Knowledge sharing, team culture, and service innovation in the hospitality sector: the case of South Africa

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Abstract

A questionnaire survey of 170 employees in three international hotels, 5 star graded, located in Sandton City, Johannesburg, sought to explore the current state of knowledge sharing, team culture, and service innovation performance in the South African hospitality sector. This will help evaluate if these are enabled towards organizational competitiveness. This study focussed attention on 'team culture' as a moderating factor between knowledge sharing (KS) and service innovation performance (SIP). Good news for the South Africa's hospitality sector is that respondents agree mostly positively to KS, team culture and SIP explanatory items; however, team culture (being a moderator for KS and SIP) is not very strong as depicted by the lower mean scores of team culture explanatory items compared to the mean scores of KS and SIP explanatory items. Organisational culture affects employees' knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours, impacting on SIP. This study therefore posits that to enhance SIP in the South Africa's hospitality sector, strong team culture has to be supported to encourage KS among team members and between superiors and subordinates.

Key words: Team culture, knowledge sharing, service innovation, hospitality sector, South Africa
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Source: http://www.mitre.org/about/culture-of-knowledge-sharing

Introduction

Although there is an increase in the recognition of the importance of team culture, knowledge sharing and service innovation in the South Africa's hospitality sector, there is still limited research focusing on these critical service performance areas. When resources (tangible, intangible and human) are not well combined and coordinated towards developing dynamic capabilities, it will be difficult for an organisation to derive a competitive advantage in the industry (Grant, 2005). Dynamic capability development, as regards service innovation for example, in a turbulent hospitality sector environment will require an organisation to be able to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to rapidly address changing environments (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997); hence the importance of team culture and knowledge sharing in developing these capabilities. This paper therefore explores variables related to knowledge sharing, team culture and service innovation in South Africa's hospitality sector, to evaluate if they are enabled towards organizational competitiveness. Research results will yield management implications for hospitality sector managers.

Over the years, the concept of knowledge management has been used broadly to study the benefits it has on organisational performance and competitive advantage (Finnegan & Willcocks, 2006; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Mohamed, Stankosky, & Murray, 2004). Knowledge management is understood as the practice of capturing and developing individual and collective knowledge within an organisation for the purpose of using it to promote innovation through the transfer of knowledge and continuous learning (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). Studies such as that of Scott and Laws (2006) posited that organisations need to engage in knowledge management as a result of continuous changing business conditions while avoiding becoming victims of intense competition. Other research (such as Pizam, 2007; Lopez Fernandez, Serrano-Bedia & Gómez-López, 2011) affirmed that organisations undertake knowledge management practices as a result of rapid changes and globalisation process. Consequently, there is ample evidence demonstrating the relevance of knowledge sharing to innovation which is seen as a driver of marketplace competitiveness (e.g. López-Fernández et al. 2011).

These researchers are not alone with their findings. A plethora of other studies (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Hu, Horng & Sun, 2009; Hu, Ou, Chiou & Lin, 2012; Lin, 2007; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001; Zheng, Yang & McLean, 2010) emphasised that knowledge should not only be managed but should be shared in order to innovate and meet the growing needs of customers. Advances in service innovation research (e.g. Hallin and Marnburg, 2008) which brought about globalisation processes, as a result, calls for knowledge transfer, knowledge re-use and production of knowledge. The aforementioned studies commented on the impact of knowledge sharing and team culture on service innovation performance generally and in the hospitality sector specifically. The literature is almost uniformly suggesting that organisations acquire new market knowledge, administer and exploit their knowledge stock across organisational entities to generate innovations. In a nutshell, knowledge management and knowledge sharing have been widely considered as an important response to change.

This study's research questions are therefore:

- What is the current state of knowledge sharing, team culture, and service innovation performance in the South African hospitality sector? and

- Which attributes of knowledge sharing, team culture and service innovation performance should be more developed to enhance South Africa's hospitality sector competitiveness?

