

Investigating the Drivers of Knowledge Management Implementation KMI in Hotels

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Abstract

Knowledge Management KM is playing a key role in success of organizations, where, the knowledge is considered one of the major assets to any organization. Knowledge management uses the information technology to transform the existing information and experience to create and discover new knowledge to improve human capital through innovative organizational culture supported by motivating organizational policy. The study aimed to model the drivers of KMI in hospitality industry, as well as suggesting practical implications to enhance KMI drivers. To achieve the study objectives and to test its' hypotheses, the study employed a quantitative approach with questionnaires distributed among hotel employees in four and five-star hotels in Alexandria, Egypt. The valid collected data were 210 questionnaires, analyzed by SEM to model the drivers of KMI. The findings showed that organizational policy OP, organizational cultures OC, IT infrastructure have a significant positive impact on KMI. Also, the KMI drivers play a vital role in shaping up the Knowledge management future in hospitality industry. The study findings suggested practical implications to enrich the KM area of research, such as adoption of reward policy, team work theory, employees' participation to set hotel future plans, putting the best employees' ideas into practice, knowledge sharing, electronic standard operating procedures E-SOP, comprehensive traditional and digital library. The current study is limited to investigate the KMI drivers in five-star hotels allocated in Alexandria. Further qualitative, exploratory and experimental studies should be conducted to assess the KM benefits in different hospitality sectors, lower grade hotels and others KMI drivers.

Keywords Knowledge Management Implementation KMI, Drivers, Organizational policy OP, Organizational culture OC, IT infrastructure.

Introduction

Knowledge management implementation KMI is prerequisite in the highly competitive, rapid and dynamic change (Malhotra, 2000). Moreover, Murray and Donegan (2003) and Malakouti et al.,(2014) stated that KM is inevitable as it supports the innovative capabilities of organizations to cope an ever-challenging competitive business world. Also, KM is necessary in a knowledge-intensive, highly intensive- labor and knowledge-intensive industries such as hospitality industry (Malhotra, 2000) to face high competition (Mohammed et al., 2014), high employee s' turnover (Fathy, 2018) to improve the performance and profitability through the retaining employees' expertise and knowledge (Cooper, 2005). The hotel industry can use the KM to face crises priority (Blackman and Ritchie, 2008; Racherla and Hu, 2009), lead to improve crisis management effectiveness by enhancing the learning to deal with the continuous changing business environment (Steiner 2007). Thus, the KM has become a trend and a management style in chain hotels to gain competitive advantage (Nonaka et al., 2000; Karamarko, 2009).

The hotel culture plays a vital role in KMI (McDermott and O'Dell 2001) Also, Teece (1998) claimed that information technology infrastructure IT allows employees to communicate, transfer, and integrate information and knowledge, to create new knowledge.

Moreover, despite the importance of KM in the hospitality industry, there are very limited studies on KMI in tourism and hospitality industry (Gronau, 2002; Cooper 2006; Hallin and Marnburg, 2008; Hu et al., 2009; Shaw and Williams, 2009; Chalkiti, 2012; Tzortzaki and Mihiotis, 2012; Okumus, 2013; Usoro and Abiagam, 2018; Cooper, 2018), particularly in Egyptian hospitality industry. Moreover, there is no clear determination of key drivers of KMI. Thus, the KM concept is a relatively new in hospitality management; it needs to conduct more researches to understand the key drivers of KM in hospitality industry to encourage KMI in developing countries. The cornerstone of current research is to understand how potential organization's drivers impacts on KMI and how they would help planning and developing an efficient KMI in hospitality industry in hotels.

The present study aims to develop a model of KMI and to investigate the key drivers that impact the implementation of KM. In order to achieve this goal, the following four objectives were targeted.

1. To create a conceptual model for organizational policy OP, organizational culture OC, and information technology infrastructure IT related to KMI.
2. To test the relationship between organizational key drivers and KMI in hotels.
3. To determine the most influential organizational factors that affect the implementation of knowledge management in the hotels of Alexandria.
4. To provide a practical implication to hospitality industry and further research.

