

Research Article

The role of customer knowledge management in improving organizational performance and creating competitive advantage from viewpoint of Rahian Kermanshah football club fans

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating the role customer knowledge management in improving organizational performance and creating competitive advantage from viewpoint of Rahian Kermanshah football club fans. The research method was of correlational type, applied in terms of purpose, and field in terms of data collection. The population included all individuals above 18 years old who attended the match between Rahian Kermanshah and PAS Hamedan football clubs. To select the places as cluster, the convenience non-probability sampling was used. After data collection, 470 questionnaires were used. For data collection, the questionnaire of knowledge management (made by Sharon Laston in 2003) was used. This questionnaire studied the components of creation, attraction, organization, storage, release, and use of knowledge. Each component was formed of four items. In total, the questionnaire included 24 items. In addition, the questionnaire of competitive advantage (made by Hussein in 1390), and five –point Likert scale was used. To ensure the questionnaire's validity, the initial questionnaire was given to ten professors of sport management to adjust the final questionnaire by asking their opinions. The reliability of research questionnaires was obtained by Cronbach's alpha coefficient for knowledge management questionnaires. For data analysis, the correlation coefficient and competitive advantage were used as 0.79 and 0.81 were used. In addition, AMOS 1 software and structural equation modeling were used to design the model.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, knowledge was considered as a key competitive factor in the global economy, but another important component called customer must be considered to attend successfully in today's dynamic market. Customer knowledge management provides the organizations with more probability of recognizing the opportunities of the market and increasing their competitive advantage. Accordingly, the concepts of knowledge management and customer relationship management were considered highly in recent years because each one brings competitive advantage for organizations. In this regard, organizations integrated customer relationship management with knowledge management has a key role in customer relationship management (CRM) (Dous et al 2005). While CRM emphasizes knowledge about customer for

customer relationship management, knowledge management systems can create, organize, and use that knowledge to promote the organizational performance and create value (Sugumaran & Bose 2003). Thus, due to the synergy resulted from KM and CRM integration; the organization could identify the needs of its customers and predict their behavior. Thus, they consider the continuous operations of innovation and develop the new products and services leading to the improvement of organizational performance.

Palanisamy (2010) defines knowledge management as an integrated and systematic process of organizations' broad activities including the creation, acquisition, storage, sharing, distribution, and use of knowledge through individuals and groups to form the major organizational goals. Nonaka & Takeuchi

(1995) consider knowledge management as a process by which the organization produces wealth from its knowledge by its intellectual capital. In addition, knowledge management emphasizes knowledge acquisition from employees about customer, competitors, and organization's products (Gibbert et al 2002). In other words, knowledge management refers to encouraging the employees for sharing knowledge and ideas to increase the products' value added (Chase 1997).

Thus, knowledge management outlook is intra-organizational and its advantage is customer satisfaction with better services and products. However, when the organization begins to develop its competencies in intra organizational knowledge management and uses it for achieving the organization's goals, develops its attitude and considers the new resources of knowledge which were not necessarily placed within the organization's borders (Paquette 2006).

In a study by Gibbert et al (2002), it was shown that by integrating the systems of customer relationship management and knowledge management, the advantages of using them can be increased leading to the reduction of risk. The obtained results indicated that knowledge management is the success factor of CRM. In addition, knowledge management methods with the aim of supporting CRM processes must be process-oriented. Finally, because KM and CRM have a high synergy potential, they must be combined together. In a study by Paquette in 2006 the issue of knowledge sharing was investigated. It showed that facilitating knowledge sharing among the intra organizational individuals and groups is essential, but it becomes more difficult when this knowledge is not owned by the organization's people and comes from out of the organization. Thus, creating social structure, business processes, and technology can have a significant effect on the improvement of organizational performance as a solution to facilitate customer knowledge. It uses a new source of knowledge by activating customers in creating the knowledge two-way flow. Another

part of the present study is investigating the role of customer knowledge management on competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is significantly found in facilitating the data processes than the access to specific resources and markets. Thus, the intellectual knowledge and capital are considered as the initial basis for achieving the main and strategic competencies for a superior performance. In line with achieving the sustainable competitive advantage, it is very important to consider the current knowledge, use it effectively, and create a structure for using the new information and knowledge. Customer relationship management is one of the issues which stimulated the organizations to reckon about the ways for establishing the relationship with the wide range of customers in today's global economy. However, it can be said that establishing an effective relationship with customers is not possible without using knowledge management. We should manage our knowledge to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of organization, ensure the products and services with high quality and obtain customer satisfaction. Thus, knowledge management is an inseparable part of customer relationship management (Ebrahimi et al, 1385). Knowledge management collects all the data and knowledge on an organization to achieve a more valuable content. Knowledge management not only makes the knowledge of every individual as total, but also reveals and enriches the hidden knowledge of individuals. In general, knowledge management obtains and maintains knowledge in such a way to help the organization work more efficiently and achieve competitiveness (Birami Igdar et al, 1395).

