
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN GREEK TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

In the modern digital age what is particularly important is the management of information. For this reason, a particular issue is how organizations have access to information and knowledge in general. This paper is considering the case of knowledge management in relation to tourism. It should be mentioned that the study shows that knowledge management can be an approach that aims to properly manage the crisis and gain a competitive advantage (Mantas, 2016). Of course, what it needs to be done is to have a specialization in relation to the management of knowledge in terms of the Greek tourism. For this reason, this study conducts an investigation of the feasibility studies for the use of knowledge in tourism management. Then it appears, for any tourism business it is useful to have and the appropriate management of data and information available in order to then be useable tourist information as well as to provide a significant competitive advantage for the tourism business (Gretzel, 2011). It should be noted the lack of relevant research in Greece, so it would be very useful to future empirical research to the point.

Keywords: Knowledge Management 1, Tourism 2, Greece 3, Tourism business 4

JEL Classification: L83, L84, M31

1 INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology has contributed in several stages of the tourism industry transformation. First, starting with computerization of reservation system of tourism offers (GDS). A chain appeared around these systems, linking vertically suppliers to tourists through the intermediary players. Then, Internet and related technologies radically affect the sector's economy by overturning this vertical organization. Change appeared through direct sales strategies of suppliers' websites. However, direct exchange between tourists and suppliers was only the beginning of a new era. ICT has also given the opportunity to many new players to introduce themselves into tourism market. From now on, travel agencies and tour operators are not the only ones able to connect supply with demand. Internet has also contributed in changing the tourist's demands and activities. Tourism is no longer limited to a mass product (Dimitriou, 2005). The tourist can inform himself and even get involved in the organisation of his travel experience. Hence, an important challenge is how to acquire the necessary data but also from the side of the tourist organizations to be able to handle all this data. Hence, the aim of this paper is to

examine usage of Knowledge Management from Greek tourist organizations, which is a research where there is a complete lack of similar research.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review which will examine the value of information and data management for a tourist company. Hence the methodology of this paper relies on the use of already made researches and papers; this is a literature review. The source of papers has being from various databases such as science direct and ESCBO. The paper will introduce the concept of knowledge management, while it will discuss how knowledge management is being used on the tourist sector. The value of this paper is that it will connect the concept of Knowledge Management with the concept of tourism and how it is applied on the tourist sector.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

3.1 TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

In the management literature, a passionate debate about what knowledge is and what forms or types of it are available can be identified. One can distinguish the positivist and constructivist standpoints in this debate (Vera and Crossan, 2003). Chiva and Alegre (2005) also identify a similar classification of approaches to knowledge: the perceptive or cognitive approach, and the constructionist or social approach. Another distinction made in the literature is between the perspective that emphasizes knowledge as something people have or possess and the one that regards knowledge as something socially constructed and thus particular emphasis is place on the process (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). In fact, the positivist, cognitive and knowledge as a possession approaches are related, and so do the constructionist, social and knowledge as a process approaches. For one school of thought, reality is objective and can be comprehended accurately, while for the other all meanings are context specific. In this section, we will do the same as Chiva and Alegre (2005) and use the “cognitive-possession” and “social-process” labels to discuss about these two major schools of thought in the organizational knowledge literature. However, it should be noted that it is not always clear whether a particular author is situated in the one or the other school, as can be seen below. According to Spender (1996) and Chiva and Alegre (2005), followers of pure cognitive-possession school believe that knowledge is justified true belief. They all share

the idea of knowledge as perceptive and as a commodity. Thus, emphasis is placed on the possession of knowledge. Followers of this view regard the cognitive system as a machine to process information. Knowledge is defined as a collection of representations of the world that is made up of a number of objects and events. It is the result of a systematic analysis of our cognitive system of a knowable external reality. Also, it exists prior to and independently from the knowing subject, who creates no knowledge in the act of appropriation. It is possible to codify, store and transmit knowledge between people. This school posits that knowledge is universal and, hence, two cognitive systems should come up with the same representation of the same objects or situations. Learning, in this perspective, is the improvement of representations.