The adoption of the concept of knowledge management is one of the indispensable strategies in hospitality industry to achieve profits, and sustainability in market. KM is vital tool to enable these operations to reach the stage of excellence in achieving their objectives (Choi and Jong, 2010; Shujahat et al., 2017). Thus, it became imperative to assess of the impacts of organizational drivers on the KMI. This study seeks to provide a contribution to improve the proposed model for the development and application of KM in hospitality industry in Alexandria.

Knowledge Management

Widely varying definitions of knowledge management have emerged. Skyrme (2005) stated that KM is a process of collecting, selecting, converting, and integrating the data, information, and knowledge into usable and reliable format, create new knowledge, disseminate it within the enterprise to increase the employees' knowledge, to timely taking decisions to achieve operation goals. Moreover, Yang and Wan (2004) stated the knowledge in the hospitality industry consists of four elements, the types of knowledge, operational process, and employee expertise, and technology. KM increases productivity by sound utilizing of human resources and cost reduction and lead to efficiency (Sherman, 2000).

The hospitality industry is one of the most knowledge-intensive, and labor-intensive industries. Due to their nature of the service product, and the continuous change of customers' preferences and needs, direct

interaction between customers and employees, they use KM strategy to enrich the employees' knowledge to improve the delivered service quality (Bouncken, 2002), to increase profit by gaining competitive advantages (Mohammed, Rashid and Tahir, 2014). The knowledge management is recognized as a significant intangible asset (Buckley and Carter, 2002; Lee and Sukoco, 2007; Li et al., 2009), and valuable intangible asset in decision making and strategy developing (Bormann, 2015).

Organizational Drivers of KMI

Three approaches applied by Hostler (2005) reflected three key drivers - people, process, and technology— that determine the success of KMI. Knowledge harvesting, mentoring, data reporting, and incentives are related to the people factor. The process factor involves the concept of best practices. Data warehousing, intranet, and portals belong to the technology factor.

Organizational Policy and Knowledge Management Implementation KMI

O'Dell and Grayson, (1998) stated that the employees should be motivated to share knowledge. The organization shouldn't evaluate the employees based only on their performance but, it should involve knowledge sharing behavior as part of employees' evaluation criteria. Also, the incentive or reward system should be set in clear motivation policies for knowledge sharing (Lee, 2008). Also, Yang (2004) indicated that the organization policies can enhance the knowledge sharing among employees. This suggests that OP can have a positive impact on the KMI in hotels. This leads to the first hypothesis H1: Hotel's policy positively affects the implementation of KM in hotels.

Organizational Culture OC and Knowledge Management Implementation KMI

Keyton (2005) indicated to organizational culture as a collection of shared assumption and values, norms emerging from individuals or team who comprise an organization though a continuous communications network to achieve the organization goals. Schein (1990) stated that culture is a pattern of basic assumptions and procedures developed, invented, emerged, or discovered by a particular group, it is used to deal

with its challenges of external adaptation and internal integration, therefore it should be taught to new members to achieve the specific organization goal.

Organization culture plays a significant to overcome the resistance that technology can not eliminate (Boudreau and Robey, 2005). There are four reasons why the organizational culture affects knowledge management implementation. Firstly, the culture forms assumptions to recognize the knowledge. Secondly, facilitates the relationships between organizational and individual knowledge. Thirdly, determines the creation and acquisition process. Finally, forms a framework for social interaction and communication (Long,1997).

Yang and wan (2004) conducted a study in hotels and stated that knowledge management climate was essential and necessary. The ideal organizational culture encourages discussing problems or errors in openly manner to learn from mistakes, encourages employees to be leader in area of their own expertise, encourages new ideas for product and service innovations, supports environment to knowledge sharing and learning (Grace, 2006; Lugosi and Bray, 2008), provides accountability within the team and a collaborative not competitive atmosphere to meet customer needs (Allee, 2001).

Yang (2007) conducted a study consists of 1200 hotel employees, he found out the positive relationship between organizational culture and effectiveness of knowledge management behaviors. He also stated that managers play an important role in encouraging knowledge sharing. In similar vein, Cohen (2007) and Liebowitz (2008) noted that culture has a profound effect on knowledge management. Yang and wan (2004) found out that organizational culture supported the knowledge acquiring and sharing. Thus, we have the following hypothesis can be formulated. H2: Hotel's culture positively affects the implementation of KM in hotels.

