AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN HOTELS' CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT VALUE CHAIN IN GHANA

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An Investigation into The Adoption of Knowledge Management Processes in Hotels'
Customer Relationship Management Value Chain in Ghana

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The concept of knowledge management (KM) has attracted the interest of academics and practitioners, but related research in the hospitality sector, especially in hotels, remains underdeveloped. How hotels generate knowledge and identify sources of knowledge to support customer relationship management (CRM) remains unclear due to sociodynamic factors and the uncertain business environment of the 21st century, hence resulting in a gap in the KM and CRM value chain nexus in many developing countries, especially in contexts where hotels struggle in managing their local business performance. This thesis addresses this gap by examining how KM processes inform CRM practices. Drawing upon emic perspectives, this study confirms how hoteliers manage knowledge to make decisions, solve problems and enhance CRM primary value chain activities in Ghana. The study also also explores how hotels engage in KM processes and how such processes affect their CRM practices, which can be influenced by various contextual factors. This thesis contributes knowledge on how various contextual factors facilitate and inhibit KM processes in 3-to-5-star hotels in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. A qualitative approach was adopted, and semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews were used to collect the data. Specifically, 36 hotel operational staff and supervisors/managers of 3 departments were interviewed and observed. Purposive and snowball sampling were employed to recruit participants from hotels that are licensed to operate under the mandate of the Ghana Tourism Authority. A thematic approach was used to analyse the data. This thesis empirically contributes to the KM literature by expanding the current knowledge on KM and CRM value chain primary activities at the micro-level of hotel properties. By investigating the generative processes of KM for hotel businesses based on organisational knowledge creation theory of the socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (SECI) model, this thesis highlights the effectiveness of the knowledge generation dimensions in consideration of the influence of KM processes on the CRM of hotels. This research also offers novel insights into those contextual factors that influence the adoption of KM processes in the hotel CRM. The study identifies six CRM primary activities and extends the SECI model by adding digitalisation (D-SECI) to account for the current technological business environment. The study develops an integrative framework to illustrate the integration of KM processes into the CRM value chain activities of hotels to aid hotel managers in strengthening their CRM primary activities and competitive advantage.

This thesis is dedicated to the blessed memory of my beloved mother, Mrs Modesta Kaabere Wavei, who passed to eternity in 2015; to my late grandmother, Mrs Candida Gyireh Kaabere (1925-2021); and to my late dad, Hon Robert Bakah Wavei (12 July 1954-12 November 2022).

(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

I also dedicate this thesis to my beloved wife Mrs Leticia Dorburo Wavei; and son Master Wavei Ethan Wisikandei

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1.1 Introduction

Peter Drucker, the father of management, commented that "today's advanced knowledge is tomorrow's ignorance" (Drucker, 1997, p. 22) because the 'only certainty is uncertainty' in an inevitably dynamic marketplace, hence requiring the creation, sharing and use of new knowledge to foster corporate success (Salem, 2014 P.176). Following the above observation, the contemporary society can be characterised as a knowledge explosion coupled with a fast-paced, dynamic and complex marketplace for business organisations. Hospitality firms should therefore adapt to changing demands to survive in the market (Anning-Dorson & Nyamekye, 2020).

Hotels are vulnerable to catastrophes, such as pandemics, epidemics, natural disasters (Hung, Mark, Yeung, Chan & Graham, 2018; Lo, Cheung & Law, 2006) and situational circumstances (Sainaghi et al., 2013), which influence their customers' purchase decisions (Choi, 2019; Jiang & Wen, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions and lockdowns significantly impacted customers' travel ability and behaviour, thereby choking the global hospitality and tourism industry. Since then, the behaviour and needs of customers quickly changed, leading to low occupancy rates and profitability of hotels. Given such uncertainty (Stafford, 2020), hoteliers needed to go the extra mile to satisfy their customers and stay in business. Lo, Stalcup and Lee (2010) show that hotels can retain their customer base by systematically identifying, processing and meeting the individual needs of their customers. To address these challenges, a shift in human thinking concerning organisational knowledge and management is crucial. Nonaka (1994) believes that knowledge creation and knowledge management (KM) are pivotal to enhancing business organisations' performance. Other scholars define KM as a need in some sectors, including manufacturing and construction, in developed countries (Nonaka, 1995) and observe a growing research attention on the hospitality and tourism industries (Cooper, 2015, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). Understanding the value of customers to hotels and relationship management through KM may be a key source of success for hotels (Phillips, Barnes, Zigan & Schegg, 2017) given that the potential outcomes of KM can enhance their competitive advantage (Cooper 2018; Nieves, 2016).

However, KM in developing countries has received scant research attention (Bormann, 2015), and the existing KM and customer relationship management (CRM) literature is primarily conceptual and descriptive in nature (Garrido-Moreno, Lockett & Garcia-Morales, 2015). Therefore, how hotels in developing countries practise KM in CRM remains unclear. While CRM in hotels has received scholarly attention, KM is an emerging research field, and how these processes work together in hotels is yet to be explored (Gebert, Geib, Kolbe & Brenner, 2003; Liew, 2008).

Given that empirically understanding the interplay between KM and CRM can enhance competitive advantages (Gebert et al., 2003; Klutse, 2016), this thesis investigates how KM processes are being adopted throughout CRM value chain activities (Buttle, 2015) to manage customer relationships, contribute to effective hotel operations and ultimately create competitive advantages in developing countries.

This introductory chapter discusses the concepts and pertinent issues contextualising this investigation. The following section then presents the research background, explains how KM has created a business environment that has revolutionised certain industries and describes its potential impact on the CRM of hotels. The rest of this chapter outlines the research problems, purpose, questions, objectives, context, contributions, significance, and organisation and ends with a summary. The definitions of terms used throughout this thesis are presented at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background to the study

Organisations all over the world are aiming to improve their performance to leverage their competitive advantage. Hotels face challenges in ensuring that their products and services satisfy the changing needs of their customers. Accordingly, customer management remains a challenge for organisations (Cooper, 2002; Salem, 2014). Striving for global and geographic competitive advantage has compelled hotels to adopt strategic perspectives and management initiatives, including KM (Cooper, 2018; Gooijer, 2000; Hussinki, Kianto, Vanhala, & Ritala, 2017; Meyer, 2006; Nieves, Quintana, & Osorio, 2014, 2016).

The concept of KM dates to the 19th century, and its theoretical roots can be traced all the way back to Plato (369 BC), who attempted to define and conceptualise knowledge (Serenko, 2013). Wiig (1997) divides the historic development of economies into six stages: (i) agrarian

economies (focused on creating products for consumption and exchange), (ii) natural resource economies (focused on exploiting natural resources), (iii) industrial revolution (focused on efficiency leading to operational excellence), (iv) product revolution (focused on sophistication and variability leading to product leadership), (v) information revolution (focused on both operational excellence and product leadership), and (vi) knowledge revolution. On the basis of these developments, Cooper (2006) and Wiig (1997) report that the 1980s marked a shift from a production-oriented society to a market-oriented society wherein consumers start asking for personalised services and products, hence necessitating organisations to collect information about their customers and leading to the emergence of KM.

The 21st century marks the emergence of 'economies of ideas' that translate into knowledge that organisations should manage to achieve competitiveness (Gooijer, 2000; Wiig, 1997). Studies in the manufacturing industry reveal that KM has long been embraced for strategic management (Li & Gao, 2003; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). In their study on the manufacturing industry of Japan, Nonaka and Takeuchi show that success of the country does not lie in its manufacturing prowess but in its creation of organisational knowledge, whereby companies create new knowledge that is embodied in their systems, services and/or products targeted at customers. For instance, the success of automobile and electronic companies in Japan (e.g. Honda, Sharp and Canon) is linked to their management of new knowledge to satisfy customers.

KM is considered vital in manufacturing, banking and management due to its capacity to transform businesses. KM caters to organisational adaptability, competence and survival (Civi, 2000; Grant, 1996; Jones & Mahon, 2012; Todericiu & Boanta, 2019) as well as organisational creativity, operational effectiveness and product and service quality (Wiig, 2003). KM is an organisational enabler of knowledge creation, management for growth and competitive advantage (Behringer & Sassenberg, 2015; Cavaliere, Lombardi, & Giustiniano, 2015; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Valmohammadi & Amidi, 2020; Wiig, 1997). Gooijer (2000) suggests that KM intervenes with an organisation's culture and change its operations to improve performance. Therefore, KM is a critical executive skill that helps organisations improve their production and economic power (Drucker, 1999; Reich, 1991; Quinn,1992; Toffler, 1990). Brenner et al. (2003) and Liew (2008) argue that KM can reduce business failures by facilitating strategic planning and customer knowledge management. Manoharan (2019) asserts that KM is a significant antecedent to organisational effectiveness that leads to guest satisfaction and loyalty, which subsequently affect financial outcomes, such as occupancy rate

and increased market share for hotels. Feng and Tian (2005) and Samayei and Sadidi (2011) define KM as an inclusive process that encompasses identifying, transmitting and using accurate data in organisations. Therefore, KM has a significantly growing influence on organisations.

Given the numerous benefits of KM, organisations need to acquire knowledge and learn and innovate to promote new knowledge creation (Drucker, 1999). KM deals with knowledge, people, processes and technologies. 'Knowledge' encompasses the knowhow and insights that people possess and use to deal with situations. 'People' refers to the embodiments of knowledge, creativity, talents and experiences that serve as sources, creators and consumers of knowledge. As they create and consume knowledge from diverse sources on a daily basis, the experiences of people need to be explored. 'Processes' involve logically collecting and guiding information to produce results, and knowledge is created to execute organisational work through humans, machines or the integration of machines and humans. 'Technology' constitutes ICT, which manages knowledge to add organisational value. KM also involves acquiring, filtering, using and protecting knowledge (Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez & Sabherwal, 2004; Gold et al., 2001; Holsapple & Singh, 2001; Migdadi, 2021).

In her theory of organisational knowledge creation, Nonaka (1994) posits that the knowledge possessed by people, organisations and societies can be expanded through a spiral process whereby tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge and reconverted into tacit knowledge. From this theory, Nonaka (1994) proposes the socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (SECI) model, which explains that knowledge creation emanates from individuals, organisations and society in a spiral form. Therefore, this study adopts this model to shed light on the KM process (see details in Chapter 2).

KM possesses some ideal characteristics given its documented success in business, management and manufacturing. As a result, hospitality and tourism industry promoters, practitioners and academics aim to comprehensively understand this concept (Heisig et al., 2016; Lo et al., 2010; Koseoglu, Okumus, & Altin, 2019; Nieves et al., 2016; Tooranloo & Saghafi, 2019). Garrido-Moreno et al. (2015) and Cooper (2015) see KM as a potential solution to the complex and unexpected changes in the demands of customers during the 21st century. Therefore, KM can be explored as a potential strategy to effect change, especially in CRM, to promote customer-centric development (Buttle, 2015; Rahimi, 2017; Sigala, 2018).

Over the past four decades, CRM has significantly changed from a basic marketing solution to a strategy that helps organisations manage their relationships and consolidate their ties with customers. The rapid changes in the needs and behaviour of customers have introduced complexities in CRM as service industries shift from promoting transactional exchanges to relational exchanges with customers (Jain & Jain, 2006). As the economic, social and political conditions of markets are constantly changing, possessing and transforming comprehensive information into meaningful knowledge and skills become critical (Koseoglu, Yick & Okumus, 2021). On the one hand, the increased variety of products and customers require employees to possess creative ideas, knowledge and skills (Liu, Williams, & Li, 2022) that allow them to quickly alternate amongst their tasks to respond to customers' needs. On the other hand, decisions related to handling customers are based on knowledge, thus highlighting the significance of employees' creativity, skills and knowledge at work. The former case pertains to CRM, which contributes to customer satisfaction and retention (Padilla-Melendez & Garrido-Moreno, 2014; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017), whereas the latter pertains to KM, which encourages organisations to strive for competitive advantage by adopting strategic perspectives and changing management initiatives (Cooper, 2018; Gooijer, 2000; Nieves, Quintana, & Osorio, 2016) and to sustain their competitiveness (Grant 1996; Raisi, Baggio, Barratt-Pugh & Willson, 2020). Companies today possess a variety of touchpoints that can improve their interactions with customers and gather feedback. Although companies have access to a huge base of information about their customers, such as their transactions, behaviours and preferences, they do not know how they can make the most out of such knowledge (Campbell, 2003). Moreover, few scholars in business operation and management and in hospitality and tourism have explored employees' perspectives towards KM and CRM.

CRM comprises a value chain (Buttle, 2004), which is crucial for enterprises seeking growth, development and competitive advantage in the short, medium and long terms (Gibbon, Bair & Ponte, 2008; Moon & Strohbehn, 2014; Porter, 1985; Sun, Law & Schuckert, 2018). Buttle (2015) proposes a CRM value chain with five primary stages (i.e. customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development, value proposition development and customer lifecycle management) and four supporting conditions (i.e. leadership and culture, data and information technology, people and processes). The CRM value chain is a framework that informs how CRM practices are implemented at the operational level and how different activities work together to create value (Buttle, 2004, 2015). KM plays a critical role in the CRM value chain, thus requiring attention from academics and industry practitioners.

However, KM remains an emerging area of research (Yiu & Law, 2014), and the hotel and tourism industry lags behind the business, economic and manufacturing industries in embracing such concept (Cooper, 2002, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Xiao & Smith, 2007). Nevertheless, some companies in the industry have started to adopt KM (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Salem, 2014), hence underscoring the need to empirically understand the KM processes of knowledge acquisition, creation and explication in the hospitality industry. KM is a complex concept lacking a standardised definition and measurement (Hussinki et al., 2017). Wiig (1997) defines KM as creating knowledge and solutions through procedures, culture, technologies and people. Hilsop (2013) defines KM as the use of social processes management, people management, technologies, culture and a wide range of methods to achieve organisational goals. Although the above definitions are not exhaustive, competitive advantage remains an essential aspect of KM as reflected in earlier studies arguing that the adoption of KM in the hospitality and tourism industry should improve customer satisfaction, value and profitability (Cooper, 2018; Nieves, 2016; Salem 2014; Stafford, 2020).

Previous research on KM has focused on developed countries (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016; Cooper, 2018; Dahou et al., 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Xiao, 2007). Therefore, the strategies for mitigating challenges, augmenting operational performance and increasing the success rate of hotels through the adoption of KM in developing countries remain largely unknown.

1.2.1 The Hotel industry in Ghana – a developing country

Ghana is a hospitality hub in West Africa with a population of about 30 million people. The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) reveals that the country is making strides in developing its hospitality, hotel and tourism industries through many initiatives, including diaspora tourism (GTA, 2019, 2020). Since the 1980s, Ghana has focused on developing its hospitality and tourism industries to increase private sector participation in its economic activities. According to the World Travel and Tourism Counsel (2018), Ghana's hospitality and tourism sector contributed 6.2% (USD 2.7 billion) and 5.3% (682,000 jobs) to the country's GDP and employment in 2017, respectively.

Accommodation constitutes the most vibrant economic enterprise of Ghana's hospitality and tourism industry (GTA, 2018, 2019). By the end of 2018, Ghana had about 3,472 licensed

hotels categorised into star-rated, guest houses and budget hotels. Ghana's hotel industry is operated by international chain and independent hotels, including 751 star-rated hotels, 157 guest houses and 2,564 budget hotels (GTA, 2018; see detailed hotel distribution discussion in Chapter Two Section 2.12.3). Nonetheless, some hotel enterprises in Ghana struggle with low occupancy and revenue per available room (RevPAR) (GTA, 2018). Surprisingly, some of these hotels practise KM, but the role of KM in their CRM remains unclear given the limited research on the influence of KM on these hotels' CRM value chain (primary) activities.

KM can influence some hotels in Ghana given their use of knowledge systems and repositories. However, the KM situation of hotels in the country remain largely unexplored (Bormann, 2015). Bormann (2015) observes that some hotels in southern Ghana have KM systems in place and strive to implement KM practices. However, further research on KM is warranted to produce insights that can inform both present and future CRM strategies.

Accra, the capital city of Ghana, lies in the Greater Accra Region in the southern part of the country. This city is deemed suitable for this investigation for several reasons. Firstly, a review of the CRM and KM literature identifies Accra hotels as an active market whose CRM and technology have already been investigated in the literature (Amoako, Artur, Christiana & Katah, 2012; Klutse, 2016). By focusing on Accra, the findings of this study complement earlier studies and clearly illustrate the effect of KM on the CRM value chain in this market.

Secondly, according to GTA, Accra has a high concentration of international hotel chains and first-class hotels with several professional staff and a large number of chain and independent budget hotels (GTA, 2018). Many of these hotels meet operational standard practices (GTA, 2018, 2019). Therefore, KM practices are assumed to be more visible amongst hotels in Accra than in other cities in Ghana. Accordingly, Accra hotels are more likely to be interested in the impact of the KM process on CRM as they search for practices that can strengthen their strategic decision making and competitiveness.

Thirdly, Accra is the most vibrant city for business and meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions and hosts several activities that serve attract international and domestic customers (Akwensivie & Abedi-Lartey, 2018). Accra presents itself as a hospitality and tourism hub by having the largest number of chain and independent hotels in Ghana (GTA, 2020). Accordingly, the city has become the first point of international contact for most business travellers and tourists in Ghana (Nutsugbodo, 2013).

By investigating the influence of the KM process on CRM in Ghanaian hotels, the findings of this study can benefit both business practitioners and investors who rely on knowledge to run their businesses. In addition, by demonstrating how KM enhances the primary stages of the CRM value chain of Ghanaian hotels, this study teaches small and medium hotels how star-rated independent and chain hotels adopt KM to manage customer relationships and create value for both themselves and their customers.

1.3 Problem Statement

Given the increasing interest in KM as a global revolution (Guribie, Tengan & Kuebutornye, 2018) and as a strategic initiative for sectoral transformation (Cooper, 2018; Nieves et al., 2014, Nonaka 1995; Wiig, 1997), this research responds to calls of KM researchers (Dahou et al., 2018; Cooper, 2018; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2015; Mohsin & Syed, 2018; Wiig 1997) for a further investigation of those contexts in which hotels manage their knowledge.

KM has recently emerged as a novel management concept. Accordingly, its functions are still relatively unknown amongst hotels. Generally, hotels operate in an unstable, dynamic business environment where they need to obtain knowledge from massive amounts of unstructured customer data (Buttle & Maklan, 2019) and tailor their products and services to satisfy the individual needs of their customers. The Ghana National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2013–2027 aims to help the hotel sector flourish through increased customer management. However, the outcomes reported in 2019 and 2020 greatly diverged from the goals outlined in the plan. Exploring the KM initiatives of chain and independent hotels that aim to secure a competitive advantage over their competitors can help these establishments and the NTDP achieve their goals of enhancing CRM.

Previous studies on KM and CRM have mostly focused on the hotel industry to understand the roles of customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, service quality, information and communication technology and revenue management integration in CRM, KM and leadership (Bouncken, 2002; Guillet & Shi, 2019; Piccoli, O'Connor, Capaccioli & Alvarez,2003; Palmer, McMahon-Beattie & Beggs, 2000; Hu, Horng, & Sun, 2009; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017; Sigala, 2005, 2018; Sigala, 2005; Sofi, Bashir, Parry & Dar, 2020). However, only few studies have examined the role of KM in CRM (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2015) and quantified its influences.

Lo et al. (2010) assess CRM practices using the CRM value chain at the hotel property level in Hong Kong. Despite exploring how hotels in Hong Kong manage customer relationships, they ignore the effect of KM on the CRM value chain in hotels. Using a modified version of Porter's (1985) value chain, Sun et al. (2018) comprehensively review 128 articles on the North American hotel industry published from 2013 to 2016 and stored in hospitality and tourism journal databases. They reveal that these studies have only investigated one or two topics within the value chain model, largely ignore the connection amongst different types of activities and are mostly quantitative (more than 85%) in nature. The above studies highlight the need for a combined investigation of CRM and value chains in KM. Moreover, although the potential effect of KM on hotel performance is widely recognised, its effects on hotel CRM value chains remain largely unexplored in hospitality research (Gonzalez-Serrano, Talon-Ballestero, Munoz-Romero, Soguero-Ruiz & Rojo-Alvarez, 2021). Similarly, research on the integration of KM and CRM integration is lacking (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2015). Unlike in the manufacturing and banking sectors (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Hong et al., 2011), the effects of KM in the hotel sector are yet to be empirically proven (Yiu & Law, 2014). Cooper (2018) calls for future research to understand the role of KM in the hospitality and tourism setting to understand its effects on CRM primary activities in hotels (Lo et al., 2010).

The KM practice in developing countries, such as Ghana, is relatively new and is even more limited amongst hotels. By contrast, Ghana's banking, education and telecommunication sectors have made great strides in implementing KM programmes. For example, by assessing the implementation of KM in the telecommunications and financial sectors of Ghana, Gyensare (2012) and Adjei and Dei (2015) find that such concept grants telecommunications companies and banks a competitive edge in developing new products and services. Using a sample of secondary schools, Gyaase, Anane and Armah (2015) find that these institutions generally lack a KM strategy and do not use information communication technology. Boateng and Narteh (2015) investigate knowledge applications in Ghanaian industries and identify organisational culture, trust and absorptive capacity as some factors that influence knowledge application. However, they do not specify the industries they have investigated and merely focus on 2001/2002 Masters of Business Administration graduates of the University of Ghana who were working in various industries. In sum, a sector-specific investigation of KM is needed.

The hotel business contributes to the economic development of developing African countries (Barros & Dieke, 2008). The KM process in this continent should be explored to advance strategic business management and market intelligence. Therefore, understanding the effect of

KM processes on the CRM primary value chain is critical at the hotel property management level. Boateng and Agyemang (2015) reveal that only few empirical studies have focused on the impact of KM in Ghana. In their investigation of knowledge sharing and application amongst frontline hotel employees in Accra, they ignore the effect of the entire KM process on the CRM value chain. Unsurprisingly, scholars have called for the implementation of innovative practices in Ghanaian hotels (Akwensivie & Abedi-Lartey, 2018; Amoako, Neequaye, Kutu-Adu, Caesar, & Ofori, 2019; Hiamey & Hiamey, 2020). Further research is important to enable better planning for the hotel sector, identify growth opportunities and provide solutions to market development challenges. These studies will also enable hotels break free from any vicious cycle of market vulnerability (Amoako et al., 2019), perform in more competitive and sustainable terms (Awad & Ghaziri, 2004), and improve their business processes. In line with Yang and Wan (2004), this thesis postulates that Ghanaian hotels will significantly benefit from KM if they understand and implement its practices.

The study recognises the importance of studying the KM process and CRM value chain activities beyond the current conceptual and descriptive role of KM. Accordingly, this thesis examines the KM process, the contextual factors that influence such process in Ghana and its potential effect on the CRM value chain primary activities of Ghanian hotels.

Definitions of KM are largely contested (Meyer, 2006; Salem, 2014), fragmented (Mohsin & Syed, 2018) and understood differently across several contexts (Johns, 2006). As KM has been underexplored in developed countries (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Lo et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2018), an Afrocentric perspective towards KM in the hospitality industry, especially hotels, is needed. In the business environment, context defines how businesses develop their strategies and practices to fit specific local conditions, cultures and industrial structures (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Meyer, 2006). Developed and developing countries show cultural, economic, organisational and social differences (Hussinki et al., 2017; Meyer, 2006). Ladhari (2012) and Sultan and Simpson (2000) posit that expectations and perceptions in business management also differ across nations. Therefore, countries may differ in their economic, political and administrative systems, cultures and customer expectations.

KM in the manufacturing and banking industries (Drucker, 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Mills & Smith, 2010; Torrez, Ferraz, & Santos-Rodrigues, 2018; Ullah, Iqbal & Shams, 2020) has been extensively investigated to underscore its relevance. However, the relationship between hotel CRM value chain and KM has not received equivalent attention, which

highlights the need to evaluate hotel operations to improve their performance, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic has changed customers' demands and behaviours. A comprehensive understanding of KM helps hotels find a foothold in the knowledge economy. This thesis then explores how KM is incorporated into CRM primary activities and identifies its drivers and barriers. A holistic understanding of KM from the supply side is critical in unpacking and generating business growth strategies for hotels to enhance their competitiveness, especially in Ghana. The novelty of this study lies in its theoretical development of a KM process in hotels' CRM primary value chain activities and proposal of a new conceptual framework for enhancing the business performance of hotels in developing regions. Mapping KM processes with hotel CRM primary value chain activities also provides useful insights to hoteliers and other stakeholders.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of KM processes on the CRM practices employed by Ghanaian hotels at the property level. Using the knowledge base view theory of the firm and the SECI model (which originated from the theory of organisational knowledge creation) to understand how hotels adopt the KM process in Ghana will shed light on the application of these theories in developing countries and contribute to the development of CRM strategies among business organisations for competitive advantage. The study aims to propose a conceptual framework that will deepen understanding of the effect of the KM processes on CRM and the influences (facilitators and barriers) affecting KM.

1.5 Research questions

Given the purpose of this study, the overarching research question is: *how does KM shape the hotel CRM value chain (primary stages) in Ghana*? The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What is the importance of the KM process for CRM in the Ghanaian hotel sector context?
2. How do hotels in Ghana apply the KM process (knowledge creation, acquisition and use) on CRM value chain (primary) activities?

3. What are the contextual influences (facilitators and barriers) on KM in the hotel sector of Ghana?

4. What theoretical framework can be developed to explain how KM can be incorporated in CRM primary activities?

1.6 Research objectives

Based on the research problem, research questions and purpose of the study, the following objectives inform this thesis:

1. To explore the importance of the KM process for CRM in hotels in Ghana;

2. To identify and analyse how hotels in Ghana apply the KM process (knowledge creation, acquisition and use) on CRM value chain (primary) activities;

3. To examine the contextual influences (facilitators and barriers) on the KM process in the Ghana hotel sector; and

4. To develop a theoretical framework for managing the KM process in CRM primary activities.

1.7 Implications of the study

This study is the first to investigate KM adoption in the CRM value chain of Ghanaian hotels. Academically, this study contributes to the literature by proposing a conceptual framework that can deepen our understanding of the effect of KM on CRM and the contextual factors (facilitators and inhibitors) that influence its adoption. Such understanding will transcend the conceptual views of theory of organisation knowledge creation by shedding light on how hotels in Ghana create and acquire knowledge through KM. Such knowledge will also be useful in evaluating the applicability of various SECI model components to Ghanaian hotels.

Apart from exploring the application of KM in CRM practice, this study extends the use of the SECI model to developing countries. Combining KM and CRM primary activities also improves our understanding of the effectiveness of KM adoption in hotels and the role of KM and CRM integration in generating value for both customers and hotels.

From the practical and managerial perspectives, Xiao (2007) argues that process knowledge can be used to update strategic marketing plans and guide long-term decisions and policy formulations. This thesis teaches hotel operators on how to align the KM process with their CRM value chain primary stages to improve their performance, increase their revenue and satisfy their customers. The findings also highlight those contextual facilitators and barriers to the application of KM in Ghanaian hotels.

