Journal of Strategic Management

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ISSN: 2616-8472

Stratford Peer Reviewed Journals and Book Publishing
Journal of Strategic management
Volume 3||Issue 3||Page 76-90|December||2019|
Email: info@stratfordjournals.org ISSN: 2616-8472

Assessing the Influence of Codification on Performance in Commercial Banks in Kenya

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How to cite this article: **Njenga, J., N. Ngugi. K. & Odhiambo, R. (2019). Assessing the Influence of Codification on Performance in Commercial Banks in Kenya.** ***Journal of Strategic management,*** **3(3), 76-90**

Abstract

The main objective of the study was to establish the relationship knowledge management strategy and performance of commercial banks in Kenya. Commercial banks are beheld as knowledge-intensive organizations. This understanding is grounded on the reasoning that the basic resources are intangible as most of their activities are conformed to be work of an intellectual nature. Codification was identified as one of the strategies that an organization can employ to manage knowledge. The study adopted descriptive study of the 43 licensed commercial banks in Kenya as at December 2017. The unit of observation comprised of 172 senior managers drawn from the Human Resource Department, Risk and Compliance, Credit and the Finance department. Qualitative and quantitative research design was undertaken to carry out the research. The final report was compiled after carrying out a census of all the 43 banks which constituted the target population. Primary data was collected using self-administered semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. Binary logistic regression model was employed based on the dichotomy nature of the dependent variable. The findings established that codification strategy was a significant predictor of firm performance among commercial banks in Kenya. The findings pointed out that the odds of commercial banks that embraced codification strategy were more than banks that operated without the strategy in place. The conclusion was informed by data obtained from primary and secondary sources. The study concluded that codification strategy is necessary to generate unique database of knowledge which an organization can continuously exploit to attain good performance and a competitive edge in a disruptive environment.

Keywords: *Codification, Knowledge, Management, Strategy, Commercial, Performance*

1.1 Background Information

The field of knowledge management has become a significant and a strategic player in the world of work as markets moves towards knowledge-based economies (Marouf, 2016). To gain a competitive edge in the highly volatile and competitive environment, organizations should lay emphasis on transformation that is likely to prepare them for future work dynamics that require up skilling and agility in response. The initiative should be taken against the backdrop that it is unlikely for today's skills to match the jobs for tomorrow and newly acquired skills may become quickly obsolete. Among the initiatives include identification of effective and critical knowledge, establishment and maintenance of the right knowledge. Such measures enable the employees to realize their potential as productive members of the society. The move is significant to any organization that envisions keeping up with the transformative changes in the world. Today, knowledge is widely acknowledged as a strategic asset necessary to promote organizational performance. Hence, corporate success through continuous knowledge acquisition, sharing and management defines the future of work. The Management should be keen to offer the necessary support to establish an atmosphere that supports development and sharing of knowledge (Sharma & Djiaw, 2011). ISO 9001: 2015 recognizes the strategic and significant role of knowledge as a critical enabler to an organization that seeks to achieve its vision (Wilson & Campbell, 2016).

Mention and Bontis (2013) recognize the importance of strategic management of human knowledge mobilized in the underlying processes as a critical enabler for the achievement of an organization's final output. To realize a healthy bottom line, the management requires drawing information from relevant and timely sources of knowledge to make critical and sound decisions. In doing so, the knowledge resource is brought in line with the overall business strategies of the firm to create a strategic fit where resources and capabilities are aligned with the opportunities in the external environment (Shahzad, Bajwa, Siddiqi, Ahmid & Sultani, 2016).

Knowledge is a critical resource and organizations should focus to manage it strategically through an opulent strategy. They should focus on creating a culture of robust knowledge management through selection of appropriate approaches necessary to discover new horizons in the field of knowledge. The ultimate goal of strategic knowledge management is to maximize an organization's value of return on investment to shareholders (Hill, 2014). Successful organizations seek out to have a surveillance system of knowledge management with an objective of leveraging tacit and explicit knowledge. Such efforts in turn, increases an organization's cultural fit, maximizes revenue in addition to building capacity necessary for an organization to gain competitive advantage and superior performance in the contemporary world of work (Jassimudin, 2014).