Technology Infrastructure and Knowledge Management Implementation KMI

Literature in the management field has paid attention to discuss knowledge management and how information technology (IT) can help organizations in facilitating KM processes to store, transfer, retrieve, and create capabilities (Bolisani and Scarso, 1999; Gallupe, 2001; Lueg,

2002; Sher and Lee, 2004; Sabherwal and Sabherwal, 2005; Wild and Griggs, 2008; Kebede, 2010; Wallace et al., 2011; Okumus, 2013; Usoro, Abiagam, 2018).

Teece (1998) claimed that technology plays a vital role in KM success. Knowledge management needs technology infrastructure that allows employees to communicate, transfer, and integrate information and knowledge from different departments. KM technologies also facilitate the organization, extraction, transfer speed of knowledge, and make it accessible to employees.

Huysman et al. (2002) stated that most organizations depend on technology to facilitate knowledge management processes. Technology facilitates the communication and ties among organization units. Also, technology facilitates the knowledge flow, sharing and transfer among individuals, departments, organizational departments to create new knowledge. To achieve that, the organizations should train and motivate their employees how to use the IT applications (Okumus, 2013).

Ward (2005) stated that technology provides the hardware, software, and communications that make automated information management possible, it has the following capabilities:

1. knowledge acquisition, and creation,
2. knowledge sharing, transferring by intranet,
3. the flow of knowledge between units,
4. the communication among individuals, teams, organizational departments,
5. the information conversion to knowledge,
6. integration, analysis, and synthesis processes, to generate new knowledge to decision makers in a usable form capturing explicit knowledge and disseminating it.

Also, Grace (2006) added the following technology capabilities such as:

7. Utilizes video/graphics tools for knowledge storage and retrieval.
8. Utilizes IT to define and analyze customers' desires, and preferences.

Despite the technology capabilities, technology design should fit the organization needs and problems. The technology is not the knowledge management; it supports the knowledge management. The technology supports processes, but did not create it (Ward 2005). Bormann (2015) recommended that if a hotel desires to invest in KM, it should design and organize new technologies proper to the needs and requirements of the employees, guests and changing societal and competitive environment. Investment of KM leads to the corporate's image enhancement, create teamwork environment, and improve performance. Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland (2004) contends that technology and culture positively affect both effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge transfer success. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis was proposed. H3: Hotel's IT Infrastructure positively affects the implementation of KM in Hotels. The literature review explains the research significance to investigate the drivers that enhance the KMI in the hotel industry as shown in Figure 1.

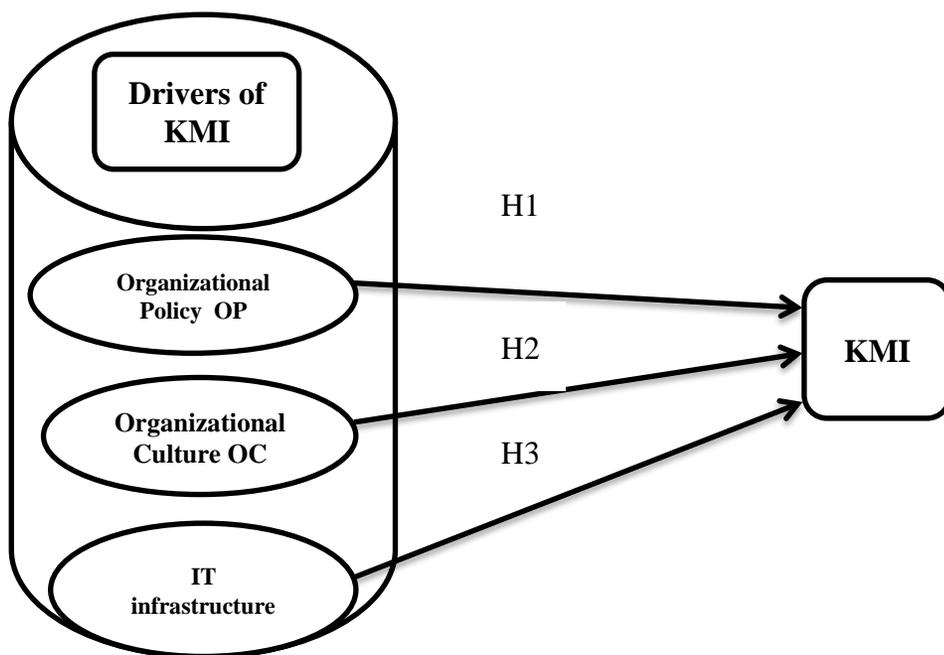


Figure. 1. The Conceptual model and the research hypotheses

Research Methodology:

