

# Influence of Knowledge Acquisition on Customer Satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the influence of knowledge acquisition on customer satisfaction in four and five star hotels in Nairobi. In conducting the study the researcher was guided by the knowledge based view of the firm. The theory was greatly favored by the research because it considers firms as sources, assimilators, developers and exploiters of different types of knowledge. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Stratified random sampling was used to arrive at the sample size. The target population comprised of 28 four and five star hotels in Nairobi County. A sample size of three hundred and twenty four employees (324) and four hundred and fifteen boarding customers (415) was selected. The study employed a descriptive research design that examined how knowledge acquisition influences customer satisfaction in four and five-star hotel establishments in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings indicated that there was a positive correlation ( $R=0.688$ ,  $p$ -value of  $0.000$ ) between knowledge acquisition and customer satisfaction. The findings further indicated that knowledge acquisition had significant influence on customer satisfaction. The study recommended that hotels should come up with measures to identify and adopt knowledge acquisition practices in order to enhance customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Customer satisfaction, Hotels, Knowledge acquisition, knowledge management

## I. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge acquisition is part of the knowledge management concept. Fernandez and Sabherwal (2010) abridge knowledge management as doing what needs to be done to in order to maximize the benefits of knowledge resources. The hospitality sector today is highly competitive and a significant factor for gaining competitive advantage over other players is properly managing knowledge to enhance customer satisfaction. Operators in the sector have to deliver outstanding service experience for guests in order to remain relevant amidst shifting population characteristics and demands by clients for superior products, new and thrilling experiences and custom-made products (Voegeli, 2019).

Kiseli, (2016) observes that knowledge management is requisite in Kenya because competition among organizations is based on knowledge since a majority of their activities are knowledge-based. The benefits that a company can acquire from knowledge management are contingent on the company's ability to bring together and use knowledge,

abilities and behaviors with the capacity to promote the learning of its members and improve organizational effectiveness and future performance (Rezgui et al., 2010).

Most of the empirical studies relating to knowledge management in Kenya emphasizes on performance. It has been observed that studies that have this form of bias towards measurement methods that put emphasis on financial performance solely can be misrepresentative and may not have the desired effect in a growth environment (Olatokun & Nwafor, 2012). According to Carneiro (2011) besides using financial indicators, non-financial indicators can be adopted to measure the outcomes of knowledge management. One of the expected outcomes of knowledge management is guests' satisfaction. Renganathan (2011) advances that the satisfaction of guests' eventually, safeguards customer loyalty, repetitive patronage and flourishing business.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the current highly competitive market plagued by harsh operating environment, hotels need to make sure that they optimally make use of knowledge to remain competitive and attract customers (Richard, 2016). Aghazadeh, (2015) observes that although aggressive marketing strategies are key, they are not sufficient to ensure sustainable competitiveness in the current knowledge based economy. Today's customer is not just looking for brand but for value for their money (Kansal et al., 2015) so that hotels must equip themselves with sufficient knowledge of its operating environment and its customers' expectations and come up with ways of managing in this environment and satisfying their customers' needs. Customers in hotels demand the best services and products so that managers and employees must have a thorough knowledge of the expectations of their customers and best practices on how to meet them (Ramphal & Nicolaides, 2014). Hotels need to acquire knowledge on customers, changing demands, competitors, innovative products and market trends among others in efforts to ensure their customers are satisfied. At the most basic level, hotels do have in place some knowledge acquisition practices even though hotel managers may not directly identify them as such (Korir, 2018). Hotels need to have a structured system of acquiring and managing knowledge to their advantage. This study provides a basis for exploring the tenets of knowledge

acquisition in hotels and its role in ensuring customer satisfaction.

III. GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the research was to determine the manner in which knowledge acquisition as a practice of knowledge management influences customers’ satisfaction in four and five star hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Theoretical Review

The knowledge based view of the firm was used in this study. This view considers firms as sources, assimilators, developers and exploiters of different types of knowledge (Levitas 2013). According to this theory an organization’s capability to generate wealth mostly depends on its intangible knowledge-based capabilities as opposed to physical or fiscal assets. This theory advances that a firm’s competitiveness depends on its capability to develop novel knowledge-based resources that will be used to generate core competences. According to Zhao et. al. (2019), the knowledge-based capability of an organization is internally determined by the ability of a firm to acquire knowledge and externally by conditions such as the operating environment.