Knowledge should be captured, understood and transferred throughout the organization using effective networks for the purpose of achieving various objectives (Millar, Lockett, & Mahon, 2016). The strategies that an organization embraces to manage knowledge are likely to make a significant impact on the performance relative to its shareholders capital investment (Hill, Charles, Jones, Gareth Schilling & Mellissa, 2014). Even though management of knowledge is a critical enabler of an organization's bottom-line; organizations that execute knowledge management (KM) consider it to be a necessary but challenging theme that requires the adoption of appropriate strategy (Marouf, 2016).

Scientific knowledge updates quickly, and firms are required to constantly acquire new scientific knowledge to uphold a high level of technological capability and continuous innovation vitality. Blanc (2012) posits that the science of knowledge should be expanded to put into consideration the problems of context, economy and social environment, at a higher level of generalization than just those of individuals or groups. Scientific knowledge can be measured in two dimensions: scientific knowledge stock and scientific knowledge flow. The scientific knowledge stock is a static representation of the scientific knowledge resources, and scientific knowledge flow is a dynamic representation of the scientific knowledge (Chen, 2016). In science-based strategy, the knowledge mastered by the R&D employees is more than the knowledge coded by patents and papers; a large part of knowledge already embedded in their brains as research equipment and experimental procedure also contains a lot of tacit scientific knowledge and constitutes firm's tacit scientific knowledge resources.

Organizations are encouraged to adopt technologies for the creation of an institutional memory for knowledge networks. In such systems, the concept of knowledge is tangibly conceptualized, as it unites the attributes of culture, history, human memory as well as business process and hence, knowledge sharing, especially when the level of tacitness is low or medium, can be facilitated by the use of IT (Giudice, 2016). There has been a propensity toward the application of advanced technology (e.g. the Internet, intranets, Web browsers, data warehouses, data mining and software agents) to enable knowledge-sharing activities to take place (Jasimuddin et al., 2015). Gitonga (2015) recognizes the significance of collaborative virtual workspaces, knowledge bases, document libraries as well as voice and voice-over internet protocol, electronic based content management-submission and indexing as added reliable information technology supported tools and techniques.

It is evident that some research about codification as a strategy to manage knowledge has been conducted in other countries. However, in the Kenyan context, there is a shortage of documented empirical studies demonstrating the actual relationship between knowledge management strategies and more so in commercial banks in Kenya and how they influence performance. The relationship remains indistinct and it is this state of affairs that informed this study.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Socialization, Externalization Combination, and Internalization (SECI) model was initially developed by Nonaka (1990). The model was further advanced by Hirotaka Takeuchi (Xu, 2013). The model is the most dominantly cited in support of knowledge creation (Choo, 2012). In this model, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) give a clear distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge. They describe a knowledge creation model that consists of four processes thus: a) Socialization (Tacit to Tacit): This mode generally starts with construction of a "field" of interaction that supports the sharing of members' experiences and mental models (tacit knowledge); b) Externalization (Tacit to Explicit): This is the process of enunciating tacit knowledge into explicit concepts. Tacit knowledge could be converted into explicit knowledge effectively and efficiently by sequential use of metaphor, analogy and model; c) Combination (Explicit to Explicit): This is the process of merging different bodies of explicit knowledge. Reconfiguration of existing information through sorting, adding, combining and categorizing

of explicit knowledge as conducted in computer databases is likely to lead to new knowledge; d) Internalization (Explicit to Tacit): This process personifies explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge.

In SECI model, movement through the four modes of knowledge conversion is a spiral, and not a circle (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2001). Having evolved through several cycles, the organization may consider that it has developed sufficiently to be able to document a new set of organizational characteristics. It is acknowledged that different cycles and different quadrants within each cycle may be more critical during knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The circular relationship ensures generated knowledge is also effectively spread (Jardon & Martos, 2012).