Population and sample

The target population for current research was the employees in four and five-star hotels in Alexandria. The Egyptian Hotels Association (2015) indicated that four and five star hotel in Alexandria are 18 hotels. The questionnaire distributed to employees during the period of Jun–Nov 2016, and a total of 250 questionnaires were collected out of 350 questionnaires distributed. 210 questionnaires were valid, giving a response rate of 60%. The current research conducts a Cronbach's alpha analysis to test survey reliability, which ranged from 0.752 to 0.921, which it was at acceptable level according to Nunnally (1978).

Since Alexandria, is the second capital, it was chosen to current research and characterized by professionalism. Thus, it was necessary to investigate the KMI drivers. Four and five-star hotels were chosen since they look for to improve their innovative capabilities and human capital to overcome an ever-challenging competitive business .and was willing to KMI than lower grades to meet endless customer needs.

Research Instrument

The main aim of this research is to investigate the key drivers of knowledge management in five-star hotels in Alexandria, Egypt. Therefore, in order to empirically test the research hypotheses, the data have been collected using questionnaire.

At the first stage of the questionnaire development, a properly extensive literature review was performed to gather questions relevant to the variables selected to ensure that questionnaire statements have content validity and that they can be adequately measured. Secondly, the pilot study was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire is well-designed and easily understood by potential respondents (20 hotels' employees represented various five-star hotels departments), to escape any misinterpretation. The questionnaire was then pre-tested in order to develop appropriate scale items to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. The questionnaire used a five point Likert- scale, where, 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5= Strongly agree.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section consisted of six items measured the knowledge management implementation KMI in hotels. The second section consisted of six items aimed to measure employees' perceptions of the hotel policies. The third section consisted of five items to measure hotel culture. The fourth section consisted of five items to measure information technology infrastructure in hotels. Finally, the fifth section consisted of ten questions and aimed at collecting demographic data of employees and hotel profile including; age, gender, marital status, educational level, management style, professional tenure, experience years in current position, number of hotel employees and employees computer skills.

Result and discussion

Hypothesized model analysis

Goodness-of-fit indices of Hypothesized model

This study used the two-step approach (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). First, the measurement model (Figure 2) was specified with three second-order measurements (x1= organizational policy, x2 = hotel culture, and x3= technology infrastructure) and one first-order measurement (DV=knowledge management implementation). The final model in (figure,1) has shown these yields (chi-square)of 611.313 , degree of freedom =203 and p-value = 0.000 which is not significant at the level of 0.05 , indicating that the model fits the data good except the p-value . Because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to the sample size . But, other fit measures are not good such as (RMSEA: .117, CMIN/DF : 3.011 , GFI : .731, AGFI : .664 , CFI :.644 , TLI :.595 , NFI : .557 , RMR : .150).