Literature review

Results from previous studies generated three theories that inform this research as they apply to the constructs of knowledge sharing, team culture, and service performance regarding work in hospitality organisations. These are a) Learning Organisation Theory, b) Social Exchange Theory, and c) Intellectual Capital Theory.

Learning Organisation Theory
The perspective underpinning this theory lies into how learning contributes to increased productivity, market share and profits for organisations (Roper and Pettit, 2002). This theory is relevant in the study of knowledge sharing because the theory sees organisations as embedded in competitive environments and therefore change is necessary. Likewise, when hospitality organisations are held closely, they may be able to survive as long as they make subtle organisational changes (Ng & Keasey, 2010) that improve its competitiveness while retaining control.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)
Organisational theorists have drawn upon social exchange theory to examine the relationship between a supervisor (leader) and a subordinate (member) and among other members in the workplace. This study draws on team member exchange (TMX) and team culture to explain the work-team socialisation process and the effect these have on knowledge sharing and service innovation performance in the hospitality sector, hotels in particular. Hu et al. (2012) describe TMX quality as a way to assess the reciprocity between an employee and his or her peers, thus measuring how much an individual is willing to assist other team members, share ideas with them and provide feedback to them. Findings by

Cropanzano and Michell (2005) confirmed that individuals with a strong exchange orientation are more likely to return a good deed than those with a low exchange orientation. Other research on SET (e.g. Bouncken, 2002) provided evidence that the social relationship improves better cognitive understanding, expectations and mutual understanding permitting functional relationships for future tasks. Cropanzano and Michell (2005) support this view in suggesting that SET principles should be reacquainted into the management science. This research support the view that many important components of SET have been overlooked in knowledge management research, and therefore aim to shed light on organisational phenomena as in the case of Cropanzano and Michell (2005).

Intellectual Capital Theory
This study also draws on intellectual capital theory (Baptiste, 2001; Cervone, Shadel & Jencius, 2001; Lin, 1999) oriented toward human, in this case hospitality work teams. The theory suggests that human resources must be carefully managed if companies want to maintain a competitive advantage over the complex and diversifying hospitality sector. Also, the role of organisational management, culture and climate in promoting knowledge sharing for innovation cannot be overemphasized.

Uniting these three aforementioned theories with the relevant organisational constructs provide better understanding of how organisational learning for organisational change may shape the management of work teams to promote knowledge sharing and innovation.

Knowledge sharing behaviour
Knowledge sharing (KS) can be defined in several ways. Hu et al (2012: 785) conceptualised KS as "activities involving transferring or disseminating knowledge from one person, group, or organisation to another", while studies such as Kim and Lee (2013: 326) describe it as "the process whereby individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new

knowledge". The operational definition adapted in this study is the one proposed by Lin (2007:315) who defined KS as a social interaction culture, involving the exchange of employee knowledge, experiences and skills through the whole department or organisation. This definition according to Lin (2007) implies that employees share their work-related experience, expertise, know-how and contextual information with their colleagues. Nonaka, Krogh and Voelpel, (2006) argued that sharing of knowledge, whether in the form of information reports, manuals or files, allow for creation of new ideas and knowledge. The above statement further confirms the broad accepted belief that knowledge sharing is one of the sources of service innovation. Sharif, Zakaria, Ching and Fung (2005), Gupta and Govindarajan (2000), and Szalanski (1996) advanced the argument that KS plays a momentous role in knowledge management and help companies to retain their competitive advantage. Other studies (Matthing, Sanden & Edvardsson, 2004; Johannesson, Oldisen & Olsei, 1999) demonstrated the importance of KS and commented on the benefits it has in supporting service innovation performance in organisations.