Grounded on this view, organizations should focus on building their knowledge management capabilities and direct them towards achieving the organizational objectives. According to Pandey (2018), knowledge infrastructure and process capacities determine an organizations tendency to knowledge management competencies. This is an expansion of the resource based view (RBV) of the firm that recognizes an organization as a collection of physical and human resources in that the knowledge based view (KBV) identifies human resources, organizational practices and organizational processes as sources of knowledge.

In an exposition of strategy, Takeuchi (2013) applies the KBV to show that knowledge is a key driver of strategy and that strategy is dependent upon continuous innovation, human interaction and the agenda of the firm. Wang and Qu (2020), employ the KBV to investigate the concept of the business model (BM) and describe its nature by exploring the dynamic process of implicit and explicit knowledge creation and cross-boundary diffusion. Knowledge is therefore not just a critical asset in a firm but one that needs continuous tending to address changing needs in an organization.

This theory however focuses on the strategic significance of knowledge in enhancing competitive advantage and performance of the firm but fails to provide bearing on how knowledge is to be managed to help the firm achieve desired results. This study will delve into identifying how hotels manage knowledge with the aim of satisfying their customers’ needs and expectations.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the following conceptual framework.

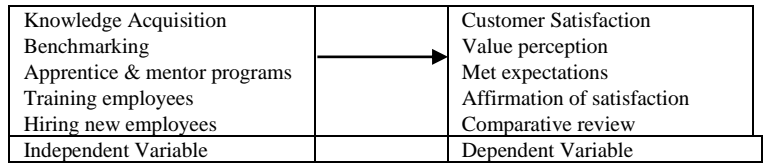


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4.3 Empirical Review

Knowledge management practices have been grouped into creation of knowledge internally, acquisition of knowledge externally, storage of knowledge, and sharing of knowledge internally or externally (Anand & Singh, 2011; Santos et al., 2020). Wu and Hu (2018) identify acquisition, transfer, integration and application as the main KM processes and suggest that these processes can be grouped as externally based or internally based with knowledge acquisition and transfer being externally based and knowledge integration and application being internally based processes. From this perspective, organizations need to adopt activities that enable them to generate knowledge internally and manage that knowledge while also looking outwards to gain from competitors’ experiences and achievements.

Knowledge acquisition has been defined to refer to a company’s ability to recognize, obtain and accrue knowledge that is vital to its running (Alaarj et al., 2017). According to Mills and Smith (2011) acquisition denotes the ability of organization to recognize, obtain and accumulate knowledge, both internal and external which is important to its running. Baytok et al. (2013) articulate that companies obtain knowledge by capturing knowledge that is prevailing in the company by knowledge employees and by outsourcing or purchasing essential information which exists externally. In their operations, hotels extract new knowledge by scanning their operating environment to obtain and gather information. This may be achieved externally by sending workers to trainings, seminars and colloquia to acquire fresh knowledge or obtaining reactions from clients and associated agencies. Internally, hotels acquire knowledge from their working procedures, databases, reports from meetings and internal documents.

A study by Alaarj et al. (2016) on the mediating role of trust on the effects of knowledge management capabilities on organizational performance established that knowledge acquisition has a noteworthy influence on the results of an organization. Samir (2020) studied the impact of knowledge management on SMEs performance in Egypt found that there is a significant effect of knowledge acquisition on customer satisfaction. According to a study by Abdavi et al. (2016) on the impact of knowledge management factors on improving the performance of success of sports customer relationship management the results illustrated that the acquisition of

knowledge management directly and considerably influences the success of customer relationship management. In a study to determine the effect of knowledge acquisition on competitiveness of savings and cooperative societies in Trans Nzoia County, Muchanji and Makhoha (2018) concluded that the knowledge base held by an organization was the most vital source of competitive advantage.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design that examined the influence of knowledge acquisition on customer satisfaction in four and five star hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. A descriptive research design is appropriate where data is collected to describe persons, organizations, settings or phenomena (Kiseli, 2016).

The target population comprised of all the twenty eight (28) four and five star rated hotels operating in Nairobi. The hotels consisted of nine (9) five star hotels and nineteen (19) four star hotels. The basis of selection of these hotels was because they were rated high and therefore were presumed to have systematic procedures.