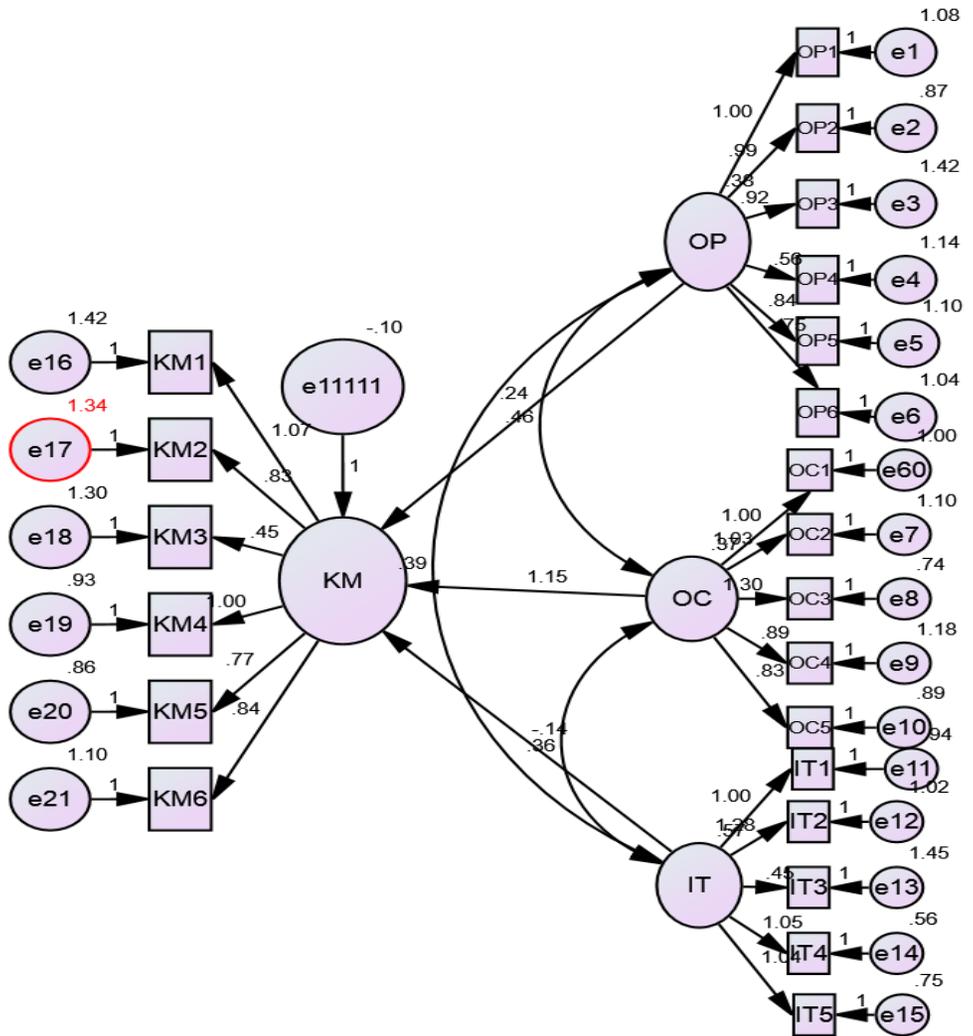


Figure. 2. The measurement model

According to previous data, we should modify it by going back to the modification indices page to find out which item(s) have the most relative percentage to be deleted. that there were large error covariance Items such as (e 6, e 8, e 9, e 13, e 15, e 16, e 17, e 20 and e21) .So, the final modified model in (fig, 9), yields are (chi-square)of 89.159 , degree of freedom =59 and p-value = 0.007 which is not significant at the level of 0.05, indicating that the model fits the data good except the p-value . However, because the chi-square statistic is very sensitive to the sample size it is more appropriate to look at other fit measures.

To ensure a good model fit, a second run of SEM using AMOS was implemented to conduct the analysis of confirmatory factor to determine whether the corresponding dimension reflected the observed variables and latent constructs for the full measurement model.

Fortunately, The second AMOS trial helped to modify the model, it also indicate the goodness of fit the model to the data, and some items were dropped out due to their low factor loadings as shown in Figure 3. (RMSEA: .059 , CMIN/DF : 1.511, GFI : .919 , AGFI : .905 , CFI :.923 , TLI :.918 , NFI : .900 , RMR : .091).