These studies suggested that organisations must look inward and develop new products, processes and services constantly and provide customers with high functionality and preference. However, it should not be ignored that research tells us that employees will likely share their knowledge based on a number of behaviours such as learning goal orientation or performance goal orientation (Kim & Lee, 2013). This signifies that, KS does not happen automatically but certain important factors must not be disregarded. As an example, Kim and Lee (2013) argued that knowledge collecting and knowledge bringing involves significant time and effort, therefore, employees must be motivated to make such inputs. Lin (2007) agreed that KS depends on individual characteristics, including experience, values, motivation and

beliefs. This author (Lin, 2007) concluded that individual motivators may enable employee willingness to share knowledge. Moreover, Kim and Lee (2013) found that learning goal orientation positively influences KS behaviour whereas performance goal orientation influences it negatively.

Accordingly, employees who are learning goal orientated will likely share their knowledge and expertise with fellow employees than those who are performance goal oriented. It is argued that performance goal oriented individuals may decide to keep their knowledge and skills simply because they want to outperform their fellow employees. In consistence with this, Chen and Cheng (2012) contend that employees refuse to share knowledge because they worry that doing so may reduce their opportunities for promotion or because doing so require uncompensated time and energy.

On the contrary, findings by Chen and Cheng (2012) indicated that the most important factor that drives KS is the employees' attitude towards it. The same study found that employees' knowledge-sharing attitudes improve when they realise that KS contributes to the hotel's successful operations. Clearly, KS is an important management tool that can be used to bring new service innovations for hospitality organisations. However, sharing such knowledge and how it is shared crucially depends on a number of individual attitudes and organisational variables.

These factors include among others, organisational culture, cultural barriers, management support, trust (Hu et al., 2012; Kim & Lee, 2013; Lin, 2007; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001), team culture and social networks (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Hu et al., 2012; Hu, et al., 2009; Scott & Laws, 2006). This study focussed attention on 'team culture' as a moderating factor between KS and service innovation. As prompted by previous research, understanding team

culture seems meaningful in promoting KS among organisations and individuals.

Team culture

Culture can be defined as "shared values, beliefs and practices of the people in the organisation" (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001: 77). According to McDermott and O'Dell (2001) culture exist on a deeper level, embedded in the way people act, what they expect of each other and how they make sense of each other's actions. This implies that culture is rooted in the organisation's core values and assumptions reflecting the visible aspects of the organisation, like its mission. Team culture may be defined in terms of an "emergent and simplified set of rules, norms, expectations and roles that team members share and enact" (Hu et al., 2009:42), while organisation culture refers to shared assumptions, values and norms (Zheng et al. 2010). These studies propose that a strong team culture exist on the basis that the rules, norms, expectations and roles are shared by the members. In the same way, it is understood that organisational culture is a source of sustained competitive advantage and key factor to organisational effectiveness (Barney, 1991).

Chen and Cheng (2012) established that 'trial and innovation' and 'fairness' are the two constructs that best explain organisational culture. Zheng et al. (2010) argued that organisational culture does not directly lend itself influence on organisational effectiveness; rather it exerts its influence through shaping the behaviour of organisational members. Zheng et al's (2010) study suggested that the influence of organisational culture on organisational effectiveness depending on how well knowledge is managed is largely associated with how well cultural values are transformed into value to organisation. This is probably why Vila, Enz & Costa (2012) argued that changing an organisation's culture is difficult, but innovation should be a part of this culture. Zheng et al. (2010) stated that knowledge management can influence organisational effectiveness and innovation when it is aligned with organisational culture, structure and strategy. Study by Chen and Cheng (2012) confirmed that organisational culture affects employees' knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours. It is believed that self-worth is one of the constructs mostly influencing knowledge-sharing attitude, suggesting that employees' knowledge-sharing attitudes improve when there is a realisation that it contributes to the organisation's successful operation.

As a reciprocal principle, KS does not seem possible according to Renzl (2008) if there is no quality relationship among team members. This view further aligns to some social exchange process that will facilitate the sharing of knowledge among team members. This is because KS will likely depend on trust (Renzl, 2008) between team members and individuals. Chen and Cheng (2012) for instance, found that the most important factor that drives knowledge sharing is the employees' attitude toward it. In encouraging employees to bring about innovative ideas, it is argued that management must deal with organisational affairs fairly and employees will develop positive knowledge-sharing attitudes (Chen & Cheng, 2012).