1.8 Organisation of this research

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the study, and it includes the study background, motivation for KM research in Ghana, research problem, purpose, questions and objectives, and context of the research. The implication of the study and definition of terms are also presented in the first chapter of the thesis. Chapter Two presents theoretical underpinnings and a review of relevant literature about KM, KM's importance and influences (facilitators and barriers), CRM practices and the CRM value chain. This chapter also discusses the social culture and organisational culture in Ghana's setting, the hotel industry in Ghana and the research gap. Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach by detailing the philosophical foundations, research design undertaken for this study, the purposive sampling approach, data analytical approach (thematic analysis of data choice), research trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four analyses the data and presents the research findings. Chapter Five presents the discussion of the thesis. Chapter Six concludes the study by summarising the key findings, theoretical and practical contributions, outlining the limitations of the study and making recommendations for further research.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Comprehending the various definitions of KM sets a tone to adapt an all-encompassing KM definition in this study. The definitions of the terms used in this study have been presented below.

1.9.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is classified as explicit and tacit (Bouncken, 2002; Polanyi,1966). Tacit or implicit knowledge primarily depends on people, while explicit knowledge is shared via systematic language (Jain, Aagja, & Bagdare, 2017; Nonaka & Konno, 1998). Tacit knowledge is difficult to digitise as it is mostly communicated from leaders to employees whereas explicit knowledge is transferable, easily codified, digitised and communicated, and can be found in customer directories, data bases, documents, files, media, technical and innovation solutions among others (Cooper, 2015). The core benefit of KM is using knowledge for competitive advantage and sustainable development (Cooper, 2015; Nonaka & Konno, 1995; Wiig, 1997).

1.9.2 Knowledge Management (KM)

KM is the service provider, offering tools and procedures for knowledge exchange (Gibbert, Leibold, & Probst, 2002). According to Wiig (1997), KM encompasses knowledge creation to solve problems and make decision through procedures, culture, technological use and engaging the mind. Similarly, Hilsop (2013) believe that KM encompasses an organisation's effort to manage knowledge using culture, ICT, social processes, and managing people. Knowledge is significant for an organisation's success, but process and technology only are not enough drivers of organisation's successfulness. People, managers, and employees are pivotal to every organisation's success. Hence, it is crucial for KM strategy implementation to centre around people in organisations as people are the bedrock to sustainable competitive advantages.

1.9.3 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Payne and Frow (2005) opine that CRM focuses on customers aim to create customer value and profitability for stakeholders. CRM is a customer-driven business process management strategy that maximises relationships (Buttle, 2004; Lo et al., 2010), which enables customers to be satisfied and retained in an organisation (Rahimi & Kozak, 2017).

1.9.4 CRM value chain

Value chain seek to provide value for customers and profitability for the company (Buttle, 2015; Lo et al., 2010). It involves five primary activities/stages (customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development, value proposition, and manage the customer lifecycle) and supporting conditions (leadership and culture, data and IT, people, and processes) (Buttle, 2004).

1.10 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided detailed information constituting the introduction of this thesis. It began with a brief introduction of the thesis, which is to investigate KM process on CRM value chain in hotels in a developing economy. This was followed by the background of the study, which provides great insights to KM and its relevance for study in the hospitality and hotel sector. Next, the research problem, the study's overall purpose and objectives were presented. This was followed by the significance of the study, the organisational structure of the study, and the definition of key terms. The next chapter is the literature review chapter – it presents a comprehensive examination of KM and CRM as well as the theoretical foundation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter discusses previous literature and theoretical foundations pertinent to this thesis. It examines the conceptual background of the knowledge-based view theory of the firm, knowledge and KM. It also reviews literature on KM processes and the theory of organisation knowledge creation of the SECI model. Next, literature on the contextual factors, i.e. facilitators and barriers, of KM identified in cross-disciplinary settings are reviewed. Then, the existing literature on CRM and the CRM value chain is presented. A brief systematic literature review on KM in hospitality and tourism is presented to discuss the state of KM studies in the hospitality industry and the identification of research gaps. Following, is the hotel and hospitality industry in Ghana as well as culture and organisation in Ghana. Finally, the research gaps are summarised.

2.2 Underpinning theories

As indicated in the first chapter, this study seeks to understand the concept of KM in hotels in Ghana by investigating the adoption of the KM process in the CRM value chain (primary) activities at the hotel property level in Ghana. To achieve this purpose, the study recognises the organisational strategists' debate on the relevance of organisational theories and employs a widely recognised theory, knowledge-based view theory of the firm, from the field of business strategic management and the theory of organisation knowledge creation. The two theories present that resources are heterogeneous in different firms and knowledge creation is a spiral process. Using these two theories as the underlying framework of this study, knowledge is considered a unique resource that gives hotels competitive advantage.

2.2.1 Knowledge-based view theory of the firm

Over two decades, theories of innovation, knowledge and knowledge management have been extended from intellectual capacity to social and organisational contexts. Knowledge-based view theory of the firm (KBVT) is a popular theory used to examine innovation and

management issues in organisations. KBVT of the firm originated from the resource-based view of organisations which submits that the competitive resource of an organisation is its strategic assets (Donate & de Pablo, 2015; Shamim, Cang & Yu, 2017). Proponents of the KBVT argue that knowledge-based resources are complex and vitally important to organisations success. Grant Robert (1996), a pioneer in research on KBVT, has pointed out that, KBVT focuses on knowledge as the core and vital strategic resource of a firm and it extends beyond the conversational view of strategic management to competitive advantage and addressing other issues such as allocation of decision-making right, management, organisational structure and nature of a firm's coordination. Thus, KBVT presents that organisational knowledge is unique to an organisation and present synergistic advantages that cannot be commonly traded by competitors nor be replicable in the marketplace because it holds an organisation together (Brown & Duguid, 1998). This shows that, in a dynamic and competitive environment, knowledge is crucial for competitive advantage in an organisation (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) through the ability to acquire and transfer. Thus, resource-based view of organisations gives rise to KBVT (Grant 1996) and the concept of KM (Barney, 1991; Donate & de Pablo, 2015; Lam et al., 2015).

Knowledge emblematises know-how and information which can be created and transferred by a firm for a competitive differentiation (Kogut et al., 1992). Knowledge availability and use help to understand the existence and effective management of an organisation (Rebolledo & Nollet, 2011). Ebbers and Wijnberg (2009) and Barney (1991) posit that the primary proposition of the KBVT is competitive advantage where organisations can create new knowledge and acquire existing knowledge to create value by efficiently managing the unique knowledge capabilities of the organisation. This differentiates the organisations from its competitors (Wernerfelt, 1984). According to Kogut and Zander (1992), every firm is supposed to be a knowledge unit, and knowledge can be in explicit or implicit forms. This is evident in the fact that KBVT claims that knowledge 'creation and utilisation' is the 'raison d'etre' (most important) of organisations (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000). However, many organisations are more inclined to knowledge identification rather than its creation and use. Having observed organisations' inability to understand how to generate and use knowledge, Argote and Ingram (2000) assert that organisations may gain competitive advantage by understanding the 'how' of knowledge creation rather than its identification.

KBVT of the firm is important to this study due to its evolution, which has made it a prominent theory for understanding organisations as well as its influential role in strategic management

(Barney & Wright 2011; Galbreath 2005). Hence, organisations ought to be examined based on their knowledge resources (Grant, 1996). Despite its role in unique knowledge exploration to advance organisational growth, development and performance, KBVT has been criticized. For example, Foss (1996) argues that KBVT attempts to describe knowledge preference for the organisation, and the explanation is often non-economic. Grant (1996) believes that KBVT conflicts with other organisational models, especially the bureaucratic and information-processing approaches. However, KBVT distinguishes itself from other organisational theories by helping to explain firm's strategic management and for competitiveness. Hence, KBVT is a knowledge creation and application theory (Grant, 1996).

2.2.2 Theory of organisation knowledge creation

What organisations know and how they create and manage knowledge is critical for KM process. McCann and Buckner (2004) contend that a firm ought to examine and understand its own knowledge by scanning its internal environment and explore the business environment to identify knowledge and respond to the external business surroundings that may present knowledge-related challenges. Based on McCann and Bucker's argument, it is important to understand how hotels acquire and create knowledge. From a strategic perspective, interactions between KM activities occur in internal and external environments to produce appropriate knowledge for business operation (Kalling, 2003; Mourtesen, 2003). Knowledge circulates during these interactions to produce a knowledge lifecycle which enlarges with each round of KM process (Lee, Lee & Kang, 2005). The theory of organisation knowledge creation holds an organisation as a system that processes information to solve problems. It questions how organisations deal with information and decisions in an environment of uncertainties and suggests that the efficiency of an organisation should be viewed from the 'input-process-output' sequence of hierarchical information processing. Knowledge creation should be embraced in addition to information processing in uncertain and challenging environments (Nonaka, 1994).

According to, organisational knowledge is created through a continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge in four patterns of interaction (see Figure 2.1). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) posit that knowledge can be created through a spiral knowledge creation process of socialisation, externalisation, combination, and internalisation (SECI). The SECI model

constitutes one of the most relevant approaches used to examine knowledge management in organisations. The model describes a high-level conceptual representation of KM, and KM as a knowledge creation process (McAdam & McCreedy, 1999). This model was developed to provide a conceptual standpoint on KM by explaining the four wide components of KM process and the significance of enrobing KM in organisations. The SECI model is designed to describe how organisational knowledge is created through continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge in four patterns of interaction (Nonaka, 1994). Explicit knowledge encompasses captured, codified and written information which can be distributed or transferred, while tacit knowledge envelopes experience, personal skills which are nonverbalised and intuitive (Easterby-Smith & Prieto, 2008; Polanyi, 2012). Thus, the SECI components help to understand various organisational development and their knowledge creation and knowledge management process (See Figure 2.1).

Nonaka (1994) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) state that organisational knowledge creation is a dynamic process which can be created through social interaction-formally and informally, otherwise known as socialisation. The socialisation component of the model converts tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge through observation, imitation, guidance etc. Informal social interaction encompasses customers, competitors, suppliers amongst others emerging knowledge or ideas being used for an organisation's strategic development. Formal interaction explores knowledge at the interorganisational level through formal agreement such as franchising and outsourcing or alliance formation. This implies that organisational knowledge is a process through which an organisation increases tacit knowledge created by individuals through observing situations. The externalisation component of the SECI model seeks to model current situations and formalise knowledge from tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge. Here, tacit knowledge gets codified into documents, computer programmes and manuals (explicit knowledge) so that employees of an organisation may have access to the knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). The process of converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge has received a lot of scholarly debates from the perspective of how impossible or challenging it might be to convert tacit knowledge. The combination component deals with converting explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge. Combination seeks to model a situation to a better form and brings together existing theories to address a phenomenon (McAdam & McCreedy, 1999). In essence, codified knowledge is combined to create knowledge (new) in an organisation. Internalisation explores expression of theory in practice (McAdam & McCreedy, 1999). It converts explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. Since employees undergo daily routines in organisations, their use of

explicit knowledge gets internalised in them as such the knowledge gets modified to form a new knowing (tacit) which is the results of employees' individual experience emerging from the level of explicit knowledge use, facilitating the emergence of heuristic knowledge-a knowledge derived from practice and evaluations (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001). Each of the four components of the model represents a process in KM as they are distinct. Nonetheless, socialisation and externalisation components as well as socialisation and internalisation produce tacit knowledge, while externalization and combination components as well as internalisation and combination produce explicit knowledge. This suggests that the four components of the model can result in tacit and explicit knowledge creation, providing an overview of their influences on KM. The SECI model enhances organisational KM by using explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

Despite the importance of the model, it is not without criticisms. Essers and Schreinemakers (1997) and McAdam and McCreedy (1999) question the model as knowledge creation and transfer in organisations are complex, convoluted, sophisticated, making it impossible to codify all knowledge forms. Hence, they describe the model as a mechanistic approach to KM in organisations. From practitioners' perspective, Gourlay (2006) submits that the model is too abstract to be an operational model for organisations and does not effectively aid new knowledge creation. Other scholars consider the model to be inconclusive and may not be universally applicable (Bratianu, 2010; Farnese, Barbieri, Chirumbolo, & Patriotta, 2019). Some scholars disagree with the order of the model, arguing that the process could occur in different order or simultaneously (Gourlay, 2003; Zhu, 2004). Andreeva and Ikhilchik (2011) analyse the model in the context of Russian national culture and suggested that decomposing the SECI model into three levels-basic cognitive processes (societal and organization conditions, and managerial tools) will enable empirical and cross-cultural examination. This implies that the model may not be applicable in certain contexts, hence the need for it to be assessed in different geographical locations. Despite the criticisms levelled against the SECI model, which largely are measurements and identification issues, the model continues to be used extensively as a model of choice for knowledge creation or generation. With respect to the present study, the criticisms against the model may not apply because this study does not test the relationship among the SECI components (socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization), instead, it assesses the model's applicability to KM in the Ghanaian context. Hence, the difficulty of which component matches with the other does not arise in this study.

Importantly, Adesina and Ocholla (2019) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to investigate specific demographic details of research studies on the SECI model from 1995 to 2018 and found the geographical distribution of research studies that applied the model (i.e., model was either suitable or had limitations) as follows: 62 percent in Asia (led by China and followed by Japan), 23 percent in Europe, 6 percent in US and Canada, 5 percent in Australia, 4 percent in Africa (mainly East and North Africa) and revealed the dearth of research on the application of the SECI model in Africa, especially West and South Africa. The authors also found that the model was used in other disciplines, namely, computer science and IT, engineering, commerce, education, management, health, marketing, project management, and government. From the foregoing, it has been realised that hospitality and tourism industry has not been accounted for regarding the SECI model application in KM studies. Given these gaps, the present study will examine the empirical application of the SECI model in hotels in Ghana-West Africa. This study, therefore, aims to understand and explain how KM process is conducted in hotels to enhance CRM practice. Hence, the SECI model assessment will help to shed light on KM process in hotels.

From the above, SECI model will help to conceptualise the concept of KM and translate it to an understandable language of hotel operators is required. The model contains elements that will explain KM initiatives and process to achieve the objectives of the study because the literature review suggests that the SECI model can explain KM process in hotels. The strengths and weaknesses of the model are recognised, and inferences are drawn. As the aim of this thesis is to investigate KM process on CRM practices in Ghanaian hotels, Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI model is considered suitable. In line with Nonaka and Takeuchi, this thesis recognises that KM process consists of knowledge creation and acquisition and will attempt to assess the model to find out its applicability in the Ghanaian context. Additionally, this investigation also accounts for the facilitators and barriers of KM process in Ghanaian hotels.

Tacit knowledge

Socialisation | Externalisation

Tacit knowledge | Explicit knowledge

Internalisation | Combination

Explicit knowledge
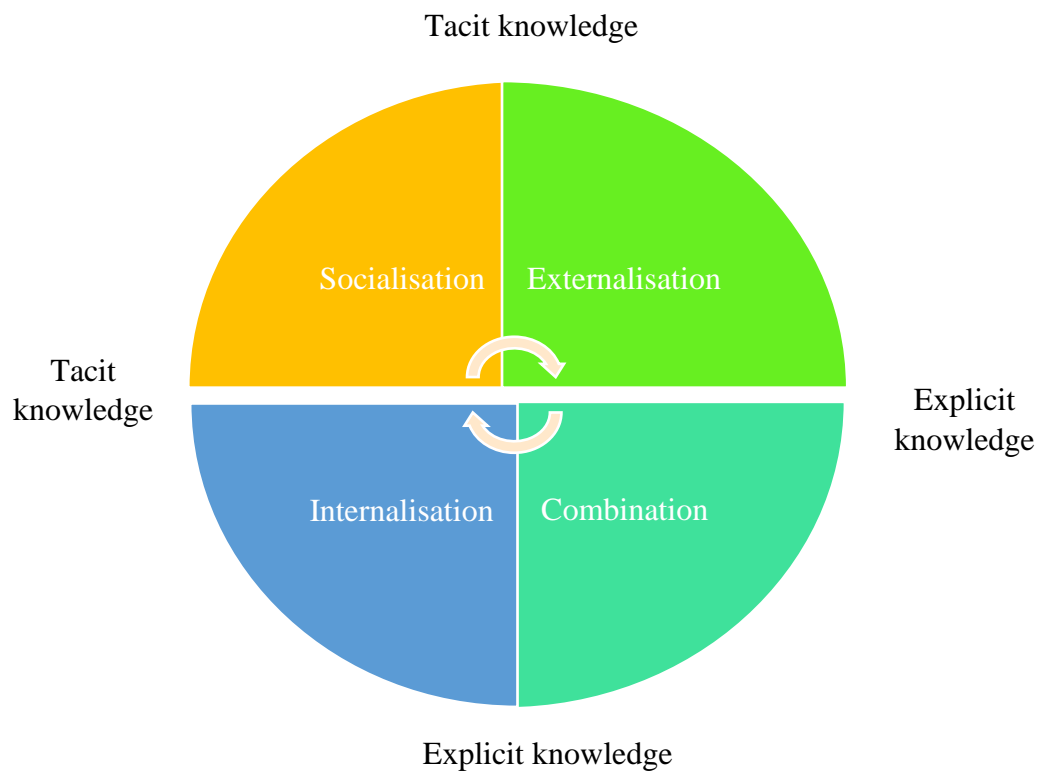
Figure 2. 1 Nonaka and Takeuchi SECI model

Source: Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

2.3 Knowledge

It is important to understand the root of the word 'knowledge' before discussing knowledge management. The concept of knowledge is a broad and abstract notion that has presented an epistemological debate in western philosophy since the classical Greek era (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The economy and psychology fields hold that diffusion, schemes of thought to resolve the inexplicable, motivation, uncertainty and renewed research lead to both imagination and routines in humans and systems (Loasby, 2002) enabling inventions and impose conjectured connecting principles to generate knowledge (Smith, 1980). The term knowledge has received varied conceptualisations and classifications in the literature.

Knowledge constitutes an intangible resource with non-imitable and unique elements which are strategic and distinct to an organisation's success (Barney, 1991). The concept of

knowledge is complex to define and measure. Its definition ranges from narrow to broad and from conceptual to practical to philosophical. Knowledge is often viewed from a general sense and can function as true and believed knowledge. True knowledge is a statement that is true in the world whereas belief knowledge is used if truth cannot be ascertain (Hempel, 1965). Ackoff (1989) defines knowledge as possessing the know-how to control a system. Bailey and Clark (1989) describe knowledge as meaningful interpretation of information in relation to the situation and user. Davenport and Prusak (1998) explain knowledge as a concept framed by contextual information, experience, expert insights for evaluation purposes. Beckman (1999) defines knowledge as reasoning about data and information actively to enable decision-making, learning and problem solving for performance. Wiig (1993) characterises knowledge as constituting beliefs, concepts, expectations, judgments, know-how, methodologies, perspectives, and truths. In short, knowledge combines data and information as well as experience and expertise to make meaningful decision (Chaffey & Wood, 2005). Knowledge is an innately human quality, residing in 'knowers' otherwise known as the human mind (Davenport, 1998), because a person must "identify, interpret and internalise knowledge" (Myers, 1996, p.2).

In Grant's (1996) literature review on knowledge-based theory of the firm, he presented some characteristics of knowledge such as transferability (i.e. transmission and receipt of knowledge capability within firms and between firms in terms of knowing about facts and theories (explicit) and knowing-how (tacit), capacity for aggregation (i.e. individuals and organisations adding new knowledge to existing knowledge to express a common language), and appropriability (i.e. ability to allocate or apply knowledge and receive the returns of knowledge).

However, some studies contend that the concept of knowledge is not any different from data and information. And because knowledge relates to data and information, these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably. It is argued that the assumed notion that data to information is the hierarchical order, instead should be a reverse hierarchy: knowledge ought to exist before information can be formulated and before data can be measured to form information because data has already been influenced by the thought or knowledge processes and expectation that leads to its identification and collection (Tuomi, 1999/2000). Critical to this, Alavi and Leidner (2001) argued that knowledge is information possessed in the minds of people which may or may not be new, observations, ideas, judgments, facts, and interpretations. Thus, information is converted to knowledge once it is processed in the minds of people and knowledge becomes

information once the individual articulates it and communicate in word. This implies that knowledge becomes a base for people to understand data and information. Again, knowledge support systems may not appear radically different from other forms of information systems but will enable users to capture and store knowledge in data and information.

Notwithstanding, some scholars argue that the terms data, information, and knowledge are not interchangeable or the same because data is a pre-requisite for information and information is a prerequisite for knowledge, hence data to knowledge should be a hierarchy (Choo, 2006; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Rowley, 2007). Data translates into information when its creator adds meanings to make it relevant and purposeful, while knowledge occurs through the evaluation of new experiences and information, values, expert insights and contextual information (Davenport, 1998). This denotes that data is a property of things from which information is extracted, while knowledge is a property of people, resides in them, and is actionable (Boddy, Boonstra & Kennedy, 2005). In IT literature, data are discrete facts which have not been processed nor organised to provide specific meaning (Award & Ghaziri, 2004; Pearlson & Saunders, 2004), while organised data is information as it has meaning to the user (Turban, Rainer & Potter, 2005) (Figure 2.1). Knowledge occurs when human action creates and organise information in achieving a target (Nonaka, 1994). Knowledge is defined in terms of information (Rowley, 2007) as well as refers to the addition of intelligence (i.e., experience and skill) to information for meaningful decision-making (Cooper, 2015). Thus, knowledge is information valued, contextualised and actionable (Choo, 2006; Cooper, 2015; Rowley, 2007).

Comprehending the difference between data, information and knowledge will enhance the ability to understand, capture data and information and formalise and/or interpret into knowledge for contextual use. The use of only data and information in an organisation is limited in solving a problem (Rowley, 2007). The use of knowledge, however, transcends data and information limitation to solve problems by effecting change. This distinguishes knowledge from data and information as the possession of data and information in a firm does not necessarily mean the possession of knowledge. For instance, different people with the same information within the same context may not have the same ability to use the information possessed to a high degree of success. So, value addition to information is a matter of ability, hence a difference in human capability to act. The differences in capability may stem from different perspectives, different experiences, different beliefs, and different training and development (Wiig, 1993). Although knowledge differs from data and information, the later are valuable because information is data processed to create a functional platform for

knowledge to occur because value added to information produces knowledge for a specific purpose (Daveport, 1998). Knowledge is derived from information and information is derived from data; hence, humans are the main actors to turn information into knowledge through conversations, connections, consequences, and comparison. In this sense, data is raw descriptions or observations about states of past, present and future world, and information is patterns that can be imbued in data while knowledge encompasses human reflection and experience (De Long & Fahey, 2000). Thus, knowledge is at a higher level in terms of insights and value creation than data and information because it is knowledge that may determine the success of an organisation, hence requires attention.

Data	Information	Knowledge
Raw facts	Organised set of data	Meaningful information
Structured	More structured	More Unstructured
Context-independent	Context-independent	Context-dependent
Less actionable	Less actionable	Actionable
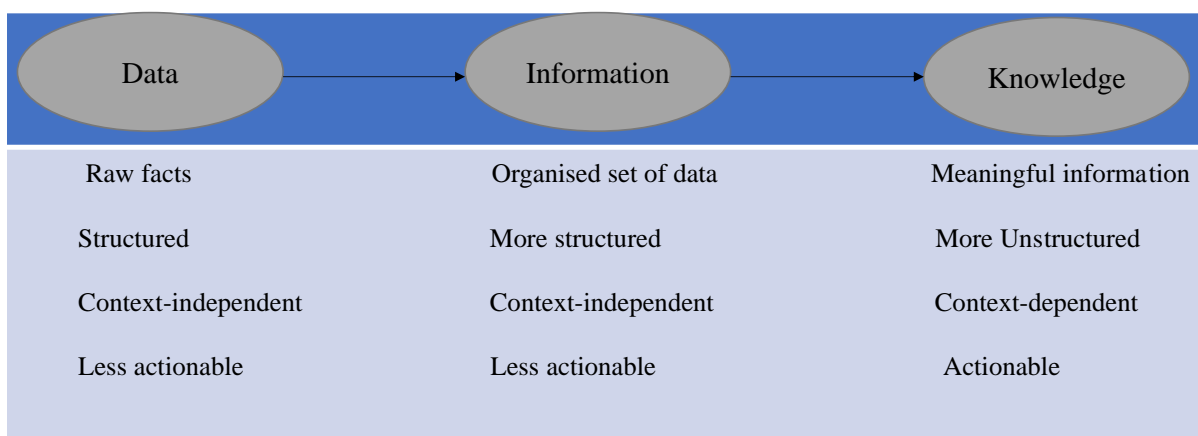
Figure 2. 2 Data, information and knowledge

Source: (Bhatt, 2001; Davenport, 1998; Choo, 2006; Rowley, 2007; Wiig, 1993)

Based on the above discussion on the actual meaning of data, information and knowledge, to researchers is inconclusive in the literature as there seems to be no clear boundaries between data, information, and knowledge (De Long & Fahey, 2000). Different organisations may consider data and information as knowledge depending on their objectives and work situation. Some organisations depending on the size and their activities and other contextual issues may consider data and information as knowledge in their organisations.

2.3.1 Types of knowledge

The classification of knowledge in organisations is debatable (De Long & Fahey, 2000) as different scholars present different typologies of knowledge. Some scholars classified knowledge as declarative (prepositional or fact-based-'know what' or know-about to do knowledge at a particular time) versus procedural (methods, procedures, or experience-based-'know how' knowledge which can be followed or serve as a guide to perform tasks), and specific (localised, inductive knowledge which is extracted from human reasoning) versus abstract (generalisable, deductive knowledge extracted from existing knowledge) (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Grant, 1996; Fowler, 2000; Nonaka, 1995; Kogut & Zander, 1992; Xiao & Smith, 2007). While experience provides immediate 'knowledge of acquaintance', 'knowledge about' is the result of systematic thought and the exercise of reason (Spender, 1996). Alavi and Leidner (2001) in their conceptual foundation and research of KM conceptualises other types of knowledge such as individual (inherent in or created by individuals from experience or insights), social (created by collective actions of a group), pragmatic (useful knowledge for a firm-best practices, market reports), relational (know-with to understand how to interact with others), conditional (know-when to perform a task) and causal (know-why to understand why things work).

Child and Rodrigues (1996) outlined three types of knowledge in relation to the role of social identity in international transfer of knowledge through joint ventures (business). Their typologies of knowledge include technical knowledge (acquiring and implementing new techniques and market forecasting and may be transferred between groups of people who share a similar occupational identity), systemic knowledge (refers to the introduction and operation of new systems and procedures in an organisation) and strategic understanding (an input of foreign strategic knowledge to a domestic environment to match the changing conditions of doing business). Transfer of systemic knowledge from abroad to a local context, is likely to be seen as threatening locally based norms of conduct as employees may not easily identify with it. Since local employees are to adopt, transferring strategic understanding to a local context can threaten the basis of the local employees' social identity and status (Child & Rodrigues, 1996). Henderson and Clark (1990) view types of knowledge to include component and architectural knowledge. Due to competition, organisations may focus much attention on dominant designs refinement, otherwise known as component knowledge. Architectural knowledge is embedded in routines, filters, channels and strategies, to which the process of

creating new information is hard to change. Individual employees may continue to rely on beliefs about the world instead of rationally evaluating it.

De Long and Fahey (2000) contends that the different types of knowledge can be categorised into at least three distinct types, at both the individual and collective levels. The authors state that in organisations today, there are three distinct types of knowledge: human knowledge, social knowledge, and structured knowledge. Human knowledge constitutes what individuals know to do and know how. This knowledge is largely cognitive consisting of expertise and skills which usually is combined with tacit and explicit knowledge. Social knowledge occurs due to relationships within groups and between individuals, which presents the ability to collaborate, and is largely tacit. Structured knowledge occurs through organisational routines, processes, tools and systems, which is largely explicit. Thus, knowledge can exist independent of humans when it is created and embedded in software or systems, routines, and tools.