Barney (1991) defines competitive advantage as: The Company which has a sustainable competitive advantage implements a strategy when it does not implement the strategy continuously with its current competitors and the competitors cannot add to the advantages of this strategy. In fact, customer knowledge management uses knowledge management as a supportive tool of customer knowledge to provide the required knowledge of

customer and facilitate the access to this knowledge. On the other hand, customer knowledge management tries to be aware of customer knowledge. Customer knowledge management tries to use this knowledge better by accumulating knowledge, facilitating the access to knowledge, knowledge cultures and knowledge capitals. Customer knowledge management is an area of management in which the procedures of knowledge management is used for supporting the exchange of customer knowledge in organization and its customers. It is used to improve the customer relationship processes like customer service, customer retention, and relationship usefulness. Customer knowledge management provides services; those who suggest the tools and procedures for knowledge exchange and customer relationship management buy services, i.e. the person who determines what knowledge is required and who creates and uses knowledge in customer interactions (BiramiIgdar et al, 1395).

The study results of Perez (2003) showed that the competition among organizations makes them work more successfully in implementing the processes of knowledge management such as knowledge production and transfer. Finally, their results showed that there is a significant relationship between the processes of knowledge management and organization's competitiveness. In addition, according to Park (2005), the competition of organizations with each other creates a positive atmosphere for improving and developing the processes of knowledge management in organization and the presence of organization in the field of competition with other organizations is one of the key factors of success in knowledge management. For the success of knowledge management in organizations, the presence of a competitive culture to stimulate the employees is necessary. Such a competitive culture develops and spreads knowledge in organization. The studies on knowledge management by Akhavan et al (1386), Zahari et al (2013), Hasanzadeh et al (2013) refers to the role of knowledge management as one of the important chains of customer relationship management.

Obviously, the concepts of improving the organization (football club) performance and competitive advantage are largely overlapped with the ideas of loyalty and commitment to the football club. The literature on sport marketing is full of loyalty, commitment, and attraction of fans. However, no study was ever done to determine how these variables are related to customer knowledge management. Today, famous football clubs meet the needs of their fans by creating the bases, producing customer and fans knowledge, and entering the issue of customer knowledge management in line with satisfying the needs of fans. They create commitment in fans and cause revenue for their clubs. However, in our country despite so many passionate fans, no study was done for the knowledge obtained from the club fans as one of the most important competitive principles. Thus, the main purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between customer knowledge management, improvement of organizational performance and competitive advantage.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant relationship between customer knowledge management, improvement of organizational performance and competitive advantage.
2. There is a significant relationship between customer knowledge management and improvement of organizational performance.
3. There is a significant relationship between customer knowledge management and competitive advantage.
4. There is a significant relationship between organizational performance and competitive advantage.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method of the present study was of correlational type, applied in terms of purpose, and field in terms of data collection. The population included all individuals above 18 years old who attended the match between Rahian Kermanshah and PAS Hamedan football clubs.

Findings

Table 1 shows the relationships between research variables. As table 1 shows, customer knowledge management has a positive and significant relationship with competitive advantage ($p < 0.05$). In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship between customer knowledge management and competitive advantage ($p < 0.05$). Structural equation model is a total statistical approach for testing the hypotheses on the relationships between observed variables 1 and latent variables 2. By this approach, the acceptable

theoretical models in specific populations could be tested by using correlational, non-experimental, and experimental data. Bentler and Chu (1987) and Bentler (1990) stated that all non-correlated errors in a model are rarely proportional to real data. Such errors in models not only destroy the confirmatory factor, but also provide a more realistic representation of the observed data. Thus, it was decided to use this model for fitting the model. Amos software provides a series of indices for the model fitting as shown in table 2.