Equally, Chen and Huang (2007) posited that employees with higher degree of KS and innovation build more interactive relationship with other employees irrespective of position. An innovation culture has been found to be directly correlated with knowledge sharing, largely because knowledge is best managed and updated in such an environment (Chen & Cheng, 2012). Hu et al. (2012) concluded by suggesting that when a good relationship exists within a team this helps enhance cohesiveness, thereby resulting in increased willingness of team members to share their experiences at work with other members.

Service innovation

Innovation as a concept has been identified as an important factor in the success of the organisation and widely linked to KS. Within the literature (Hu et al., 2009; López-Fernández et al., 2011; Ottenbacher, 2007) attention has been drawn to demonstrate the impact of KS on service innovation as well as its impact on organisational performance. Although innovation is used to create and sustain the competitive advantage of an organization, Vila et al. (2012) argued that developing and applying new ideas that add value to a service is no easy task particularly when hotel competitors seek to duplicate any innovation they detect.

Hu et al. (2009) and López-Fernández et al. (2011) concur by stating that organisational changes, such as new corporate strategies, organisational structures, or marketing plans, appear to be the first steps in implementing innovations. According to Ottenbacher's (2007) finding, innovation can be an idea, practice, process or product that is perceived as new by an individual and that transforms a new problem-solving idea into an application. Only a few studies (such as Argote, Ingram, Levine & Moreland, 2000; Chen & Cheng, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2013; López-Fernández et al., 2011) were found in the literature which commented on the essence of service innovation in the hospitality sector.

Ottenbacher (2007) found that hospitality organisations resorted to innovation activities as a result of unstable and turbulent hospitality environment as they are constantly forced to modify and update their portfolio mix to meet the changing needs and wants of the target markets segments. This author supported the idea that innovations are critical for not only survival but also for long-term stability and profitability. Study by Hu et al. (2012) noted the positive relationship between innovation and KS in organisations. This study indicated that to enhance service innovation performance (SIP), KS should be encouraged among team members and between superiors and subordinates. Study by Lin (2007) indicated that a firm's ability to transform and exploit knowledge determines its level of organisation's innovation. Ottenbacher (2007) noted that the rate of innovation is low particularly in the hospitality sector partly because there is also a high number of hotels and restaurant concepts that fail every year. Ottenbacher added that the high failure is attributed to the limited knowledge about how to achieve success with hospitality innovation. The study conducted by Ottenbacher (2007) suggested the need for more research that is specific to service and hospitality innovation. Similarly, studies like López-Fernández et al. (2011) commented that there are a limited number of hospitality studies addressing the sector innovation. They inferred that a lack of qualified personnel to innovate in the hospitality sector is a major reason but argued that such a low number does not stop innovation. This alone, precipitated the need for intellectual capital management in the sector. In conclusion, López-Fernández et al. (2011) found that hospitality organisations do not see the lack of marketing information which informs innovation as a problem. This provides evidence that hospitality organisations are slow or reluctant to innovate through organisational learning.

The relationship between Team Culture, Knowledge Sharing and Service Innovation Performance

While it is believed that sharing knowledge is seen as a practical way to solve business problems, Chen and Cheng (2012) contend that knowledge sharing is not an automatic behavior. Studies by McDermott and O'Dell (2001) posited that in an organisation with a knowledge sharing-culture, people would share ideas and insights because they see it as natural, rather than something they are forced to do. There is also ample evidence from the international research community (Camacho & Rodriguez 2005; Lopez Fernandez et al., 2011) suggesting that