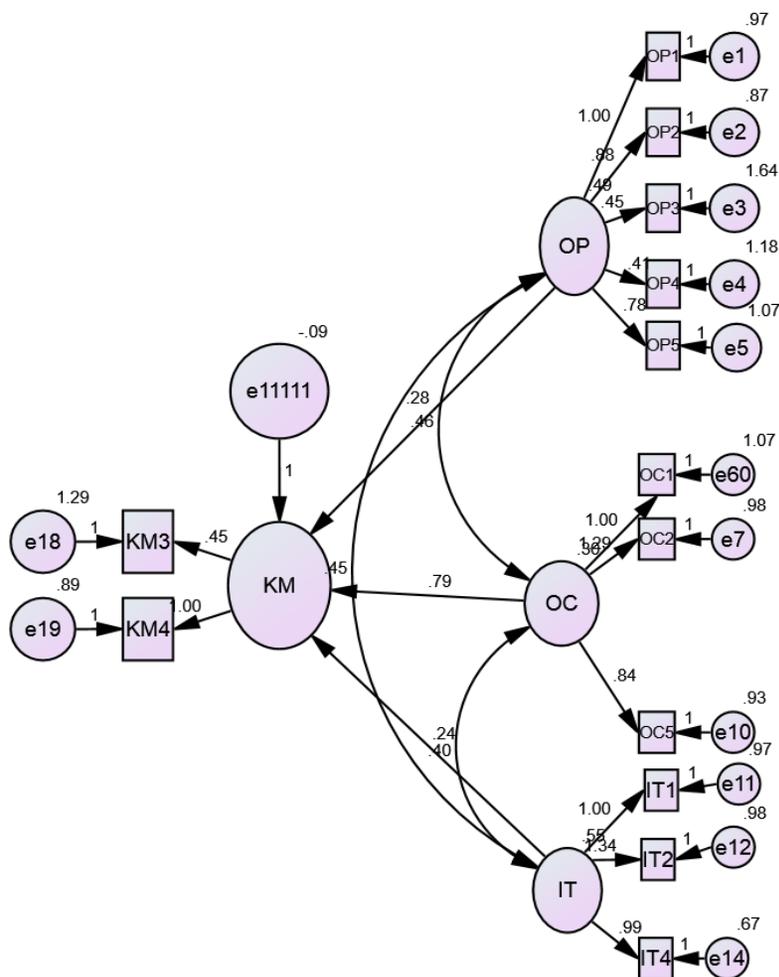


Figure. 3. The Structural model

The resulting statistical estimates of the model are shown. All indexes indicate that the model achieves a good level of overall fit.

Hypothesis testing of Hypothesized model

Based on Hayashi et al. (2006) regression weights present each parameter's un-standardized estimate (S.E), and (C.R) , where estimation of the critical ratio (C.R) by divided into (S.E) . If the result is above +/- 1.96 (Null Hypothesis): C.R is "0" is rejected.

H1: Hotel's policy positively affects the implementation of knowledge management in hotels.

Based on the finding intable 1, C.R value = 5.604 , estimate = + 2.617 and p value = .547 . So, the hypothesis is acceptable because the C.R value is above +/-1.96, in addition, the relationship between hotel's policy and knowledge management is positive, because the estimate value is positive, and highly significant (P <0.001) path coefficient provides an evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

H2: Hotel's culture positively affects the implementation of knowledge management in hotels.

The resulting statistical estimates of this hypothesis (see table 1) are shown that C.R value = 9.541 , estimate = + 4.198 and p value = .589 . So, the hypothesis is acceptable because the C.R value is above +/-1.96, in addition, the relationship between hotel's culture and knowledge management is positive because the estimate value is positive, and highly significant (P <0.001) path coefficient provides an evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

H3: Hotel's IT Infrastructure positively affects the implementation of knowledge management in hotels.

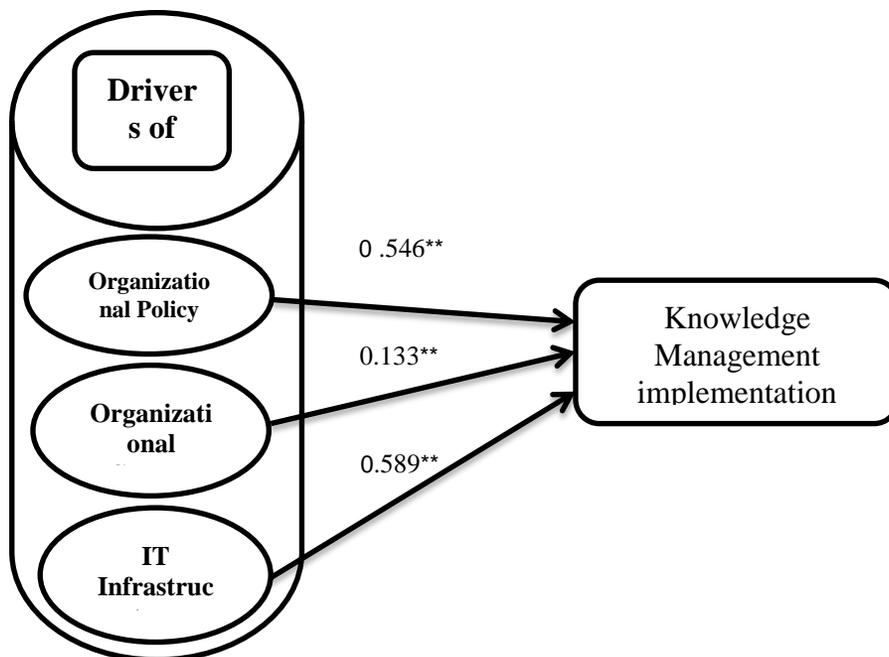
Based on the results in (table1), C.R value = 11.503, estimate = + 6.051 and p value = .133 . So, the hypothesis is acceptable because the C.R value is above +/-1.96, in addition, the relationship between Hotel's IT Infrastructure and knowledge management is positive because the estimate value is positive, and highly significant (P <0.001) path coefficient provides an evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

