

# Knowledge Management Enablers for Knowledge Creation Socialisation in Nepalese Hospitality Industry

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## Abstract

This paper examines the relationships between the knowledge management enablers and knowledge creation socialisation in the hospitality industry such as hotel, travel and trekking agencies in Nepal. 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 the key knowledge management enablers such as collaboration, trust, learning, and information technology do influence to the knowledge creation socialization positively. Managers should promote collaboration, trust, learning, and information technology facilities for employees to create knowledge in organization.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Trust, Learning, Centralization, Formalization, IT support, Knowledge creation socialisation, Hospitality industry.

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## 1. Introduction

Knowledge management enablers are the mechanism for the organisation to develop its knowledge and also stimulate the creation of knowledge within the organisation as well as the sharing and protection of it (Theriou, Maditinos & Theriou, 2011). Enabler factors should be clear in an organisation, because not only they create knowledge but also they prompt people to share their knowledge and experiences with others (Yeh, Lai & Ho, 2006).

Socialisation (tacit to tacit knowledge) is a process of sharing experience (way of thinking or technical gestures) however creating knowledge. It is to share tacit knowledge and experience possessed by individuals with other group members, through practical exercise and physical proximity. To achieve these results there are two distinct and key activities (Nonaka & Konno, 1998): capturing knowledge through interaction with external agents (clients and suppliers) and internal (organisational members), from physical proximity or virtual interaction, and the dissemination of knowledge, transferring individual knowledge to other person. Selfdirected teams are very useful tools here (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Fattahi et al. (2013) stated that socialisation is the process of converting tacit knowledge into tacit through shared experiences. Since tacit knowledge cannot be expressed by spoken language, the conversion has to take place through experiences, such as observation, imitation, and practice.

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According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), organisational knowledge creation processes start from tacit knowledge distribution that communicates more or less with socialisation, because compact and unexploited information residing within people is required for augmented distribution in an organisation. Socialisation enables workers to construct communication to liberally trade really personal or specialized knowledge (Li et al., 2009). Bolloju et al. (2002) supported this idea by suggesting that through socialisation, executives can obtain tacit knowledge by observation, imitation and practice. Therefore, socialisation among project team members can benefit their performance in terms of the knowledge sharing of expertise and skill sets, which could save time in investigating this particular knowledge during the project lifecycle. According to Gold et al. (2001), organisations must carefully transform aspects of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge to avoid the loss of efficiencies in production and innovation.

Theriou et al. (2011) proved that key enabler factors such as leadership, culture, strategy, technology and people do influence positively knowledge management effectiveness. However, their research indicated that only leadership and culture statistically supported knowledge management effectiveness, but enablers such as technology, strategy, and people are not significantly related to the knowledge management effectiveness. Choi and Lee (2002) found that human strategy was more likely to be effective for socialisation however system strategy was more likely to be effective for combination. Similarly, Hu et al. (2009) found that members should help each other to foster knowledge sharing for knowledge creation socialisation. In the context of Nepal, there is a need to study whether the impact of knowledge management enablers on the knowledge creation socialisation is significant or not. Therefore, this study seeks to examine whether knowledge creation socialisation, in a Nepalese context, have been applied or not, and if applied, what the consequences of them are. Nepalese hospitality industry is very competitive. Knowledge is a resource to gain competitive advantage in this sector. It requires obtaining comprehensive information on how knowledge is managed and utilised in hospitality industry. It is also necessary to examine the organisational culture, structure and information technology that are essential in managing the process in hospitality industry in order to make it more efficient.

The objective of the study is to evaluate the relationship between knowledge management enablers and knowledge creation socialisation in the business enterprises of sectors such as hotel, travel and trekking agencies. Remaining part of the paper has been divided in four sections. Second section presents the literature review, third section reveals the research method, fourth section reveals results and the final section presents the conclusion of the study.

## 2. Review of Literature

The organisation culture determines not only what knowledge is valuable, but also what knowledge must be maintained for sustainable innovative advantage (Long, 1997). It is also important to note that for successful implementation of knowledge management practices, major cultural change is often necessary. The traditional rewarding system based on individual performance should be exchanged for a new system that esteems knowledge sharing (Jeng & Dunk, 2013).