service innovation can be enhanced through sharing of knowledge among team members. Stacey (2001) confirmed that when employees share such knowledge, there is great potential of developing new ideas and service innovations that could be of value to the business. Other studies (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2013; López-Fernández, et al., 2011) supported the view that a relationship between KS, team innovation and enhancement of organisational performance exist. Correspondingly, research conducted by De Dreu and West (2001) provided evidences that team innovation result in the creation of new products and services. In the same vein, Lin (2007) found that the relationship among knowledge sharing enablers, processes and firm innovation capability may provide a clue regarding how firms can promote KS culture to sustain their innovative performance. These studies advanced the organisational argument that team members serve as an important conduit in sharing useful knowledge that results in outcomes such as service innovation performance (SIP). Within the literature, it has become clear that human networks are one key vehicle for sharing knowledge. However, it should also be noted that organisations cannot expect employees to share their ideas and insights simply because it is the right thing to do, but should appeal to something deeper like linking knowledge sharing to the core values of the organisation. This is because teams are increasingly responsible for organisation's service innovations (Hu et al., 2009). Besides, organisations must build a sharing culture; enhance networks that already exist while enabling employees with resources and legitimization.

Since team development has increasingly become important for organisation's innovative tasks which require input of specialized knowledge individuals, the value of team's organisational environment and culture that influences innovative performance (Hu et al., 2009) cannot be discounted in KS and innovation studies.

Study by Hu et al. (2009) revealed that team culture moderates the relationship between KS and SIP. The literature has demonstrated that team culture based on cooperation and organisational support will stimulate greater KS in organisations, hence better team culture also means increased SIP. Hu et al. (2009) posited that SIP leads to customer satisfaction and suggested improving KS, team culture and service innovation as managerial imperatives.

Research method and design

170 employees in three international tourist hotels, generally upmarket 5 star graded hotels located in Sandton city, Johannesburg, were surveyed using a structured questionnaire (respondent-completed). Contemporary tourism is a mass phenomenon requiring much involvement from governmental, not-for-profit and for-profit organisations, as well as tourists, which rely on quantified information for significant aspects of decision-making (Ezeuduji, 2013; Veal, 2011). Questionnaire survey is an ideal way of getting some of this information (Veal, 2011); including employee views on issues related to their working environment. The Human Resource Managers of all three hotels promised to administer the questionnaire using simple random sampling of hotel employees. One hundred and twenty two (122) usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a 72% response rate.

The questionnaire battery included respondents' profile, knowledge sharing (KS), team culture, and service innovation performance (SIP) items. The questionnaire items were derived from previous studies. KS items were drawn from two empirical studies (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Walz & Niehoff, 2000) in which a total of 11 KS item measures were utilised. The 16 team culture items were taken from the studies of Drach-Zahavy and Somech, 2001; Stashevsky and Koslowsky, 2006; and Van der Ven, Delbeeq, and Koening, 1976, which included three dimensions, namely:

(i) team support, (ii) team coordination, and (iii) team cohesion. The third and final measurement scale items focusing on service performance used 14 measurement items that was guided by the previous studies of Matear, Gray and Garrett, 2004 and Scott & Bruce, 1994. Two additional SIP dimensions, i.e. 'employee service innovation behavior' and 'new service development' were added by the authors as measurement items. KS, team culture and SIP items were measured along a 6-point Likert scale (ordinal variables). The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Respondents' profile questions were sorted into categorical variables.

SPSS version 22 software was used for statistical analysis (IBM Corporation, 2013). The first stage of analysis used descriptive statistics to derive frequency of respondents' profile (in percentages), mean and standard deviation of KS, team culture and SIP variables. Multivariate analyses of the data collected were done at the second stage of data analysis, to reveal the consistency of items in KS, team culture and SIP sections. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as reliability parameter to indicate the internal consistency of the items within each section. Commonly, a cut-off point of 0.5 - 0.7 is used for Cronbach Alpha values (Buehl & Zoefel, 2005; George & Mallery, 2003; Nunnally, 1978), therefore we can confidently say that a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above indicates internal consistency of items, hence we can rely on those items to explain a common feature such as KS, team culture and SIP.