In the hospitality and hotel industry, Bouncken (2002) identifies four knowledge categories including: (a) Task-specific knowledge which relates to procedures, strategies, and actions in fulling a task which allows employees to perform tasks in a coordinated way without extensive communication. Boucken believe that task-specific knowledge is highly tacit knowledge as it enhances employee's mental capacity to attend to listen to and attend to the guests; (b) Task-related knowledge. According to Bouncken, task-related knowledge encompasses beliefs, shared values, and teamwork, which aids reliability and empathy in employees service provision; (c) Transactive memory includes the decentralised knowledge of employees' cognitive models whereby they compensate for each other to fulfil a goal through finding the right person for a specific task; and (d) Guest-related knowledge deals with wants and desires of customers in the present and future.

Generally, the widely acceptable knowledge classification or types in organisations are explicit and tacit knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Bouncken, 2002; Grant, 1996; Jones, 2012; Polanyi,1966), which this study discusses further as essential to comprehending KM's role in hotels. These two types of knowledge are not the same (see Table 2.1). The critical distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge lies in their transferability and the mechanisms for transfer across individuals, time and space (Grant, 1996). In Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) view, the level of accessibility can account for the difference between explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowledge easily stored, retrieved and communicated or described (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000) and it is known in most organisations (Seidler-

de Alwis & Hartmann, 2008). It may be publicly available and can be found in books, journals, newspapers, internet, television and radio (Kikoski & Kikoski, 2004). Tacit knowledge is the opposite of explicit knowledge but fundamental to explicit knowledge occurrence. It is knowledge that has not been codified, but accumulated through experience and observations, it resides in individuals, and it is difficult to describe, communicate or explain (de-Alwis-Seidler & Hartmann,2008; Nonaka et al, 2000; Polanyi, 1966). Tacit or implicit knowledge primarily depends on people whereas explicit knowledge is shared via systematic language (Jain, Aagja, & Bagdare, 2017; Nonaka & Konno, 1998). This means that tacit knowledge complements explicit knowledge; hence, both are significant to organisational effective functional performance. Tacit knowledge is, however, difficult to digitise as it is mostly communicated from leaders to employees whereas explicit knowledge is transferable, easily codified, digitised and communicated, and can be found in customer directories, data bases, documents, files, media, technical and innovation solutions among others (Cooper, 2015). Table 2.1 provides the features of explicit and tacit knowledge.

Table 2. 1 Features of explicit and tacit knowledge

Explicit knowledge	Tacit knowledge
Codifiable	Inexpressible in a codifiable form
Impersonal	Personal
Easy to share	Difficult to share
Objective	Subjective
Context-independent	Context-specific

Source: Hislop, Bosua and Helms (2018)

While the above knowledge types have been identified in organisations generally, dissimilarities or similarities may exist in the hotel sector considering the fragmented nature of the hospitality and tourism industry and their sub-sectors. Considering the different types of knowledge in literature, it is essential to understand the types of knowledge in hotels, especially in the developing region. Also, the continuous identification of different knowledge types in the academic community suggests that different knowledge types can be created in different situations and contexts and at different times. Consequently, empirically examining the

different knowledge used by hotel managers and employees for performance success will contribute to the existing literature. Knowing the different knowledge types makes it necessary to understand the sources of knowledge. This is the focus of the next section.

2.3.2 Sources of knowledge

When businesses grow, their sources of data, information, and knowledge might also increase and require further understanding. Knowledge can be acquired and created from internal sources, within an organisation, which include employees collaborating and sharing knowledge for innovative purposes (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Leiponen and Helfat (2010) agree with Spinello's (2000) analysis that external knowledge sources are critical to achieve innovations in organisations. Similarly, a study in firms in the wine-making industry indicates the criticality of internal and external sources of innovation with customers and suppliers as the high-rate sources of knowledge with enormous influence on the wine industry (Doloreux, 2015).

According to Inkpen and Tsang (2005), organisations could acquire knowledge through collaboration with external agents such as suppliers and clients. Lane, Koka and Pathak (2006) in their literature review considered external sources of knowledge as being local (knowledge source close to the organisation) and non-local (knowledge source distance from the organisational knowledge base).

Spinello (2000) put forward that organisational source of data, information and knowledge can come through external awareness and internal awareness. Knowledge obtained can be translated into organisational capability for action as external awareness is the ability of an organisation to absorb information beyond its boundaries and transform it into usable knowledge to recognise the value. Thus, the organisation has an absorptive capacity; while internal awareness is the ability of an organisation to look within and absorb information about its performance capabilities resources and transform it into usable knowledge to enhance performance. Thus, both external and internal sources of knowledge might aid organisations to identify changes and formulate strategies to handle clients. Thomas and Wood (2014) suggest that the hospitality and tourism industry largely rely on external knowledge, but a meta-analysis of tourism and hospitality research show that external sources of knowledge are underexplored (Sainaghi, Phillips & Zavarrone, 2017).

Consequently, Ordanini and Parasuraman (2011) conclude that establishing the appropriate informal and formal mechanisms to capture and share knowledge is crucial. This thesis, therefore, advances the knowledge about internal and external sources as the origin of ideas for KM in hotels considering local and non-local sources of knowledge because a qualitative study can improve understanding of how hotels capture internal and external knowledge (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018). Having established the sources of knowledge and the knowledge types, it is important to understand the role of knowledge in business organisations.

2.3.3 Role of knowledge in business organisations

For organisations to have lasting competitive advantage, they have to be knowledge driven (Holsapple & Joshi, 2002). Bukowitz and Williams (2000) believe that organisations can use their knowledge to respond to the marketplace demands and opportunities by matching intellectual capital to strategic management through the organisation's day-to-day knowledge use. Knowledge in business organisations can play a role in achieving organisations' corporate, business, and functional levels strategies. Corporate level deals with the overall scope of a firm to add value to business through selecting and managing resources, and business level strategy is concerned with individual businesses and how to operate effectively while functional level strategy guides managers of different functional units and deals with constant innovation to providing new and quality products or service through support activities in satisfying customers (e.g. operations, accounting and finance, human resources, marketing, etc.) (Bonn & Fisher, 2011; Bowman & Helfat, 2001; Okumus, Altinay, Chathoth & Koseoglu, 2020).

Knowledge is essential to the success in products creation, customer retention and loyalty, and company's brand image. Knowledge-based solution can improve organisations service delivery because knowledge resources are displacing natural resources as the basic economic resources in the new economy for organisations competitive advantage (Wu & Chen, 2004). Grant (2000) explains that the main value driver is derived from services and not from goods. As indicated above, knowledge capability has the potential to influence corporate level strategy achievement in organisations, which can directly and indirectly influence business level strategy. What an organisation knows, how it uses what it knows, and how fast it can know something new is the only thing that gives the organisation competitive edge (Davenport & Prusak, 2000). They add that knowledge is derived from minds at work. These include

knowledgeable individuals, knowledge-full books, database and memos, crucial for attaining competitive advantage (Youssef, Hack & Youssef, 2017) and significant to responding to the ever-changing business environment and organisations (Nieves et al., 2014).

At functional level, knowledge helps organisational understanding that knowledge resides in the minds of employees (Behringer, 2015) and has the potential to transform organisations and give them competitive advantage (Hunt & Arnett, 2006). This shows that knowledge essentially supports an organisation's adaptation, survival and performance (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2007); hence, has the potential to make a significant difference in organisations' bottom line (Andreeva & Kianto, 2012).

At the business unit level, knowledge can help to minimise crisis with appropriate management in organisations. As environmental changes may introduce new risks, knowledge can arm organisations with comprehensive understanding and capability to respond promptly to the unstable business environment in the global economy (Alhawari, Karadsheh, Talet, & Mansour, 2012; Levy, 2011). The current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates that knowledge is key and thus plays role in how different countries, institutions, organisations, and individual are dealing with this health crisis. The role of knowledge can be determined under the current circumstances through "useable ideas" (Bailey, 2000) to manage organiations and their clients.

Based on the literature review above, the concept of knowledge has potential roles in organisations as it is a unique capability that can solve problems in the business setting and influence organisational performance, which makes it necessary to examine knowledge and its role in business organisation in understanding the process of knowledge management. Hence, an understanding of hotel managers' and employees' perspectives of knowledge in hotel operation is useful in overcoming poor performance and uncertainties. The interpretations and role of knowledge guide this research to show how effectively knowledge can be generated and applied in the business world.

2.4 The concept of knowledge management

Competitive advantage cannot be attained when knowledge is only possessed but not used by companies. As knowledge is a transferrable, aggregable and appropriable resource (Grant, 1996), how the different processes involved in KM needs to be understood. Understanding the

meaning of KM is fundamental for hotels' value creation and competitiveness. Although KM can be traced to the early 1990s after Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explored knowledge creation in companies and after the establishment of the Journal of Knowledge Management (Pauleen & Wang, 2017), KM remains a relatively new field of inquiry (Pauleen & Wang, 2017). KM can be considered the currency of the 21st century business world and the future as organisations and government institutions have demonstrated increasing interest in such concept over the past two decades (Liebowitz & Wright, 1999; Malhotra, 2000). This contention agrees with the common societal view that people are living in a knowledge economy where knowledge plays a key role in ensuring the competitiveness of organisations.

KM started to receive attention in hospitality and tourism research in the 1990s (Hallin & Marn burg, 2008). However, the definition of this concept remains contested in the literature (Salem, 2014; Slagter, 2007). KM is variously referred to as business intelligence, corporate knowledge, intellectual capital, intellectual property and knowledge assets (McElroy, 2000), thereby fuelling a debate amongst scholars and practitioners (Salem, 2014; Slagter, 2007). Some prevalent definitions of KM are presented in Table 2.2 to inform the discussions. As the actual meaning of KM remains contested (Handzic, 2001; Shongwe, 2016), the definition of this concept is still evolving.

Many scholars have proposed contrasting views regarding the conceptualisation and meaning of KM. For example, Heisig (2009) identifies about 160 different ideas behind KM, whereas Earl (2001) develops a KM framework and categorises the related ideas into three major thoughts, namely, behavioural (knowledge resides in the human mind and can be shared through socialisation, which is a purely human concept), techno-graphic (KM can be quantified, preserved and transferred by technology) and economic (knowledge is capital that creates innovation and improves performance and competitive advantage). Other researchers have defined KM as managing knowledge in an organisation's workforce using ICT, culture or social processes and people (Bhatt, 2001; Hislop, 2013; Wiig, 1997), sharing (i.e. acquiring, storing and managing intellectual capital) knowledge in an organisation to achieve competitiveness (Bashouri & Duncan, 2014; Petty & Guthire, 2000; Rastogi, 2000) and generating, communicating and exploiting useable ideas (knowledge) for organisational and personal benefit (Bailey & Clark, 2000). Researchers in the hospitality and tourism industry have also not reached a consensus on the definition of KM (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Salem, 2014). Some of these scholars view KM as a process of generating, storing and leveraging knowledge for innovation (Cooper, 2018, 2015).

Recent studies have viewed KM as process, technology and human interactions (Table 2.2). Wiig (1997) contends that KM constitutes contextual factors, including culture, technology and humans, which are relevant to collaborative knowledge creation and management in organisations. Therefore, the quality of knowledge available for creating services and satisfying the specific needs of customers is relevant to improving competitiveness (Bashouri & Duncan, 2014). By contrast, Bhatt (2001) identifies five phases (i.e. knowledge creation, validation, presentation, distribution and application) of KM that allow organisations to learn, reflect, unlearn and relearn. These five phases shape the interactions amongst technologies, techniques and people. Bhatt proposes that an exclusive focus on KM does not necessarily lead to a competitive advantage for an organisation.

Other scholars have broadened the concept of KM to include intellectual capital (IC). Petty and Guthrie (2000) describe IC as another form of knowledge that is instrumental in determining an enterprise's value and economic performance. They conclude that IC enhances the information and knowledge that drive the new economy. By contrast, Rastogi (2000) describes KM as the developing tool of IC in companies that encompasses the capabilities, competencies, expertise, innovation, organisational learning and skills of organisations, all of which have dynamic effects on organisational performance. Human capital, including knowledge and innovation, helps organisations effectively obtain competitive intelligence (CI) that helps them interact with suppliers, customers and competitors and gather business knowledge. Human capital motivates employees through knowledge identification, learning, sharing and retention. Employee involvement and effective management in CI practices help create valuable knowledge for a strategic implementation. Understanding the perspectives of managers towards CI may improve the day-to-day operations and performance of organisations (Koseoglu, Okumus, & Altin, 2019; Koseoglu, Ross, & Okumus, 2016). McElroy (2003) proposes the knowledge life cycle model, which suggests that KM begins by identifying knowledge gaps and ends by producing the desired knowledge. McElroy proposes two knowledge activities, namely, knowledge production and integration into the organisation through searching, sharing and teaching.

More recently, Mishra's (2009) presents KM as a means to make organisations work faster through innovation. This hinges on co-ordination, which is achieved through creating knowledge, sharing, and applying it. To effectively do this, an organisational memory should be created where lessons learnt in business operations, and best practices should be incorporated to foster organisational learning and performance. To Mishra, knowledge is a

commodity or intellectual asset with paradoxical characteristics that are radically different from other valuable commodities. For example, knowledge is abundant but suffers scarcity in use, and much of organisation's valuable knowledge is lost daily. People, processes, and technology are connected to leverage knowledge (Desouza, 2011) because information is processed by individuals in organisations from expertise, ideas, judgement, and ideas for team performance or organisational performance (Wang & Noe, 2010). As noted earlier, a more comprehensive definition by Hislop in 2013 presents KM in organisations in his work titled "knowledge management in organisations-a critical introduction" Here, human resource management practices should be employed to facilitate KM. Prior to this position, Hislop's (2010) KM literature analysis found that only 8 percent focused on IT-related issues, and more than a quarter (27 percent) focused on people-related issues. And this has been reinforced by Hislop (2013). Accordingly, KM is defined as:

 ''*an umbrella term which refers to any deliberate efforts to manage the knowledge of an organisation's workforce, which can be achieved via a wide range of methods including directly, through the use of particular types of ICT, or more indirectly through the management of social processes, the structuring of organisation in particular ways or via the use of particular culture and people management practices*'' (p. 56).

Within the literature, although KM is considered a treasure-trove, it is not without issues. KM is presented with definitional complexities and difficulties as it encompasses a complex and multi-faceted concept requiring a process approach to organisational management (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The various definitions of KM are used in different contexts and are diversified. For instance, KM is hard to define as various scholars define KM differently in various fields (Handzic, 2001; Shongwe, 2016). More so, the different definitions of the concept suggest varied terms used in describing KM. Whereas some authors use the term KM, others use IC to describe KM (Boedker, Guthrie & Cuganesan, 2005; Petty & Guthrie, 2000; Rastogi, 2000), community of practice where a group of people exchange knowledge about a common interest (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) and learning organisation (Hadad, 2017). Moreover, whereas some authors focus on technology as important in KM, other authors view process or people as fundamental. That is, the definitions of KM may be viewed in various ways: results-oriented definition-harnessing the right knowledge at the right time and for the right purpose; process-oriented definition-identifying, creating, gathering, sharing and applying knowledge; and technology-oriented definition-applying databases. Hence, there is a lack of a clear and agreed upon conceptualisation of the term and inadequate theoretical application in explaining it,

particularly in the accommodation sub-sector. In the tourism and hospitality industry, it is argued that lack of clarity characterised the meaning of KM (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). This diversity is challenging to pinpoint the actual meaning of KM. Nonetheless, it makes the study of KM interesting as there is an ongoing need to further research to understand the meaning of KM in different geographical context. Despite the different definitions of KM, its agenda reveals similarities in achieving organisational goals. The various authors view the concept as a process of decisions making aimed at improving organisational performance by leveraging knowledge of people and their activities within the organisations' settings.

Based on the definitional review of the concept of KM, it is evident that defining KM considering technological or social systems alone engenders bias in overemphasising one aspect over the other (Bhatt, 2001) because not all KM initiatives involve technology (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Besides, situational meanings are attached to several definitions of the concept, giving rise to human factors, technological factors and the integration of human and technological factors to comprehend KM. This suggests a clear lack of consensus about the true meaning of the phenomenon as noted earlier, making it hard to conclude on its actual meaning. As this fact exists, definitional diversity gives scholars an opportunity to use the concept as they deem fit. Consequently, an understanding of the concept in relation to what it means in hotels will extend the existing literature.

After reviewing the literature on KM definition by various authors, it shows the isolated definitions given to KM by different authors from different fields to suit their needs. Again, it is significant to understand and clarify the meaning of KM as some authors view it to be context-based and multifaceted (Hussinki et al., 2017). This suggests that what works in the business sector may not necessarily work in the manufacturing industry; hence, the need to unearth the tourism and hospitality version of KM since the sector is primarily a service sector and is under researched. Further, the lack of common terminology for KM makes its understanding challenging. Due to the different perspectives on KM from different fields, it is worthwhile to establish how hotels conceptualise KM.

Table 2. 2 KM definitions

Author & Year	Definition
Wiig (1997)	KM encompasses how knowledge could be created to solve problems and also make decision through procedures, culture, technological use and engaging people's mind
Petty and Guthrie (2000)	The management of an organisation's intellectual capital (IC) simply refers to knowledge management
Rastogi (2000)	KM is a systematic and integrative process of coordinating organisation-wide activities of acquiring, creating, storing, sharing diffusing, developing, and developing knowledge by individuals and groups in pursuit of major organisational goals, hence a process for organisations to create and use their collective and institutional knowledge.
Alavi and Leidner (2001)	KM comprises dynamic and continuous processes and practices which seek to identify and leverage the collective knowledge in a company for competitive advantages.
Bhatt (2001)	KM refers to procedures and processes governing the creation, sharing and use of knowledge by merging organisational structures, people and technology in order to better leverage resources in an organisation.
Groff and Jones (2003)	Knowledge management is the tools, techniques, and strategies to retain, analyse, organise, improve, and share business expertise.
Mishra (2009)	KM coordinates people, processes, technology and organisational structure deliberately and systematically for value addition through innovation and reuse in an organisation.
Hislop (2013)	KM is ''an umbrella term which refers to any deliberate efforts to manage the knowledge of an organisation's workforce, which can be achieved via a wide range of methods including directly, through the use of particular types of ICT, or more indirectly through the management of social processes, the structuring of organisation in

Author & Year	Definition
	particular ways or via the use of particular culture and people management practices'' (Hislop, 2013, p. 56).
Bashouri and Duncan (2014)	Knowledge management is making available and sharing what is known in an organisation in order to achieve set objectives and remain competitive

Given the variety of definitions of KM, a logical question worth asking is which one of these definitions of KM is the best-fit? This question does not have a straightforward answer as each definition has its weaknesses and strengths and can capture different aspects of KM. For instance, while some scholars emphasise that KM is a process of knowledge creation, sharing and use through technology (Bhat, 2011; Hislop, 2013; Rastogi, 2000; Wiig, 1997), others view human factors to be substantial in KM process (Petty & Guthrie, 2003). The present study defines KM as the deliberate efforts of an organisation to create knowledge from data and information and manage it using employees and technology as well as other techniques or methods to add value through co-ordination in order to achieve a wide range of goals for competitive advantage.

2.5 The importance of KM

Studies on how KM impacts firms' performance started to appear in the 2000s (Gooijer, 2000) and the role of KM in today's knowledge-based world has attracted considerable attention in industry and academia (Samiei & Habibi, 2020) because effective KM enables competitiveness of organisations (Raisi, Baggio, Barratt-Pugh & Wilson, 2020). Gebert, Geib, Kolbe and Brenner (2003) claim that KM focuses on the identification of knowledge available to an organisation as a major success factor. Evidently, a recent study reveals that tacit knowledge management significantly impacts on companies' performance in the electronic-based industry companies as well as medical and pharmaceutical companies (Muthuveloo, Shanmugam, & Teoh, 2017). In hotels, KM can facilitate the exchange of knowledge leading to the development of new insights, innovation capabilities and personalized customer experience (Veiga, Fernandes & Ambrósio, 2022). Simply put, KM was first identified as a form of

knowledge creation to solve organisational problems, and this view has been reiterated by other researchers (Gebert et al, 2003). Migdadi (2020) explains that in Jordanian organisations, KM processes do not have a direct effect on organisation performance except through innovation capabilities, and Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) further explains that knowledge is a form of intellectual capital because a firm's intellectual capital is a function of the stock of knowledge accumulated by individuals and units. To them, "unless an enterprise continuously generates new knowledge, it will soon be playing tomorrow's game with yesterday's tools. And unless knowledge is pumped efficiently throughout the network, the enterprise will not only pay the price of reinventing the same wheel but will also risk becoming prey to competitors that are able to replicate its ideas rapidly" (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000, p. 72).

KM is significant to organisations in business decision making (Omotayo, 2015). Chauvel and Despres (2002) stress that KM has the potential to ensure organisational development and employee satisfaction. Other scholars underscore value creation (Andreeva, 2012; Darroch, 2005) and value contribution (Heisig et al, 2016) to organisations as impacts of KM as well as improving organisational capabilities, efficiency, and implementation of the organisational strategy (Gronau, 2002). Kianto et al. (2018), in assessing KM impact on companies' market performance, point out that KM serves as market improvement channel. Implying knowledge-friendly supervisory behaviours or positions in an organisation may shape its organisational culture (Shamim, Cang & Yu, 2019). KM integration in organisations is relevant (Grant, 1996) as it leads to knowledge protection, formal and informal mechanisms-trademarks, intellectual property rights and secrecy and employee guidance. KM provides benefits beyond the firm level, leading to competitive advantage in the global space (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Pandey & Dutta, 2013). KM is important to firms in the service industry because it constitutes the bedrock of firm's competitiveness where knowledge is created and strategies developed to provide value to customers (Nonaka, 1995; Valmohammadi & Amidi, 2020). The relevance of KM cannot be overemphasised as it is critical to an organisation (Hislop, Bosua & Helms, 2018), hence it is necessary for both the public and private sectors managers of organisations to consider KM as a prerequisite for higher productivity and flexibility success process (Martensson, 2000).

Researchers who have contributed to the development of KM believe that the value of KM may be realised through its performance evaluation and assessment. They argue that KM is not only a necessary component that enables organisations to survive and maintain competitiveness but has academic relevance. In academia, Serenko and Bontis' (2013) analysis of KM reveals that

the early years of the 21st century saw a sustained interest in research. There are a growing number of citations for all KM research topics, and several peer reviewed academic journals exist (e.g., journal of knowledge management, journal of information and knowledge practice etc) in the field of KM (Serenko & Dumay, 2015).

Martensson (2000), Shaw and Williams (2009), Zaei and Zaei (2014) argue that for sustainable hospitality and tourism industry, KM approach should be the underpinning objective for future research to translate knowledge into competitive advantage and sustainability for industry players and governments. KM is new to the tourism industry and is limited in the literature because KM studies in the hospitality and tourism industry are particularly scarce, hence the need for more research on the benefits of the KM approach among organisations and destinations of the tourism industry (Cooper, 2015; Nieves, Quintana & Osorio, 2014). These authors acknowledged that the tourism industry, especially the hospitality sub-sector, is a maze of complex and unexpected change in dealing with the 21st century customers' needs. Consequently, it is important to research KM in this field to unpack KM and its role in value chain for competitive advantage. Tooranloo and Saghafi (2019) also state that KM should be the main concerns of the managers to create competitive advantage. They argue that strategic thinking of managers is inevitable, hence the need for KM in organisations across the value chain for business success. Having an understanding about the business environment is essential for management to analyse information and make strategic decisions to quickly improve production capabilities and properly achieve organisational goals (Koseoglu, Okumus, & Altin, 2019; Koseoglu, Ross, & Okumus, 2016; Martensson, 2000; Nieves, Quintana & Osorio, 2014; Tooranloo & Saghafi, 2019). (See Table 2.4).

The above demonstrates that in recent years, KM has received attention in academic research and the service industry (Halme, Lindy, Piirainen, Salminen & White, 2014; Warhurst & Thompson, 2006; Wiig, 1997). Although some scholars appraise KM as relevant for competitive advantage (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Valmohammadi & Amidi, 2020; Wiig, 2003), firms' survival (Civi, 2000), and knowledge generation and use (Chen & Chen, 2006), in contrast, others doubt the practical benefits of KM (Grant, 2011; Serenko & Bontis, 2013) due to KM application costs in terms of personnel efforts, money and time, hence it is an expensive process (Chauvel, 2002). Indeed, KM outlook has become one of the most debated management concepts (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008) with disagreements on its universality. Various scholars view KM as a Western concept (Meyer, 2006; Mohsin & Syed, 2018; Nieves, Quintana & Osorio, 2014), mainly practiced in Western countries. Several other

studies such as Cooper (2015), Garrido-Moreno et al (2015), Gebert, Geib, Kolbe and Brenner (2003), Koseoglu, Okumus and Altin (2019), Nieves, Quintana and Osorio (2016), and Tooranloo and Saghafi (2019) highlight contextual studies in the developed countries with only few studies in Asia and the Middle East (Mehrez, 2019; Salem, 2014). To date, there is a limited understanding of KM, and most organisations still struggle as far as business performance is concerned (Omerzel & Ruzzier, 2011). Given this, the importance of KM to developing economies is unclear as many organisations are experiencing performance and market failures.

2.6 KM process

KM is a process of acquiring knowledge, organising, and maximising it so that it can be shared and retained in the organisation (Nonaka, 1995; Rowley, 2005). The KM processes constitute diverse activities that relate with explicit and tacit knowledge (Civi, 2000; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Alavi and Leidner (2001) present that KM process involves knowledge creation, storage/retrieval, transfer and application. Intezari, Taskin and Pauleen (2017) identify knowledge sharing, creation, and implementation as core knowledge processes, while Migdadi (2022) identify KM processes such as knowledge acquisition, creation, sharing, and storage/documentation. Some of the KM processes, including knowledge acquisition, creation, storage, and use, have been introduced by researchers, which still require further investigations in other sectors or fields (Wong, Tan, & Lee, 2015).

Knowledge acquisition: knowledge acquisition involves the process whereby an organisation obtains useful knowledge from customers and suppliers to perform task (Costa & Monteiro, 2016; Wong et al., 2015) through searching, seeking and identifying both new and old knowledge (Rusly, Sun & Corner, 2015) from knowledge sources such as internet and databases (Wang et al., 2006). Firms can acquire knowledge about firm management, new products, market development and managerial knowledge for operation (Yang, Liu & Li, 2019) The acquisition process is also considered as exploitative practices entail leveraging existing knowledge from knowledge storage, transfer and applications (Grant 1996; March, 1991). However, some scholars such as Kim and Lee (2010) and Chen and Mohammed (2007) regard activities of creation, developing and exploitation of knowledge as acquired knowledge. This

presents an ambiguity in setting a clear boundary between knowledge identification and modification. Knowledge acquisition is important to develop and expand an organisation's knowledge base (Rusly et al., 2015) and to promote survivability and competitiveness of organisations (Chen, Hwang & Raghu, 2010). Shu-Chen and Farn (2010) point out that knowledge could be acquired from internal sources such as firm's routines, staff expertise, and personal networks while Andreeva and Kianto (2011) suggest that knowledge could be acquired from external sources such as customers, suppliers, and policy makers. Notwithstanding the importance of knowledge acquisition process, this process largely focuses on the role of information technology (Motta, 2013) and neglects the behavioural perspective in KM literature (Rusly et al., 2015). Pinho et al. (2012) found that IT systems support knowledge dissemination; good internal and external coordination and communication coupled with education and training could aid knowledge acquisition. The literature shows that knowledge acquisition process activities involve employees referring to corporate database before processing tasks, search internet to obtain knowledge for tasks, brainstorm for knowledge, employ various knowledge sources, and use IT (Wong et al., 2015).