However, researchers in this school have moved beyond positivist notions of knowledge and adopt a more pluralist point of view. They have recognized that knowledge may be difficult to codify and communicate, that it may be deeply rooted in action and involvement in a specific context. Some have proposed that organizations have different types of knowledge, and that identifying and examining these will lead to more effective means for generating, sharing, and managing knowledge in organizations (Orlikowski, 1996). As a result, classifications of knowledge have been developed and then used to examine the various strategies and techniques, through which different types of knowledge are created, codified, converted, transferred, and exchanged. Such researches are grouped under an approach that is often referred to as "taxonomic" (Tsoukas, 1996). A well-known example in this case is the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge put forward by Nonaka (1994) based on the work of Polanyi. Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language. Tacit knowledge has a personal quality, which makes it hard to formalize and communicate. Explicit knowledge can be converted to tacit knowledge and vice versa. Although Nonaka argues that tacit knowledge has a cognitive element centering on mental models, he does recognize its technical element, which is rooted in specific contexts. Grant (1996) can also be put in this group with their distinctions of knowing-how versus knowingabout and routines versus skills, respectively.

Similarly, Alavi and Leider (2001) conclude from their review of the literature that knowledge can also be referred to as declarative (know-about or knowledge by acquaintance), procedure (know-how), causal (know-why), conditional (know-when), and relational (know-with). Additional knowledge taxonomies such as individual versus social (Alavi and Leider, 2001), local versus universal, codified versus uncoded, canonical versus non canonical, know-how versus know-what (Tsoukas, 1996), routines versus experiences (Orlikowski, 1996) have also been elaborated.

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) find that there exists a related perspective to the cognitive-possession one: the connectionist. This perspective shares with the cognitive-possession one the view that knowledge, in other words the representations of the environment, arises as a result of information processing.

However, the process of representing is different in that it believes knowledge to be generated through networks and relationships, and not by individuals. From this perspective, organizations are networks made up of relationships and managed by communication. Knowledge, thus, is found in the connections that exist between the organization and its people. A concern of researchers in this school is the distinction between individual and organizational knowledge. Being connectionists, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) state that there exists individual knowledge, group knowledge, organizational knowledge, and network knowledge. Individual knowledge belongs only to the individuals. Group knowledge is created by the teaching of individual knowledge through frequent interaction within small groups. Cross-group interactions, in turn, help create organizational knowledge. Network knowledge is created when individuals of the organization establish interactions with external actors such as suppliers or buyers. In the cognitive-possession school, there have been several different views about the relationship between individual and organizational knowledge. The first approach defines organizational knowledge as individual knowledge shared by all members of an organization (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). This approach can be seen in Grant's (1996) view of knowledge (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). He argues that the creation of knowledge is individual and thus companies should aim at applying knowledge to the production of goods and services rather than creating and acquiring knowledge. The second approach, put forward by Nonaka (1994), examines the interaction between individual and organizational knowledge. His idea is that organizational knowledge is created through continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge. In the study of knowledge, although the cognitive-possession school is the predominant one, it has been increasingly challenged and complemented by the social-process school (Vera and Crossan, 2003), shifting the notion of knowledge as a commodity that individuals or organizations may acquire, to the study of knowledge as socially constructed and held collectively in organizations. This school proposes the idea that reality is socially constructed or conceived and is based on social interactions and discursive behaviours (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

According to Heaton and Taylor (2012), it makes an assumption that, given the limitations of our physiological constitution as living beings, the only kind of reality we can consciously know is constituted by the kind of distinctions we make in language. When people live in different operational contexts, they perceive different realities. What we know as humans, therefore, is not a universe, but a "multiverse" of modes of knowledge creation. This approach understands

knowledge as not as a representation, but a constructing or creating acts, in other words, as a process. It is something which we do, not something that we possess (Chiva and Alegre, 2005). The notions of practice and communities of practice are very important in this school of thought. The basic argument inherent in many views in this school of thought is that knowledge is embedded in practice and is readily generated when people work together in the communities of practice. A community of practice is “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time” (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

A community of practice can also be viewed as an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities. The participants are united in both action and in the meaning that that action has, both for themselves and for the larger collective (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The practice of a community of practice is the specific knowledge that the community members develop, share and maintain. It can contain ideas, information, documents, or styles that community members share (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). It is “the way in which work gets done and knowledge is created” (Brown and Duguid, 2001), or “the coordinated activities of individuals and groups in doing their “real work” as it is informed by a particular organizational or group context” (Cook and Brown, 1999). Practice is not behavior or action. Doing of any sort is behaviour, while action is behaviour imbued with meaning. Practice is action informed by meaning drawn from a particular context (Cook and Brown, 1999).