The model provides a framework to support that sharing of knowledge and experience means that it is possible to identify knowledge workers and use a strategy necessary to support effective use of their knowledge. For example, through the framework, senior workers and experts can share their knowledge with juniors and new entrants with ease. When retirees leave, their knowledge has been retained by new and young employees who remain behind. When tacit knowledge is converted to explicit (externalization), knowledge is captured in the organizational system and the knowledge is retained in repositories and databases. Retention of knowledge includes all activities that preserve knowledge and allow it to remain in the system. It also includes those activities that maintain the viability of knowledge within the system

2.2 Empirical Review

Codification strategy contends how well explicit knowledge can be extracted for storage in knowledge databases for reuse by employees in the organisation (Yousif, 2013). The object of this strategy is to safeguard employees' knowledge through collecting, classifying, documenting, capturing, and recording processes (Kumar & Ganesh, 2011). In this strategy, knowledge is mainly extracted and stored, usually in some electronic repository, so that potential users can search and retrieve knowledge from the repository without essentially notifying the knowledge producer (Liu, 2013). The ''people-to-document' strategy focuses on capturing, codifying, storing and making the use of explicit knowledge in a form that is attuned with a company's objectives (Bolisani, 2015).

Exploitation (commonly referred to as low resource-augmenting modes) fundamentally lays focus on the efficiency utilization and enhancement of the current capabilities (Jose, Pla-Barber, Cristina, Fidel & León-Darder, 2014). It focuses on repetitive cycles of reusing, and improving on existing knowledge. Exploitative knowledge processes are instituted upon prevailing knowledge for the purpose of meeting the needs of the various customers and thereafter increasing the value add of the firm's products and services for the existing customers (Millan, 2016). At the core and support level, knowledge has to be exploitative, in the sense that the performance of business processes and generation of new revenue streams can be enhanced by providing operational staff with knowledge relevant to their job specification (Oluikpe, 2012).

Enterprise R&D activities are acknowledged to be knowledge-intensive business activities (Lai, 2013). The knowledge arising from such activities is essentially explicit and

predominantly articulated in different types of text. Such knowledge enhances communication and exchange of knowledge. Research-based knowledge also encompasses other forms of codified knowledge that may not have been subjected to a rigorous quality control process. Examples of such research may include different types of reports and results (Nilsen Gunilla Nordström Per-Erik Ellström, 2012). Such knowledge is derived from empirical research as well as concepts, theories, models and frameworks. This kind of knowledge is scientifically grounded and generated in a highly structured and thorough process, which typically begins with problem identification, and thorough analysis of the problem. The findings are likely to have applicability beyond the specific research situation.

Information technology plays a significant role in organizations and supports the intensive knowledge needs (Campanella, Del Giudice, & Della Peruta, 2013). ICTs provide the necessary support for knowledge acquisition and creation, knowledge dissemination and utilization hence; KM practices are strongly supported by ICTs (Pedro Soto-Acosta Juan-Gabriel Cegarra-Navarro, 2016). Technology is known to be a critical enabler and foundational element of a KM plan (Omotayo, 2015). Palacios-Marqués, Soto-Acosta, and Merigó (2015), uphold that it is critical to integrate internet technologies to support information sharing and knowledge exchange within firms. It is therefore significant to identify the factors that influence the usage of internet technologies for knowledge exchange (Palacios-Marqués et al., 2015).

3.0 Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design. Numerical values were referenced to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Structured survey questionnaires were used in the study. The target population comprised of 172 senior managers drawn from the Human Resource, Risk and Compliance, Credit and Finance department. The departments are considered to be the most critical in all the banks. To achieve the objective, the study adopted stratified probability sampling. The main research tools that were used were questionnaire and interviews. Document analysis was used to analyze secondary data. A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on the study objectives and the hypothesis and distributed to the respondents to collect primary data. Drop and pick technique was employed to collect the questionnaires from the respondents. Regression and correlation analysis was used in testing of hypotheses and subsequent generation of inferential statistics for prediction purposes (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

The following regression model was adopted to test the hypothesis;

H_{A1}: *Codification significantly influences performance in Commercial banks in Kenya.*

$$\log[p] = log\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = \ln\left(\frac{P}{1-P}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Then;

Y = Performance

B_0 is the y-intercept or model coefficient;

β_1 is the coefficients of the predictor variable;

X_1 =C=Codification.