Factor loadings, CR, SE, and path analysis were highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1. Regression weights of the path analysis

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
KM <--- OP	2.617	.467	5.604	.546
KM <--- OC	6.051	.526	11.503	.133
KM <--- IT	4.198	.440	9.541	.589
OP1 <--- OP	1.000			
OP2 <--- OP	.883	.160	5.506	***
OP3 <--- OP	.447	.170	2.636	.008
OP4 <--- OP	.410	.145	2.829	.005
OP5 <--- OP	.785	.162	4.843	***
OC1 <--- OC	1.000			
OC2 <--- OC	1.290	.251	5.146	***
OC5 <--- OC	.843	.196	4.300	***
IT1 <--- IT	1.000			
IT2 <--- IT	1.335	.216	6.186	***
IT4 <--- IT	.987	.165	5.976	***
KM4 <--- KM	1.000			
KM3 <--- KM	.455	.133	3.412	***

In summary, figure four showed SEM results which supported all the study hypotheses and rejected all the Null hypotheses (no relationship). First, the organization policy and the knowledge management implementation KMI revealed that OP have a direct positive and significant effect on knowledge management implementation KMI (0.546**). Second, the organization culture OC and the knowledge management implementation KMI revealed that OC have a direct positive and significant effect on knowledge management implementation KMI (0.133**). Third, the information technology IT infrastructure and the knowledge management implementation KMI revealed that IT infrastructure have a direct positive and significant effect on knowledge management implementation KMI (0.589**).



*ns= Not Significant ** Significant at 0.01 Note: * Significant at 0.05*

Figure 4: The path model and hypotheses testing

Discussion

The study findings provided support for related previous literature, modeling, and testing the KMI drivers in hotel industry to achieve the first and second research's objectives. The third objective has been achieved through the study finding which proved that organizational culture OC, organizational policy OP, and IT infrastructure have strong significant positive impacts on Knowledge Management Implementation KMI, respectively.

The finding has recognized the organizational policy OP divers have significant impact on KMI. For example, the clear rules for categorizing process its product and service. Moreover, the training and provide the hotel knowledge management, adoption of team work theory, open discussion to issued orders prior to implementation, and suggestion box in all hotels' departments are all key motivators to KMI. The current

study finding is semi consistent with findings of O'Dell and Grayson (1998).

Moreover, the current findings supported that drivers of organizational culture OC have positive impact on KMI in hotel industry. Hence, KMI are likely to gain benefits from OC drivers emphasizing increasing the employees' loyalty, which can encourage them to retain the expertise in hotel instead of moving to other hotels or other industry. Therefore, the hotels provide a consistency in service quality standards, because the hospitality employees' skills have improved to meet customer needs. Due to increased employee knowledge of unique guest / customer needs. Also, Hotels that encourage the knowledge exchange among employees is a strong and major driver for the knowledge management implementation KMI. The study findings consistent with findings of Yang and Wan (2004), because it enhances the learning environment in hotel and improve the employees' performance, and hotel profits (Cooper 2005). Consequently, the above elements have formulated the OC drivers to KMI.