3.2 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

Knowledge can be seen from the cognitive-possession and the social-process views. As different views of knowledge lead to different perceptions of knowledge management (Alavi and Leider, 2001), two contrasting schools to knowledge management have developed accordingly. They are often considered as the first and the second generations of knowledge management (McElroy, 2000), reflecting the dominance of the cognitive-possession school in the past and the increasingly influence of the social-process school in the more recent years. The distinction has been named differently in the literature, such as “cognitive” and “community” models , personal knowledge and organizational knowledge orientations , information technology and human approaches , and content and relational perspectives (Sanchez, 2005). These authors use different terms but they essentially talk about a same thing. This research uses the terms cognitive and social to distinguish the two schools.

The cognitive school believes in the cognitive-possession view of knowledge, which argues that valuable knowledge is located inside people's head and can be identified, captured, and processed via the use of information technology tools and then applied in new contexts (Bresnen et. al., 2003). The definitions of knowledge management put forward by this perspective in the literature often have a strong prescriptive element. Knowledge management is understood as "managed learning" and is assumed to have a positive impact on performance (Vera and Crossan, 2003). For example, it is defined as "the explicit control and management of knowledge within an organization aimed at achieving the company's objectives", "the formal management of knowledge for facilitating creation, access, and reuse of knowledge, typically using advanced technology", "the process of creating, capturing, and using knowledge to enhance organizational performance", or "the ability of organizations to manage, store, value, and distribute knowledge" (Vera and Crossan, 2003). The goal of knowledge management is to capture, codify and distribute organizational knowledge via the application of information and communication technologies so that it can be shared by all employees. It focuses on knowledge use, not knowledge creation. The target of all investments in first generation of knowledge management is the individual workers and the extent to which he or she has access to, and can leverage information needed to get the job done (McElroy, 2000). Alavi and Leider (2001) find that three most common applications of IT to knowledge management consist of the coding and sharing of best practices, the creation of corporate knowledge directories, and the creation of knowledge network that focuses on bringing individuals distributed across time and space together so that knowledge is shared. The most fundamental advantage claimed by this approach is that once an individual's knowledge is articulated in an explicit form, information system can be used to disseminate that knowledge, thereby freeing an organization from the limitations of time and space. Moreover, codified knowledge is easier to leverage. It is also visible and can be discussed, debated, tested further, and improved, thereby stimulating organizational learning processes. The codification of knowledge also minimizes the risk of losing expertise due to employee turnover (Sanchez, 2005). With the idea of knowledge as perceptible and as a commodity, which can be codified, stored, and easily transmitted, learning is separated from knowledge and thus, can be dealt with separately (Chiva and Alegre, 2005).

However, the knowledge management literature tends to see knowledge as a resource, a raw material to be leveraged, processed and utilized for the benefit of the organization. For the first time, it is claimed that knowledge has to be managed as a thing itself. However, the cognitive school has been vastly criticized. Debates have questioned the emphasis on explicit knowledge and the codification of knowledge through technology (Bresnen et. al., 2003). Critiques have been being mounted of the cognitive approach precisely on the grounds that it ignores the social architecture of knowledge exchange within organizations (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003) and

completely side-steps the question of how knowledge is created, disseminated, renewed and applied (Cavaleri, 2004). The critiques have led to the emergence of the social school, which believes in the social-process view of knowledge. Understanding how knowledge is created, how it is shared, and diffused throughout an organization – and not just how to codify and record it in artificial form, or map it into business process – lies at the very heart of the social school (McElroy, 2000). It is also recognized that the creation, diffusion and application of knowledge is situated and heavily influenced by the context of practice. In this context, developing communities of practice has been viewed as a popular approach for knowledge management because they favor situated and context-dependent learning and knowledge creation (Wenger, 2004).

Knowledge management objectives in this school emphasize and promote social networks and the cultivation of trust, norms and shared values amongst employees that constitute “communities of practices” (Bresnen et. al., 2003). A well-known article is that of Wenger and Snyder (2000), in which effective knowledge management is characterized as the “cultivation” of communities of practice within the organization. This idea has been frequently cited in the literature and widely adopted in the business world (Ardichvili et. al., 2003). Moreover, in an era of globalization and worldwide communication networks, it is claimed that communities of practice with virtual interactions have emerged (Hildreth, 2003). Virtual communities of practice are described as containing any community of practice that cannot rely on face-to-face meetings and interactions as its primary means for connecting members. Typically, virtual communities of practice cross multiple types of boundaries, linking people across time zones, countries, and organizations (Wenger et. al., 2002). It is stated that virtual communities of practice are becoming a knowledge management approach of choice for an increasing number of multinational corporations, including many well-known industry leaders such as Hewlett Packard, British Petroleum, IBM, and Shell (Ardichvili et al., 2003).