4.0 Results and Discussions

A total of 172 questionnaires were administered to the selected managers from human resource department, risk and compliance, operations and finance department in all the 43 commercial banks. The questionnaires that were entirely filled and returned were 136 that represented a response rate of 79.06%. 20.94% of the questionnaires were not returned since the target individuals became unavailable to give responses. However, (2004) avers that such a response rate is adequate enough compared to threshold of 50% for analysis and inferences derivations in regard to study population. Therefore, the finding provided in this chapter was based on results from 136 respondents out of the target 172 respondents.

The respondent background information examined in this section includes gender, age bracket and education level. The findings revealed that male respondents were 59.6% while female respondents were 40.4% the implication being that commercial banks in Kenya employed individuals from both genders in almost equal proportions. The findings also showed that 54.4% of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years, 24.3% were aged between 41 and 50 years while 21.3% were aged between 20 and 30 years. The findings established that the banking sector was dominated by young and middle-aged professionals. The findings further indicated that 54.4% of the respondents had undergraduate degree while 45.6% had master's degree as their highest level of education. The study findings implied that banks in Kenya hired relatively highly educated individuals to fill the management positions.

Table 1: Background Information on the Respondents

Demographics Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender of Respondents	Male	81	59.6
	Female	55	40.4
	Total	**136**	**100**
Age Bracket	20-30	29	21.3
	31-40	74	54.4
	41-50	33	24.3
	Total	**136**	**100**
Highest Level of Education	Undergraduate Degree	74	54.4
	Masters	62	45.6
	Total	**136**	**100**

Background Information on the Bank

This section presents the findings on the background information on the commercial banks where the respondents were drawn from. The findings showed that 62.5% of the commercial banks were in operation for more than 20 years while 14.7% ranged their operations between 16 and 20 years. The results pointed out that many commercial banks in Kenya had operated for overs 16 years (Table 2). In reference to the size of the bank, 48.5% indicated employee population in the various branches ranged between 300 and 999 while 37.5% indicated that the number of employees in their banks was less than 300 employees. 14% of the banks had 1000 to 1999. The findings implied that majority of the banks in Kenya have been in operation for or a long time and that the sector was a significant creator of job opportunities in the country.

Table 2: Background Information on the Firm

	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Number of years in business	1-5 Years	8	5.9
	6-10 Years	8	5.9
	11-15 Years	15	11
	16-20 Years	20	14.7
	20 and above	85	62.5
	Total	**136**	**100**
Size of the Bank	Less than 300 employees	51	37.5
	300 –999 employees	66	48.5
	1000-1999 employees	19	14
	Total	**136**	**100**

Descriptive Statistics Results for Codification Strategy

The study examined the use of codification strategy using four indicators namely; exploitation, research-based knowledge, ICT and intellectual property portfolios. The findings presented in Table 4.5 indicate how the respondents responded to the statements that were used examine the use of codification strategy in commercial banks in Kenya. The study used percentages, mean and standard deviation to describe the data obtained from the respondents. The mean provided the average response while standard deviation provided the deviation of response from the mean. The larger the standard deviation indicated high variation of responses across the respondents. The mean of above of 3.5 was an indication that majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while the mean of below 3.5 show disagreement.