Sample size was obtained using the following formula as proposed by Babbie (2014) from a population of 1,872 employees and 2,076 customers:

$$n = \frac{20}{100} \times N$$

Where;

n = required sample size

N = size of the population

From the foregoing, the sample size was determined as:

$$\frac{20}{100} \times 1,872 \text{ employees} = 374 \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{20}{100} \times 2,076 \text{ customers} = 415$$

The study collected data from 374 employees and 415 boarding customers drawn by use of stratified random sampling from the four and five star hotels in Nairobi County.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study obtained primary data using questionnaires administered to the total number of respondents. Out of the 789 questionnaires issued, 634 responses were received giving a response rate of 80 percent which was considered suitable for the study. Further analysis was carried out using the 634 collected questionnaires.

6.1 Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variable

Descriptive statistics were presented as frequencies of the level of respondents' agreement in a 5-level Likert rating scale, mean and standard deviation. The respondents were presented with statements on knowledge acquisition activities and asked to rate how they agreed with the hotels practice of each. From their responses, frequencies, mean and standard deviations were calculated for ease of interpretation.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Employees Knowledge Acquisition Practices

Statements (N = 317)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Benchmarking	2	0	6	110	199	4.59	0.597
	0.60%	0.00%	1.90%	34.70%	62.80%		
Mentorship in partner hotels	0	2	8	140	167	4.49	0.582
	0.00%	0.60%	2.50%	44.20%	52.70%		
Regular trainings organized	2	0	0	111	204	4.62	0.558
	0.60%	0.00%	0.00%	35.00%	64.40%		
Employees recruited for new knowledge	2	8	10	127	170	4.44	0.733
	0.60%	2.50%	3.20%	40.10%	53.60%		
Consultation when undertaking duties	0	0	18	137	162	4.45	0.602
	0.00%	0.00%	5.70%	43.20%	51.10%		
Suggestions during meetings	0	0	4	143	170	4.52	0.525
	0.00%	0.00%	1.30%	45.10%	53.60%		
Average %	0.30%	0.52%	2.43%	40.38%	56.37%	4.52	0.600
Summary	0.82% (Disagreement)			96.75% (Agreement)			

The results in Table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents (96.75%) with a mean aggregate score of 4.52 and a standard deviation of 0.600, agreed with the various assertions that

hotels had knowledge acquisition practices. This indicated that the practices adopted by hotels on knowledge acquisition integrated employees' attitudes and ideas towards new

methods and products. Majority of the respondents agreed that their hotels do acquire knowledge through benchmarking at 97.50%, mentorship in partner hotels at 96.90%, regular trainings at 99.40%, employees recruited for new knowledge at 93.70%, consultation when undertaking duties at 94.30% and suggestions during meetings at 98.70%.

The results are in agreement with those of Kiseli and Senaji (2016) which indicated that the respondents in the study agreed with a mean of 4.0227 and a standard deviation of 0.62835 that five star hotels in Nairobi had processes for acquiring knowledge about new products and services. The study findings are also in agreement with Muchanji and Makokha (2018) who found that that the firm develops and

implements training plan annually as a means to make employees acquire knowledge for an organization to be competitive. In addition, the findings agree with the study by Gatuyu and Kinyua (2020) who found that employees are taken for external training to acquire new knowledge and that hiring skilled labour is a big emphasis by enterprises.

6.2 Descriptive Statistics for Perception of Influence of Knowledge Acquisition Practices on Customer Satisfaction

Customers were asked to state their level of agreement with statements regarding the influence of knowledge acquisition on their satisfaction.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Customer Perception of Influence of Knowledge Acquisition Practices on Customer Satisfaction

Statements (N = 317)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ease of booking a room	8	0	4	145	160	4.42	0.757
	2.50%	0.00%	1.30%	45.70%	50.50%		
Superior experience in the hotel	0	0	8	139	170	4.51	0.549
	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	43.80%	53.70%		
Employees knowledgeable in their work	0	0	32	125	160	4.40	0.666
	0.00%	0.00%	10.10%	39.40%	50.50%		
Employees aware of new trends	0	6	26	121	164	4.40	0.720
	0.00%	1.90%	8.20%	38.20%	51.70%		
Employees consult for guidance	0	0	4	135	178	4.55	0.523
	0.00%	0.00%	1.30%	42.60%	56.10%		
Asked my preferences	0	16	60	93	148	4.18	0.911
	0.00%	5.00%	18.90%	29.30%	46.80%		
Average %	0.42%	1.15%	7.05%	39.83%	51.55%	4.41	0.690
Summary	1.57% (Disagreement)			91.36% (Agreement)			

The findings in Table 2 show that majority of the respondents agreed that knowledge acquisition practices in hotels influences customer satisfaction as indicated by an average mean of 4.41 with a standard deviation of 0.690. As indicated by the total of respondents who agreed with the various propositions, 96.20% of the respondents perceived that knowledge acquisition resulted in easy of booking of rooms, 97.50% in superior experience in the hotel, 89.90% in employees being knowledgeable in their work, 89.90% in employees being aware of new trends in hotel industry, 98.70% in employees consulting for guidance before addressing unclear matters and 76.10% in employees asking customers for their preferences.