Knowledge creation: Wiig (1997) highlights the importance of KM in organisations which is the driving force behind the 'economics of ideas', with prime focus on knowledge creation, to improve organisation and society. Wiig's stand supports the process of how knowledge is being created through the SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The SECI model posits that knowledge is created through social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge (Kaur, 2015) and the interactions of an organisation with individuals and the environment to generate knowledge (Kaur, 2015; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Thus, knowledge creation is supported by relevant data and information which can improve decisions and serve as building blocks in creating new knowledge (Kaur, 2015). Morey (2001) in his research titled "high-speed knowledge management" for rapid results, outlined knowledge creation as generating best practices and new ideas from intellectual properties. To create a fertile ground for knowledge creation, Pinho et al. (2012) posits that IT supports decision making, good internal coordination and communication, positive leadership, results oriented culture, education, training, and development practices aid knowledge creation. Hong, Suh and Koo (2011) research in the financial and banking service revealed a conversational way of creating knowledge which involves human interactions and collaboration for knowledge creation and sharing among knowledge workers or team members. The knowledge creation process is

deemed as explorative practices which target new knowledge creation (Grant 1996; March, 1991) through various means. Knowledge creation in an organisation produces new knowledge (Wang et al., 2006) through internalising existing knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Training and educational programmes, employees proposing new ideas, number of research and development projects and time for new product development constitute activities of knowledge creation (Wong et al., 2015).

Knowledge storage: Olivera (2000) explained that knowledge storage encompasses chronicling knowledge and documenting in a firm's repository or memory such as computer-based systems, databases and knowledge centres which can be accessible to employees. Thus, firm memory includes storing structured information in electronic databases, documenting information and firm procedures and processes. Knowledge storage in a firm could take several forms. Technology-based storage in electronic archives such as intranet and Lotus Notes databases, and company directories (Olivera, 2000). Research in the financial and banking service indicates that KM process of knowledge storage represents conventional KM that involve the use of technology to collect knowledge in a centralised repository and making it accessible (Hong et al., 2011; Sun & Scott, 2005). Thus, IT systems support information/knowledge storage (Pinho et al., 2012). Although, theoretical development of knowledge storage has contributed to some level of understanding how a firm store knowledge (Spender, 1996), there has been little empirical studies on how firms store experiential knowledge and how employees access it (Olivera, 2000) in terms of tacit and explicit. Wong et al. (2015) posits that codification and storing of knowledge activities include storing experience on new tasks, document needed knowledge for task, investment in IT and knowledge management systems.

Knowledge use: Wiig (1997) defined knowledge use as putting to good use or applying knowledge that has been acquired and created by an organisation and people. In a survey of about 150 respondents from 99 contracting organisations operating in Hong Kong, construction professionals revealed that knowledge use is critical for an organisational knowledge asset as it enables more intense and active response to market changes and client's needs (Chen & Mohammed, 2007). Knowledge use enables a logical guide on how work is executed in organisations known as process (Baloh et al., 2011). This process can be conducted by

technology, humans, and or both. Knowledge application is significant for an organisation's success as it informs "how much does your organisation know?" (Bohn, 1994 p. 61). It is important to add that an important aspect of the KBVT theory is that competitive advantage lies in the application of knowledge rather than the knowledge itself (Grant, 1996). Application and utilisation of knowledge may be visible when employees are ready to accept new knowledge and apply it to their tasks, when necessary, the use of knowledge and the ability to transform, and number of problems solved and ideas implemented in a period of time (Wong et al., 2015).

Table 2.3 summarises Wong et al.'s. (2015) review on KM process and performance measurement metrics, types of measurement, trends, and approaches in the last two decades. The authors further noted that internalisation (learning capability, employees can refer to best practices and apply them to their tasks, employees can learn what is necessary for new tasks and employees have a unique mastery of the tasks), and knowledge transferring and sharing (level of interactions, discussion and collaborations among employees on important identified subjects, communication capability, level of inter-departmental information communication, level of information communication with customers, and number of users participating in knowledge sharing activities) are important to manage knowledge. Wong et al. further concluded that KM process may differ from one industry to another.

Table 2. 3 Metrics for measuring the performance of KM Processes

KM process	Metric	Author
Acquisition	Continuous use of knowledge items in repository. Employees refer to corporate database before processing task. Employees can obtain knowledge from the internet. Employees employ knowledge sources to search information for task performance. Number of research and development projects per year.	Arora (2000) Lee, Lee and Kang (2005)

KM process	Metric	Author
	Employees often have access to knowledge resources.	Andone (2009)
	Number of knowledge workers.	Kuah et al. (2012)
	Internal trainings.	
	Frequent learning and communication with external parties.	Wu et al. (2009)
	Annual investment in IT and KM systems.	
	Number of meetings attended for idea generation per employee per month.	
	Working hours per employee spent for inputting knowledge into KM system.	
	Number of ideas, solutions, and new knowledge employees create per month.	
	Expenditure on training and educational programs per year.	
Creation and generation	Time taken to develop next-generation technologies.	Martin (2000)
	Number of new services and products developed.	Ahn and Chang (2004)
	Number of times each employee brings up a proposal.	Huang et al. (2007)
	Number of knowledge assets created per year.	
	Number of meetings attended for idea generation per employee per month.	
	Number of ideas, solutions, and new knowledge employees create per month.	
	Number of knowledge workers.	
	Number of inventions and services generated per year.	
	Expenditure on training and educational programs per year.	

KM process	Metric	Author
	Number of investments in IT and KM systems.	
Storing	Available organisational memory to codify information and knowledge assets. Number of knowledge workers. Employees are able to store knowledge for further usage. Employees try to store legal guidelines and policies related to tasks. Employees try to store expertise on new task design and development. Number of working hours for putting knowledge resources into KM system. Investment in IT and KM systems.	Arora (2002) and Jennex and Olfman (2004) Kuah et al. (2012) Lee et al. (2005)
Sharing	Employees share information and knowledge necessary for the tasks. Employees promote sharing of information and knowledge with other teams. Communication capability. Employees develop information systems like electronic bulletin boards and intranet to share information and knowledge. Level of information communication with customers etc.	Lee et al. (2005)

Source: Wong et al. (2015)

From the hospitality and tourism standpoint, hotel operators are encouraged to move beyond short-term ad hoc and market driven research to KM in order to enhance their competitiveness (Zaei & Zaei, 2014). These authors came to this conclusion after identifying knowledge as a key competitive tool for the hospitality and tourism sector, an activity-based service sector, in which adaptations is a requirement to satisfy customer's needs. Developing knowledge repositories such as intranet and template services to create and administer templates to store

different kind of information in different types of documents is crucial in organisations (Gronau, 2002).

Based on the above literature review, this study conceptualises and adopts KM processes comprising knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and knowledge use, and investigates how they are being applied in the hotel setting in order to contribute to KM understanding in hotels and to hospitality and KM literature. Given the impact of COVID-19 and the current social changes in the business environment and fast changing behaviour of the customer daily, qualitative approach will provide further insights to understand the KM processes in the hotel context, especially in CRM practice, nowadays.

2.7 Facilitators and barriers of knowledge management

Factors affecting KM adoption have been studied in the manufacturing and banking fields, with little conceptual and empirical studies in the tourism and hospitality sector. Existing studies therefore do not consider the many aspects of hospitality and hotel empirical KM influences (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). Pinho et al. (2012) carried out a literature on KM process from January 1985 to August 2010 and found that KM thrives on positive organisational context and fails in the absence of it. They categorised facilitators and barriers for KM process (knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer). KM uses knowledge to create function and systematically organise innovation knowledge for performance (Nonaka, 1994), and may be driven by several factors in realising its process workability.

Therefore, a discussion on facilitators and barriers of KM is relevant to this thesis as these drivers will deepen our understanding of how KM processes or initiatives are enabled to affect hotel performance holistically. KM in organisations is determined by various features or factors, and these affects how KM is performed. These factors could be deemed facilitators and barriers to how KM and KM process are carried out in business organisations. The implication is that if these resources are positive, KM process may thrive and vice versa (Pihno, 2012). The key facilitators and barriers of KM are presented below.

2.7.1 KM facilitators

KM facilitators constitute determinants of KM effectiveness implementation in organisations and serve as the driving force solidifying KM (Yeh, Lai, & Ho, 2006). KM facilitators are critical because they can enable appropriate organisations mechanisms for intentionality and consistency of fostering knowledge (Dang, Long & Kim, 2018). Deriving from the theoretical literature on KM and the resource-based and knowledge-based view theory (Barney, 1991), several factors were identified as potential facilitators of KM process. From the organisational perspective, some of these factors can be categorised into organisational readiness, organisational culture, technology (IT infrastructure), training and development, communication, and organisational design in business, manufacturing, and computer science studies.

2.7.1.1 Organisational readiness

Organisational readiness informs the level of preparedness of an organisation to deploy or embrace a change in relation to strategic initiative (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2015). It is derived from the knowledge-based view theory (Barney, 1991) that every organisation has its unique capabilities and resources. Employees may either embrace or resist change readiness in an organisation (Elias, 2009). How employees react to organisational readiness for change remains a scant research area empirically, requiring further investigation (Elias, 2009; Kotter, 1995; Shah, 2010) as it may impact managing vision and organisational growth (Haque, TitiAmayah & Liu (2016) which can set the pace for efforts in KM process (Donate & Guadamillas, 2011).

2.7.1.2 Organisational culture

The work of Davenport and Prusak (1998) and Alavi and Leidner (2001) posit that a friendly organisational culture can enable a successful KM initiative. Erwee, Skadiang and Roxas (2012) observe that the nature of an organisational culture in terms of how people support one another while performing tasks can facilitate a firm to engage in knowledge creation and sharing due to all organisational members and top management support (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). For example, dialogue between individuals can encourage knowledge creation (Gold,

Malhotra & Segars, 2001) and atmosphere and culture promote knowledge generation (Yeh, Lai & Ho, 2006). Alavi and Leidner (2001) found that the majority of successful KM initiatives were based appropriate organisational culture that was conducive for knowledge collection and sharing among employees. In contrast, De Long and Fahey (2000) in their study of more than 50 companies pursuing KM projects showed that organisational culture is widely held to be the major barrier to KM. In the fields of management, organisation and anthropology, the literature reveals that culture and organisational culture differ from one geographic location to another. In particular, organisations are social creations and creators of social meanings shaped by society (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984).

2.7.1.6 Organisational design

The framework of an organisation plays an essential role in KM. A critical component of organisational design has to do with building communities of practice and share knowledge creation spaces such as large open spaces or meeting areas where employees may gather and partake in discussions that ignite knowledge acquisition and creation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The authors further view integration of open access to knowledge, computer terminals located across the organisation where employees can pursue personal research interests on work to be some vitamins in encouraging knowledge creation. Thus, the absence of a proper organisational design to handle knowledge is a barrier (Ajmal et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is no consensus on the optimal organisational design that individual organisations can emulate.

2.7.1.3 Information Technology

In the pursuit to make KM practice meaningful and to determine its facilitators, Alavi and Leidner (2001) found that technology (IT) is a facilitator of KM because it mobilises social capital and integrate flows of information and knowledge (Ajmal, Helo & Kekale, 2010; Gold et al., 2001; Hadad, 2017). While Chae, Koh and Prybutok (2014) found that unlike the 1990s, when proprietary information systems prevailed, the 2000s are characterised by more standardised and homogeneous information systems and with the rapid adoption of enterprise resource planning (ERP) and web technologies; IT capability has no significant link to firms performance, especially financial performance, Aydiner, Tatoglu, Bayraktar and Zaim (2019)

sampled 214 Turkish firms and their finding support that IT can help leverage the decision processes of a company.

In knowledge economy, IT can effectuate knowledge through mobilising social capital and integrating flows of information and knowledge (Ajmal, Helo & Kekale, 2010; Gold et al., 2001; Hadad, 2017). Technology contributes to the absorption of knowledge into the organisation because explicit knowledge passes through them (Brown & Duguid, 1998; Pinho, 2012). IT can keep and use customer database in managing customers' needs satisfactions (Josiassen, Assaf & Cvelbar 2014), while the internet-based technology applications and social media can result in content creation and exchange (Chan, Fong, Law & Fong, 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the development of e-commerce, a number of online accommodation booking sites have emerged whereby online comments can be provided by users and knowledge created from the online comments by hotels (Xia, Chan, Zhong & Xu, 2022). IT infrastructure presence may affect many industries (Ruan & Li, 2019; Sun et al., 2018) and facilitate knowledge creation for competitive advantage (Mao, Liu, Zhang & Deng, 2016; Piccole, 2008; Ruan, 2019; Salem, 2014; Sun et al., 2018; Yeh et al., 2006; Wu, Wu & Huang, 2011). Despite, Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) argues that technology infrastructure is not the be-all and end-all of KM. In view, Brown and Stange (2002) indicate that McKinsey study found that $7.6 billion was spent on IT between 1995 and 2000 in the accommodation subsector yet no increase in revenue nor increase in productivity. Again, it is not all KM initiatives that may necessitate an IT for acquiring and creating knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

2.7.1.4 Training and development

Training and development in most organisations are critical to the organisational success in the business environment. Although training and employee development is not new, organisational and managerial practice has recently become more knowledge focused (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) where employees can be trained on knowledge audits and best practice transfer (Grant, 1996) which aids knowledge acquisition. Lan, Wong and Wong (2022) in their study conducted in a luxury hotel chain consisting of four-five-star hotels in Hong Kong contend that a knowledge sharing group can enhance new employees' perceived importance and affective liking of a hotel principles leading to high levels of job clarity and job attitudes. Organisations may commit more to trainings because it serves to develop individuals and enhance their skills to acquire knowledge in and outside the organisation to perform organisational tasks (Alavi &

Leidner, 2001). Trainings in organisations drive KM as knowledge creation should be viewed as a way of amplifying and internalising individual knowledge as part of an organisation's knowledge base (Nonaka, 1995). Individual members of an organisation having knowledge alone is not enough but the ability to make it available in the organisation, which could come about through trainings, is important. It is believed that trainings provide access to acquiring and creating knowledge in the organisation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Pinho, 2012) and at the individual level (Staples & Jarvenpaa, 2001) as it provides channel to learning (Yeh et al., 2006).

2.7.1.5 Communication

At the organisational level, knowledge creation, knowledge retrieval and knowledge exchange (Ackerman, Pipek & Wulf, 2003) can occur through sharing in the form of communication. This form of knowledge sharing, or communication is facilitated by individual members of the organisation as they capture knowledge, modify, and use it for daily activities in the organisation (Lam, 2000). Because individuals accumulate and manage knowledge in the organisation (Staples & Jarvenpaa, 2001), they become organisational knowledge carriers (Hong et al., 2011) and both they and the organisation clear communication can enable smooth knowledge acquisition and creation for use.

2.7.2 KM barriers

The possible barriers inhibiting knowledge generation is pertinent to KM process in business organisations. Based on the theoretical literature on KM and the resource-based and knowledge-based view theory (Barney, 1991), several factors can be identified as potential barriers of KM process. From the organisational perspective, some of these factors can be categorised into organisational structure, time, technology, knowledge hoarding, communication in business, manufacturing, and computer science studies.

2.7.2.1 Organisational culture

All organisations are concerned with structures creation intended to rationalise individual units for efficient work. Although the case, organisational culture can lead to unintended consequences of hampering and limiting collaboration and knowledge sharing across internal organisational departments (Gold et al., 2001; Singh & Kant, 2008). The literature shows that organisational structure may promote individualistic behaviours of functions and divisions leading to knowledge hoarding (Gold et al., 2001). This is considered as the constituents of 'cultural wall' (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). The work of Davenport and Prusak (1998) postulates that different vocabularies and different groups and individuals will consider knowledge as their prerogative right and preserve. Poor and lack of coordination among employees and departments can prevent the likelihood of success in KM initiatives (Ajmal et al., 2010). A literature review of five case studies of failed KM initiatives revealed organisational culture as a barrier (Chua & Lam, 2005).

2.7.2.2 Time

Time is of the essence. Following the understanding of time from the organisational management perspective, a myriad of factors account for the time of employees in an organisation, such as lean staff, busy schedules, customers seeking attention, together with a host of factors that may inhibit time. Hence, employees may be task focused and do not have time to teach, coach, mentor and share knowledge with others, which can hamper knowledge acquisition and creation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) and even lack of time to apply knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

2.7.2.3 Technology

Technology can be both facilitator and barrier of KM. Numerous scholars attest that the level of technology can have a substantial effect on KM process in an organisation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Al Hawamdeh and Al-edenat, 2019; Pinho, Rego & Cunha, 2012; Riege, 2005; Singh & Kant, 2008; Wang, Peters, & Guan, 2006). Technology in KM emphasises the KM systems features and functionalities to obtain, collect, store and share information via the technological domain (Pinho, Rego & e Cunha, 2012). The literature shows that technology is a barrier (Chua & Lam, 2005) and it can be categorised into four sub-barriers: IT systems/processes for

information storage (databases, repository systems, and data warehousing) (Ajmal et al., 2010); IT systems/processes for information/knowledge dissemination (thematic portals, and yellow pages); adjustments between IT systems/processes and user's needs/activities; and IT systems/processes for planning, time management and creativity (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Rosen, Furst & Blackburn, 2007). These four IT systems/processes are considered as poor IT infrastructure when their use is inefficient (Wang et al., 2006) and when employees lack the technical skill to use them (Pinho, 2012).

2.7.2.4 Knowledge hoarding

The knowledge worker behaviour can both be complicated and full of uncertainties- 'knowledge they say is power' and whoever carries it can be deemed 'powerful'. In some organisations, some employees can show unwillingness and inconsistencies to share their knowledge and insights because they may think their futures are dependent on the knowledge they generate and use, but not what they share with and teach others to generate (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Some individuals may feel insecure revealing their knowledge and teaching others how to generate knowledge while individual receivers who do not trust the source of knowledge may not want to generate it or put it to full use (Barson et al., 2000). Donate, Gonzàlez-Mohíno, Appio and Bernhard (2022) conclude in a study conducted in hotels in Spain that knowledge hiding erodes innovative capabilities in the Spanish hotel industry. Knowledge hiding creates a gap in awareness (Bures, 2003), trust issues and internal resistance (Barson et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2011). Thus, individual orientation could constitute a barrier to KM process in an organisation.

2.7.2.5 Communication

Communication is perhaps one of global issues impeding knowledge generation or creation in organisations. Language among employees, and conflict avoidance as the main social barriers to an organisation. The lack of standard or primary language in a department can pose a risk of concealing knowledge among employees because employees who understand a common language may feel comfortable sharing knowledge among themselves to the neglect of others who may not share in their language (Bures, 2003). Poor internal and external communication prevents KM initiatives in an organisation (Pinho et al., 2012). Recently, a study on knowledge

sharing among five-star hotel employees in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, reveal little desire by the employees to share knowledge (Newnham & Dutt, 2022). It is therefore critical for further research on hotels to determine their barriers of KM.

2.7.2.6 Absence of incentives for employees

Psychology and behavioural studies view that, motivation is part of human behaviour. Through a literature review and subsequently a survey of managers and assistant managers of business in Finland, Ajmal et al. (2010) revealed that when employees who have engaged in KM initiatives are not offered suitable incentive schemes by management, employees will most likely stop or decrease such initiatives. Admittedly, various scholars have suggested that motivation schemes like monetary rewards and moral acknowledgement of 'right thing' to do play a critical role to the success of KM practice (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Singh & Kant, 2008; Wu et al., 2011). Ajmal et al. also found that the lack of authority for employees to perform KM initiatives was the least barrier accounted for by managers and assistant managers in business in Finland.

From the discussion of KM facilitators and barriers from literature above, although various facilitators and barriers of KM have been identified, especially from the business, manufacturing, and computer science industries, however, this thesis maintains that this list is not exhaustive. Again, the literature review shows little attention has been given to environmental facilitators and barriers of KM. Different KM facilitators and barriers may emerge in different cultural settings and business environments as well as organisational types (Davenport, 1998). In the 21st century uncertain business environment coupled with pandemics such as COVID-19, identifying contextual KM process facilitators and barriers is critical for business performance. This can help to address context specific business challenges and shed light on whether KM process can affect hotels' performance through value chain. Against this backdrop, this thesis aims to further the knowledge on KM process facilitators and inhibitors by investigating the facilitators and inhibitors of KM in the context of Ghanaian hotels.

2.8 Customer relationship management

Relationship marketing is the umbrella concept from which CRM originated, and it aims to initiate, retain, and improve organisations relationships with customers (Berry, 1983). Berry first introduced the term relationship marketing, and CRM emerged in the 1990s as a modern-day terminology coined from relationship marketing to enhance relationships management with customers in organisations (Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2002). CRM is widely considered a business strategy that focuses on creating and managing relationships with customers through detailed customer data analysis to deliver strategic advantages (Buttle, 1996; Law, Ennew & Mitussis, 2013; Wu, 2010) and benefits such as customer satisfaction and retention, and organisation profitability (Mohammed & Rashid, 2012; Ryals & Payne, 2001; Padilla-Melendez & Garrido-Moreno, 2014). CRM's main purpose is for the organisations to know their customers better which will enable better service resulting in keeping loyal customers forever. CRM focuses on organisation and its current and prospective customer base relationship management for competitive advantage (Gebert, Geib, Kolbe & Brenner, 2003).

During the early years of the development of CRM, scholars started to conceptualise CRM as new denoting a modern management approach for organisations to use existing customer information to manage customers for better customer service delivery and improving an organisation's profitability (Galbreath, 1998). From the 2000s, scholars have viewed CRM to constitute an organisation's system and technology of segmenting market, profiling customer data, products portfolios and stores important information about customers so as to derive customers' needs in an organisation (Harrigan & Soutar, 2018; Mohammed & Rashid, 2012; Rajola, 2003). This shows that now CRM caters to the needs of existing, future, or potential customers by managing the customer lifecycle (Lo et al., 2010) through customer-oriented relationships building (Rababah, Mohd & Ibrahim, 2011).

2.8.1 Customer value

As the hospitality and tourism industry continues to expand and grow, it is crucial to understand the complexity of customer relations and how to improve on them purposefully and systematically. Customers have their own perception about the service and brand image of

every organisation. Customer value may result in high purchase or low purchase of an organisation's service and products, and organisations will have to ascertain this for the progress of their business (Amoako et al., 2019)

In an empirical study assessing the influence of CRM dimensions on organization performance, alem Mohammed, bin Rashid, and bin Tahir (2013) found that CRM dimensions such as customer orientation has a positive significant impact on hotel performance whereas CRM technology dimension is insignificant in terms of learning and growth of hotel performance. These dimensions look like a process but lack specific activities involved in each dimension in creating value for both the customers and the company. Therefore, CRM is a more comprehensive approach in visualising the various core activities in managing customer relationships and creating value. This thesis submits that a CRM value chain provides a more comprehensive approach to explain how various internal activities contribute to customer and company value.

2.8.2 CRM value chain

Buttle (2004) proposed the CRM value chain model by integrating an organisation's internal and external processes to create value for the customers at a profit. This model is based on a modified version of Porter's (1985) value chain. Porter's (1985) seminal book on competitive advantage introduced the value chain in organisations for performance analysis. Value chain refers to the "full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use" (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2000, p.4). Porter (1985) explains that value chain implies the internal activities or processes a firm perform in order to design, produce, market and deliver its product(s) because value is created for each activity leading to overall value of the service or product provided (Sharma et al., 2014). The concept of value chain in management thought is a breakthrough contribution as it stresses the relevance of looking at the discrete activities an organisation performs and how they interact to deliver value to the marketplace for competitive advantage (Presutti & Mawhinney, 2013). Porter's value chain model is categorised into two major parts, namely primary activities and supporting activities (See Figure 2.3). According to Porter, "every firm is a collection of activities that are performed

to design, produce, market, deliver, and support its product" (Porter, 1985, p.36). These activities are then combined to generate profits for organisations and create value for customers, leading to competitive advantage at the micro (Song et al., 2013) and macro (Romero & Tejada, 2011) levels.
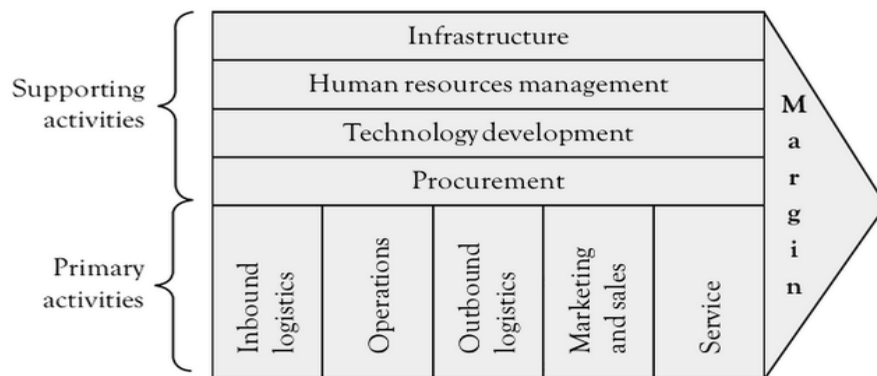
Figure 2. 3 Porter's value chain model

Source: Porter (1985)

Buttle modified Porter's value chain (1985) to produce the CRM value chain (Buttle 2004, 2015). The CRM value chain model comprises primary stages and supporting conditions (Figure 2.4). The primary stages help to locate and study a customer and his/her habits, and then interact with the customer to develop a relationship mutually beneficial to the customer and the firm while the supporting conditions help the primary stages to function and also enable the firm to experience the full benefit of CRM (See Figure 2.4). If an organisation is to respond to the demand and supply sides of the market needs, the CRM value chain activities must be given considerable attention. As the world and business environment have changed significantly in the last two decades, a business model must reflect these changes through the CRM value chain.
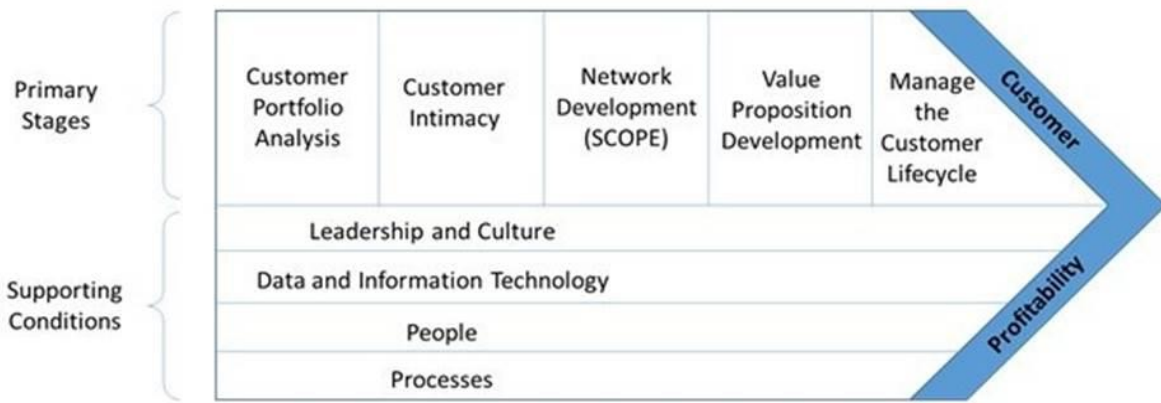
Figure 2. 4 The CRM value chain

Source: Buttle (2015)

Figure 2.4 outlined the primary stages and supporting conditions of the CRM value chain. As indicated in the study's background and problem statement, this study considers the CRM value chain primary stages relevant to have value potential for customers and organisations, hence the following sections briefly discuss the different the different stages. Although the CRM value chain model consists of primary stages/activities and supporting conditions, the researcher focused on the primary stages due to two reasons. First, the CRM model comprises five primary stages and four supporting conditions. Each of which has its own concepts and tools (Buttle, 2015). The CRM primary activities constitute the core foundation of the CRM model (Buttle, 2001). Second, since three items (people, processes, and technology) out of the four in the CRM supporting conditions appear to reflect the people, process and technology variables of KM, the researcher aim to assess whether and how KM and CRM can be combined. Therefore, the researcher seeks to qualitatively explore in detail to obtain in-depth and rich information, know the current status and value potential of the core activities of CRM, and gain knowledge background and understanding of the CRM core practices in the unique context of Ghanaian hotels.

