KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL SURVIVAL: A STUDY OF TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Determining the degree of correlation regarding knowledge management and organisational survival was the focus of this research. For the purpose of this research seven hypotheses were stated and a questionnaire was designed to enable the researcher obtain the information required to test the stated hypotheses. Forty-one (41) structured questionnaires were administered to respondents in the selected telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. The formulated research hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient Statistical tool with the aid of SPSS to find out the correlation between the independent and dependent variable. Drawing from the results, the study found that the survival of telecommunication firms through adaptability and flexibility result from the knowledge management competencies. Based on this, the study concludes that organizational survival of firms is largely due to the extent of knowledge management effectiveness put to practice. From the foregoing, the study recommends that organizations should practice knowledge management based on conscious practice of knowledge acquisition, storage, sharing and Utilization to sense the needed flexibility and adaptive capacity necessary for their survival.

Keywords: Knowledge management and organisational survival, acquisition, transfer, application, adaptability, flexibility.

INTRODUCTION

Telecommunication is a fast-moving innovative industry with rapid development of technology. Corporations within the telecommunication industry work as any other business and in order to survive in this industry, it is of importance to the firms to integrate their knowledge techniques to initiate changes in technology and product design (Bengtson, 2012). In the current information age, knowledge has come to be seen as key defining elements in terms of an organisation's competitiveness, growth, survival and sustainability (Kalling, 2003). Such a phenomenon holds true for all organisations, irrespective of whether they fall within the ambit of the business sector or within that of other sectors. The success of any organisation in the current era largely depends on the availability and utilisation of its intangible assets, including especially knowledge. In today's knowledge-based economies, the employment field places much stress on the importance of continuously exploring new areas of knowledge, as well as on exploiting existing knowledge which has evolved into knowledge management (March, 1991). By means of such exploration and exploitation of knowledge, organisations are expected to acquire a competitive advantage (Drucker, 1994; Teece, 2000). Consequently, there is a growing necessity for all types of organisations to "manage their knowledge assets better" (Loermans 2002: 285). Senge (1990) asserts that organisations now accept that they have to continually attempt to expand their capacity to create their own future through the development of learning systems which transcend issues of organisational membership, thus placing a premium on knowledge management.

The above presentation has shown that knowledge management is central to the competitiveness, survival and sustainability of organizations including the telecommunication firms. The business organisations are profit-oriented entities attempting to adapt to their operating environments and thus survive in their peculiar circumstances. Therefore, formal organisations are governed by one overriding goal, survival (Scott, 1987). Consequently, within the highly competitive business environment, business organisations strive to survive and maintain equilibrium.

The telecommunication firms across the globe and indeed in Nigeria have been marred by serious challenges which are closely associated with the poor management of their knowledge stock. This has resulted in the loss of resources by some of the firms who could not contend with the stiff environmental challenges. In Nigeria, the poor structure of the knowledge management strategies of these telecommunication firms have resulted in the failure of some of these firms (notably, Mtel, Intercellular, Nitel etc). Therefore, there is a need for these telecommunication firms to initiate measures that will inform the adequate use of their knowledge resources to adapt favourably to their changing competitive environment and this can only be achieved if their operational structures are flexible enough to accommodate such changes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge Management (KM)

According to Demarest (1997) knowledge management is defined as a socially construct model based on initiatives. Such a dimension includes both the scientific inputs to knowledge creation (such as innovation-based knowledge, which is generated both internally and externally) and the social construction of knowledge, by means of interaction among members of an organisation, when knowledge has already been constructed it becomes embedded within organisational processes by means of both explicit (in the form of programmes) and social interactions among organisational entities, which involves the process of distributing constructed and embodied knowledge throughout the internal and external organisational environment, the ultimate goal of constructing and disseminating knowledge across the entire organisation, Knowledge use is considered to bring about economic and other benefits to an organisation including its knowledge workers.

Bukowitz and Williams (2000) present a different perspective on knowledge management to the preceding views. In their focus on knowledge management processes, they distinguished between the tactical and strategic processes in knowledge management. By distinguishing between the tactical and strategic processes in knowledge management, organisations are able to differentiate between day-to-day tactical activities of knowledge management initiatives and strategic knowledge management initiatives, which focus on the alignment of the organisational knowledge strategy with the overall business strategy of the organisation, so that preoccupation with one strategy does not occur at the expense of the other. Davenport et al. (1998) identified the following five processes as constituting knowledge management:

1) Understanding knowledge requirements; searching for knowledge from different sources; finding existing knowledge; and fusing it;
2) Creating new knowledge;
3) Integrating knowledge created externally;
4) Applying existing knowledge; and
5) Re-using knowledge.