Stratford Peer Reviewed Journals and Book Publishing
Journal of Strategic management
Volume 3||Issue 3||Page 76-90|December||2019|
Email: info@stratfordjournals.org ISSN: 2616-8472

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Results for Codification Strategy

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
In my opinion knowledge is well codified through formal documents and manuals in this bank	0.0%	11.0%	16.2%	58.8%	14.0%	3.76	0.83
Documentation of knowledge is done systematically, and not performed when the problem has already appeared	0.0%	2.9%	16.2%	73.5%	7.4%	3.85	0.58
Employees are encouraged to think outside the box for the purpose of encouraging creativity	0.0%	9.6%	15.4%	65.4%	9.6%	3.75	0.76
In this bank we believe that research based knowledge increases our performance	0.0%	16.2%	9.6%	39.7%	34.6%	3.93	1.04
Use of integrated IT systems and tools supports knowledge management tools requirements	0.0%	3.7%	8.8%	50.0%	37.5%	4.21	0.75
Information systems support has a positive effect on knowledge management	0.0%	6.6%	5.9%	50.7%	36.8%	4.18	0.82
My bank's Intellectual Property Portfolios strategy has led to improved performance	0.0%	14.7%	18.4%	57.4%	9.6%	3.62	0.85
The social media platforms offer the management the opportunity to create structured methods of knowledge management	3.7%	3.7%	27.9%	30.1%	34.6%	3.88	1.05
In this bank, there has been rising recognition of the significance of use of expertise improve performance	0.0%	13.2%	5.9%	63.2%	17.6%	3.85	0.87
There has been rising recognition of the significance of patents for the purpose of improving the bank's performance	0.0%	18.4%	8.8%	33.8%	39.0%	3.93	1.10
The use of standard policies and procedures is highly appreciated	0.0%	10.3%	2.9%	30.9%	55.9%	4.32	0.95
Overall						**3.94**	

The study sought to assess whether the respondents acknowledge the use of codification in their banks through formal documents and manuals. 58.8% agreed, 14.0% strongly agreed while only 11.0% disagreed. The statement had a mean of 3.76 which confirmed that majority

of the respondent agreed. The standard deviation of 0.83 showed that responses varied slightly from the mean score. On whether documentation of knowledge is done systematically, and not performed when the problem has already appeared the findings showed that 73.5% agreed. The statement had a mean score of 3.85. The study finding further revealed that 65.4% of the respondents agreed that employees in their banks are encouraged to think outside the box for the purpose of encouraging creativity.

The study further sought to establish whether commercial banks in Kenya appreciate the role of research-based knowledge in enhancement increases their performance. The study findings indicated that 39.7% of the respondents agreed while 34.6% strongly agreed with the statement. The statement had a mean response of 3.93 which confirmed that commercial banks in Kenya believe that research-based knowledge increases their performance. The study sought to assess whether the use of integrated IT systems and tools supports knowledge management tools requirements, and the findings showed that 50.0% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 37.5% strongly agreed. Similarly, 50.7% agreed while 36.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that information systems support had a positive effect on knowledge management.

The study further sought to identify whether their banks intellectual property portfolios strategy has led to improved performance. The statement had a mean score of 3.62 which implied that majority of the respondent agreed and strongly agreed. The finding as shown by the mean score of 3.88 indicated that respondent agreed that social media platforms offer the management of commercial banks in Kenya the opportunity to create structured methods of knowledge management. The study sought to find out whether in their banks, there has been rising recognition of the significance of expertise to organizational performance. The study findings pointed out that 63.2% and 17.6% of the respondent agreed and strongly agreed respectively. On whether there has been rising recognition of the significance of patents for the purpose of improving performance among commercial banks in Kenya, the study established that majority of the respondents agreed as indicated by the mean score of 3.93. The results further showed that majority (30.9% and 55.9%) of the respondent agreed and strongly agreed that the use of standard policies and a procedure is highly appreciated in their banks.

The study findings revealed that respondents agreed with the statement used to measure the use of codification strategy in their commercial banks. The findings implied that commercial banks in Kenya adopted codification strategy in their knowledge management to achieve competitive advantage and improve their performance. The banks utilized exploitation, research-based knowledge, ICT and intellectual property portfolios to enhance performance. The study finding supports those of Kalei (2015) who found that firms in Kenya use explicit knowledge management strategies which had a positive significant effect on employee performance. Similarly, Shehata (2015) found that firms that utilized knowledge management systems (KMSs) increased their performance.