2.8.2.1 Customer portfolio analysis

The customer portfolio analysis identifies the potential economic contributions of every customer through revenue generation estimations by the firm (Buttle, 2004, 2015; Lo et al., 2010). These customers can be considered the most desirable to the firm as they create the most

value of profitability to the company and can be served differently (Buttle, 2004). Customer data analysis may allow insights so as to develop strategies for more efficient interactions with customers. Customer data may be collected from the customer profile information, observing the customer's behaviour of choice and preference, and what the customer says and wants (Minghetti, 2003). Buttle (2001) argues that customer portfolio analysis can enable customer segmentation into different groups such as sack, re-engineer, nurture and invest. The author explains sack as sacking or get rid of customers who have no present and future value to the company. And re-engineering customers mean cautiously dealing with customers who mean not be profitable to the company now but could be profitable in future, which may require the company to review or revamp relationship with them. Nurturing customers is to care for customers who may not be valuable now but has potential future value to the company whereas investing in customers contain customers who have economic value at present and future economic value potential.

2.8.2.2 Customer intimacy

The customer intimacy is the stage of dealing with customers who have been filtered by a firm as most valuable. Here, data collection and mining are key as they help a firm to provide greater value to this class of customers compared to competitors (Lo et al., 2010). Although choosing to serve a customer is desirable, getting to know the customer is paramount. Knowing the customer enables understanding of the nature of the customer. In this vein, Buttle (2001) believed that collecting data about customers will aid the understanding of who, why, where, what, when and how in terms of the behaviour of customers. Lo et al. (2010) conducted a study of CRM for hotels in Hong Kong and found that all hotels proactively observed, collected, and recorded information about their customers preferences, which is used in service operations, sales, and marketing. This could mean a more conventional approach for targeting selected customers through direct sales, telemarketing, and direct email, when the product or nature of service of the company is suitable to such customers (Winer, 2001). According to Winer, research has shown that a firm constantly measuring customers satisfaction levels and developing programs to deliver service beyond the expectation of targeted customers delivers a higher level of satisfaction to customers than its competing firms.

2.8.2.3 Network development

The network development stage of the CRM entails the various stages of interactions between a firm and its customers. These include staff, suppliers, partners who are instrumental to the interaction between a firm and its customers (Buttle, 2004, 2015). A network development refers to the connectedness a company has with other parties who co-create to deliver value to customers. The resultant effect is for a customer to enjoy satisfactory interaction with the firm and for the firm to gain competitive advantage (Buttle, 2001). Burdon, Mooney and Al-Kilidar (2015) in their study of innovation using co-creation partnerships in service sector found a collaborative management who interact, and exchange resources aim to support in managing customer relations. The authors showed that a customer relations management ecosystem include various stakeholders such as the customer and customer communities, suppliers, and business partners, because partnership may be relevant for companies that seek higher levels of commercial service and competitive advantage. Contrary to Burdon et al., Lo et al. (2010) study on CRM value chain for Hong Kong hotels did not support network development stage of the CRM value chain.

2.8.2.4 Value proposition development

Once a firm has identified the preferred customer(s) to serve, a tailor-made products, services or customised offers based on customer(s) expectations, preferences or requirements are rolled out to them. The sole aim is to create value (Minghetti, 2003). According to Bowen and McCain (2015), the value propositions that may appeal to the new millennials (i.e., Generation-Y or We, people born between the late 1970s and mid-90s who seek flexibility and more personalised experiences) may not appeal to the older generation, hence there is the need for hospitality enterprises to revisit their CRM implementation. Thus, the current generation of customers may have interest for firms to 'understand and value their needs' and what shape their life. Inview, Soltani and Navimipour (2016) posits that, companies will have to continuously explore information about customers expectations and preferences to be able to create and present to the customers with the desired offerings. A company's willingness to continue to learn about customers preferences is important to deliver superior value to customers over time through communication (Cai, 2009). According to Yaghoubi et al. (2011), organisations' thorough understanding of customers' needs, preferences and wants will enable effective control check and provision of quality service. How hotels respond to these needs can

enable customer loyalty and retention or otherwise. But how exactly hotels do this in the world of competitive business environment is context driven and is yet to be extensively explored.

2.8.2.5 Manage the customer lifecycle

The life cycle of the customer involves the 'journey' from being a potential customer to becoming an actual customer and then an advocate for the firm (Buttle, 2004, 2015; Buttle & Maklan, 2019). It is important for organisations to implement and maintain customer-oriented approach across the organisation to ensure consistency of purpose in managing customer relationships (Rahimi, 2017). Here, customer satisfaction and retention plan are important in addition to effectively managing the network development to deliver satisfying service to the customer (Buttle, 2004). Geib, Reichold, Kolbe and Brenner (2005) note that CRM processes or activities of analysis (i.e., segmenting customers by analysing data), support process (i.e., identifying market needs to develop loyal customers) and delivery (i.e., marketing promotions, sales, service support) are important activities within a company that can influence and enhance the customer relationships (Rababah, Mohd & Ibrahim, 2011). Organisations attempt to secure good relationships with customers to increase customer capital and decrease parting of potential customers (Khalique, Nassir, Isa, & Ageel, 2011). In this 21st century, hotel customers are becoming more aware of competitive expansion since they now have a variety of choices to make among hotels. Hence, the hotel sector needs to have greater customer orientation.

To every business, profit accruement and competitiveness are more important. The 21st century is bedevilled with customer complexities and risks such as pandemics and financial hiccups. This has resulted in an uncertain business environment and a fierce competition in today's world (Presutti, 2013). Accordingly, if organisation X designs its value chain better than organisation Y, then organisation X's chances of delivering on the value dimensions that customers demand will increase. Customers will be willing to pay for the value received than it costs for the organisation to deliver value, resulting in increased profit. This suggests that an organisational value chain can deliver sustained competitive advantage to maintain profit.

Presutti (2013) observes that the value chain of an organisation is not static. It is a dynamic business ecosystem that should be nurtured to produce the desired results. Just like a biological ecosystem, the value chain needs balancing cardinal elements to enable it to remain responsive to the continuous changes in the business environments in which it functions. Technology has

played a role to enhance the value chain, but the role of humans remains unclear (Presutti, 2013). The author adds that an organisation-wide variable or binding element for overall performance efforts should be pursued in managing the value chain of an organisation. KM appears to be the missing link in any meaningful discussion for integrating all the value chain activities in the hotel setting. Consequently, KM process can be a potential facilitator of the CRM value chain for maximum effect. Understanding dynamic factors within the value chain is crucial for production efficiency and market penetration (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2000).

2.9 The hotel sector and the CRM value chain

CRM implementation in firms improves business performance by satisfying customers (Sigala, 2005; Wu & Lu, 2012), thereby attracting huge CRM investment in firms (Cook, 2010). However, CRM programs fail due to several factors, including approaching CRM as technology only solution (Cook, 2010; Croteau & Li, 2003), tactical issues and/or management skills such as a 'me too' strategy to combat competition and 'unclean' or unavailable data (Abbot, Stone & Buttle, 2001), and limited budget in implementing CRM as well as organisational culture of limited understanding of CRM between management and customers in budget hotels (Rahimi, 2017). A survey by Forrester found a 47% failure rate of CRM projects (Cook, 2010). Also, Kale's (2004) study, 'CRM failure and the seven deadly sins', outlined CRM failures: focusing solely on technology, losing sight of customers, ignoring customer lifetime value, lack of management support, undervaluing data analysis, underestimating change management, and flexible business processes (Payne & Frow, 2006).

According to the CRM value chain, the end results are 'customer value and profitability' which refers to the performance of the business. Globally, hotel performance faces challenging times, especially in this era of COVID-19, a global pandemic that has affected interaction, travel and hotel patronage. Anecdotally, the obvious challenge to hotels is change in guests' expectations and behaviour and overall service management. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on hotels' performance reinforce Sainaghi, Phillips, and Corti's (2013) argument that "encouraging signs for the future of the global hotel sector remain uncertain, due to growing evidence of challenging times ahead" (p. 150). Further, it is common for hotels to face seasonality in what may be described as "normal times".

As indicated earlier, Porter's (1985) developed the value chain (primary and support) activities over three decades ago. Given the time Porter's value chain was developed vis-à-vis the current unstable and uncertain business environment, Presutti (2013) argues that a revised value chain model is needed to reflect the changes in the business environment over the past three decades. Consequently, Buttle (2015) provided a CRM value chain. The author drew on Porter's primary and support activities of the value chain and modified and created the CRM value chain, namely primary stages and supporting conditions (See Figure 2.4)

Previous research on customer relationship management indicates that attention has been paid to technology use and CRM performance (Cine, 1999; Gilbert & Powell-Perry, 2001; Raab, Berezan, Krishen, & Tanford, 2016), customer loyalty satisfaction (Sui & Baloglu, 2003; Hyun, 2010; Rahimi & Kozak,2017), and impact on firms' performance (Piccoli, O'Connor, Capaccioli, & Alvarez, 2003; Prentice & King, 2011; Wu & Lu, 2012; Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016). Currently, CRM is considered a strategy for branding customers experiences to improve satisfaction and loyalty. CRM is about active management of the customer or on the customer journey such as customer on-boarding, customer win-back, loyalty management among others to ensure survival of relationships and prosperity for both firms and customers (Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

Notwithstanding the growing interest of scholars in CRM studies, little is known about knowledge management and CRM in the hospitality sector. Hence, there is an empirical gap which needs to be filled because CRM faces failures in organisations (AMR Research, 2007; Cook, 2010; Ebner et al, 2001; Payne & Frow, 2006; Rahimi, 2017). Further, the context of CRM value chain study has been on developed countries. This is insufficient to determine what constitutes the CRM value chain in hotels in other contexts such as Africa due to economic, cultural, geographical and administration differences. Moreover, whether and how hotels are employing KM process in tackling the hotel's CRM value chain primary stages in addressing some of these bottlenecks put forward by various authors deserve much attention.

It is therefore argued in this research that different context may have different hotel CRM value chain activities because the hotel industry is complicated and there may a high number of functions within the core stages in the hotel CRM value chain. Hence, it is important to understand each context hotels CRM value chain and how each context hotels delivers on KM process regarding their CRM value chain primary stages. For instance, KM may be relevant in examining the hotel's value chain with potential benefits such as influencing customer

satisfaction and loyalty and hotel revenue and market share increase (Manoharan, 2019). This thesis uses Buttle's CRM value chain primary stages and seeks to understand the CRM primary stages in Ghanaian hotels and examine how the KM process is adopted.

2.10 Integrating KM in managing customer relationships

Although KM and CRM appear to be similar, they are two different management concepts in function and purpose, and little empirical research attempt to explore their linkage (Migdadi, 2021). Customer relationship management is an enterprise approach to understanding and influencing customer behaviour through meaningful communications to improve customer acquisition, customer attention, customer loyalty, and customer profitability (Swift, 2001 p.12). This author further establishes that CRM core mandate is a firm's capability to generate products, services, responsiveness, mass customisation, customer happiness and individualisation. This suggests that CRM is not just about mailing, pricing, and phone calls to prospects. On the other hand, KM is a "set of management activities aimed at designing and influencing knowledge creation and integration (including processes of sharing knowledge)" (Mclver et al., 2013, p. 597). Knowledge is a valuable organisational resource which is inimitable, rare, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). A great deal of this knowledge belongs to individual organisational members considered as 'knowers' (Grant, 1996). Knowledge must be managed to profit the organisation, and managing it means KM because KM coordinates by integrating people process and technology in an organisation to create, retain, use and share knowledge (Martelo, Barroso, & Cepeda, 2013).

There are numerous studies on each of these two concepts, but there is a dearth of detailed, comprehensive and integrated research on them. Even though KM and CRM appear similar, they are dissimilar in function because they operate differently. Table 2.4 shows that while KM focuses on the organisation with employee as recipient of benefits, CRM focuses on the customer with the customer as recipient of benefits (du Plessis & Boon, 2004; Lin; Gibbert, Leibold & Probst, 2002; Su & Chien, 2006). Further, CRM looks out to identify needs and preferences about customers in order to relate better with the customer. KM is geared towards accessing knowledge from the customer (i.e., seek knowledge residing in customers as customers are considered knowledgeable in the business environment) from listening to understand the customers who bought, or did not buy, the company's products. In addition,

KM encourage employees to be knowledge sharers. KM fulfils a vitally important role as it makes knowledge becomes the key value-added resource in organisations (Gibert et al., 2002). In sum, KM is about efficiency gains (i.e., avoidance of 're-inventing the wheel') and provides useful information that is used in actions, creates sense, interpretation and leads to new combinations. It, thus, create innovation and growth in a company. In contrast, CRM seek relationships with customers as co-creators of company value (as a well-known CRM adage presents that-'retention is cheaper than acquisition'). Although CRM focus on retention can help a company's business success, retention appear to become increasingly difficult in an age where competitors' product offerings are often close imitations (Gibert et al., 2002). Therefore, only CRM practise may not suffice the evolving consumer. Hence, some academics suggest the need to understand how KM and CRM can be integrated to produce an effect to enhance an organisation's performance (Tseng, 2015).

To understand the state of hospitality CRM research, Law, Fong, Chan, and Fong (2018) systematically conducted a thematic analysis of the literature from 1988 to 2017. They found five research foci: CRM planning and implementation process, organisational support, technology and tools, customer perspectives, and characteristics and outcome and impact. Sota, Chaudhry and Srivastava (2019) supplemented Law et al.'s (2018) CRM study by reviewing hospitality CRM from 1988 to 2017 to understand the trend of CRM researches. From their review, the trend and major themes of CRM have largely focused on software and technology and neglected the building of actual relationships. This implies that CRM has now morphed into a technological and administrative tool that pays little attention to relationships (Eldridge, 2018). This author emphasises that an effective CRM must seek to understand customer behaviour and preference. It is an open secret that the fundamental goal of CRM is to maintain intimate relationships with customers for practitioners to draw valuable insights into customers behaviours, needs, and preferences (Josiassen, Assaf, & Cvelbar, 2014). CRM's goal aims to satisfy customers by providing customised service, ensuring organisational profitability by customer retention, increasing performance and productivity standard by collecting feedback and suggestions to improve service quality, reduce cost and save and achieve market competitive edge (Srivastava, Chandra & Srivastava, 2019). Thus, the global market space has shifted from product-centric approach to customer-centric approach, requiring in-depth and re-designed strategic studies in this area to identify the appropriate elements in satisfying customers (Rahimi et al., 2017; Srivastava et al., 2019).

What is missing in CRM literature is the organisational perspective of the 'how' and the process of better performance (Rahimi, 2017). More recently, the CRM conventional practice of relying on structured data about customers in managing them has changed. The 21st century customer expresses various forms of unstructured data such as feelings and emotions about service experience through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube Channel, photos, videos, audio, etc. suggesting that firms require more unstructured and complex ways of handling customers if they want to be successful (Buttle, 2019). This shows that available information and data to an organisation ought to be interpreted and enriched to make it more useful for managing business operation (Abusweilem, & Abualoush, 2019). Thus, there is a scattered wealth of knowledge-infinite, requiring humans to receive, sort, digest and compare for effective organisational operation Groff and Jones (2003). The present study addresses this gap by taking an integrative perspective of CRM and KM in hospitality. Contemporary CRM literature focuses on big data analytics (Anshari, Almunawar, Lim, & Al-Mudimigh, 2019; Zerbino, Aloini, Dulmin, & Minnino,2018) and technology use such as social media (Law et al., 2018; Sigala, 2018). In view of this, Rahimi (2017) and Migdadi (2021) stress that knowledge management along with relationship management is key to effective CRM as people, process and technology are significant factors for implementation. This suggests inadequate integrated KM and CRM study.

Currently, the corpus of literature stemming from KM and CRM activities are largely Eurocentric, conceptual, customer-oriented perspective and scant on organisational perspective. Hence, it is needful to examine the relationship that exists between the two terms and their integrative role in business performance. KM process, though relevant, has received less attention in the hospitality and hotel literature. It is thus necessary to focus on KM and its relevance to the operation of hotels at the property level. A study on how their integrative role can affect hotel performance is timely to achieve performance targets in hotels.

Table 2. 4 KM versus CRM

	KM	CRM
Knowledge sought in	Employee, team, company, network of companies.	Customer database
Axioms	'If only we knew what we know.'	'Retention is cheaper than acquisition.'
Rationale	Unlock and integrate employees' knowledge about customers, sales processes, research and development.	Mining knowledge about the customer in company's databases.
Objectives	Efficiency gains, cost saving, and avoidance of re-inventing the wheel.	Customer base nurturing, maintaining company's customer base.
Metrics	Performance against budget.	Performance in terms of customer satisfaction and loyalty.
Benefits	Customer satisfaction.	Customer retention.
Recipient of incentives	Employee.	Customer.
Role of customer	Passive, recipient of product.	Captive, tied to the product or service by loyalty schemes.
Corporate role	Encourage employees to share their knowledge with their colleagues.	Build lasting relationships with customers.

Source: Gibbert, Leibold and Probst (2002)

2.11 KM in hospitality and tourism

The hospitality and tourism sectors are fragmented with different sub-sectors ranging from restaurants to hotels. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2020), the hospitality sector is vast and a main driver in value creation the world over. For example, in 2019 the hospitality sector significantly contributed 8.9 trillion USD to the global economy

(representing 10.3% of the global total gross domestic product), and 330 million jobs (1 in 10 jobs around the world) across the globe (WTTC, 2020). The study of hotels' understanding of KM and its performance remain latent as KM practices are marginally implemented in the hospitality and tourism industry (Cooper 2006; Manoharan & Singal, 2019; Salem 2014; Nieves et al., 2014; Sigala & Chalkiti, 2014). Meanwhile, the industry is knowledge-intensive because of the nature of the service product (Marco-Lajara, Claver-Cortes, Ubeda-Garcia, Garcia-Lillo, & Zaragoza-Saez, 2019). Cooper (2015) argues that there is scant literature on KM in the tourism and hospitality sector. As already indicated, KM has been applied extensively in other service industries such as manufacturing, consultant firms, medicine and pharmacy, accounting, business firms, particularly information technology (IT) companies (Gupta & McDaniel, 2002). Reinforcing this view, Nieves, Quintana, and Osorio (2016) state that KM is empirically studied more in the manufacturing industry, but it is underexplored in hospitality. A contemporary review of the field of hospitality and tourism and KM finds that the hospitality industry has been slow to adopt KM (Cooper, 2018). Cooper's view indicates that some scholars have discussed the possible application of KM in the hospitality industry. This suggests that the hospitality organisations must constantly generate new knowledge to stay competitive, and they must be knowledgeable of customers' needs since service delivery occurs via interaction between employees and customers (Chalkiti, 2012; Khale, 2002). There is the need to examine changing trends of knowledge creation and strategic management research in the hospitality field (Koseoglu, Wong, Kim & Song, 2022). Undoubtedly, hotels constitute an important segment of the tourism experience as they serve as accommodation for customers and hence have the potential to create a 'home-away-from-home' experience for their customers. Given this, directing KM focus on the hotel sector may increase managerial knowledge and awareness in enhancing some of their service components such as customer management in hotels.

In line with Watson and Webster's (2020) argument that the scientific progress of a topic relies on scholars' synthesising existing work to lay a solid foundation for theory development worthy of academic and practice usefulness, the rsearcher conducted a literature review of KM practice in hotel industry from 1997 to 2021 with recourse to the explosion of knowledge and KM emergence era. A Scopus search engine was employed regarding KM process in the hotel sector from 1997 to 2021. The search objective was to answer the following questions: What was the annual publication trend of KM related studies from 1997 to 2021 in the hotel industry? What was the contributions of authors from different countries to KM research from 1997 to

2021 in the hotel industry? What are the key research areas? These research questions emerged to fill the gaps in the conceptual studies of Halin and Marnburg (2008) and Cooper (2018) in the hospitality and tourism industry.

The search employed Google Scholar and Scopus engine search and restricted to KM studies that present the concept of KM and its practice in the hotel industry. Academic journals (articles) published from 1997 to 2020 were retrieved from Scopus search engine in November 2020. Because of this, conference papers, textbooks, and information from the internet were not considered for this study because reviewed journal articles are most valuable and go through a quality process of peer review before publication (Deale, Lee & Bae, 2020; Newton, 2010). To retrieve relevant articles for the study, hospitality and tourism journal articles were selected using the Scopus search engine in line with Falagas, Pitsouni, Malietzis and Pappas (2008) finding that Scopus is of better accuracy and wider coverage in performance. The authors compared PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google scholar search engines; strengths and weaknesses, and found Scopus to offer more citation analysis.

Suitable search key words ("Knowledge Management" OR "Knowledge Creation" OR "Intellectual Capital" OR "Knowledge Exchange" OR "Organisational Learning") AND (LIMIT-TO ("Hotel Industry" OR "Hotel Performance" OR "Hospitality Industry" OR Lodging Industry") AND DOCTYPE (ar) AND SUBJAREA (Arts and Humanities, Social Science, Business, Environment etc) AND PUBYEAR (1997 to 2020) AND SOURCE TITLE (("J") AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English") were used under the document (TITLE-ABS-KEY) section in Scopus. 146 search results occurred (searched on November 2, 2020).

Despite the search criteria, non-hospitality and tourism journals still appeared. For appropriate analysis of the subject, this study was strictly limited to KM research coverage in hospitality and tourism journals. Journal selection for this study was limited strictly to hospitality and tourism journals as adopted in previous literature review studies (Hall, 2010; Okumus, Zhao, Van Niekerk, & Law, 2018; Otoo & Kim, 2020).

Table 2.5 presents the number of papers found in each journal, the selected number of papers relevant to this study and the journal impact factor. The researcher also viewed the various journals websites notes to authors or statement of purpose to ensure they are relevant to the subject. This investigation follows Frechtling's (2004) method of assessment of tourism/hospitality journals selection for an exploratory study. From the journals' websites, the researchers found the statement of purpose regarding the selected journals.

The search results revealed very limited studies in general (as 34 out of 174 hospitality and tourism journal papers were found relevant-See Table 2.5) with only 7 qualitative studies. KM practice in hotel started emerging with only 1 journal article publication in 1997. There has since been an increase and a decline in KM research in the 20th century (see Figure 2.5). In 21st century, however, a score matrix for single and multiple authors (2.6) shows that KM has begun to gain attention in the academic community enjoying a rise in research publication (Table 2.7) with only Egypt in the Middle East making effort in its research, while the rest of the countries researching KM are developed countries (see Table 2.7). This trend indicates an underexplored KM research in hotels, especially in developing countries of the African continent.

Table 2. 5 Summary of search results, journals and selected papers

No.	Selected Journals	No. of papers from search	No. of final selected papers for this study	SJR Impact factor
1	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (IJCHM)	22	7	2.203
2	Tourism Management (TM)	55	10	3.068
3	International Journal of Hospitality Management (IJHM)	35	4	2.217
4	Tourism and Hospitality Research (THR)	4	3	0.647
5	Tourism Economics (TE)	9	2	0.611
6	Annals of Tourism Research (ATR)	10	1	2.228

No.	Selected Journals	No. of papers from search	No. of final selected papers for this study	SJR Impact factor
7	International Journal of Tourism Research (IJTR)	1	1	1.032
8	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management (JHTM)	8	1	0.970
9	Current Issues in Tourism (CIT)	13	2	1.404
10	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology (JHTT)	7	1	0.894
11	Journal of Travel Research (JTR)	3	1	3.014
12	Tourism Review (TR)	7	1	0.766
	Total	174	34	

Source: Author's construct
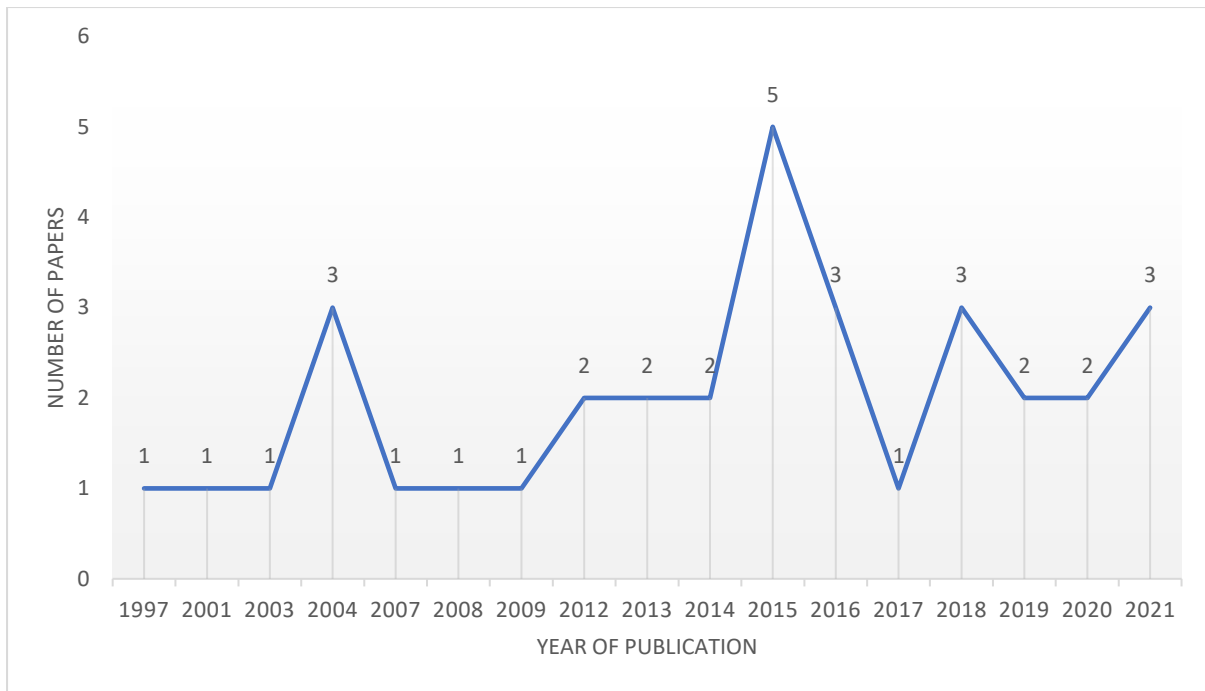
Figure 2. 5 Number of KM academic research papers published between January 1997 to September 2021

Source: Author's construct

To assess various countries, researchers, and institutions' contributions to KM research, the investigation adopted a formula propounded by Howard, Cole, and Maxwell (1987) that contributes to identifying and understanding leading contributors of articles over time and their productivity scores/credit. The formula has been used by earlier researchers in the construction field to conduct similar reviews, to analyse green building research trends in construction journals (Darko & Chan 2016) and to examine the trend of research in labour productivity (Yi & Chan, 2014). Given that various researchers have adopted Howard et al.'s (1987) formula, which is shown below, in conducting similar reviews, validity and reliability are assured in adopting the same formula for this study.

$$Score = \frac{1.5^{n-i}}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} 1.5^{n-i}}$$

In the formula above, *n* denotes the number of authors and *i* signifies a particular author's order. The numeric score represents the contribution of each author, otherwise known as credit. A

single-authored paper attracts 1 credit while in multiple-authored papers, the credits are prorated proportionally. Howard et al. (1987) believed that authors in a multi-authored paper(s) do not make equal contributions. The first author contributes more than the second author in that order. Thus, the first and second authors in a co-authored paper were given 0.60 and 0.40, respectively. Table 2.6 shows the score matrix for single and multiple authors.