Acquisition

The process encompasses the development and creation of knowledge, being equivalent to what Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) term ‘organisational knowledge acquisition’. Knowledge acquisition, which entails the ability to conceive ideas and solve problems, is a process which results in the development of new knowledge, or in the reorganisation of existing knowledge, in order to render such knowledge usable. Knowledge acquisition is clearly the most important aspect of knowledge management, because it is concerned with the development of

skills, new products, better ideas and more efficient processes. Organisations acquire knowledge in one of two major ways. The one way is through individual members of the organisation, as they interface with the clients, suppliers or stakeholders. The other way is from organisation to another (inter-organisation knowledge acquisition), as well as by means of competition. Jashapara (2004) argues in support of Huber (1991) that other ways in which organisations learn is by means of congenital learning, whereby the knowledge which is possessed by founding fathers of organisations is passed on to other members of the organisation. When individuals work in teams, members influence one another through knowledge exchange. Accordingly, knowledge acquisition takes place at all levels of the organisation and if adequately articulated can be effective in making the firm active in the highly competitive business environment. Once such knowledge is acquired, it benefits the organisation in terms of productivity, the enhancement of creativity, the reduction of response times, and the improvement of decision-making (Hartenian 2003).

Transfer

Knowledge transfer is sometimes taken to be synonymous with knowledge sharing (Yang, 2007) as the sharing of knowledge across companies is called 'knowledge transfer', whereas the sharing of knowledge between individuals is simply called 'knowledge sharing'. In the current study, knowledge transfer is seen to mean the distribution of knowledge from individual to individual and from team to team, within an institution. Individuals transfer knowledge to their counterparts by means of exchanging ideas, thoughts, beliefs, knowledge and experiences with them while contributing to task execution in teamwork, or informally, through conversations with them. The transfer of knowledge at individual level occurs when an individual is willing to assist, as well as to learn from, others in the development of new skills and competencies. According to Senge (1990), the process of transferring knowledge helps to reduce the amount of knowledge in areas or individuals which have a high concentration of such knowledge to areas that need it.

Application

According to the knowledge management cycle model King; Chung and Haney (2008), knowledge application is accomplished in various different ways, including by means of elaboration, thoroughness (facilitation), innovativeness and collaborative problem-solving. Knowledge can also be applied in the development of new products, research and development, and in the improvement of processes and procedures.

Organisational Survival (OS)

Organizations are, fundamentally, social groups attempting to adapt and survive in their particular circumstances. Thus, formal organizations, like all other social groups, are governed by one overriding goal; survival (Scott 1987). Thus, organization strives to survive and to maintaining its equilibrium. And as Morgan (1997) says, organizations are open systems that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adapt to environmental circumstances.

It is widely accepted that, organizations today are facing the issue of responding continually to an environment, which is increasingly dynamic, complex and uncertain as a consequence of demographic changes, a more global economy, the "hyper competition", or knowledge-based competition (Daft and Lewin 1993). A company's competitiveness will depend not only on being efficient in their organisational routines but also on their innovative ability at the same time.

Adaptability

Adaptability represents the capability of an enterprise to react quickly to opportunities and risks and convert them into business advantage (Macmillan and Tampoe, 2000). Adaptability refers to; the capacity to respond to the needs of customers and clients; the ability to make optimum choices; an intentional response to change based on the information regarding the environment - past, present and future; Recognising that primarily people are the ones who must adapt not organisations. People must be empowered to: take sensible risks, build new capabilities, experiment, adjust their behaviours, be fearless, learn from their failures and share their experiences with others; Simplifying the organizational structure of the company, if deficiencies are proven. Adapting to the permanent changes in the business environment represents a continuous process that consumes many resources in an organization, like time, effort and energy.

Ironically, organizations that are well integrated are often the most difficult ones to change (Kanter 1983). Internal integration and external adaptation can often be at odds. Adaptability has been empirically linked with firm performance (Marcoulides and Heck 1993). Some specialists demonstrated the existence of an important relationship between firm performance and adaptability, viewed as a set of cultural values (Kotter and Heskett 1992; Gordon and DiTomaso 1992). These researchers state that organizations capable of better internalizing values leading to a superior ability that allows them to recognize and adapt to changing conditions are more likely to reap superior rewards. According to them, adaptability is a combination of two or more cultural values, including innovation and action orientation, that allow a firm to adjust to environmental conditions better than others, thereby, leading to superior performance.