Table 2. The goodness of fit indices for the research model

comp titiv	kno wle	kno wle	know ledge	knowl edge	knowl edgeo	kn ow	k n	SD	M	variabl e
-.181 *	-.177 *	-.176 *	-.176 *	-.169 *	-.173 *	-.168 *	1	1/176	2/91	kno
-.179 *	-.167 *	-.171 *	-.169 *	-.165 *	-.159 *	1		1/187	2/65	kno wle
-.188 *	-.168 *	-.177 *	-.167 *	-.162 *	1			1/114	4/41	سازمان kno
-.176 *	-.171 *	-.167 *	-.171 *	1				-.174	2/84	مشاور know
-.166 *	-.178 *	-.156 *	1					1/21	2/67	مشاور know
-.169 *	-.171 *	1						-.159	2/09	مشاور know
-.179 *	1							1/21	2/87	مشاور know
1								1/54	2/89	کودک know ledge
										compe titive

Most scientists consider the values between 2 and 3 acceptable on the ratio of square-chi to degree of freedom ($df \times 2$). However, the attitudes in this field are different. For example, Schumacher and Lomax considered the values between 1 and 5 acceptable. In this study, the ratio of 2.10 was obtained.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Katlar (1390) stated that understanding the behavior of consumer and identifying customers is not simple. Customers may expect their needs in such way but act in another way. They may be

unaware of their internal deeper motivations or react to the effective factors which change their opinions on the last second. However, marketers must study the demands of their customers, their mental receptions and purchase behavior. The

present study is focused on the behavior of consumer and whether this behavior leads to the club's reputation or not. The purpose of this study was to design the structural equation model of brand social identity on the club's reputation from the viewpoint of football Pro League's fans.

Based on the study results, there was a sportive and significant relationship between customer knowledge management and creating competitive advantage among the fans of ShirinFaraz club (-r/79). Akhavan et al (1386) in a study entitled "customer knowledge: an approach for obtaining competitive advantage" showed that the crated knowledge management in customers leads to their awareness which leads to competitive advantage for organizations (1). In addition, another study by Zahari et al (2013) entitled "the relationship between customer knowledge management and knowledge participation in Malasian insurance companies" concluded that knowledge participation among the organization and customers leads to the creation of customer knowledge management and organizations use its advantages. Shi et al (2009) in another study entitled "the relationship between customer knowledge management with organizational learning and organizational performance" concluded that customer knowledge management leads to organizational learning. Thus, it leads to the positive or negative performance of organization. In general, the present study is consistent with the study results of Akhavan et al (1386), Zahari et al (2013), Hasanzadeh et al (2013), Pawyswych et al (2011), and Shi (2009).

In this study, a combined model was presented for customer knowledge management; this model enables the operationalization of data collected from customers by using the knowledge management techniques. In this model, the knowledge flows in relation to customer were considered and have two-way benefits for customers and organization. The organization can recognize the customers' needs accurately through the access to correct and timely information on customer. Receiving the products and services

according to the customer's table leads to the increase of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The strong positive relationship between customer knowledge management and obtaining the competitive advantage of the club indicates that the clubs especially the popular clubs which seek for keeping their fans in competition with other clubs must pay more attention to the concept of knowledge management in customers. The teams such as of Rahian Kermanshah can create more awareness in their fans by creating, producing and attracting knowledge on customers to meet the needs of their fans. It leads to the creation of loyalty among the fans of that club which finally the team can use the advantages of creating loyalty to the club. One of the advantages of creating knowledge management is to be familiar with the basic needs of fans, trust of fans to the club, create two-way relationships among the club fans, approach the fans to the club and create commitment to the club. This case led to the value creation of fans to the club and the fans require themselves to attend the home games. Thus, by keeping and attracting the fans, the sponsors are attracted to the team to advertise for themselves and help the team. As a result, the teams will earn more financial advantages. In addition, the stadiums full of population lead to more revenue through selling more tickets and environmental advertisement of the stadium. Thus, the marketers and managers of sport clubs are suggested to recognize the customers by creating the total customer data to consider the benefits of fans as the main principle of the club while making decisions about the club. In creating the customer knowledge management, the clubs' managers are suggested to use the methods which lead to stimulation and awareness of consumer and make their attitudes or feelings positive towards the club, so that, they can attract fans by creating loyalty and commitment in fans.

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