Table 2. 6 Score matrix for multi-authored papers for a particular author

Number of authors	Order of specific author				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1.0				
2	0.60	0.40			
3	0.47	0.32	0.21		
4	0.42	0.28	0.18	0.12	
5	0.38	0.26	0.17	0.11	0.08

The scores/credits of the individual authors from institutions in the same country are summed up to give the contribution of each country and institution towards KM studies. Furthermore, countries where the studies were based were counted, and in the case of collaborative research between authors from different institutions the study setting is specified, the author with more credit points was based on the country where the author's affiliated institution was located and was counted as the country/region affiliation for the study. Accordingly, if author 'X' of a certain institution has the second and third authorship out of a total of three authors for each paper, author 'X' has 0.53 credit (0.32+0.21) for his or her country/region. The scores for all authors from institutions in the same country/region are added up. Table 8 shows that most research works were done by researchers from institutions in developed countries. The highest contributing countries in hotel KM research based on Howard et al.'s (1987) formula include Spain, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand and Turkey. The higher score arising from the developed countries implies that the developed countries have contributed more to KM research. When exploring the extent of the focus on hospitality and hotels and tourism development and sustainability in the aforementioned countries, it may be expressive of the large extent of KM practice in these locations. Further, only two developing

countries in Asia (Taiwan and Turkey) and one in the Middle East (Egypt) have made good efforts to contribute to KM research with 7, 2 and 2 papers, respectively. Could unawareness of KM potential contribution, hospitality companies not prioritising KM as an important management activity and undeveloped publication culture in developing countries result in the low manifestation of KM research? Regardless of the reason, as KM publications from countries in Africa are missing from the list of KM research at the time of this study, it is therefore crucial for researchers to focus their attention on Africa to understand KM practices in the developing economies in Africa. Table 2.7 shows countries and number of papers published from 1997 to 2021.

Table 2. 7 Countries and number of papers published (search results:1997-2021)

Region	University's country/region affiliation	Nature of country/ region	No. of papers
Europe	Spain	Developed	6
Asia	Taiwan	Developing	7
Europe	UK	Developed	9
North America	US	Developed	5
Oceania	Australia	Developed	3
Oceania	New Zealand	Developed	2
Asia	Turkey	Developing	3
Middle East	Egypt	Developing	2
Europe	Slovenia	Developed	1
Asia	Qatar	Developing	1
Europe	Norway	Developed	1

Region	University's country/region affiliation	Nature of country/region	No. of papers
Asia	Iran	Developing	1
Asia	Pakistan	Developing	1
Asia	Korea	Developing	1
Asia	Jordan	Developing	1
Europe	Serbia	In transition	1
North America	Canada	Developed	1
Europe	Cyprus	Developed	1
Asia	China	Developing	1
Europe	Denmark	Developed	1
Europe	Greece	Developed	1

Note: nature of country/region (developed, developing, or in transition) is accessed based on investopedia.com

Source: Author's construct

In terms of methodology approach, Table 2.8 summarises the methods adopted in previous KM studies in the hospitality industry. From Table 2.8, although both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been employed in the existing studies, quantitative studies are more dominant. In addition, as noted earlier, more than 85% of 128 published journal articles on hotel value chain studies in North America applied quantitative methodology in their analysis (Sun et al., 2018).

Table 2. 8 Methods of KM studies in hospitality industry

Author (s)	Method	Author(s)	Method
Teare and Bowen (1997)	Quantitative	Jalilvand *et al.* (2019)	Quantitative
Okumus (2001)	Qualitative	Ali *et al.* (2020)	Quantitative
Bayraktaroglu and Kutanis (2003)	Qualitative	Pascual-Fernandez *et al.* (2021)	Quantitative
Yang and Wan (2004)	Qualitative	Wang and Huang (2021)	Quantitative
Yang (2004)	Qualitative	Rudez and Mihalic (2007)	Quantitative
Hallin and Marnburg (2008)	Database searches of KM	Kim *et al.* (2012)	Quantitative
Okumus (2013)	Synthesis of previous literature	FitzPatrick *et al.* (2013)	Content analysis
Salem (2014)	Quantitative	Zeglat and Zigan (2014)	Quantitative
Leonidou *et al.* (2015)	Quantitative	Bontis *et al.* (2015)	Quantitative
Martinez-Martinez *et al.* (2015)	Quantitative	Davey *et al.* (2017)	Content analysis
Assaf *et al.* (2016)	Quantitative	Liu and Jiang (2020)	Quantitative
Nieves and Diaz-Meneses (2016)	Quantitative	Elsharnouby and Elbanna (2021)	Quantitative
Wong, French and Wickham (2016)	Qualitative	Frechtling (2004)	Quantitative
Marco-Lajara *et al.* (2018)	Quantitative	Shaw and Williams (2009)	Conceptual review
Nieves and Diaz-Meneses (2018)	Quantitative	Chalkiti (2012)	Qualitative

Author (s)	Method	Author(s)	Method
Pappas (2018)	Quantitative	Sobaih and Jones (2015)	Qualitative
Hsieh and Chuang (2019)	Mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative)	Wu and Chen (2015)	Quantitative

Source: Author's construct

From this investigation, three key research themes were found that included, first, KM process and development which dealt with strategic decision making and notes that organisational learning in hotels shape the development of competitiveness capability. Only a few studies have examined knowledge resources and little to no attention is given KM processes such as knowledge acquisition and creation in hotels, creating opportunities for further research in this area. For example, Yang and Wan's (2004) study on sharing and retaining knowledge which resides in employees' minds revealed traditional knowledge storage systems such as logbook, standard operating procedures (SOPs), employee's newsletter, sales reports, and situational 'bibles' (whereby employees record step-by-step complaints and information about customers during daily operations), which leaves much to be desired in this era of technology and internet explosion. Second, intellectual capital (IC) capabilities of KM which analysed IC and alliance management capability of value creation, brand management, creating an opportunity for IC in KM research that suits the local conditions. And third, knowledge exchange transfer in business performance, that highlights knowledge transmission from academia to industry, with little attention on knowledge sharing and transfer in organisations.

The finding also revealed a methodological gap; only seven qualitative studies out of 34 research studies were found. Observing the current environment shows that the pace of things has changed over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to change, hence the need to employ qualitative research method in areas such as how KM is being adopted in offering different types of accommodation services and managing the changing customers' needs and preferences. A qualitative method will be appropriate to explore and unpack hidden connections of KM processes because qualitative research captures the real-life context within which a phenomenon occurs and its unfolding story (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2005). It also enables better understanding because in-depth information, details, and

explanations are provided about the phenomenon (Yin, 2009), which can unravel the growing complexity of a phenomenon (Provenzano & Baggio, 2019) to open ontological, epistemological and methodological opportunities (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015) in hospitality research as opposed to quantitative research. Hence, future studies should employ more qualitative studies and must pay attention to KM in hotels in the developing regions, for example, countries in Africa, Asia etc.

The knowledge gaps to be addressed based on this review study include KM process implementation (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008) in hotels in developing regions, barriers, and facilitators of KM in hotels, especially in the developing countries, and the examination of KM process on CRM in hotels. As KM has potential benefits, more research is required on KM in the hospitality and tourism industry to prepare the industry to for the future (Cooper, 2018) and to understand how to memorise and store real-time contextual knowledge in a dynamic way (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). That is, there is a need for KM research to shed light on how the KM processes are being adopted by hotels in managing customer relationships, particularly in today's complex business environment.

2.12 The Ghanaian context: Geography and economy, hotel industry, culture, and organisational culture

This section provides a country context, a summary of essential background information to the study area. First, it presents an overview of the geography of Ghana and the hotel sector as well as a classification and regional distribution of hotels in Ghana. Then it examines hotels' performance and management in Ghana and describes the research site. The section ends with a review of culture and organisational culture vis-à-vis KM and touches on the nature of culture in Ghana.

2.12.1 Overview of Ghana's geography and economy

Ghana's geographical characteristics are critical to the state of hotels and hospitality, and challenges bedevilling hotel industry. The location of Ghana and its ethnic composition require tactical strategies in customer management in hospitality enterprises. Ghana is located in West Africa and boarded by Burkina Faso on the North, Atlantic Ocean on the South, Cote D'Ivoire

on the West, and Togo on the East, with a population of almost 30 million and a land area of 238, 537 square kilometres (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). The country is home to agriculture, manufacturing, oil, hospitality and tourism among others (Asiedu, 2014). The hospitality and hotel sub-sector primarily drive the tourism industry in the country. The country's economic sector is home to heavy reliance on agriculture with (37.3%) GDP, and manufacturing (7.9%) GDP, and hospitality and tourism (6.7%) (Asiedu & Stengos, 2014).

The country has two major divisions: northern and southern. These two parts of Ghana have 16 regions, including Ahafo region, Ashanti region, Bono region, Bono East region, Central region, Eastern region, Greater Accra region, Northern region, North East region, Oti region, Savannah region, Upper East region, Upper West region, Western region, and Western North region (See Figure 2.6). These 16 regions have tourism and hospitality enterprises whose activities are under the mandate of Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), a government agency, which has been granted this mandate by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Art to ensure sustainable hospitality and tourism development in Ghana.

2.12.2 Tourism and the hotel industry in Ghana

Ghana's tourism and hospitality industry abound in beaches, rich numerous cultural heritage and festivals, colonial slave castles, hospitable people, and tropical weather (Mensah, 2006). All these attractions serve as pull attractions to both domestic and international visitors, with hotels serving as a stay over place of having. Hospitality and tourism industry is considered a major economic contributor as is the fourth-largest foreign-exchange earner after gold, cocoa, and foreign remittances (Mensah-Ansah, 2014). In 2011, international tourist arrival was 1,080,220 with corresponding US$2.1 billion receipts. This is an increase from 698,069 international tourist arrival with corresponding US$1.4 billion receipts in 2008, providing 234, 679 to 330, 514 jobs in this service sector (GTA, 2012). Moving forward, 2019 recorded 1.13 million international tourist arrivals in Ghana and nearly US$3.5 billion in revenue was realised (GTA, 2019). In 2020, Ghana managed a paltry 355000 tourists' visitations and generated US$387 million in revenue, a drop from the previous year, due to COVID-19. For the year 2021, Ghana experienced a dramatic turnaround from the previous year as the country saw 623,523 arrivals with a corresponding US$ 803.8 million in revenue (GTA, 2021).

In Ghana, evidence of globalisation in the hotels sector is visible with the arrival of multinational hotel chains, for example: Kempinski Gold Coast, Marriot International Hotels, Golden Tulip Hotel, Holiday Inn, Best Western Premier, Ibis Styles, Protea Hotels, and Hilton-yet to start operation. These hotels deliver higher standard of services facilitated by brand and proper management of the execution of the policy and procedures. With the increasing demand for hospitality and tourism products and services in Ghana, more ought to be done in terms of customer management to meet the service standards and customer needs well for better performance (GTA, 2018).

2.12.3 Classification and regional distributions of hotels in Ghana

The government of Ghana has established an agency, GTA, a tourism development public agency, established by Tourism Act, 2011 (Act 817) as the main implementing body of the Ministry of Tourism, to guide the sector's development in the country. The GTA provides classifications or categories for hospitality enterprises.

GTA's regional distribution of hotels are clustered into 10 regions for effective hotel business performance monitoring, evaluation, and inspection purposes by this government agency. The 10 regional clusters and their sum licensed hotels include Ashanti Region (600 hotels), Brong Ahafo Region (246 hotels), Central Region (304), Eastern Region (404 hotels), Greater Accra Region (1096 hotels), Northern Region (155 hotels), Upper East Region (118 hotels), Upper West Region (49 hotel), Volta (186 hotels), and Western Region (314 hotels) (See details in Table 2.9).

Per GTA's classification, hotels fall under category 'A', and guest houses are under category 'B'. And the hotels and guest houses range from budget to 1-Star to 5-Star rated accommodation in the country. With this classification system in place, hotels and guest houses ought to provide basic services including beddings, breakfast, washroom/bathroom, car park, and security to the consuming public.

Table 2.9 shows the regional distribution of formal accommodation-licensed hotels in Ghana as of December 2018. From Table 2.9, Greater Accra accounts for 31.6% of Ghana's hotel population. Ashanti region accounts for 17.3% while Eastern, Western, Central, Brong Ahafo account for 11.6%, 9.1%, 8.8% and 7.1% respectively. These six regions, located in Southern Ghana, are the main economically viable regions in Ghana, constitute 85.5% of the hotel's

population in Ghana. Except for Volta region, the remaining 3 regions are in the Northern part of Ghana and constitutes 9.1% of the hotel population (GTA, 2018). The percentage share distribution of hotels as shown in Table 2.9 also reflects the distribution of visitors, whether business, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) or leisure related, in the country.

Table 2. 9 Regional distribution of hotels and classification in Ghana (December, 2018)

REGION	GRADES								
	5-Star	4-Star	3-Star	2-Star	1-Star	Guest House	Budget	Total	% Share
Ashanti		1	7	53	72	17	450	600	17.28
Brong Ahafo				7	20	2	217	246	7.08
Central			4	15	28	7	250	304	8.75
Eastern		2	6	22	39	22	313	404	11.63
Greater Accra	3	8	7	90	156	71	761	1096	31.56
Northern				10	14	7	124	155	4.46
Upper East				4	8	10	96	118	3.39
Upper West				4	5		40	49	1.41
Volta			2	9	32	1	142	186	5.35
Western		4	8	24	87	20	171	314	9.04
Total	3	15	36	236	461	157	2564	3472	

Source: GTA (2018)

2.12.3.1 Study location

Hotels in Accra located in Southern Ghana are selected for the study. Accra is the capital of Ghana and doubles as the regional capital of the Greater Accra region. The city houses the headquarters of all government agencies, departments, and ministries and most of the big private companies. The only international airport in Ghana, Kotoka International Airport, is

located here, making it the most developed city in Ghana followed by Kumasi-Ashanti region. The name 'Accra' emanated from the original Twi word 'Nkran', meaning 'ants', reference to the numerous anthills that characterised so many parts of Accra's countryside before the area experienced modern architectural buildings. The region has over 4 million urban population, making it the second largest after Ashanti region which has a population of over 5 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019) as shown in Figure 2.6,

Accra is a tourism hub as it receives and accommodates the greatest number of tourists and business travellers and has the most businesses compared to other cities (Akwensivie & Abedi-Lartey, 2018; GTA, 2020). Hospitality, especially luxurious and first-class hotels, hotel chains and other hotels type ranging from budget to 5-Star rated hotels are located here. Various activities such as trading and commerce, meetings, incentives, convention, and events (MICE), lodging, leisure activities and many more activities go on in this city as it is the 'heart' of Ghana and the only international entry and exit point for international travellers and visitors by air and water. Accra and Kumasi are the two major cities with many economic activities and are also home to night life, major tourist attractions and other entertainment facilities. For example, Accra was chosen based on the development of hotels in the capital serving as the country's economic and administrative hub with more developed hotel industry in the capital city.

A review of relevant literature did not reveal any documented evidence of extensive KM study in hotels. However, several KM studies in communication networks, banking, and health (Adjei & Dei, 2015; Assem & Pabbi, 2016; Boateng, 2016; Gyensare & Asare, 2012) can be found. Scant empirical and no theoretical study about KM exists in the hospitality sector literature. Meanwhile, this sector is fragile as it is service-oriented and requires the right knowledge input for success. On one hand, the country's budget hotels struggle with poor record keeping and undefined means of handing down knowledge from one generation of workers to the other amidst high staff turnovers. For this reason, there is a lot of wastage of resources in repetitive actions and trying to re-invent the wheel. On the other hand, some star-rated hotels in Accra practice KM but there is little research on them. Consequently, an investigation into how the star-rated hotels conduct their KM process to enhance CRM practices will serve as a better intervention for other hotels in Ghana.
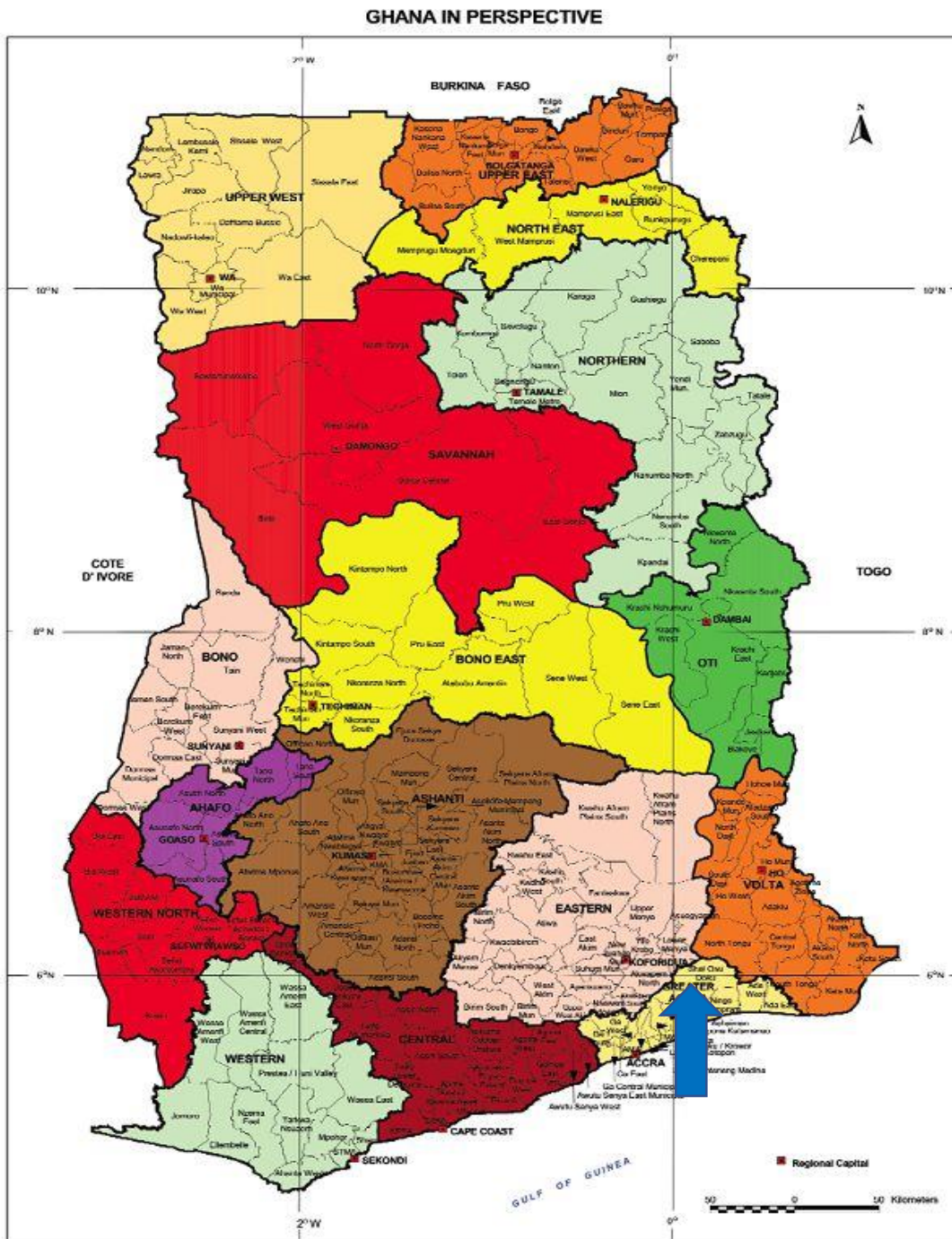
Figure 2. 6 Map of Ghana showing the study location

Source: Ghana statistical service (2019)

2.12.4 National culture and organisational culture

Culture plays an important role in the growth of a society and by extension a nation (Kanagaretnam, Lobo, Wang & Whalen, 2019). This can affect people's behaviour and actions (de mooij, 2017; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Schein (2010) view that culture involve a group of people learning and sharing valid basic assumptions as the appropriate ways of feeling, perceiving, thinking, and solving internal and external problems. Culture thus denotes the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group of people from another (Compare countries, 2020). This programming influences patterns of thinking which are reflected in the meaning people attach to various aspects of life and which become crystallised in the society and organisations. Culture shapes belief about what knowledge is worth sharing and it creates the environment for social interaction which influences knowledge sharing and use (Karlsen & Gottschalk, 2004).

The culture of nations varies (Compare countries, 2020). Some countries may be more individualistic, masculine, normative, and avoid uncertainties in the future while others take the pragmatic, collectivist, and feminine approach. Insights from Hofstede's classification of different countries demonstrate that developed countries such as the United States dominate in terms of being more individualist with a score of 92 percent, masculinity (62 percent) and has low power distance (40 percent). Similarly, the United Kingdom scored 89 percent for individualism and is thus considered a masculine society with a score of 66 percent and has low power distance (35 percent). On the contrary, Hong Kong is more power distanced (68 percent), collective, and masculine (57 percent) society. Developing countries such as Ghana is dominated by power distance with a score of 80 percent, less individualistic and considered the feminine type where the thrust is on caring for others and achieving a good quality of life. Unlike masculinity, which cherishes the best, motivates people and prioritised competition, success and achievement, feminism appreciates what people do (Compare countries, 2020).

According to Boateng and Narteh (2015), culture presents geographical peculiarities that can influence organisations. This could mean that a Western business model may not exactly work as planned in an African or Asian country. Hence, research is required to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries. The literature shows that culture can be viewed as belief system, strategy, learnt entity and mental programming (Maull, Brown & Cliffe, 2001), meaning different organisations may have their own unique culture and its comprehension (beliefs, materials, values etc.), and culture can have an impact on an

organisation (Sun, 2008), for competitive advantage. Hofstede (1984, 2001) brings to bear that organisational culture across different countries show variations and differences in organisational culture arising from power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity, and femininity as well as work values. This suggests that culture has implications for planning and managing organisations.

Fundamentally, Hussinki, Kianto, Vanhala and Ritala (2017) report how variations exist in the managerial assessment of KM practices among developed (Finland, Spain) and emerging (China, Russia) economies constituting Western and Eastern countries. These countries have collectivist (China, Russia) and individualistic (Finland, Spain) cultural orientations (Hofstede et al., 1980, 2010). KM practices are socially embedded phenomena shaped by the managers' institutional and cultural contexts. Therefore, contextual studies of KM practices are recommended to enable businesses to manage performance and market failures (Hussinki et al., 2017).

Without an appropriate understanding of the underlying driving mechanism between KM and the hotel's value chain activities in different cultural and geographical setting, the 'popular' acclamation of one-size-fits-all approach to hotel performance is questionable. Differences exist between developed and developing countries in terms of organisational readiness, leadership, politics and technology infrastructure. KM is Westernized as it emerged from Western developed countries in view of which existing studies question its universality. Hence, further research is crucial to the body of knowledge on KM in hotels business (Nieves et al, 2016) to establish different organisational and cultural settings management issues (Hay, 2014) in developing countries. It important to state that the cultural dimension in Ghana is not mutually exclusive. Ghana is a collective society, more feminine than masculine, uncertainty avoider, short-term oriented, and appreciate power distance (Compare countries, 2020). Other scholars such as Ansah (2015) and Ansah and Louw (2019) have observed that Ghana's organisational culture is a masculine, collectivist culture, very high uncertainty avoidance and has strong and large power distance. What this means for the hotel business sector in Ghana is unclear. Also, how company culture and national culture affects KM process and CRM practices in hotels remain unclear.

The present study fills this gap in a developing country in Africa, Ghana, and will be useful to other developing countries that share similar characteristics. More so, an understanding is

required in the practice of KM and CRM because context and culture can affect how a business model works (Johns, 2001; Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004).

2.13 Research Gaps

The study reviewed a substantial scope of the extant literature on KM and CRM with the view to highlighting the current state of knowledge and identifying grey areas in the literature that have not been adequately examined. Evidence from the literature review shows that KM and CRM practices are separate and predominantly Western concepts which are being studied in developed countries. This is not necessarily undesirable, as the contributions of these studies have provided a deep understanding of these concepts at the broader level. Nevertheless, there is, therefore, the need for studies that explore KM and CRM primary activities incorporation; to establish the KM processes that can enable effective CRM practice. An understanding of the KM adoption in CRM is necessary for effective CRM to achieve competitive advantage.

Following the critical literature review, scant in extant studies relates to knowledge creation process and the contextual facilitators and barriers of KM in CRM. Consequently, this study sought to, empirically, examine the SECI model in knowledge creation, how the KM processes of knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and knowledge use are being implemented in the CRM primary activities, and the contextual facilitators and barriers in hotels.

More specifically, the effect of localised KM on the outcomes of the CRM value chain primary activities has not been examined. KM is an emerging concept whose applicability remains unclear in different economic sectors and regions. No study has empirically and theoretically demonstrated KM's process on CRM value chain primary activities practices in both the developed and developing regions. In sum, the literature review reveals research gaps pertaining to KM in hotels in the developing regions. This study, therefore, examines KM in Ghanaian hotels and explains its importance, processes and application in CRM practices as well as the contextual facilitators and barriers of KM adoption.

2.14 Chapter summary

The chapter first discussed the underpinning theories-KBVT, and theory of organisation knowledge creation of the SECI model, the concept of knowledge, the concept of KM and its processes and then the importance of KM and its facilitators and barriers were discussed. The first section provided the understanding that knowledge is different from data and information as knowledge informs meaningful decision making. And that there are two widely accepted knowledge categories: tacit and explicit. KM is viewed important, and it is both a human and technological management process with the capacity to enable organisational competitive advantage. Despite that, KM is fragmented, and its actual meaning has attracted an on-going debate to date, resulting in KM definitional incomprehensiveness. It was, however, surprising to find that relatively the influences (facilitators and inhibitors) of KM were missing in hospitality and tourism discussions, especially hotels as the banking and manufacturing fields are advanced.

The second section focused on CRM, CRM value chain (primary activities), KM and CRM. A systematic literature review on KM in hospitality industry was presented which showed that there is scarcity of KM studies in hospitality coupled with qualitative methodological gap. The literature review revealed that CRM value chain has developed from the value chain. From the review, scholars point to need for creative ways to enhance hotel performance in the business world. It is argued that hotel performance through CRM practices can be enhanced by other means.

The third section discussed the hotel and hospitality industry in Ghana, and culture and organisation in Ghana. The literature review demonstrated that, a Eurocentric stage exists regarding KM and CRM studies, and little is known about these issues in developing countries context. The next chapter is the methodology chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological procedures of the study. To begin with, the underlying philosophical foundation is presented, followed by a discussion of the approaches to the research and how the design of study is underpinned by the theory of organisation knowledge creation of the SECI model and KBVT. In addition, the sampling and data collection techniques and data analysis are discussed. Finally, the research trustworthiness reliability and validity as well as the ethical considerations applicable to this thesis are discussed.