Flexibility

Organizational flexibility was previously mentioned by relevant authors of strategic management field as an important condition for organizational survival. According to Daft and Lewin (1993), historically, managers designed and redesigned organizations by making modifications to traditional bureaucratic forms on the basis of intuition, past experience, imitation, and personal attitudes and preferences.

Volberda (1998), states that "organizational flexibility derives from the control capacity of the management and the controllability of the organization". From this definition, organizational flexibility is treated as a two-dimensional concept: the managerial task and the organizational design task (Volberda, 1998) and they constitute the two most important

blocks of organizational flexibility. Both tasks need to be fit with the combination of environmental characteristics. The interaction between these three forces determines how the paradox of flexibility gets resolved and results on different organisational forms along enterprise lifecycle: rigid, planned, flexible and chaotic. In Volberda's model of organizational flexibility, if the firm is doing efficiently its managerial task is denoted by "the sufficiency of flexibility mix" and when the firm is doing its organizational design correctly, it is denoted by "the adequacy of organization design (Van der weerdt 2009).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This provided a detailed account of methods used in data selection, why the method was selected and how the data were analysed. Kent (2007) defined research methodology as the basic plan which guides the data gathering project. It is the framework which specifies how the information required will be gathered and the procedure of gathering such information.

For the purpose of this research, seven hypotheses were stated and forty-one (41) copies of completed questionnaires were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool, which represent a respond rate of 91.1%. These were conducted using the SPSS Programme and the unit of analysis consists of department / basic work units of the telecommunication industry in Port Harcourt zone. The target population of this study consisted of departments/basic work units of telecommunication firms in Nigeria to which this research work will be generalized about.

However the accessible population consisted of departments/basic work units of four major telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. Using the check list of the National Communications Commission (NCC), as a result of the above, we had no need for any form of sampling as we adopted the entire accessible population census.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test of hypotheses for the dimensions of knowledge management and measures of Organizational Survival using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient with SPSS version 21.0 package.

Correlations

	Acquisition	Transfer	Application	Adaptab	Flexibility	COPERATE CULTURE	Org Survival
Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.296	.543	.615	.499	.167	.173
Acquisition; Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.407	.105	.019	.037	.645	.634
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Correlation Coefficient	.296	1.000	.190	.548	.063	.770	.307
Transfer ; Sig. (2-tailed)	.407	.	.598	.028	.045	.009	.389
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Correlation Coefficient	.543	.190	1.000	.795	.499	.143	.216
Application; Sig. (2-tailed)	.105	.598	.	.039	.008	.694	.549
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Correlation Coefficient	.615	.548	.795	1.000	-.299	.240	.795**
Adaptab; Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.028	.039	.	.401	.505	.006
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Correlation Coefficient	.499	.063	-.181	-.299	1.000	.311	.254
Flexibility; Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.045	.616	.401	.	.382	.479
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
Correlation Coefficient	.167	.770**	.143	.240	.311	1.000	.701
COPCUT; Sig. (2-tailed)	.645	.009	.694	.505	.382	.	.024
	41	41	41	41	41	41	41

Correlation Coefficient	.173	.307	.216	.795**	.254	.701	1.000
Org Sur; Sig. (2-tailed)	.634	.389	.549	.006	.479	.024	.
N	41	41	41	41	41	41	41

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

Control Variables			AcqTranApl	AdaptFlexib
Corporate	AcqTranApl	Correlation	1.000	.701
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.024
		Df	0	8
	AdaptFlexib	Correlation	.701	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.024	.
		Df	8	0

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between knowledge acquisition and adaptability of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for Ho_1

Significance	Confidence	rho
0.019	0.05 (95%)	0.61

Source: Survey Data, 2015

As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis one (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge acquisition and adaptability of telecommunication firms, this is evident in the correlation value of 0.61 (61%). The null hypothesis one was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis one accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between knowledge acquisition and flexibility of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for Ho_2

Significance	Confidence	rho
0.037	0.05 (95%)	0.49

Source: Survey Data, 2015

As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis two (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge acquisition and flexibility of telecommunication firms, this is evident in the positive correlation (rho) value of 0.49 (49%). The null hypothesis two was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis two accepted.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between knowledge transfer and adaptability of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for Ho_3

Significance	Confidence	Rho
0.028	0.05 (95%)	0.54

Source: Survey Data, 2015

As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis three (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge transfer and adaptability of telecommunication firms. This is informed by the positive correlation (rho) value of 0.54 (54%). The null hypothesis three was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis three accepted.