The organisation culture can be defined as both the set of values, philosophy and mission of

the organisation, as well as the unspoken set of values that guide the employee's actions and perceptions in the organisation (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Knowledge culture in particular, can be defined as the organisational lifestyle on enabling and motivating to create, share and use knowledge towards its continuous success (Bock, 1999). Organisations should assess and review their current cultural situation towards developing a knowledge culture; otherwise any attempt to knowledge management is likely to fail (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). To create a knowledge friendly culture, employees should treat knowledge capturing and sharing as a daily and natural activity. Employees often consider knowledge as power and are unwilling to share knowledge, as they feel they might lose this power (Rao, 2004). Thus, it is vital to create trust and safety on employees, for them to feel comfortable and willing to share their own knowledge. Furthermore, organisations should promote communication, collaboration and teamwork among employees. These create a shared context where employees interact with each other, and not only challenge existing premises but also gain new perspectives (Sunassee & Sewry, 2002).

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 et al., 1998).

Goh (2002) highlighted that collaborative culture is significant for knowledge distribution among individuals and groups. Collaboration has also been empirically proved an important contributor to knowledge creation. Sveiby and Simons (2002) argued that collaborative climate is one of the key factors that influence the effectiveness of knowledge management. They suggested that effective knowledge management requires the creation of a supportive and collaborative culture.

Trust is an anthropocentric notion, and as such inextricably linked to human beliefs, sentiments, and intentionality. It can be defined as maintaining reciprocal faith in each other in terms of intention and behaviors (Hurley & Hult, 1998). Trust can facilitate open, substantive, and persuasive information exchange (Iansiti, 1993; Hansen et al., 1999). When trust is relatively high in people's interaction, they become more willing to exchange knowledge and participate in social interactions (Hedlund, 1994). Employees look for advice from trusted colleagues to increase their understanding of problems. The institutionalization of trust among employees can be thought as a breakthrough in knowledge transfer (Iansiti, 1993). Accordingly, increasing the knowledge transfer based on mutual trust results in knowledge creation.

The capacity of knowledge creation can be increased by various learning means such as education, training, and mentoring. Krogh (1998) proposed training programs as a means of knowledge creation. Swap et al., (2001) highlighted mentoring as a key means in creating organisational knowledge. Intense mentoring enables professionals to obtain a higher level of knowledge. For the organisations to be successful in knowledge creation, traditional training and development activities may no longer suffice; they need to nurture an environment with continuous and persisting learning (Lubit, 2001; Eppler & Sukowski, 2000).

Centralisation refers to the locus of decision authority and control within an organisational entity (Caruana, Morris, & Vella, 1998). The concentration of decision-making authority inevitably reduces creative solutions while the dispersion of power facilitates spontaneity, experimentation, and the freedom of expression, which are the lifeblood of knowledge creation (Graham & Pizzo, 1996). Therefore, many researchers proposed that a centralised organisational structure makes it harder to create knowledge (Teece, 2000). Moreover, centralised structure hinders interdepartmental communication and frequent sharing of ideas due to time-consuming communication channels (Bennett & Gabriel, 1999); it also causes distortion and discontinuousness of ideas (Stonehouse & Pemberton, 1999). Without a constant flow of communication and ideas, knowledge creation does not occur.

Migdadi (2005) stated that organisations should feel that it is feasible to establish a formal system for codifying, organizing and storing knowledge resulting from both their informal communication and from their less formal systems and procedures. When an organisation is highly formalized, employees would then have little discretion over what is to be done, when it is to be done and how they should do it, resulting in consistent and uniform output (Robbins et al., 2001). Knowledge creation requires flexibility and less emphasis on work rules (Lusch, Harvey & Speier, 1998). Lee and Choi (2003) defined formalisation as the degree to which decisions and working relationships are governed by formal rules, standard policies, and procedures.

Many researchers have introduced IT as a critical element for knowledge creation and transfer (Ein-Dor & Segev, 1982; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Madhavan & Grover, 1998; Zaltman, 1986). It affects knowledge in different ways. First, it assists knowledge creation and sharing process by facilitating rapid collection, storage, and exchange of data on a scale which was not practical in the past (Ichijo et al., 1998) and helps employees to access the required knowledge easily (Eppler & Sukowski, 2000). Second, it integrates fragmented flows of information and knowledge into a single stream (Ein-Dor & Segev, 1982) which can overcome communicational barriers in organisation departments. Third, IT fosters all processes of knowledge creation and is not limited to just explicit knowledge transferring (Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2000; Miller, 1996; Woodman et al., 1993). Among diverse variables of technology, “information technology support” is the main variable for utilizing IT (Roberts, 2000). It is the degree to which knowledge management is upheld by the use of information technologies (Ein-Dor & Segev, 1982).