3.2 Establishing philosophical foundations

This section identifies and explains the philosophical stance of the study. Philosophical assumptions are a set of beliefs that explain what should be studied, how research should be conducted and interpreted (Hillman, 2018; Mertens, 2014). Thus, it is the general views about the world that a researcher holds (Creswell, 2009). There are two major aspects of philosophy: epistemology and ontology (Bryman, 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

3.2.1 Epistemology and Ontological assumptions

Epistemology delves into the nature of knowledge and its sources as well as the limits of knowledge (Richey and Klein, 2005). Thus, epistemology is the nature of knowledge (Tracy & Blackwell, 2020), for example, how can one know reality and the relationship of the knower (Hillman, 2018). In this case, Creswell (2016) intimates that a lessened distance should exist between the researcher and the researched. Epistemology submits that knowledge is context-driven as knowledge concerns how people make meanings in their world or live, implying a variation in thoughts and views of different groups of people since humans are different and create their own world differently (Saunders et al., 2019). There are two opposing

epistemological perspectives: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2012 p27) and they constitute the two dominant research paradigms in social science (Guba 1994; Punch, 2014).

Positivism concerns itself with facts and objectivity rather than impressions (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2019), measures phenomenon and centres on statistical analysis. Ormston et al. (2014) opine that quantitative research is usually situated within the positivism paradigm and normally takes on a deductive approach whereby knowledge is acquired and hypothesis is developed and tested. Interpretivism or interpretivist emphasises that social phenomena are far more complex and cannot be easily measured. Researchers are required to enter the social world of the research subjects, to study people and gain access to their world views and reasoning and the meanings they attribute their acts and the acts of others (Bryman, 2012). Given the objectives of the study is to seek exploration rather than validation, the study adopts the interpretivist perspective. Research grounded in interpretivism emphasises the exploration of experiences, interactions, impressions and practices of social actors in KM and CRM.

Interpretivism is considered appropriate for the study because its focus is to understand the world views of social actors and interpret (Gray, 2014), rather than measuring phenomena they experience. Thus, the researcher can draw multiple viewpoints and meanings attach to KM and CRM through the eyes of hotel employees about their world of work (Saunders et al., 2019). In other words, an interpretivist perspective enables gaining interpretation and understanding of the nature of knowledge about KM and CRM from different hotel employees in their worlds. Overall, the interpretivist perspective is highly appropriate in the case of management research, especially in fields such as human resource management and organisational behaviour (Saunders et al., 2019). Human and organisational behaviour are unique and complex and are a function of particular set of circumstances. How KM and CRM are perceived and practiced in a context can only be effectively unpacked through understanding how these people make meanings of each concept in their world (Saunders et al., 2019).

Ontology deals with what there is to know and puts forward very important questions such as whether there is a social reality that exists independently of human conceptions or closely related to this (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014). There are two major ontological perspectives that shape social science: objectivism and subjectivism or constructionism (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2019). In objectivism, external reality is believed to exist independent of people's belief. That is, social actors exist independently from social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2012) and objective measures and standard procedures can help

measure the things of the social world (Bryman, 2012). By contrast, constructionism (also known as constructivism) assumes that ontologically, reality is multiple and hence can be seen through various standpoints (Creswell, 2016) when the nature of reality is studied (Ormston et al., 2014). While objectivism describes how social actors are concerned with the existence of phenomenon, constructionism describes the existence of social phenomenon as perceived by social actors. Accordingly, ontological assumption enables researchers to use quotes and themes from participants' words and provide contrasts from different perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Realities exist in multiplicities and the one viewing is considered part of the viewed (Charmaz, 2020). Emphatically, social phenomena are not static but are constantly evolving by social actors and interactions (Bryman, 2012). Ontology presents the need, just like epistemology, to study the details of a social phenomenon and explore the meanings. By this, hotel employees KM and CRM practices worldview can be explored at length (Bryman, 2022).

This thesis therefore adopts subjectivism to construct the realities of the concept of CRM, KM and its influences and whether and how KM is being applied in the hotel CRM (primary) value chain activities. CRM and KM are dynamic due to social interactions and human behaviour. These suggest that knowledge and relationship building, and their integration is dependent on social actors who are involved. To understand these realities, the researcher unpacks the detail practices, interactions, behaviour and impressions of interacting actors, such as, hotels managers/supervisors and rank-and-file employees, to understand how knowledge develops as a social construction based on interaction and the world around them (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). Thus, questions about the nature of the world and realities of hoteliers will be asked for them to respond (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

All in all, this study is positioned within an interpretivist and constructionist perspectives, for two prevailing reasons. First, the study involves many actors (hotel managers/supervisors and rank-and-file employees) across chain and independent hotels. The study aims to understand how hoteliers understand KM and CRM, and their interpretations (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2019). Second, based on the SECI model, employing constructionism allows the researcher to solicit the expressions and feelings of hoteliers to understand how KM and CRM as concepts are construed within the hospitality landscape of Ghanaian hotels. Participants shared experiences will enable the investigator to understand at the business unit and functional level the adoption of KM process on the hotel's CRM value chain primary stages in the global south (Saunders et al., 2019) of this under-researched subject matter.

3.3 Research design

Based on the ontological and epistemological perspectives discussed earlier, the study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach. A qualitative approach allows a researcher to immerse and fully understand its subjects' worldview by uncovering their realities or constructed worldview (Cavana, Sekaran & Delahaye, 2001) and understanding more complex issues (Durbarry, 2018). Exploratory qualitative research explores people experiences in details and rich information, as in, subjective beliefs, perspectives, and thoughts, from research participants (Kahlke, 2014). Interpretivism and constructionism are essential in understanding subjective experiences and gaining insights into hotel managers/supervisors and rank-and-file employees world by elucidating the process of meaning and clarifying what and how their meanings are (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1998). This further enables the use of interviews, observation, and case studies for clear and transparent authentication of data and inductive understanding. Therefore, the use of an exploratory research enables the researcher to ascertain unknown hotel employees' perspectives about CRM, CRM value chain and KM and the facilitators and barriers of their incorporation. Hence, achieve the research objectives and fill a gap in the literature on CRM and KM nuances.

Qualitative research is situated in the interpretative paradigm since the researcher is required to make sense of the subject meanings expressed by participants (Bryman, 2012; Hillman, 2018). Constructivist epistemology is employed to create new and rich knowledge because business situations are complex and unique in terms of context (Sunders et al., 2019). In the world of work, to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds, business management researchers recommend dealing with organisations of different groups of people through interpretivist paradigm (Saunders et al. 2019). In addition, constructionism illuminates the specific and identify actors' reality experience of issues in a situation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006) by making sense of or interpreting experience/realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Although argued that theories best inform analysis by putting in sight emerging empirical evidence (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), the researcher ensured that theoretical discussions in the previous chapter did not overshadow the data collection and analysis.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach and choices

Aristotle, Plato, and other early Greeks employed qualitative methodology in their studies which advanced the early studies as they engaged in understanding new concepts and produced a rich and deeper understanding of issues, for example, the concept of philosophy and paradigms trace their roots to qualitative works. Methodologically, there is a gap in the literature as most KM studies employed a quantitative method in general (Chen & Chen, 2006; Serenko, Bontis, Booker, Sadeddin & Hardie, 2010). As noted earlier, in chapter 2 section 2.11, a systematic literature review of KM studies in the hospitality industry revealed more quantitative studies; only 7 qualitative studies out of 34 research studies on KM in hospitality were found. Considering the uncertain business environment, the current COVID-19 pandemic, and the scant academic information regarding KM in the developing regions, a prudent method is required to access realities from participants in these challenging times. A detailed understanding of participants views on KM process vis-à-vis CRM value chain (primary stages) activities in their context will help achieve the objectives for this research. Consequently, this research adopts an integrated deductive and inductive qualitative approach to expand the understanding of KM and to explain how it affects the hotel's CRM value chain primary activities in the context of Ghana.

Qualitative study can unravel the growing complexity of a phenomenon (Provenzano & Baggio, 2019; Yin, 2009) to open ontological, epistemological and methodological opportunities (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015) in hospitality research over quantitative method. This provides the best-fit practices of KM to enhance contextual hotel business performance, addresses the methodological gap identified by adopting an integrated deductive and inductive qualitative route, and extends the understanding of the concept of KM in an under-researched context. Deductive approach comprises a start list of themes for the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the anticipation that certain core concepts are in the data (Thomas, 2006). Inductive approach involves going through data line by line thoroughly and assigning codes to segments or paragraphs of texts as concepts emerge in relation to the research objectives (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007; Thomas, 2006). In-depth interviews will allow for interpretations of hotels operational staff world view of KM and its influences and how it affects the hotel's value chain activities (primary and supporting activities of the hotel value chain).

By contrast, quantitative research (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) employs conceptual models, theories and hypotheses testing on an observed phenomenon through experiment and survey data collection (Creswell, 2003; Saunders et al., 2019). Creswell (2003) criticises quantitative research for failing to consider the subject's unique ability to construct their own interpretations and act on them, interpret their behaviours and experiences. It hardly captures sophisticated and complex phenomena that exist (in reality) under investigation. This suggests the rejection of the positivism paradigm for the purpose of this study.

Therefore, this thesis adopts a purely qualitative approach through in-depth interviews, a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019) and an inductive approach (Bryman, 2012). The interpretivism and constructivist paradigm and integrated deductive and inductive approach will aid to discover why something is happening such as the reasons that account for progress and limitations of KM process in hotels.

3.4 Research data collection methods

The methodology element looks at theoretical principles and framework that serve as guidelines on which a research is conducted through a particular paradigm (Sarantakos, 1998). This implies that methodology constitutes methods studies through theoretical means in order to justify the use of a specific method for a study. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) present that when a researcher employs particular tools to gather data, analyse them and report to create knowledge, it hinges on methods, for example, the use of interviews in gathering data. Ontology (philosophy or nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge or how reality is known) inform methodology (model of theoretical principles and framework in guiding research (Durbarry, 2018; Tracy & Blackwell, 2020). The study seeks rich information about hotel KM and CRM practices, which can be obtained through hotelier's subjective experiences (Creswell, 2014). For detail and rich data collection, the researcher considered interviews as more appropriate over other data collection methods in qualitative studies including, observation, videos, pictures, document analysis, etc. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Table 3.1 shows the specific contributions of each method to the overall data analysis.

Table 3. 1Qualitative research data collection methods

Data collection method	Options	Contributions to the study
Documents	-Newspapers and meetings minutes. -Private documents (diaries, letters, and journals).	• Documents can provide data on the context within which research participants operate (e.g., bearing witness to past events) and may not go beyond. • Certain information in documents can suggest some questions that need to be asked and situations that need to be observed as part of the research. • Helps to collect, review, interrogate and analyse various forms of written text to corroborate or verify findings from other sources. • Although documents can be a research approach of its own, it can provide supplementary research data being valuable additions to a knowledge base.
Audio-visual digital materials	Videotapes, sounds, photographs, film, computer messages and art object	• Very creative in capturing attention visually, but results may be difficult to analyse and interpret. • The researcher may be disruptive and affect responses and that may not provide the real experiences of participants when data is analysed.
Interviews	Face-to-face-one-on-one, in-person interview, telephone (researcher interviews by phone), e-mail (internet)	• Explores the beliefs, views, and experiences of participants on specific matters, which can enhance thematic data analysis in identifying similarities, differences and new trends.

Data collection method	Options	Contributions to the study
	interview, focus group (researcher interviews participants in a group).	• Provides a deeper understanding of a phenomenon where nothing or little is already known about the study because the interviewer and interviewee can diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. • Allows for the discovery and elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the researcher. It helps to provide rigorous inductive analysis for reporting. • Enables researcher control over the line of questioning, leading to in-depth information collection from participants, aiding deductive data capturing and analysis.
Observations	Complete participation-researcher conceals role, observer as participant (role of researcher unknown), complete observer (researcher observes without participating), participant as observer (observation role secondary to participant role).	• Most appropriate for an in-depth qualitative case study and design as the researcher can utilise an inductive, discovery-oriented approach. However, data analysis will only elaborate on the observed characteristics. • Private information may be observed that researcher cannot analysis and report and that will not help achieve the study purpose. • A prolonged or extended observation could be most effective to capture at full-length, participants behaviour. On the contrary, it may pose ethical

Data collection method	Options	Contributions to the study
		concerns when the subjects being observed do not have the opportunity to wilfully consent to their role in the research.

Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018); Groenland and Dana (2020); Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008)

To achieve its objectives, the present study required detailed insights from hotel managers/supervisors and rank-and-file employees. Hence, face-to-face, one-on-one, in-person interviews were used to explore in-depth data, beliefs and experiences of participants and to allow the need for some follow-up. The researcher perceived (as shown in Table 3.1) that documents and audio-visual digital materials may not help provide the whole picture of KM processes and CRM (primary) activities incorporation. Document analysis process could be expensive, time-consuming, and unlikely for the researcher to gain access to hoteliers' documentary evidence due to privacy and restrictions concerns (Creswell, 2014). The use of audio-visual and digital materials can also pose numerous challenges such as technical faults (inability to record), intruding the privacy of participants, and creating uneasiness and uncomfortableness among participants (Tracy, 2020).

According to Bryman (2012), Hennink et al. (2011) and Punch (2014), a qualitative interview is the most popular method of collecting data as it enables the appropriate collection of participants' perceptions, definitions, and constructions of realities and meanings explanation. A qualitative research interview is a purposeful conversation that aims to understand the world from participants' perspective and to reveal meanings of their experience for scientific explanation (Saunders et al., 2019). In-depth interviews unpack almost every bit of participants' worldview through further probing (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, after careful consideration of the methods of data collection as discussed above, in-depth interviews complemented with direct and unstructured observation method was considered most appropriate. An unobtrusive approach allows the researcher to study human activities in the environment where they occur (Veal, 2006) to determine any discrepancies between what participants say they have done or are doing and what they actually did or are doing (Robson, 2011). In this case, unstructured observations were conducted through impromptu and unannounced visits to the hotels and non-participation in the hotels' activities by the researcher as an observer (Saunders et al., 2019).

Interviews can be structured (using researcher-completed questionnaires), semi-structured (using a predetermined list of themes to guide the conduct of each interview) and unstructured (in-depth or informal) amongst others (Saunders et al., 2019).

Saunders et al. (2019) likens the structured interview to self-completed questionnaires, where participants complete the questionnaire all by themselves. It is mostly used in quantitative studies, and can also be used in qualitative studies, with weakness as limiting participants' responses to what is on the questionnaire (Gray, 2014). Semi-structured interviews may be considered in-depth since guided theme questions are employed to solicit participants' views, and probing is used to collect rich and detailed information (Punch, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012). It is suited for exploring knowledge on what is less known. Semi-structured interviews allow follow up questions (probe) and hence contributes to the richness and depth of the data from an emic perspective.

The researcher considered semi-structured interview (complemented with unstructured observation) to be appropriate for this study because it offers flexibility to collect data in a precise manner and allows participants to discuss relevant issues that may not be captured in the interview guide (Tracy, 2020). The researcher acknowledged the weakness of the face-to-face interview, where the researcher plays an empathetic role in interacting with participants (Saunders et al., 2019) with likely bias (Creswell, 2018). Also, it is acknowledged that the observation method has a weakness of difficulty to follow each participant around since it was not ethical for the researcher to follow hoteliers around on daily basis and also observe COVID-19 protocols.

However, the researcher minimised the possibility for empathy to influence the data collection process by maintaining a high level of professionalism. Semi-structured interviews constitute an unobtrusive method of interviewing that ensures that is convenient for participants and enables them to reflect on their answers and make corrections where necessary (Galletta & Ebrary, 2013). The researcher did not have a schedule or a formalised recording for behaviour (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and as much as possible avoided intruding into private issues and information of participants (Creswell, 2018). The unstructured observation helped the researcher to note respondents' behaviour, listen to conservations, observe experiences and gain insights into the work context of KM databases and KM process and CRM activities (Saunders et al., 2019). The observations include the nature of hotel employees' activities in the hotel, their customer interactions, and how they record and use customer information, and employees' interactions with one another. This information was helpful in terms of discovering meanings that people attach to their actions within real-life context (Robson, 2011) and corroborating their actions with their statements.

3.5 Sampling

This study employed purposive and snowball sampling to inform a better understanding of the research problem and purpose (Creswell, 2014; Punch, 2014). Due to COVID-19, the initial data collection sample size plan changed from 10 to seven hotels (36 participants). Prior to the field visits, 10 out of 20 three-to-five-star hotels in Accra of Ghana (GTA, 2018) were selected, comprising 60 participants and covering about 50 percent of the study population. The selection criteria included: a minimum of 50 rooms, a minimum of five years in operation, and licenced to operate under GTA's mandate. This allows for dealing with hotels that have their basic operations and standards in place as well as potentially visible or tangible KM process practice. Hotel managers and operational staff constituting 'well informed interviewees' were sampled to mitigate memory failures and distortions (De Massie & Kotlar, 2014; Golden, 1992) in order to collect rich information. This is particularly important for a developing country such as Ghana where power distance is high. In high power distance countries, most managerial positions are more likely to monopolise information flow within a firm, with employees finding it difficult to air their views (Azungah, 2018). Proportionate sampling strategy was used to arrive at the initial 10 hotels. For example, the researcher selected two out of three from the 5-Star hotels (six participants each from a hotel (n=12)); four out of the eight from the 4-star hotels (six participants each from a hotel (n=24)); and four out of the nine from the 3-star hotels (six participants each from a hotel (n=24)).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had an untold impact on the data collection as thirteen out of eighteen of all three- to five-star hotels in Accra continued to operate but the rest ceased operation due to COVID-19 protocols and restrictions at the time of the data collection. During the field visits, the researcher received referrals of other hotels KM practices in Accra Ghana from some participants, aiding and confirming the researcher's purposively sampled list of hotels. A snowball sampling method was adopted to follow up on the referrals. In total, only seven hotels agreed to participate in the research interview due to COVID-19 impact in the Ghana hotel industry.

The seven hotels, as already indicated, resulted in 36 participants. This sample size is justified by different scholars. Creswell (2007) suggests 25 to 30 sample size as most appropriate to develop a theory. In their study, Saunders et al. (2012) state that there

are no strict rules in qualitative research sample size as the idea is not to generalise and quantify. Instead, the purpose is to unpack, reveal, make meanings and interpret the realities of people's world (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2020). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) also argue that published recommendations on how many interviews are enough range from six to 200. The arguments above notwithstanding, the qualitative research sample size is appropriately determined by data saturation (Saunders et al., 2019; Tracy, 2020). The point of data saturation is reached whenever the data being collected does not reveal and suggest any new themes and insights (Creswell, 2014). Thus, "saturation is considered to be the gold standard, which is the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to emerging findings and themes" (Tracy, 2020, p. 174). One hotel operational manager/supervisor and one rank-and-file employee from each of the three departments, including Front Office (FO), Sales and Marketing (SM) and Food and Beverage (FB) of hotels were interviewed since they directly function with the hotel's customer touch points such as sales, operations and service, advertising, call centres etc. which makes them the most proximal representatives to customers (Lages, Piercy, Malhotra & Simoes, 2020) or key point of contact of customer relationships (Kutaula, Gillani, Leonidou & Palihawadana, 2022). Employees of these departments constitute the most capable and experienced frontline people in operational and management capacities (Bart, Bontis & Taggar, 2001). Thus, they are the core contact persons to customers and the day-to-day administrators within the hotels. In this research, the data saturation point across the seven participated hotels was reached at 36 participants as discussed in section 3.6.3 (phase 3-final semi-structured interviews). Tables 3.2 and 3.3 summarise the hotels and participants' profiles. Following is the data collection procedure is described below.

Table 3. 2 Profiles of hotels

Code	Hotel category/ranking in operation and number of hotel properties in Ghana	Number of rooms	Number of years in operation	Type of hotel	Key customer markets served and types of customers
GTAG hotel	Chain (4-Star), 2 properties	238	30	International	America, UK, Germany, Dubai, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana-both business and leisure customers.
LPAG hotel	Independent (4-Star), 3 properties	159	22	Local	UK, America, Nigeria, Ghana-both business and leisure customers
ARAG hotel	Independent (3-Star)	109	14	Local	Europe, South Africa, America, Nigeria, Ghana-both business and leisure customers.
KGAG hotel	Chain (5-Star)	269	5	International	Asia, Europe, Nigeria and Ghana markets-both business and leisure customers.

Code	Hotel category/ranking in operation and number of hotel properties in Ghana	Number of rooms	Number of years in operation	Type of hotel	Key customer markets served and types of customers
OPAG hotel	Independent (3-Star), 3 properties	100	12	Local	Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, America, UK, China, Philippines, India, Jamaica - both business and leisure customers.
LBAG hotel	Independent (5-Star)	164	30	Local	America, Ghana, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, India, Russia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Angola-both business and leisure customers.
MGAG hotel	Independent (3-Star)	110	12	Local	All nationalities-largely Ghana business customers

Source: author's construct

Table 3. 3 Participants' demographics profiles (N=36)

Participants' demographic profile								
Code	Department	Position	Years of experience in position in the present hotel	Years of experience in hotel business in general	Gender	Age	Nationality	Educational level
GTAG hotel (n=6)								
GTAG1	SM	SM Manager	3	8	M	34	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
GTAG2	FO	FO Manager	30	32	F	55	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
GTAG3	SM	SM Executive	4	13	F	40	Ghana	Master's Degree
GTAG4	FO	FO staff	6	7	F	31	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
GTAG5	FB	FB Manager	20	22	M	44	Ghana	Master's Degree
GTAG6	FB	FB staff	10	14	M	34	Ghana	Senior High School
LPAG hotel (n=6)								
LPAG1	FO	Asst. FO	1	5	F	35	Ghana	Master's Degree
LPAG2	FO	Manager	7	7	F	34	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
LPAG3	SM	FO staff	5	8	F	34	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
LPAG4	SM	SM Manager	8	19	F	50	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree

Participants' demographic profile								
Code	Department	Position	Years of experience in position in the present hotel	Years of experience in hotel business in general	Gender	Age	Nationality	Educational level
LPAG5	FB	SM staff	22	23	F	55	Ghana	High National Diploma
LPAG6	FB	FB Manager FB staff	20	20	M	43	Ghana	Institute Commercial Management Certificate
ARAG hotel (n=6)								
ARAG1	FO	FO Manager	10	11	F	35	Ghana	Master's Degree
ARAG2	FO	FO staff	7	16	M	45	Ghana	Basic Education
ARAG3	FB	FB Manager	9	12	F	50	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
ARAG4	FB	FB staff	13	15	F	37	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
ARAG5	SM	SM Manager	4	11	F	35	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
ARAG6	SM	SM Executive	5	5	F	31	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
KGAG hotel (n=6)								
KGAG1	SM	SM Director	5	17	F	40	Kenya	Undergraduate Degree
KGAG2	FB	FB Director	3	15	M	36	Indian	Master's Degree

Participants' demographic profile								
Code	Department	Position	Years of experience in position in the present hotel	Years of experience in hotel business in general	Gender	Age	Nationality	Educational level
KGAG3	SM	SM staff	3	4	F	30	Ghana	Master's Degree
KGAG4	FO	FO Manager	5	9	M	31	Swiss	Undergraduate Degree
KGAG5	FO	FO staff	5.5	5.5	F	37	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
KGAG6	FB	FB staff	4.5	18	M	37	Ghana	Diploma
OPAG hotel (n=6)								
OPAG1	FB	FB staff	11	30	M	53	Ghana	Senior High School
OPAG2	FO	FO staff	1	2	M	24	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
OPAG3	SM	SM staff	3	5	F	35	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
OPAG4	FB	FB Supervisor	1	6	F	30	Ghana	Advanced Diploma
OPAG5	FO	FO Supervisor	2	4	F	32	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
OPAG6	SM	SM Manager	13	19	M	45	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
LBAG hotel (n=3)								
LBAG1	SM	SM Coordinator	7	7	F	31	Ghana	Master's Degree

Participants' demographic profile								
Code	Department	Position	Years of experience in position in the present hotel	Years of experience in hotel business in general	Gender	Age	Nationality	Educational level
LBAG2	FO	FO Manager	11.5	14	F	42	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
LBAG3	FB	FB & Events Manager	8	10	F	32	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
MGAG hotel (n=3)								
MGAG1	FB	FB Manager	20	30	M	59	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree
MGAG2	FO	FO Manager	6	10	F	38	Ghana	Master's Degree
MGAG3	FO	FO staff	2	4	M	24	Ghana	Undergraduate Degree

Source: Author's construct

3.6 Data collection procedure

In January 2021, all three- to five-star hotels (chain and independent) registered in the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) directory in Accra were first contacted by telephone to gauge their willingness to participate and to identify key informants. GTA is a government agency responsible for hotels standards, quality, and assurance issues in Ghana. This yielded positive results as some hotels welcomed the idea and others demanded an official notification from GTA.

3.6.1 Negotiating entry into the research site

As per the request of some hotels, the researcher officially contacted GTA, gatekeeper of hotels in Ghana, to establish its respective internal protocols regarding the involvement of hotels in study of this nature. The researcher furnished GTA with the following: hotels recruitment criteria, purpose of study (research information sheet for participants) (Appendix A), participants' consent form (Appendix B) and interview sample questions (Appendix C) together with a work plan. The GTA gave official approval and contacted (wrote an introductory letter of the research) 13 hotels that were still operating amid COVID-19 to participate in this study in February 2021 (Appendix D). This facilitated access to these hotels and participants' willingness to participate and provide information without reservation. Indeed, this strategy of using GTA as the primary recruitment tool is consistent with the suggestion by Walsh (2002) that creating new knowledge requires collaborative efforts between academia and practitioners.

The researcher followed up with phone calls and visits (to present the research information sheet and consent forms to hotels) in order to begin to bond with would-be participants. As noted earlier, only 7 hotels agreed to participate in the research interviews. The rest of the hotels refused to participate for one of three main reasons: lack of time and the unwillingness of informants to provide detailed answers to the semi-structured interview questions due to COVID-19 protocols and restrictions, consideration for hotels temporarily shut down due to COVID-19, and hotel not opened to the public for research engagements due to the COVID-19. Participating hotels confirmed their involvement by their GM, HR managers, Executive

Personal Assistant and Training Managers through phone calls, emails, and letters to the researcher (Appendix E-sample research acceptance letter and email from some hotels).

The impact of COVID-19 on the hotel sector was noticeable by the researcher as most hotels were running shift systems with low staff numbers to prevent team members from infecting COVID-19. Challenging as it was, the researcher followed up to discuss and schedule interviews with the seven hotels that agreed to participate in the research. Within this period, more rapport was created, and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed with the informants (FO, SM and FB managers and rank-and-file staff). The researcher then proceeded to conduct the interviews in English as it is Ghana's official language and hence the language of formal business (Adika, 2012). Given the role of English in Ghana, all hotels' operational staff use basic English in their day-to-day business administration.

3.6.2 Phase 1 – Observations in the field

The researcher undertook direct observations (unstructured) alongside the data collection period (late March 2021-early August 2021) in line with Veal's (2006) recommendation. Direct observation presented an unobtrusive method through which the researcher studied hoteliers' KM practice in their CRM within the hotel premises (Veal, 2006). This phase was very helpful in getting a better understanding of how various hotels departments work within the hotel's premises. It provided new insights into the research context, more specifically the nature of the property management systems that hotels have and use, interactions with customers, and knowledge creation and use, which has received limited attention in the literature. The timing for this observational work varied due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant restrictions. For ethical reasons, the HRs of selected hotels were informed that the researcher will be observing the hotels' FO, SM, and FB work, and they agreed.

