

Collaboration for Knowledge Creation in Nepalese Hospitality Industry

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Abstract:

This paper examines the different factors promoting collaboration for knowledge creation in the hospitality industry such as hotel, travel and trekking agencies. The study is based on primary data with 382 responses. The self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the perceptive opinions from the respondents. The study concludes that hospitality industry employees' supportive and participative behaviour and keep each other informed about work-related issues in the team have a larger impact on the knowledge creation while each employee contributes equally to the organisation's service innovation influences less.

Key Words: *Collaboration, Knowledge Creation, Hospitality Industry*

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I. Background of the study

Collaboration is defined as the degree to which people in a group actively support and help each other in their work (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). Collaborative culture is necessary for effective knowledge management (Hansen, Nohria & Tierney, 1999; Ein-Dor & Segev, 1982). Collaborative interactions such as open discussion, social interaction, and joint activity can help to create organisational knowledge (Hedlund, 1994). They suggested that a successful knowledge creation, exchanging knowledge amongst people is a prerequisite. This type of exchange can be fostered by collaborative interactions to reduce fear and increase openness to other members. The study by Zucker, Darby, Brewer and Peng (1996) confirmed the significance of collaborative interactions for successful knowledge creation in the biotechnology industry. They showed that collaborative interactions should be encouraged, both formally and informally, among different members of organisation. It also reduces individual differences between organisational members (Damanpour, 1991). Collaboration can help people obtain a shared understanding about organisation's external and internal environments using supportive and reflective communication. Without established shared understanding among staff, knowledge creation is negligible (Holsapple & Singh, 2001). Hedlund (1994) believed that knowledge creation should be facilitated by the availability of a shared understanding between people. Therefore, many scholars considered collaboration as a key enabler for knowledge creation (Hansen et al., 1999; Graham & Pizzo, 1996; Caruana, Morris, & Vella, 1998).

Collaboration is an important feature in knowledge management adoption. It is defined as the degree to which people in a group actively assist one another in their task (Hurley & Hult, 1998; Lee & Choi, 2003). A collaborative culture in the workplace influences knowledge management as it allows for increased levels of knowledge exchange, which is a prerequisite for knowledge creation. This is made possible because collaborative culture eliminates common barriers to knowledge exchange by reducing fear and increasing openness in teams (Lee & Choi, 2003).

Fahey and Prusak (1998) defined that collaboration between team members also tightens individual differences which can help shape a shared understanding about the organisation's environments through supportive and reflective communication. Without shared understanding among team members, very few knowledge creation activities are conducted (Fahey & Prusak, 1998; Lee & Choi, 2003). From a knowledge governance perspective, work arrangements that allow people to work in groups serve as a potent facilitator of knowledge sharing. Following Cook and Brown's (1999) line of reasoning, group-based work affords sharing of knowledge among organisational members. Be it story telling among members of communities of practice (Brown & Duguid, 2000) or group discussion among members based on brainstorming or brain-writing (Paulus &

Yang, 2000), the outcome is the sharing of knowledge. In communities of practice, less experienced members learn from experts in the field (Ardichvili, Maurer, Wentling & Stuedemann, 2006) and personal experiences of individual community members merge to form a comprehensive understanding of the business problem at hand (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

The objective of the study is to examine the different factors promoting collaboration for knowledge creation in the business enterprises of sectors such as hotel, travel and trekking agencies. Remaining part of the paper has been divided in three sections. Second section presents the research methodology, third section reveals results and the final section presents the conclusion of the study.

II. Research Methodology

Basically, it is a descriptive study having the features of survey research. For collecting primary data, a survey technique was been adopted. The study considered hospitality industry of Nepal as its population. However, for convenience, samples were taken only from hotels and travel/trekking agencies from within Kathmandu valley. Hospitality industry was further categorized into two groups, namely, hotels and travel/trekking agencies. The 38 hotels and 59 travel/ trekking agencies were selected as sample on the basis of judgmental sampling. Employees of executive, officer and non-officer levels in Nepalese hospitality industry are the respondents of the study. The survey was conducted in the month of May 2015. Of the 458 questionnaires distributed to the respondent-employees, the 382 responses were usable making the response rate of 83 per cent.

The descriptive statistical tools were used for the data analysis and presentation. To evaluate and test the various statements in the response, mean values of each variable, standard deviation and ranking were used as per the need of the study. Items featured a seven-point Likert scale, with response options ranging 1 to 7 where, 1 for “strongly disagree” and 7 for “strongly agree”.

III. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the respondents. As the table shows, the majority of the respondents were male (63.6%) and were in the age group of 20- 35 years (66.2%). In terms of marital status, they are almost equally divided. Majority of the respondents are graduates (46.9%), work in middle and operational level (88.7%) and have less than five years of experience in the current position (56.3%).