Fattahi et al. (2013) stated that socialisation is the process of converting tacit knowledge into tacit through shared experiences. Since tacit knowledge cannot be expressed by spoken language, the conversion has to take place through experiences, such as observation, imitation, and practice. Socialisation relies on people to share knowledge through more traditional means such as direct person-to-person contacts, and fosters new tacit knowledge such as shared mental models and technical skills. For example, if a manager reports a high level of socialisation, this means that the manager believes that the organisation has many processes in place to support socialisation.

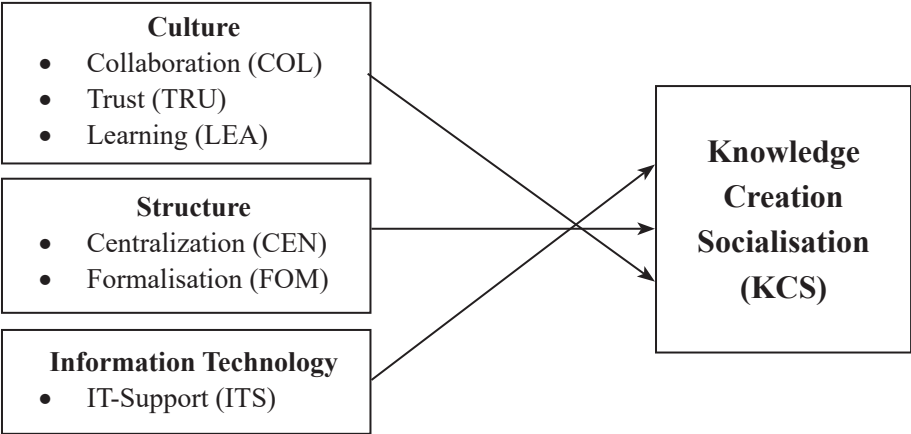
Socialisation is the construction of new-fangled tacit knowledge through trusting in tacit knowledge resources in the course of social communication (Vaccaro et al., 2009). Socialisation changes innovative tacit knowledge like collective mind-mapping representations, technological expertise plus know-how, generally taking place through training more

willingly as compared to documentations (Choi & Lee, 2002). Thus, socialisation presents a more subjective form of knowledge capture through the means of social communication, experience sharing and guidance or apprenticeship.

Socialisation results in ‘sympathized knowledge’, such as common intellectual models and technological expertise (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). According to Lee and Choi (2003), socialisation modifies tacit knowledge into new tacit knowledge through social relations with members. Through socialisation, experiences are shared and in so doing tacit knowledge is created (Salmador & Bueno, 2007). In brief, the progress in socialisation integrates tacit knowledge into a more combined and comprehensive form of tacit knowledge as a result of knowledge sharing among teams or communities from a more informal way of sharing.

Socialisation methods like group conferences, multifunctional teams as well as joint workshops helps in connecting people together, by means of resultant patterns in intimate communications generating networks in inter-reliant societal relations (Lawson et al., 2009). Lawson et al. (2009) continued to explain that this improves common confidence levels and value through new product development groups. These assertions are sensible because new product development teams often consist of cross-functional team members, which rely on knowledge sharing among different fields of experience in order to progress in their projects (Lawson et al., 2009).

**Knowledge Management Enablers for Knowledge Creation Socialisation**  
**Knowledge Management**  
**Enablers**



**3. Research Method**

To examine knowledge management enablers for knowledge creation socialisation in Nepalese hospitality industry, the study used the descriptive research design based on the survey. The quantitative research design is applied to develop an understanding of the research issue.

The study has used primary data collected from executives, managers, department heads, sales officers, marketing officers, finance officers, guest relation officers, public relation officers and human resource managers in the hospitality industry organisations. In the process of gathering

information, a set of structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument. The primary data were collected by 'delivery and collection' methods.

The total of 458 responses was collected from 97 firms. Due to incomplete data, 76 responses were eliminated. Consequently, 382 responses from 97 firms were taken for further analysis. The total response rate was 83 per cent. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the perceptive opinions from the respondents.

Questionnaire items developed included a list of 59 items to measure the different constructs in the study: collaboration, trust, learning, centralisation, formalisation, information technology and knowledge creation socialisation. The development of the items was done by re-evaluating intensively the literature review related to the concepts and constructs stated in the integrative view. The aim of this empirical research is to test whether the dimensions proposed in the above-mentioned integrative view support a significant distinction between different kinds of knowledge management enablers.