One of the more major findings to emerge from current study is that drivers of IT infrastructure have strong significant positive impacts on Knowledge Management Implementation KMI. The equipped computers with standard operating procedures SOP for all departmental tasks play a major role to improve the employees' performance. Therefore, increase customer satisfaction, hence increase the hotels benefits from the KMI. Moreover, the use of electronic devices adds value to customer services such as E-POS, because it provides quick service to customers. The hotels have computers in all hotels' departments to store its own information, retrieve as indicated by Martin (2000), and disseminate it to employees, especially the new comers to benefit from previous colleagues' experiences. Thus, retain of experts' experiences and knowledge, share best practices, due to improve job performance, provide consistent service standard to customers and gaining competitive advantages (Tzortzaki, and Mihiotis, 2012).

For maximize the Knowledge management Handzic and Zhou (2005), recommended that organizations must establish technology infrastructure that support the knowledge to be available, visible, sharing, usable form (Handzic and Zhou, 2005) reliable, traceable, and retrievable (Martin, 2000).

Practical implications

Knowledge management has become a common issue among academicians and hoteliers. Technological development is long used by hotels to meet the customers' needs and the achievement of competitive advantages over their counterparts. The KM technology can help hotel to collect, store, analysis, retrieve, distribute knowledge. KMI technology allows employees to recognize the right knowledge from the right sources and apply it to their jobs. Thus, the four and five-star hotels, must adopt KM to achieve competitiveness by identifying and implementing best practices in the hospitality industry. The current finding provides a framework to enhance the KMI drivers in order to expand the KMI benefits to hotel industry.

The purpose of this study is to model drivers of KMI application in the hotel industry by exploring the perceptions of hotels' employees. The current findings highlighted the importance of KMI to hotels success, especially for upscale hotels (DeLong, and Fahey, 2000).

This research has several practical implications. Firstly, it provides innovative, motivating and inspiring organizational policy OP through the incentives and rewards (monetary and moral); adopt the team work rather than individual work and provides suggestions boxes in all hotel departments, lead to enhance KMI. Secondly, the hotels, create motivating organizational culture, thus, the managers should give team members the self-confidence to participate in developing future plans, encourage the knowledge exchange among employees, share their opinions on how they perform their daily tasks, apply the best employees' ideas and lead to enhance organizational learning, lead to success of KMI, which will certainly increase the employees' loyalty and retention, thus mitigate the employees' turnover rate. Thirdly, the organizational culture should adopt the organizational learning instead the individual learning, thus encourage the knowledge sharing behavior among employees and improve the human capital. Finally, the evidence from this study suggests that the Electronic form of standard operating procedures E-SOP should provide in different technological forms. Also, the hotel should assign a room for comprehensive traditional and digital library accessible by all hotel employees, and enrich the department computer with all its information.

Limitations and Further researches

The current study applied quantitative approach to investigate drivers of KMI in the hotel industry in Alexandria, Egypt. Qualitative research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of employees' attitudes and perceptions of KM and to define and identify the perceived challenges of KMI. Also, the KMI in hotel industry needs a strong inferences and comprehensive deep analysis, thus, other mixed method approach should be conducted. Results cannot be generalized because it was conducted only in five-star hotels in Alexandria city, Egypt. Further studies are needed to investigate the KMI drivers in lower hotel grades, airport hotels, casino hotels, resorts, floating hotels, motels, fine dining restaurants, quick service restaurants and ethnic restaurants.

Moreover, the current study can be the cornerstone for further studies. The sample subjects were hotel employees. Other samples from hotel general managers GM, Human Resource directors, hotel departments' managers such as IT, sales, marketing, room division, and food and beverages managers can be considered to gain a rich deep understanding of KM.

The current findings match with the drivers in the proposed KMI model that were adapted from literature review. The drivers in the proposed model are organizational policy, organizational culture, IT infrastructure. Three more drivers should be added to the proposed model: organizational structure, and knowledge process and knowledge sharing in the future research. Additionally, further exploratory study should be conducted to investigate the drivers and barriers of tacit and explicit knowledge in hospitality industry.

Finally, further studies should not only attempt to examine theoretical models, but further experimental trials to examine the significant benefits of KMI and its impact on hotel performance, financial performance, satisfaction and loyalty of employees, lead to and loyalty and satisfaction of guest.

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