The practice perspective sheds more light on how to study the actual doing of the knowledge managers. First, for practice theory, people count and can be taken as a research phenomenon. Second, according to this perspective, one may take the knowledge managers as the creative agents being at the focal point to examine how they amend and reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw. This perspective enables the researcher to look closely at how the knowledge managers move back and forth between their understanding of knowledge management landscape and their performing of knowledge management tasks. The perspective offers to investigate the doing of the knowledge managers in their job as situated practices in a particular context. Moreover, studying the knowledge managers from a practice perspective is also in line with the current trend in the knowledge management literature. At this stage, the research

direction can be reformulated as the situated practices of the knowledge managers in their specific organizational context.

3.3 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN TOYRISM

In modern societies it is increasingly recognized in recent years that the sustainable competitive advantage of a state in the global market depends on its ability to exploit the knowledge, as opposed to more traditional societies. This resulted in the dissemination and commercialization of research, up to a point, which has become a key issue for governments initially and business secondly. These are the most recent developments are indicating the importance of knowledge as the key competitive tool for private businesses. Tourism has being developed as one of the most important areas in the world, should be directly adapted to new data. Thus, it is assumed that if the modern enterprises wishing to remain competitive in this era of change, adopting Knowledge Management practices is urgently required to enable them to exploit the tourist market data and their intellectual capital. With the adoption of Knowledge Management public and private businesses can become more effective, profitable, competitive and efficient resulting work smartest on the market and create the same knowledge (Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008) .

The result of the commercialization of knowledge that has an organization is the creation of tourist products and services that meet the needs and requirements of tourists and exploitation of business opportunities that arise. Okumus et al. (2014) have conceived the idea of the Chain of Knowledge Value (value chain knowledge). The concept of Knowledge Value Chain refers to the main stages of Knowledge Management, from its creation to the commercialization and distribution of knowledge for the benefit of tourist companies. An example can be the views or perceptions that tourists have about a hotel or some internal knowledge such as how to prepare dinner or how the bar can operate in an efficient manner.

The importance of the information and communication technology and particularly the Internet has played an important role in the tourism industry and has grown considerably recent year. The tourist industry is an industry which relies on information in which the Internet plays a very important role where information and data are playing an important role on how internet tactics are set up for the hotels.

The outcome is that knowledge is defined as the most important form of content, which in principle has the form of data, then information is everywhere and finally evolves into knowledge. For this reason, the information collected from tourist, has even greater value when converted into knowledge. The tourist agencies, who manage to exploit the information and to transform knowledge into effective are they there, shall be winners. The competitiveness of companies operating in these areas dependent tail to a very large extent on how effectively they acquire, maintain, exchange and access to knowledge and whether they can convey the appropriate information to the right person and the right time (Gronau, 2012).

Knowledge Management is addressed to the company's effort to adapt to survive and be competitive in a constant changing environment. In the tourism sector, this environmental change is barely noticeable, so in the supply chain, and the constant change in consumer behavior. The destinations are constantly adapted to different situations with the creation and use knowledge that responds to different conditions, as was done for post 11/9 environment where appropriate measures were taken for the safety and Civil Protection, which relied on the smooth flow of data between the tourist companies (Hallin and Marnburg, 2008).

Despite the extensive literature of the tourist industry, there are few reports on the relationship between Knowledge Management and Tourism. However reported some models which are based either on knowledge stocks, or cross Flow letters. The knowledge stocks in an organism or an destination to both the empirical and the recorded knowledge (Law and Jogaratnam, 2005).

An example of knowledge mapping for tourist companies. In practice, the mapping of knowledge provides a design that visualizes the knowledge so it can easily be tested, improved and be exchanged with other users who are not knowledgeable. The database may include takes a list of skills, knowledge, experience, skills and information communication society. Some of the knowledge can be stored in a database along with data associated with tourists. The knowledge map can also be used has been as an interactive tool which unites different concepts of the world. Mapping knowledge helps in easy identification of key sources and restrictions on the flow of knowledge and creation. If the map makes it easier finding knowledge, reuse of knowledge is favored. This has as resulting higher costs for inventing knowledge and reduce search time and recovery. These important skills are more visible on the map and the exchange knowledge becomes easier and more widely. This results so tha the tourist company's staff to find the necessary knowledge to be reduced, while on the other the customer response, making the problem solving-decision significantly improved with the providing of access importance in the applicable knowledge (Okumus et al, 2014) .