To validate the proposed research model, this study conducted a pre-test. The pre-test was conducted in the month of November, 2014. For the pre-test survey, this study developed questionnaire and collected data from 36 potential respondents of the selected samples: both hotels (20) and travel/trekking agencies of 16 respondents. Based on the findings of the pre-test survey, research questionnaire was modified to improve reliability and validity of the study. After the pre-test, the questionnaire was finalised and the main study was conducted.

The study used regression analysis to test the interrelationship of knowledge management enablers (independent variables) similarly their impact on knowledge creation socialisation (dependent variables). The application of regression analysis to the present study is desirable as they significantly help researchers evaluate the causal effect of one variable on other variables.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Hypotheses

The study hypotheses were largely derived from theoretical statements made in the literature on knowledge management. In the first hypothesis, the study analyzed the collaboration dimension of knowledge management enabler. In the second and third hypotheses, the study analyzed the trust and learning dimension. In the fourth, fifth and six hypotheses, the study analyzed the centralisation, formalisation and information technology support dimension.

#### Hypothesis 1: Collaboration

The study proposes to analyse the collaboration for knowledge creation socialisation. The following hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : Collaboration does not affect knowledge creation socialisation.*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_1$ : Collaboration affects knowledge creation socialisation positively.*

The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 1 implies that collaboration will have positive effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the effective role of collaboration on knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand, if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the collaboration is not helpful for knowledge creation socialisation.

## **Hypothesis 2: Trust**

After determination of the collaboration for knowledge creation socialisation, the study proposes to evaluate the trust dimension of knowledge creation socialisation. To test the trust for knowledge creation socialisation, the testable hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : Trust does not affect knowledge creation socialisation.*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_2$ : Trust affects knowledge creation socialisation positively.*

The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 2 implies that trust will have positive effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the effective role of trust on knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the trust does not play important role for knowledge creation socialisation.

## **Hypothesis 3: Learning**

After determination of the trust for knowledge creation socialisation, the study proposes to evaluate the learning for knowledge creation socialisation. To test the learning for knowledge creation socialisation, the testable hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : Learning does not affect knowledge creation socialisation.*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_3$ : Learning affects knowledge creation socialisation positively.*

The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 3 implies that learning will have positive effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the effective role of learning on knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the learning does not play important role for knowledge creation socialisation.

## **Hypothesis 4: Centralisation**

After determination of the learning for knowledge creation socialisation, the study proposes to evaluate the centralisation for knowledge creation socialisation. To test the centralisation for knowledge creation socialisation, the testable hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : Centralisation does not affect knowledge creation socialisation..*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_4$ : Centralisation affects knowledge creation socialisation negatively.*

The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 4 implies that centralisation will have negative effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the negative effect of centralisation for knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand, if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the centralisation does not play important role for knowledge creation socialisation.

## **Hypothesis 5: Formalisation**

After determination of the centralisation for knowledge creation socialisation, the study proposes to evaluate the formalisation for knowledge creation socialisation. To test the formalisation for knowledge creation, the testable hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : Formalisation does not affect knowledge creation socialisation.*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_5$ : Formalisation affects knowledge creation socialisation negatively.*



The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 5 implies that formalisation will have negative effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the negative effect of formalisation for knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand, if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the formalisation does not play important role for knowledge creation socialisation.

### Hypothesis 6: IT Support

After determination of the formalisation for knowledge creation socialisation, the study proposes to evaluate the IT support for knowledge creation socialisation. To test the IT support for knowledge creation socialisation, the testable hypotheses have been formulated:

*Null hypothesis,  $H_0$ : IT support does not affect knowledge creation socialisation.*

*Alternative hypothesis,  $H_a$ : IT support affects knowledge creation socialisation positively.*

The acceptance of alternative hypothesis associated with hypothesis 6 implies that IT support will have positive effect on the knowledge creation socialisation and it points to the effective role of IT support for knowledge creation socialisation. On the other hand, if the tests reject the alternative hypotheses and it may suggest that the IT support does not play important role for knowledge creation socialisation.