Results and discussions
Respondents' profile

Table 1 depicts the respondents' profile. There were more females than males within the sample. Many respondents had a technical college education or below tertiary education, supporting the study of López-Fernández et al. (2011) that there is a lack of qualified personnel working in the hospitality sector. Many of the respondents were single in terms of marital status, with first-line staff (waiters/waitresses, counter receptionists, and room attendants) and grassroots leaders or supervisors dominating the sample. Many of them worked in the food and beverage and rooms division departments.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents ($N = 122$).

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	44.1
	Female	55.9
Highest educational level	Matriculation or below	39.2
	Technical college	30.8
	University's National Diploma or first degree	24.2
	University's Master's degree and above	5.8
Marital status	Married	28.1
	Single	66.1
	Other	5.8
Current department	Food & Beverage	24.8
	Rooms	25.6
	Personnel	10.7
	Finance / Accounting	9.1
	Sales	9.1
	Others	20.7
Current position	First-line staff (waiter/waitress, counter reception, room attendant)	42.9
	Grassroots leader or supervisor	23.5
	Unit chief (supervisor, deputy manager or manager)	16.0
	Department supervisor	16.0
	Highest level (general manager or CEO)	1.7

Knowledge sharing behaviour

High mean scores ranging from 4.68 to 5.05 (with probable highest score of 6) show that most respondents agree to the statements in Table 2, reflecting mostly that they are willing to share knowledge within their organisation, with the statements "*I believe that members should help each other through teamwork to foster knowledge sharing*" and "*I am willing to help other team members*" having the highest mean scores of 5.02 and 5.05 respectively.

Table 2: Knowledge sharing behaviour (*N* = 122).

Knowledge sharing variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha if item Deleted
S2.1 I am pleased to learn and share knowledge among different teams	4.85	1.133	105	.911
S2.2 I believe that members should help each other through teamwork to foster knowledge sharing	5.02	.940	105	.911
S2.3 In a team setting, I would share knowledge with colleagues who had assisted me in the past	4.81	1.169	105	.916
S2.4 I want to become a person with professional knowledge in the eyes of my colleagues	4.99	.935	105	.914
S2.5 I believe that knowledge sharing among teams can help establish my image as an expert	4.98	.888	105	.917
S2.6 I respect others' impression that I am willing to assist people	4.92	1.035	105	.915
S2.7 Helping my team address work problems would make me feel happy and satisfied	4.98	.940	105	.923
S2.8 I enjoy exchanging knowledge and I don't ask for anything in return	4.68	1.114	105	.916
S2.9 I am willing to use my spare time to help other team members	4.79	1.016	105	.921
S2.10 I am willing to help other team members	5.05	.913	105	.917
S2.11 I would personally help other team members regardless of whether or not they ask for my help	4.90	.883	105	.917
Reliability Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha = .923, N of Items = 11 *Valid cases = 105(86.1%), Excluded cases = 17(13.9%), Total = 122* *Scale: 1(strongly disagree); 2(disagree slightly); 3(disagree); 4(slightly agree); 5(agree); 6(strongly agree)*				

The item statements "*I am willing to use my spare time to help other team members*" and "*I enjoy exchanging knowledge and I don't ask for anything in return*" were least agreed to (mean scores of 4.79 and 4.68 respectively). Items in the KS dimension were subjected to reliability statistics and showed a very high Cronbach Alpha of 0.923, showing internal consistency of these items to explain knowledge sharing behaviour. Organisations undertake knowledge management practices as a result of rapid changes and globalisation process (Pizam, 2007; Lopez Fernandez, Serrano-Bedia & Gómez-López, 2011). These South Africa's hospitality sector

results embraced the previous studies' position that knowledge should not only be managed but should be shared in order to innovate and meet the growing needs of customers (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Hu, Horng & Sun, 2009; Hu, Ou, Chiou & Lin, 2012; Lin, 2007; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001; Zheng, Yang & McLean, 2010). It seems that South Africa's hospitality sector employees have the right attitude towards KS, as demanded by Chen and Cheng (2012). Their study found that employees' knowledge-sharing attitudes improve when they realise that KS contributes to the hotel's successful operations. These attitude issues can be found in the following team culture results.