Table 1:
Demographic Data for the Respondents of the Main Survey

Demographic Object	Items	Percent %
Sex	Male	63.6
	Female	36.4
Manager's Age	<20	4.5
	20-35	66.2
	36-50	24.1
	51-65	4.7
	>65	0.5
Manager's Highest Level of Education	Higher Secondary	24.1
	Bachelor's degree	46.9
	Master's degree	28.5
	Ph. D.	0.5
Manager's Work Experience	<5	56.3
	6-10	13.6
	11-15	12.0
	16-20	7.4
	>20	10.7
Marital Status	Married	50.3
	Single	49.4
	Others	0.3
Manager's Current Department	Human Resources	12.6
	Finance/Accounting	16.2
	Sales	24.8
	IT	5.0
	Public Relations	27.0
	Marketing	14.4

Manager's Current Position	Top Management Level	11.3
	Middle Management Level	47.9
	Operational Level	40.8

Source: Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire contained a list of different statements of observations regarding different factors promoting collaboration for knowledge creation. The respondents were requested to express their agreement/ disagreement on the given statements by using a seven-point Likert Scale.

Table 2:
Promoting Factors for Collaboration

This table reports mean weightage, std. deviation and rank of the responses on the given statements. The mean values, std. deviation and rank of collaboration (people in a group help one another) are presented as well.

S. No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
	Collaboration (People in a group help one another)			
1.	Employees in this organisation are supportive and participative.	5.33	1.441	1
2.	There is good coordination among different units and people in this organisation.	5.22	1.354	3
3.	Each employee of this organisation contributes equally to this organisation's service innovation.	4.91	1.475	8
4.	People keep each other informed about work-related issues in the team.	5.31	1.253	2
5.	This organisation team is open and responsive to change.	5.05	1.328	7
6.	People in the team co-operate in order to help, develop and apply new ideas.	5.22	1.317	3
7.	Employees in this organisation provide practical support for new ideas and their application.	5.09	1.342	6
8.	Employees in this organisation provide helpful advice and constructive feedback in order to encourage me to do job to the best of my ability.	5.20	1.416	4
9.	The team continually monitors and evaluates its own performance in order to achieve the highest standard.	5.10	1.368	5

Source: Questionnaire survey

The mean values of observation statements varied from 4.91 to 5.33. The majority of the respondents identified that collaboration for knowledge creation mainly affected by 'supportive and participative behaviour of employees.' Similarly, they thought 'keep each other informed about work-related issues in the team', 'good coordination among different units and people' and 'people in the team co-operate in order to help, develop and apply new ideas' as the second and third important factors, respectively, influencing knowledge creation. It indicates that the supportive and participative behaviour of the employees help in developing new ideas for their services. Therefore, it can be concluded that hospitality industry should give more priority to develop supportive good teams and promote the system for providing required information to their members who can create knowledge. The finding is similar to the study of Migdadi (2005) that, in Australian enterprises, discovered that collaboration for knowledge creation would get mainly affected if 'organisation members are helpful' and 'organisation members are supportive'. The present study findings also are similar to that of Hu, Kireev, Plutz, Ashourian, & Belmont (2009) which found that 'willing to help other team members' is an influencing factor for knowledge creation.

With respect to other statements such as 'each employee contributes equally to organisation's service innovation', 'organisation team is open and responsive to change', 'employees provide practical support for new ideas and their application', 'employees provide helpful advice and constructive feedback in order to encourage to do job to the best of ability' and 'team continually monitors and evaluates performance in order to achieve the highest standard' give the least influencing factors to collaboration for knowledge creation. It indicates that the organisation team must plan to provide for least service innovation and response to change for knowledge creation. Similarly, Migdadi (2005) found 'willingness to accept responsibility for failure' and Hu et al. (2009) found 'personally help other team members regardless of whether in need' were least influencing factors to collaboration for knowledge creation.

Table 3:
Collaboration: Mean Difference t-Test and F-Test of Demographic variables

Descriptive statistics	t-value / F- value	P- value
Sex	0.709	0.479
Manager's age	0.066	0.992
Education level	2.699	0.046
Work experience	0.835	0.503
Marital status	1.159	0.315

Current department	1.936	0.088
Current position	0.195	0.823

Note: * Significant at 5% level

There is a statistically significant difference between responses of four educational groups at 5% level of significance (Table 3). It indicates that education influence on the promoting factor for collaboration. But there is no statistically significant difference between response of gender role, the five different age groups, five work experience groups, three marital status groups, six current department groups, and three current position groups of the hospitality industry in the context of collaboration at 5% level of significance. This results show the promoting collaboration is not affected by different in sex, age, work experience, marital status, current department and current position.

IV. Conclusion

Hospitality industry should give more priority to develop supportive good teams and promote the system for providing required information to their members who can create knowledge. The finding is similar to the study of Migdadi (2005) that, in Australian enterprises, discovered that collaboration for knowledge creation would get mainly affected if 'organisation members are helpful' and 'organisation members are supportive'. The present study findings also are similar to that of Hu et al. (2009) which found that 'willing to help other team members' is an influencing factor for knowledge creation. Similarly, the level of education influence on the promoting factor for collaboration in organization.

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