## 4.2 Regression Equation Model between KCS and KMEs

Regression equation between the knowledge creation socialisation and knowledge management enablers as follows:

$$KCS = \alpha + \beta_1 COL + \beta_2 TRU + \beta_3 LEA + \beta_4 CEN + \beta_5 FOR + \beta_6 ITS + E$$

Where,

KCS = knowledge creation socialization

$\alpha$  = constant number

$\beta_1$  = change in knowledge creation socialization associated with unit change in collaboration

$\beta_2$  = change in knowledge creation socialization associated with unit change in trust

$\beta_3$  = change in knowledge creation socialization associated with unit change in learning

$\beta_4$  = change in knowledge creation socialization associated with unit change in centralisation

$\beta_5$  = change in knowledge creation socialisation associated with unit change in formalisation

$\beta_6$  = change in knowledge creation socialisation associated with unit change in information technology

COL = collaboration

TRU = trust

LEA = learning

CEN = centralisation

FOR = formalisation

ITS = information technology

E = prediction error (residual)



Table Estimated Relationship between KCS and Fundamental Variables

The results are based on pooled cross-sectional data of 97 enterprises with 382 observations by using linear regression model. The model is,  $KCS = \alpha + \beta_1 COL + \beta_2 TRU + \beta_3 LEA + \beta_4 CEN + \beta_5 FOR + \beta_6 ITS + E$ . Where, KCS, COL, TRU, LEA, CEN, FOR and ITS are knowledge creation socialisation, collaboration, trust, learning, centralisation, formalisation and information technology respectively. Results for various subsets of independent variables are presented as well.

Models	Intercept	Regression Coefficients of						R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	DW
		COL	TRU	LEA	CEN	FOR	ITS				
1	2.186 (000)*	0.560 (000)*						0.366	0.364	219.238 (000)*	1.870
2	2.791 (000)*		0.447 (000)*					0.251	0.249	127.497 (000)*	1.771
3	2.329 (000)*			0.572 (000)*				0.410	0.409	264.599 (000)*	1.844
4	4.970 (000)*				0.030 (0.344)			0.002	000	0.896 (0.344)	1.490
5	5.161 (000)*					-0.025 (0.446)		0.002	-0.001	0.581 (0.446)	1.508
6	2.557 (000)*						0.515 (000)*	0.365	0.363	218.228 (000)*	1.667
7	1.626 (000)*	0.243 (000)*	0.080 (0.095)	0.372 (000)*				0.471	0.467	112.148 (000)*	1.889
8	5.073 (000)*				0.081 (0.056)	-0.080 (0.067)		0.011	0.006	2.133 (0.120)	1.507
9	1.319 (000)*	0.128 (0.016)**	0.064 (0.142)	0.321 (000)*	0.001 (0.960)	-0.060 (0.041)**	0.292 (000)*	0.561	0.554	79.846 (000)*	1.897

Source : Questionnaire survey, 2015

Notes :

- (1) Figures in parentheses are p-values.
- (2) \* and \*\* denote that the results are significant at 1 percent and 5 percent level of significance respectively.

The regression results of knowledge creation socialisation on collaboration, trust, learning, centralisation, formalisation, and information technology are presented in Models 1 to 6 include various combinations of the fundamental variables. Model 7 includes various combinations of fundamental cultural variables. Model 8 has various combinations of fundamental structural variables and model 9 includes all the six fundamental variables simultaneously.

The knowledge creation socialisation is positively influenced by collaboration, trust, learning and information technology, and not significantly influenced by centralisation and formalisation. The overall results show the positive relationship of knowledge creation socialisation with collaboration, trust, learning and information technology, and not with centralisation and formalisation.

## 5. Conclusion

The study has concluded that the key knowledge management enablers such as collaboration, trust, learning, and information technology do influence to the knowledge creation socialisation positively. This result is similar to Choi (2002), Lee and Choi (2000), Berraies et al. (2014) and Migdadi (2005) from the collaboration viewpoint. This result is similar to Choi (2002), Berraies et al. (2014), and Lee and Choi (2000), which found that trust is a significant predictor of socialisation. The result is consistent with Choi (2002), Lee and Choi (2000), Berraies et al. (2014) and Migdadi (2005) from the learning viewpoint. Enabler such as structure is not significantly related to the knowledge creation socialisation. The result is consistent with Migdadi (2005) from the centralisation viewpoint. Choi (2002) also found that the formalisation has no effect on the knowledge creation socialisation. Similarly, Choi (2002) also found that the formalisation has no effect on the knowledge creation socialisation.

In addition, the study results have revealed the culture as the most vital enabler of knowledge creation socialisation. Thus, building and supporting a culture which rewards and encourages employees for seeking, sharing, formalising and creating knowledge attributes will most probably lead to the successful capture, absorb, creation and implementation of knowledge management.

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