6.3 Inferential Statistics

To be able to find out the level of correlation between knowledge acquisition and customer satisfaction in four and five star hotels in Nairobi County, inferential statistics were conducted.

The results include model summary, analysis of variance and model test results.

Table 3: Model Summary of Influence of Knowledge Acquisition on Customer Satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels in Nairobi County

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.688	0.473	0.472	0.35074
a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Acquisition				
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction				

The Pearson’s correlation coefficient in Table 3 is 0.688. This shows a positive correlation between knowledge acquisition and Customer Satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels in Nairobi County. The coefficient of determination (R Square) shows that variations in knowledge acquisition practices account for 47.3 percent of the variations in customer satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance for Influence of Knowledge Acquisition on Customer Satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels in Nairobi County

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	34.843	1	34.843	283.223	0.000
	Residual	38.752	315	0.123		
	Total	73.595	316			
a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Acquisition						

The results from analysis of variance indicated the significance of the linear relationship between the two variables. It tested the null hypothesis that customer satisfaction in four- and five-star hotels is non-linear to knowledge acquisition. The results show that the p-value corresponding to the observed F-statistics is 0.000, which is less than 5 percent ( $F(1, 315) = 283.223, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis hence concluding that knowledge acquisition has a significant positive linear relationship with customer satisfaction in four- and five-star hotels.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Influence of Knowledge Acquisition on Customer Satisfaction in Four and Five Star Hotels in Nairobi County

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.248	0.246		1.006	0.315
	Knowledge Acquisition	0.915	0.054	0.688	16.829	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

The regression equation of the linear regression analysis is as shown in equation (i):

Y	=	0.248	+	0.915X <sub>1</sub>	+	E	.....(i)
t-statistic		1.006		16.829			
p-value		0.315		0.000			

Where:

- Y – Customer Satisfaction
- X<sub>1</sub> – Knowledge Acquisition
- e – Regression error term

The P-value in Table 4.24 indicated that the relationship between knowledge acquisition and perceived customer satisfaction was significant with a p-value of 0.000 less than 5 percent. The regression equation above established that by considering all factors constant at zero, customer satisfaction in four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County was 0.248. A unit increase in knowledge acquisition would lead to a 0.915 increase in scores on perceived customer satisfaction. This supports the results in Table 4.23 of the ANOVA test. These findings confirm the results of the study by Gatuyu and

Kinyua (2020) who found that there was a strong positive correlation between knowledge acquisition and firm performance with a Pearson Correlation of 0.781 and R<sup>2</sup> being 0.768. According to the study, knowledge acquisition significantly influenced performance of the SMEs ( $F=9.15787, sig.= 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

### VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that majority of the hotels practiced various knowledge acquisition activities as indicated by 96.75% of the respondents who were employees agreeing while 91.36% of the respondents who were customers agreed to being satisfied with the benefits of knowledge acquisition activities. An intermediate positive correlation between knowledge acquisition and customer satisfaction ( $R = 0.688, R^2 = 47.3%$ ) was found indicating that knowledge acquisition account for 47.3 percent of the variations in customer satisfaction in four and five star hotels in Nairobi County. Additionally, the p-value corresponding to the observed F statistic ( $F=283.223$ ) indicated was 0.000, which was less than 5 percent indicating that knowledge acquisition has a significant positive linear relationship with customer satisfaction in four- and five-star hotels when all the other independent variables are held constant.

It is important for hotels to employ knowledge acquisition in order to promote customer satisfaction. To this end, hotels should invest in knowledge acquisition activities in order to ensure superior customer service experience.

In addition, four and five star hotels should conduct benchmarking activities in hotels with best practices, train their employees regularly and incorporate employees' opinions in their operations to help enhance customer experience in the hotel.

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