Table 3 results show somewhat high mean scores ranging from 4.38 to 4.98 (with probable highest score of 6) explaining that most respondents agree to the statements in Table 3, reflecting mostly that the organisations' team culture is not generally weak, but needs improvement on certain aspects. The statements "*my department supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing*" and "*my direct supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing*" have the highest mean scores of 4.91 and 4.98 respectively. The item statements "*each member of this team contributes equally to our hotel's service innovation*" and "*during our spare time, team members of this hotel socialise and hold various social activities*" were least agreed to (mean scores of 4.45 and 4.38 respectively). While the low score of equal team contribution may be accepted as a given and reality, the lowest scoring 'team socialisation' should be addressed. Department supervisors, unit supervisors and direct supervisors should encourage team members to socialise during their spare time and make attempts to support this.

Birthday celebrations, team member recognition party, end of the year party are some of the social activities that need to be integrated into the team work life to foster a relaxed atmosphere that is enabling to knowledge sharing and service innovation performance. Items in the team culture dimension were subjected to reliability statistics and showed a very high Cronbach Alpha of 0.952, showing internal consistency of these items to explain team culture. Study by Chen and Cheng (2012) confirmed that organisational culture affects employees' knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours. Knowledge sharing will not be possible if there is no quality relationship among team members (Renzl, 2008). South Africa's hospitality sector needs to foster stronger team members' relationship through social activities.

Table 3: Team culture (*N* = 122).

Team culture variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
S3.1 My team supports knowledge and technical information sharing	4.85	.932	104	.950
S3.2 My direct supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	4.98	.776	104	.950
S3.3 My unit supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	4.88	.885	104	.950
S3.4 My department supervisor supports knowledge and technical information sharing	4.91	.883	104	.950
S3.5 In my organization, there is always someone to address work problems	4.68	1.143	104	.950
S3.6 This hotel coordinates teamwork through formal rules and procedures	4.62	1.209	104	.947
S3.7 This hotel coordinates teamwork through pre-designed work plans and processes	4.67	1.101	104	.947
S3.8 This hotel coordinates teamwork through leaders or their assistants	4.63	1.090	104	.949
S3.9 This hotel assigns coordinators to coordinate teamwork	4.64	1.165	104	.951
S3.10 This hotel coordinates work by directly communicating with knowledgeable team members	4.53	1.174	104	.952
S3.11 This hotel's members hold regular meetings to coordinate teamwork	4.57	1.050	104	.951
S3.12 This hotel's members meet freely to discuss the coordination of teamwor	4.64	1.060	104	.951
S3.13 During our spare time, team members of this hotel socialize and hold various social activities	4.38	1.302	104	.949
S3.14 Each member of this team contributes equally to our hotel's service innovation	4.45	1.131	104	.948
S3.15 This service team possesses a fine spirit	4.68	1.082	104	.948
S3.16 Members of this team have a strong sense of participation	4.79	.952	104	.948
Reliability Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha = .952, N of Items = 16 *Valid cases = 104(85.2%), Excluded cases = 18(14.8%), Total = 122* *Scale: 1(strongly disagree); 2(disagree slightly); 3(disagree); 4(slightly agree); 5(agree); 6(strongly agree)*				

When a good relationship exists within a team this helps enhance cohesiveness, thereby resulting in increased willingness of team members to share their experiences at work with other members (Hu et al., 2012), thus enhancing service innovation performance.High mean scores ranging from 4.76 to 5.10 (with probable highest score of 6) show that most respondents agree to the statements in Table 4, reflecting mostly that the employees are of

the opinion that service innovation performance of the hotels is supported.

Table 4: Service innovation performance (*N* = 122).