Correlation Analysis for Codification Strategy and Performance of Commercial Banks in Kenya

The study employed Pearson correlation analysis to test the association between codification strategy and performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis for Codification Strategy and Performance

		Codification Strategy	Performance
Codification Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	136	136
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.639**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	136

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results presented in Table 4 revealed that codification strategy and performance had a Pearson correlation value (r) = 0.639, p=0.000. The findings indicated that codification strategy had strongly positive and significant association with performance of commercial banks. The findings established that commercial that embraced or adopted codification strategy in knowledge management also showed increase in their performance. This study findings concurred with those of Kalei (2015) who found that institutionalization of explicit knowledge had a positive significant effect on employee performance since all the identified factors were significant predictors of employee performance. The study further mirrored the finding of Mahapa (2013) who found out that system-oriented (codification) strategy is instrumental to organizational performance. The study confirmed the earlier findings which revealed that codification strategy significantly affected performance of commercial banks.

Univariate Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

Regression is the determination of a statistical relationship between two or more variables (Kothari, 2014). In simple regression, there are two variables, one variable (defined as independent) is the cause of the behaviour of another one (defined as dependent variable). The study used both univariate and multivariate to test the effect of independent variables on dependent variable. Univariate regression was used to test the effect of each variable while holding other factors constant. Test for research hypotheses relied on multivariate regression analysis.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model Summary	
-2 Log likelihood	118.501a
Cox & Snell R Square	0.376
Nagelkerke R-Square	0.509
Wald Chi-square	64.229 (p=0.000)

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: Codification Strategy.

Findings of Nagelkerke R Square = 0.509, codification strategy accounted for 50.9% of the variation in performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The model that was adopted to test the influence of codification strategy was statistically significant as shown by the Wald Chi-square = 64.229 (p=0.000) (equivalent of ANOVA in ordinary least squares). The findings established that codification strategy was a significant predictor of firm performance among commercial banks in Kenya.

Regression coefficients

Regression coefficients of β= 1.671, p= 0.000 revealed a positive and significant relationship between codification strategy and performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The odds (Exp (B) =5.317) showed that commercial banks that adopted codification strategy were 5.317 more likely to record high performance compared to those that don't have codification strategy. The finding implied that the use of codification strategy improved the odds of recording high performance. The study further mirrored the findings by Mahapa (2013) and Kalei (2015) who found out that system-oriented (codification) strategy is instrumental to organizational performance.

Table 6: Logistic Regression Analysis for Codification Strategy and Performance

		β	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp (B)
Coefficients	Codification Strategy	1.671	0.317	27.739	0.000	5.317
	Constant	5.563	1.224	20.646	0.000	0.004

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: Codification Strategy.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that codification strategy is essential in generation of unique database of knowledge which an organization can continuously exploit to achieve a better performance. In the modern information era, only organizations that have relevant, modern and right environment on best business practices, market approach and customer preferences stand a chance of good performance. Codification was found out to be one of the key strategies in information extraction and storage of knowledge that can be tapped to increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

6.0 Recommendations

The section presents the recommendations made for improvement of management in commercial banks and policy formulation both by the regulator and boards of the commercial banks to support improved performance. The study recommends that management of commercial banks or organizations that seek to utilize knowledge management strategies must adopt codification. Codification enables organizations to store necessary knowledge for future consumption by the employees in the organizations in case where generator of this knowledge

is not available any more. Stored information can be extracted, develped and utized to enhance performance.

The study also recommends that management of commercial banks in Kenya should prioritize internal knowledge management strategies that will enable harnessing of internal knowledge and capitalizing on such knowledge to boost performance. The management should encourage a culture where employees meet and brainstorm on different ways and strategies of doing business. Informal sessions should also be organized where employees feel free to share their views, insights and knowledge based on past experiences. Relevant knowledge generated can be put on pilot and finally adopted it evidence is provided to show to can improve performance.

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