From the map, users can discover important practices which take country learning. The knowledge map may be used as a baseline for measure progress in the projects of Knowledge Management, as well as storage and evaluation of knowledge available to the company. There are several criteria that must be borne in mind when preparing a map knowledge. Such criteria are for example the determination of knowledge as to its origin as well as the structure and use of knowledge. More specifically, A knowledge map should take into account the location, possession, timing, access rights, storage methods and usage statistics. When designing a knowledge map should be taken of the various publications are the relationships that exist between them. To create a map requires extensive research and communication with the relevant stakeholders of the company ding transport and exchange processes and organizational culture Real knowledge is not a static structure but is dynamic as it was caused shall be in pieces of knowledge and information which depends on various conditions. The mapping process should be a continuous process and It will be upgraded to be useful (Law and Jogaratnam, 2005).

Another example is the use of knowledge management in the tourist research. As a matter of fact, the tourist companies are in a need of tracing in an easy and fast way necessary data so to turn it into knowledge. Although the tourist research has shown tremendous progress in recent years, most tourism businesses find it difficult to exploit the opportunities offered in the industry. This is also due the fact that the tourism industry, especially in Greece, dominated by SMEs, which do not participate in the global research effort. As a result, the industry, the management knowledge

ing is not a very popular approach. As is growing and more the tourism sector, its importance is increasingly recognized member as a result of spending more money on research on tourism. Unlike the tourism industry, the successful adoption of knowledge management from companies in other industries, such as logistics, combined with the informational technologies, helped to move with haste to success and growth (Shaw and Williams, 2009)

4 DISCUSSION

Knowledge management has been widely accepted as being a managerial approach which allows the tourist companies to utilize the data and information which have on their disposal. A research made from Mantas (2016) indicated that Greek companies tend to avoid using such advanced managerial methods, though whenever those have been used they have helped the firms to overcome the negative impact of a crisis. Dimitriou (2015) has mentioned that many

Greek tourist companies are using state of the art technologies and knowledge management systems but still they have not created an integrated Knowledge Management strategy and this is their weak point, along with the lack of similar research.

The existence of knowledge management related systems means that companies in the tourist sector know how to use them but they are not aware that they have proceed with a knowledge management strategy. It is well accepted that information and its proper usage can lead into a competitive advantage. However, it is essential for the tourist sector in Greece to further invest into the production of applications and software which will help the firms to acquire this information and to convert it into valuable knowledge. The previous chapter provided two examples (knowledge mapping and knowledge research systems) that will enable a tourist company to enhance its knowledge management strategy. For this reason it is important for the tourist organizations to establish KM practioners. The KMers are like the practitioners, who draw on “a complex bundle of practices involving social, material and embodied ways of doing that are interrelated and not always articulated or conscious to them” (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009), to perform their praxis. For example, the social practices are drawn on in the case of Alex, as he is obliged to follow the existing norms of knowledge management. Similarly, Carol makes a bet in carrying out her communication campaign, because the top management is neither for nor against the idea. The material practices clearly influence Helen. The IT issues make her always include a brief instruction on how to obtain a particular knowledge document from the sharing database when she informs people of its arrival. The embodied practices, which are the “repository of background coping skills upon which actors unconsciously draw as part of their everyday being within the world” (Chia, 2004), are seen in the way the KMers seek help from the strategic helpers through constant follow-up.

5 CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, knowledge management is an important managerial concept. The paper has identified that there is a gap in the literature and research regarding the use of Knowledge Management in the Greek Tourist sector but also in the tourist sector overall. Despite of the fact that most of the tourist companies are already using knowledge-management based systems, such as to utilize the information retried from internet sites, the missing point is having an integrated knowledge management strategy but also to have KM managers. For this reason, it is suggested

that a future research must be a primary research which will investigate the views and perceptions of the tourist industry's professionals regarding their views on knowledge management but also to identify some best practices from their experiences. This will help the authors to understand the current practices and to develop some new ones.

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