Service innovation performance variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
S4.1 At work, I sometimes come up with innovative and creative notions	4.93	.930	94	.953
S4.2 At work, I seek new service techniques and methods	4.91	.991	94	.954
S4.3 At work, I sometimes propose my creative ideas and try to convince others	4.87	.975	94	.952
S4.4 At work, I try to secure the funding and resources needed to implement innovations	4.76	1.123	94	.955
S4.5 At work, I provide a suitable plan and workable process for developing new ideas	4.95	.908	94	.952
S4.6 Overall, I consider myself a creative member of my team	5.05	.808	94	.954
S4.7 This hotel provides a suitable environment for developing new services	5.10	.763	94	.954
S4.8 All departments and units interact well to develop new businesses	5.04	.747	94	.955
S4.9 When developing and executing new service projects, managers and front-line service personnel collaborate closely	4.90	.830	94	.955
S4.10 This hotel will offer incentives or promotions to members involved in the development of new businesses upon the success of their project	4.90	.843	94	.953
S4.11 This hotel will dedicate some resources to developing new services	4.95	.847	94	.953
S4.12 The hotel's current manpower is sufficient for the new services that have to be developed	4.90	.856	94	.953
S4.13 This team is professional in developing new services or new products	5.03	.725	94	.953
S4.14 The new services developed by this team are effective with respect to timing, resources and Process	4.95	.872	94	.955
Reliability Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha = .957, N of Items = 14 *Valid cases = 94(77.0%), Excluded cases = 28(23.0%), Total = 122* *Scale: 1(strongly disagree); 2(disagree slightly); 3(disagree); 4(slightly agree); 5(agree); 6(strongly agree)*				

The statements "*overall, I consider myself a creative member of my team*" and "*this hotel provides a suitable environment for developing new services*" have the highest mean scores of 5.05 and 5.10 respectively. The item statement "*at work, I try to secure

the funding and resources needed to implement innovations" was least agreed to (mean score of 4.76).This result is not surprising given that first-line staff (waiters/waitresses, counter receptionists, and room attendants) and grassroots leaders or supervisors dominated the survey sample. Staff members at this level are mostly reluctant to secure resources but concentrate on the assigned work.

First-line staff members however need to be encouraged to communicate any new service idea and follow it up with their supervisors to help secure the resources needed to implement new ideas. This encouragement can be supported by a good relationship existing within a team, resulting in increased willingness of team members to share their experiences and new ideas at work with other members, especially their superiors. Items in SIP dimension were subjected to reliability statistics and showed a very high Cronbach Alpha of 0.957, showing internal consistency of these items to explain SIP. Literature (Hu et al., 2009; López-Fernández et al., 2011; Ottenbacher, 2007) demonstrated the impact of KS on service innovation as well as its impact on organisational performance. Hu et al. (2012) also noted the positive relationship between innovation and KS in organisations.

Conclusions

This study brings good news to the South Africa's hospitality sector managers as it found a generally favourable state of KS, team culture, and SIP within the sampled hotels. Team culture plays a moderating role in promoting KS for service innovation. This study found that team culture is not very strong as depicted by the lower mean scores of team culture explanatory items compared to the mean scores of KS and SIP explanatory items. Team socialisation having the lowest score (as team culture item) should be addressed. South Africa's hospitality sector needs to foster stronger team members' relationship, through social

activities. Birthday celebrations, team member recognition party, end of the year party are some of the social activities that need to be integrated into the team work life to foster a relaxed atmosphere that is enabling for knowledge sharing and service innovation performance. This will support the hospitality sector's competiveness as it strives towards gaining global market leadership. Organisational learning (for subtle positive organisational changes) through social exchange (positive supervisor-subordinate relationships) will enhance the intellectual capital (work teams) of organisations in the hospitality sector.

Organisational culture affects employees' KS attitudes and behaviours and KS will not be possible if there is no quality relationship among team members. When a good relationship exists within a team this helps enhance cohesiveness, thereby resulting in increased willingness of team members to share their experiences or new ideas at work with other members (Hu et al., 2012). This study therefore posits that to enhance SIP in the South Africa's hospitality sector, strong team culture has to be supported to encourage KS among team members and between superiors and subordinates.

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