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant relationship between knowledge transfer and flexibility of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for Ho_4

Significance	Confidence	rho
0.045	0.05 (95%)	0.63

Source: Survey Data, 2015

From the statistical testing of the hypothesis four (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge transfer and flexibility of telecommunication firms, this is evident in the positive correlation (rho) value of 0.50 (50%). The null hypothesis four was thus rejected, and the alternative hypothesis four accepted.

Hypothesis Five

There is no significant relationship between knowledge application and adaptability of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for Ho_5

Significance	Confidence	rho
0.039	0.05 (95%)	0.79

Source: Survey Data, 2015

The statistical testing of hypothesis five (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge application and adaptability of telecommunication firms, this is evident in the positive correlation (rho) value of 0.79 (79%). The null hypothesis five was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis five accepted.

Hypothesis Six

There is no significant relationship between knowledge application and flexibility of telecommunication firms.

Decision Table for HO_6

Significance	Confidence	Rho
0.008	0.05 (95%)	0.49

Source: Survey Data, 2015

As evident in the statistical testing of hypothesis six (see appendix), a significant relationship was revealed to exist between knowledge application and flexibility of telecommunication firms, this is evident in the positive correlation (rho) value of 0.49 (49%). The null hypothesis six was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis six accepted.

Hypothesis one shows that there is a significant relationship between knowledge acquisition and adaptability of telecommunications firms in Port Harcourt. These findings agree with the previous studies of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Gordon and DiTomaso (1992). According to them, the ability to conceive ideas and adjust to environmental conditions that enhance organisational survival.

Hypothesis two result shows that there is a significant relationship between knowledge acquisition and flexibility of telecommunications firms in Port Harcourt. Draft and Lewin (1993), in their findings, said organisational ways of making modifications need to be formed on the basis of intuition.

Hypothesis three result shows that there is a signification relationship between knowledge transfer and adaptability of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. This finding prescribed the study of Yang (2007). The finding stated that transfer of knowledge at individual level occurs when the individuals are willing to learn and adapt to the development of new skills.

Hypothesis four shows that there is a significant relationship between knowledge transfer and flexibility of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. The finding revealed the study of Yang (2007). The finding stated that knowledge transfer involve distributing knowledge from team to team in an institutions.

Hypothesis five result shows that there is a significant relationship between application and adaptability of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. These findings revealed the study of Chung and Haney (2008). Their findings stated that organisations need to work collaboratively in other to solve the problems in the development of new products, research and the improvement of processes and procedures.

Hypothesis six shows that there is a significant relationship between knowledge Application and Flexibility of Telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. These findings prescribed the study of Ross & Weill (2004). Their findings stated that in order to deliver value, new strategies are needed in utilizing technologies. Old strategies of knowledge management ensured that information was delivered to people when they needed it. Collaborative knowledge management enables the concretion whereby information is emergent and integrated from the beginning.

V. CONCLUSION

The telecommunication firms across the globe and indeed in Nigeria have been marred by serious challenges which are closely associated with the poor management of their knowledge stock. This has resulted in the loss of resources by some of the firms who could not contend with the stiff environmental challenges.

Based on this, there is a need for these telecommunication firms to initiate measures that will inform the adequate use of their knowledge resources to adapt favourably to their changing competitive environment and this can only be achieved if their operational structures are flexible enough to accommodate such changes.

From the foregoing, the study recommends that organizations should practice knowledge management based on conscious practice of knowledge acquisition, storage, sharing and utilization to sense the needed flexibility and adaptive capacity necessary for their survival.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Consequent on the conclusion above, the researcher therefore recommends that;

1. That Organisational Survival of telecommunication firms through adaptability and flexibility result from the knowledge management competencies.

2. Based on this, Organizational Survival of firms is largely due to the extent of Knowledge Management effectiveness put to practice.

3. Top management of the telecommunication firms should strive to maintain appropriate strategic procedures that will guide the knowledge transfer and application process of organizations staff so as to help enhance and actualization of corporate goals.

4. Management should install the necessary machinery for organization's knowledge acquisition so that employees would be quick to acquire the necessary knowledge scope to enhance their contribution to goals attainment.

5. Employees at the various functional levels in the telecommunication firms should be closely monitored to ensure that all knowledge acquired are put to effective uses for the benefits of the organization.

6. The organizations should practice knowledge management based on conscious practice of knowledge acquisition, storage, sharing and utilization to sense the needed flexibility and adaptive capacity necessary for their survival.

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