synergies which increase performance. Creating a collaborative culture requires a large amount of investment to align everyone on the organisation's performance objectives (Groysberg et al., 2018; Srisathan et al., 2020). Leadership benefits from engaging people to participate in collaborative initiatives and proactively communicate on issues and opportunities. When this happens, trusted relationships flourish, knowledge flows more easily and performance improves.

Technology

Technology provides the foundation for connecting these interdependent elements and their subsequent efficiency. Technology development is an excellent opportunity to amplify what can be done across all these elements. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing new or improved tools, such as video conferencing, team sites, collaboration boards and social media channels, enabled improved virtual collaboration. This made knowledge sharing and management decisions much easier, in real time and asynchronously, than previously. During the pandemic, the hotel industry incorporated several such technologies or used them more productively to gather customer, stakeholder and market intelligence.

Summary

The proposed GHKMF provides a strong foundation for implementing knowledge initiatives in the hotel industry, especially in the early stages of knowledge maturity. These elements are consistent with key elements in some of the international knowledge assessment tools, including the Most Admired Knowledge Enterprise Awards (Hong Kong Polytech, 2017), the knowledge-ready organisation (KRO, 2017) and the international knowledge management standard (ISO, 2018).

The proposed GHKMF's implementation in the hotel industry is expected to enhance the performance of the organisations applying the framework, thus elevating the industry's standard as a whole. A key characteristic of this KMF is its implementation within an ecosystem of connections and interdependencies, not as a categorised collection of independent aspects. The synergies come from the flow between the elements, not from dealing with them separately as a rigid step-by-step process.

Conclusion

This study involved developing a novel GHKMF to overcome a persistent knowledge vacuum in hotel industry knowledge management practices. The framework not only fills a research gap but also offers a graphic display that can serve as a knowledge compass. The depicted components and relationships enable researchers and practitioners to understand what knowledge components and linkages are mission critical.

Theoretical Implications

This GHKMF is a theoretical construct requiring further research and testing. This paper's author conducted a second study (forthcoming paper) in which knowledge management experts and hotel managers provided their assessment and validation.

The proposed GHKMF is expected to be a launching pad which will ignite interest and re-energise research work (and practical applications) for better use and value generation through strategic knowledge management.

Practical Implications

Practitioners will greatly appreciate the GHKMF as a tool that can help with understanding knowledge management. SSHC executives may use the GHKMF to review their internal current processes to see how initiatives can be better leveraged. Tourism and hospitality organisations may use the GKMF as a guiding tool to incorporate knowledge management activities into their next year's budget activities. In this sense, the study provides a substantial contribution and a step toward closing a significant knowledge gap in the hotel industry.

Limitations and Future Research

Using an interpretive research approach, the study may have incurred author bias. However, clearly structured processes and pre-existing research on KMFs were used to mitigate any bias. The concern that the sample size (six KMFs) is small and insufficient to generate meaningful data may also be raised. In this regard, two things must be considered: a) the six KMFs are actual (real in use) frameworks, and b) this is the first research activity in this specific field. This study's findings cannot be generalised; therefore, further research and applications are recommended.

Future research should include qualitative and quantitative research and stretch across various subcategories (e.g., hotels of different sizes and star ratings) and geographical locations. Above all, the biggest limitation was SSHC executives' unwillingness to undertake this research, a challenge that Okumus et al. (2007) and Voegeli (2019) experienced. However, persistent rejections and the current author's will to overcome them led to the creation of alternative research methodologies to make this study possible.

Furthermore, this study is expected to re-ignite interest in researching hotel-specific knowledge management, perhaps expanding into overarching or related industries such as hospitality, tourism, travel and leisure, as well as the service sector overall.

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