The researcher then visited these hotels unannounced to ascertain how KM was performed throughout the data collection period. The unannounced visits served the purpose of validity and reliability of hotels' KM practice and employees' behaviors because hotels' knowledge of the researcher's observational work may affect their behaviour. An unstructured naturalistic observation was conducted on how hotels used databases to check in clients and serve them, how information was stored and shared in the hotel, how employees interacted with customers, support for employee learning and development/training programmes, social communication

(social climate), etc. Therefore, the researcher did not have a formalised schedule or recording in place (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researcher took notes of hotels' software/databases availability and use, their customer interactions, issues being dealt with in customer service, teamwork support system, the nature of work, management and rank-and-file staff work relationship.

Sampled photos were taken at the end of the day to showcase what was observed. Across all hotels, the marketing departments were very busy with daily marketing calls to make appointments with customers across Accra. The staff of the marketing departments usually report to work in the morning and leave to various organisations and places in search of clients or attend to appointments with clients. When in the hotel, they are typically on phone and computers with clients and move around hotel premises observing and reaching out to clients in need. Compared with the interviews, there were fewer observations because hotels restricted the number of people that could enter their premises on daily basis. Also, there were few staff who were running shifts and check-ins were few within the observation period. Further, few international clients were found in the various hotels (both chain and independent).

3.6.3 Phase 2 - Development of the interview guide and pre-test

To ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of data collected, an initial seven set of interview questions were constructed based on keywords from the literature (Appendix C) to test the suitability of the interview guide.

A pre-test of the interview guide was conducted on a four-star hotel operational manager/supervisor and rank-and-file employees in FO, SM and FB for this study. Detailed and rich data collection can be assessed through the initial data collection test (Silverman, 2017). A pre-test of the interview guide constitutes initial interviews to determine the appropriateness of interview guide designed. Bryman (2012) submits that a pilot study enables the researcher to refine interview questions and provides a clear idea on the appropriateness of the interview guide.

 The pilot study was carried out in March 2021 to keep the researcher with the required consistency (Krauss et al., 2009). In line with Kvale (2007), discoveries and limitations were identified in the pilot study and modifications were made to the final interview. Consequently, the researcher modelled and modified interview questions in context for the better

understanding of participants. For example, while some interviewees understood the term KM, others struggled to construe it. Also, participants pointed out repeated questions and made suggestions for some questions to be merged. To promote clarity, the researcher used simple language to enable the participants to understand the intended meaning of the KM concept instead of using the term KM. For example, what is your understanding of managing knowledge in hotel? How did you acquire or create knowledge and apply it in your hotel operation? Also, expressions such as 'knowledge controlled', 'knowledge saved, shared and used as information to give a hotel a competitive edge over its competitors' were used to help the participants understand the concept of KM. This was done alongside the researcher's observation of KM practices in various hotels. After rephrasing the questions, some participants suddenly realised the KM concept and began to share their lived experiences on the subject.

Through the pilot study, the investigator observed appropriate interview protocol, ethics, and experience on how to solicit detail and rich data from participants. The researcher also gained confidence and probing skills during the pre-test interviews which helped to obtain the desired results for this thesis. Further, the researcher gained an understanding of the verbal and non-verbal communication and behaviour of participants that show 'when to stop' and 'when to continue' asking questions in the Ghanaian setting coupled with how to persuade and elicit important information when conducting interviews (Karra & Phillips, 2008). Additionally, the researcher learned to avoid being close to "the topic of study" in order not to "make certain features seem more salient and important than they really are" (Karra & Phillips, 2008, p.554). Finally, the researcher took a reflexive stance in line with Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010) to pay attention to "the most insignificant detail" and organised the interview data "in a case study" to enhance transparency and reliability of the research (p. 17).

3.6.4 Phase 3 - Final semi-structured interviews

The final interview questions were constructed during the fieldwork and the researcher ensured that it was reflective of the context of the study area. It was influenced by the pre-test of the interview guide in section 3.6.3 (Appendix C). The design of the interview guide was limited to the research objectives, and the researcher's knowledge of the local dynamics of the research area. Interview questions were mostly open ended, allowing more room for participants

responses. The interview guide was sent to various hotels training department and human resource department managers ahead of the scheduled interviews. They called the researcher and clarified questions they did not understand, and such questions were further refined. The final interview questions constituted five parts (see Table 3.4) and they explored the views and lived experience of hoteliers in KM process in CRM. The final interviews were conducted between late March 2021 and early August 2021 with 36 informants with an interview time ranging from 45 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes per interview session.

Table 3. 4 Semi-structured interview questions

Main Question		Objective
1. Experience of the hotel manager/staff		
A. How many years have you been working in the FO, SM, FB, KM/CRM field of this hotel? B. In general, how many years have you worked in the hotel sector?		Establish manager/staff experience in current hotel and in general
2. Understanding concepts		
CRM	A. What does CRM mean to you? B. What role do you play in managing customer relationships?	Establish understanding of: CRM,
CRM value chain	A. What does your hotel do in managing customer relationships? B. What do you consider as the primary or key activities? What are the supporting activities in managing customer relationships? Follow-up: how are prospects from digital campaigns being handled? Do you have access to the digital campaigns reports and what information you look out for? C. Who are the stakeholders of your hotel? What role do they play in your hotel CRM?	CRM value chain, and KM in the hotel setting

Main Question		Objective
	D. How do you connect with customers before, during and after check-in?	
KM	A. Have you heard of the term Knowledge Management? If yes, could you explain what it is? If no, do you and your colleagues generate or use knowledge in your daily operations? If yes, please explain.	
3. Applying KM process in CRM		
A. How does your hotel use knowledge management processes in managing customer relationships? Please explain.		Understanding of KM process
B. What kind of data do you acquire and how do you convert the data into knowledge?		Establish data conversion into knowledge
C. How did you use knowledge to manage relationships with customers?		Determine knowledge types
D. Based on the operation of your department, what types of knowledge are needed to manage the customer relationships value chain of your hotel?		Establish knowledge acquisition/creation, storage, and use.
E. How does your department or hotel acquires, creates, documents, and applies knowledge in your day-to-day business operation?		
F. Please describe any process or procedures that your department or hotel follow in creating/acquiring and using knowledge in CRM. Follow-up: what's the leadership style and approach to implementing knowledge management in your hotel?		Identify formal procedures / Determine customer data use
G. Do you use customer data or record in your hotel?		
H. What do you use customer data or record for? Explain		
I. If competitors are adopting marketing technologies or having presence on social media, is your hotel eager to follow? Explain		Determine KM practices

Main Question	Objective
J. Is there any government support or subsidy to facilitate your knowledge management activities in Ghana? Please explain	
K. Could you explain any industry association support for your hotel knowledge management activities?	
L. During COVID-19, how did you manage your FB and hotel to impress and attract potential customers?	
M. What type of technology do you use in your hotel for the purpose of managing customer relationships and why?	
N. How can inter-hotel KM be practiced?	

4. KM process importance	
A. How important (why is it not) is KM process (acquiring/creating and using knowledge) in managing customer relationships to your hotel?	Understanding the importance of KM process
B. Is KM process important for competitive advantage to your hotel? Explain	

5. KM influences		
Facilitators	A. What makes the use of knowledge and knowledge management processes in managing customer relationships possible?	Identify KM facilitators and enablers
Barriers	A. Have there been challenges or impediments or hindrances to the current KM practice in your hotel CRM? If yes, what are they?	Identify KM barriers/inhibitors
	B. How does the Ghanaian cultural values and norms impact your capacity (negatively and positively) to acquire/create and use knowledge in managing customer relationships?	Determine impact of national culture on KM
Changing dynamics of	A. Has your knowledge in managing customer relations changed over the last five (5) years? How? Why?	Feedback from hoteliers on managing knowledge experience.

Main Question		Objective
society and knowledge	B. Given seasonality, the current COVID-19 pandemic, unforeseen circumstances, and the changing needs of customers, please explain the antecedents to changing knowledge for hoteliers to survive and stay sustainable in satisfying customers.	Determine antecedents of changing knowledge in current times

Various hotels management selected managers and rank-and-file employees from the three departments (FO, SM, and FB) based on their KM and CRM work experience to participate in the interviews. Permission was sought from participants to audio record each interview. During the interview process, the researcher can recall that at countless times, some respondents have excused themselves to attend to customers and the researcher had to reschedule other interviewees just to finish the initial interview due to respondents shift work system and busy schedules. This was a daunting challenge to grapple with. Also, few respondents showed signs of unwillingness to talk during the interview which got the researcher down spirited. However, the researcher exercised patience and managed to maneuver his way and got interviewees talking and interestingly, some interviewees applauded the researcher regarding how he managed to get them talking even though they tried to pull his legs.

Interestingly, more than 70 percent of the participating hotels requested a summary of the findings, which shows their interest in the KM topic. All these fulfilled pre-understandings, understanding, and integrity allowed for data triangulation and trustworthiness (Guba,1990) of the whole research process. Given the negative impact of COVID-19 in reducing the number of participating hotels, the researcher reached a saturation point of 36 interviews in line with the ideal sample size of between 15 and 40 interviewees (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013). After the interviews, the researcher sent a thank you letter to the participating hotels and GTA (Appendix F) and some hotels acknowledged receipt (Appendix G).

3.7 Data analysis

The data gathered (audio recorded) were manually and electronically (sonix.ai) transcribed verbatim. The researcher replayed each audio and compared it with each transcript to ensure

consistency. Almost all transcripts were found to have phrases and sentences that had been wrongly transcribed. The researcher then manually reviewed and edited the transcripts based on the audio replay of each interviewee to prevent wrong spellings of words and phrases that have the tendency to change the actual meaning of an interviewee's viewpoint. This resulted in verbatim transcription of all the words and expressions of participants in analysing the data.

After the transcription, the data were cleaned, codes were generated, and reconciled with the non-participant observation and the research objectives and questions.

3.7.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a qualitative method of organising and describing the available data in order to identify underlying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA constitutes the primary method of analysis to provide rich, detail, and inductive theorising which contributes to new directions and new ways of seeing the empirical world of the phenomenon (Bansal, Smith & Vaara, 2018). It enables the researcher to identify, interpret and report patterns emerging from the data in line with the constructionist paradigm (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor, 2014). This thesis follows the constructionist paradigm; hence, thematic analysis was considered appropriate. More so, thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches for analysing qualitative data, which makes it widely acceptable in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2012). By this, the researcher gained rich data and in-depth data description presented in the findings chapter.

Having carried out field observation and finally observed from the raw data that there were common behaviour and themes of three- to five-star hotels, the researcher believes that these hotels have the same characteristics with minimal categorical different characteristics (highlighted where necessary) regarding a theme. Fundamentally, the TA was based on the common themes of these hotels' KM efforts as various hotels have similar KM practice characteristics. The researcher focused on the broader level of overall hotel KM practices and its importance; hence, the study argues that the adoption of KM in the various activities in the CRM value chain affect the entire hotel and can be seen in similar hotels.

To support the analysis and interpretation of data from the interviews conducted for the study, NVivo 12 software was used to organise and analyse the data following deductive and inductive analytical approach. In addition to NVivo 12, the researcher manually analyses the

data to generate themes. Participants' full length of interpretations were examined, and non-participant observations were utilised to avoid the researcher's subjectivity, by bracketing chunks and writing a word to represent a category (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Prior to using NVivo 12 software, the research had taken a course in qualitative research method and used NVivo 12 in assignments as part of his PhD course work. The researcher had also participated in NVivo Virtual Conference 2021 (qualitative data analysis with NVivo) organised by QSR International (Americas) Inc. All these NVivo software trainings enhanced the researcher's skills and knowledge in using NVivo 12 software for the analysis.

In this vein, the researcher after transcribing the interviews uploaded the interviews transcripts into NVivo 12 software. The transcripts were read and participants' common expressions, words, meanings, and discussions (Creswell, 2007) about KM and CRM were categorised. Participants related expressions based on the research objectives were organised into broad codes. An initial thematic map for KM and CRM combination (Figure 3.1) was outlined to illustrate the data structure. The thematic map helped the researcher to code at a broad level which were reviewed and converted into themes and arch themes (Figure 3.2).
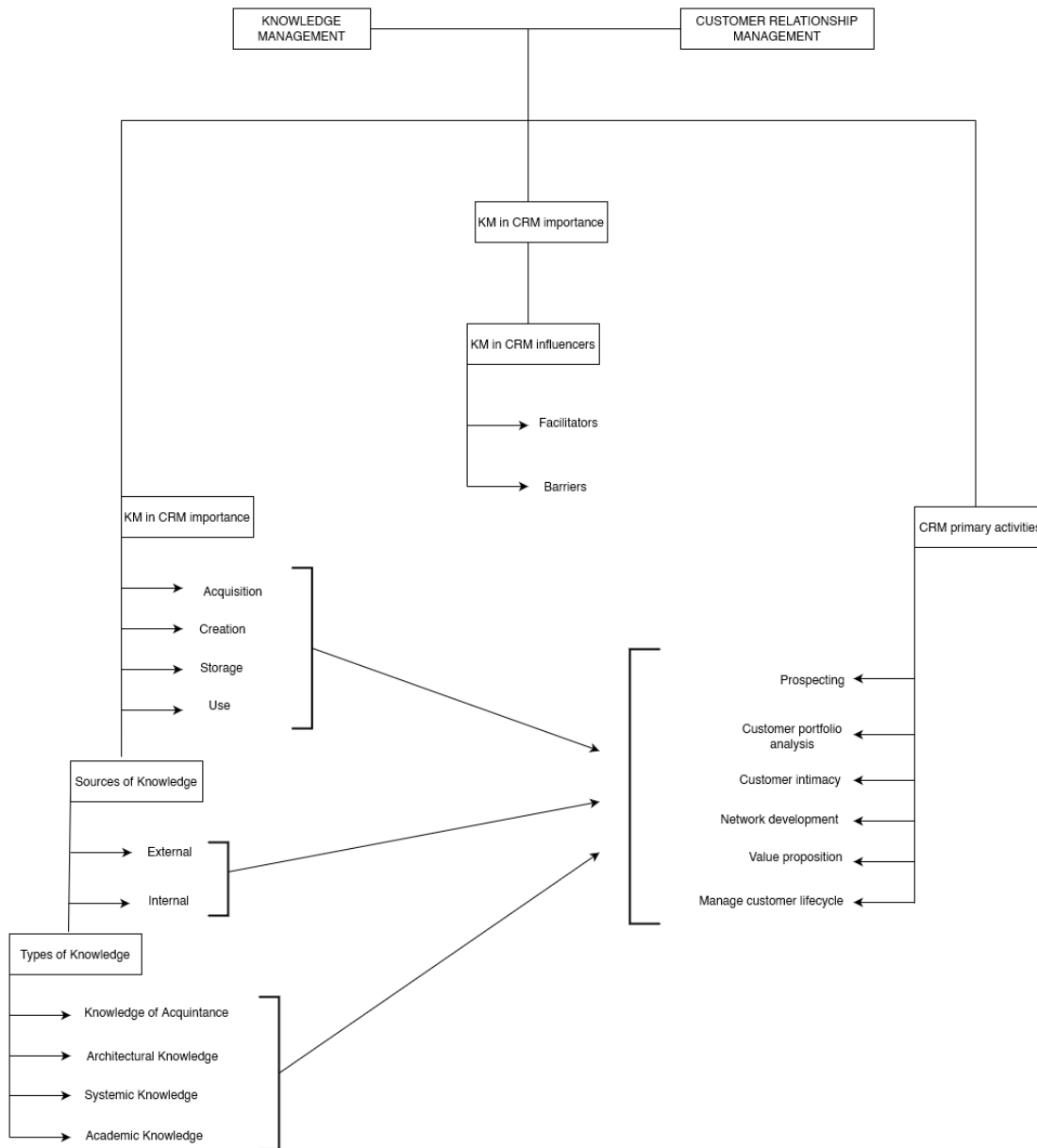
Figure 3. 1 Thematic framework

Codes were further reviewed and reorganised to produce sub-themes and themes. This took deductive and inductive form of data analysis (Figure 3.2). Deductive and inductive analysis have been outlined in section 3.7.1.1.
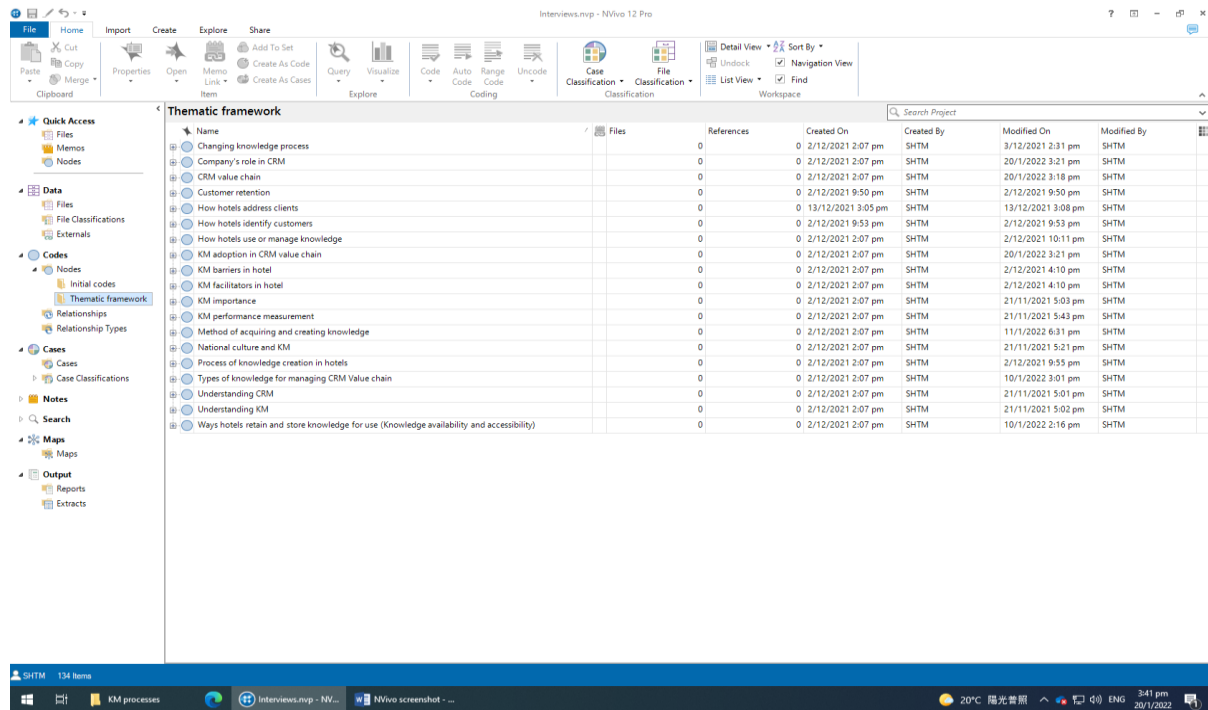
Figure 3. 2 NVivo 12 software analysis of the dataset

Source: Author's construct

3.7.1.1 Deductive and inductive analytical approach

In line with Thomas (2006), Azungah (2018) and Ali and Birley (1999), both inductive and deductive approaches were employed in this investigation. Bingham and Witkowsky (2022 p.133) argue that "using deductive and inductive analytic practices iteratively provide the deductive or a priori tools to organise the data and bound the inquiry, the inductive tools allow findings to emerge from the data, and the understanding to apply existing knowledge and theory to interpret and explain findings". Deductive and inductive approaches are associated with the research philosophies, whereas deductive approach owes more to positivist epistemology, while inductive approach owes more to the interpretivist epistemology (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2015).

The deductive and inductive approaches enable the researcher to generate codes from the existing interview guide and new codes from the data analysis, leading to flexibility and creativity in themes identification for this study through TA. For instance, the inductive approach allows the investigator to conduct detailed readings of raw data to derive themes, models, or concepts through interpretations made from the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thomas, 2006). That is, one works exclusively with participants' experiences, and this informs the entire analysis. The deductive approach, on the other hand, enables the investigator to use a start list or codes to analyse data to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions and theories identified by the investigator (Bradley et al., 2007; Thomas, 2006). Table 3.5 shows the difference in meaning, function and purpose of deductive approach, inductive approach, and integrated approach.

Table 3. 5 Deductive versus Inductive versus Integrated approaches

No	Purist deductive	Purist inductive	Integrated approach
1	Develop theoretical framework.	Area of enquiry identified-but no theoretical framework.	Develop theoretical framework based on constructs.
2	Variables identified for relevant constructs.	Respondents identify constructs and explain the relationship between them.	Some variables identified for relevant construct-others can be identified by respondent.
3	Instrument development.	Broad themes for discussion identified.	Researcher converts the a priori theoretical framework into theoretical questions.
4	Respondents give answers to specific questions.	Respondents discussed general themes of interest.	Respondents discussed seemingly general questions and identify constructs meaningful to them and relationships between constructs.

| 5 | Answers analysed in terms of priori theoretical framework. | Researcher develops theory on a purely inductive basis. | Respondents data analysed according to existing theory. Or theory developed on an inductive basis. |
| 6 | *Outcome* Theory tested according to whether hypotheses are accepted or rejected | *Outcome* Theory developed | *Outcome* Either theory is adapted or Alternative theoretical framework is presented. |

Source: Ali and Birley (1999)

The evaluation objectives provided a focus of relevance for conducting the analysis, not a set of expectations about specific findings (Thomas, 2006). In analysing the data, the investigator first organised the interview data, and then read and digested it to make sense of data. Initial codes from semi-structure interview guide (deductive) and open coding (inductive) were used. This resulted in categorisation through integration of the deductive and inductive categories. The investigator then cross-tabulated to identify overlapping categories, refined and grouped the categories to generate themes of the subject matter under investigation.

3.7.1.1.1 Phase 1: Deductive approach to data analysis

Phase 1 is theory-driven whereby the researcher created codes a priori regarding the subject matter under investigation before conducting the thematic analysis. This approach assumed that certain core concepts are in the data based on knowledge of extant literature on the topic under investigation (Bradley et al., 2007). The researcher identified and derived predetermined codes from the semi-structured interview guide to initially organise the raw dataset. Deductively, this investigation to an extent used the data analysed to assess the organisation knowledge creation theory of the SECI model in literature in order to understand how it applies in the hotel setting. Thus, some insights were drawn from literature to aid understanding of KM role in CRM value chain in Ghana hotels.

The researcher picked out predetermined theoretical concepts from existing literature (Johnson and Johnson, 2009) and used the existing theoretical concepts to offer a theoretical foundation and interpretation as a starting point in the data analysis (Terry, Hayfield, Clark & Braun, 2017). Predetermined thematic codes such as CRM and CRM value chain (Buttle, 2015), KM (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), knowledge acquisition, creation, storage and use (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) etc. were used to create a clear structure and organise the raw dataset. The researcher read and re-read all individual transcripts and highlighting words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs of information relating to the identified pre-existing theoretical concepts (e.g., KM, CRM, core stages of CRM) from literature. Concepts that did not help to answer the research objectives were removed and put in separate file for re-evaluation in the inductive analysis stage.

Codes, categories, themes and sub-themes (themes and sub-themes were merged) were created. Examples of themes included CRM meaning, KM meaning, how hotels acquire knowledge, how hotels create knowledge etc. The researcher used the thematic codes while following Azungah (2018) method of thematic analysis. For instance, in terms of the types of knowledge, all codes belonging to a higher order concept were added to a higher category. For example, customer/guest-related knowledge and knowledge of flexibility were merged with knowledge of acquaintance. Knowledge about client geographical location and behaviour was merged with strategic understanding. Hotel industry reports, 'expos' (exhibitions), and knowledge about data management were merged with systemic knowledge. Environmental, sensing, social media knowledge and love job/passion were merged with technical knowledge. Procedural and service excellent knowledge were merged with architectural knowledge. Thus, codes that refer to a similar thing were merged. That said, the researcher was not limited to the literature review given the qualitative approach adopted. Through the deductive analysis, the researcher found different themes including hoteliers understanding of KM, hoteliers understanding of CRM, CRM value chain, KM process and its incorporation in CRM value chain, SECI model, perceived importance of KM and KM influencers. Exemplary illustrations of descriptions and quotes from the interviews of themes are presented in the findings (chapter 4).

3.7.1.1.2 Phase 2: Inductive approach to data analysis

Phase 2 is data-driven, and the researcher stayed open to exploring the dataset. The inductive approach played a more dominant role in this investigation data analysis which allowed significant themes to emerge from the raw data, and actual effects described, not just planned effects (Scriven, 1991). The investigator focused on the data collected and the findings stemmed directly from the raw data analysis, not from a priori expectations or theory. The researcher used the content of the data collected from the research participants to generate codes, categories, patterns, themes and sub-themes in the dataset (Terry et al., 2017). In contrast to deductive stage, in inductive stage, the researcher was deeply immersed in the data and remained open to exploring new meanings within the dataset of CRM and KM. The researcher created a codebook, read and re-read all transcripts and highlighting paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words that suggested new meanings. All arranged codes, categories, patterns, themes, and sub-themes were organised into themes. For instance, prospecting was identified as a new theme under the CRM (primary) value chain activities. Regarding KM meaning, product knowledge management was identified as a new theme. The researcher tracked emerging thematic codes by creating a codebook while following Azungah (2018) method of thematic analysis. Through this data analysis phase, themes such as KM facilitators, barriers and how KM is incorporated in CRM value chain, and types of knowledge. Under types of knowledge theme, abstract codes without labels were labelled as subthemes (e.g., academic and professional knowledge emerged).

The researcher integrated emerging themes and sub-themes from both deductive and inductive phases. And a detail definition and description of each theme with supporting quotes provided. For example, in terms of knowledge use for customer intimacy stage of the CRM value chain, a FB staff reports "…our knowledge and skills of creating rapport and relating well makes the guests feel belonged, and they know that you know exactly what they want". The use of inductive approach establishes clear links between the research objectives and the findings derived from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). Likewise, inductive approach enables the researcher to build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organising the data into increasingly more abstracts units of information (Creswell, 2014) without the researcher's preconceived mindset of previous theory in literature review influencing the data analysis.

All sum, the themes and sub-themes from the deductive and inductive phases were synthesised to form a comprehensive synthesis of the KM in CRM practice subject matter. That is, both deductive and inductive codes were merged into themes for this study, following Azungah (2018) and Percy, Kostere and Kostere (2015) by creating a codebook to track emerging codes, patterns and themes in NVivo 12. Attention was paid to explore KM and CRM understanding and KM use in CRM value chain, KM process and importance as well as unpack the facilitators and barriers of KM for thematic analysis. The coding frameworks of themes and sub-themes that emerged have been presented in chapter 4.

The deductive approach showed data based on knowledge of extant literature on the topic under investigation (Bradley et al., 2007) and the inductive approach generated themes from the data (Thomas, 2006). The sequential approach of using deductive approach and inductive approach resulted in merging similar categories into higher order ones. Based on the integrated dataset, the data were cross tabulated in order to examine and identify relationships among categories (Suter, 2012). Figure 3.3 illustrates the integrated approach analysis used for this investigation. It shows the step-by-step procedure of the integrated approach employed in the data analysis to address the research questions and objectives of the investigation.
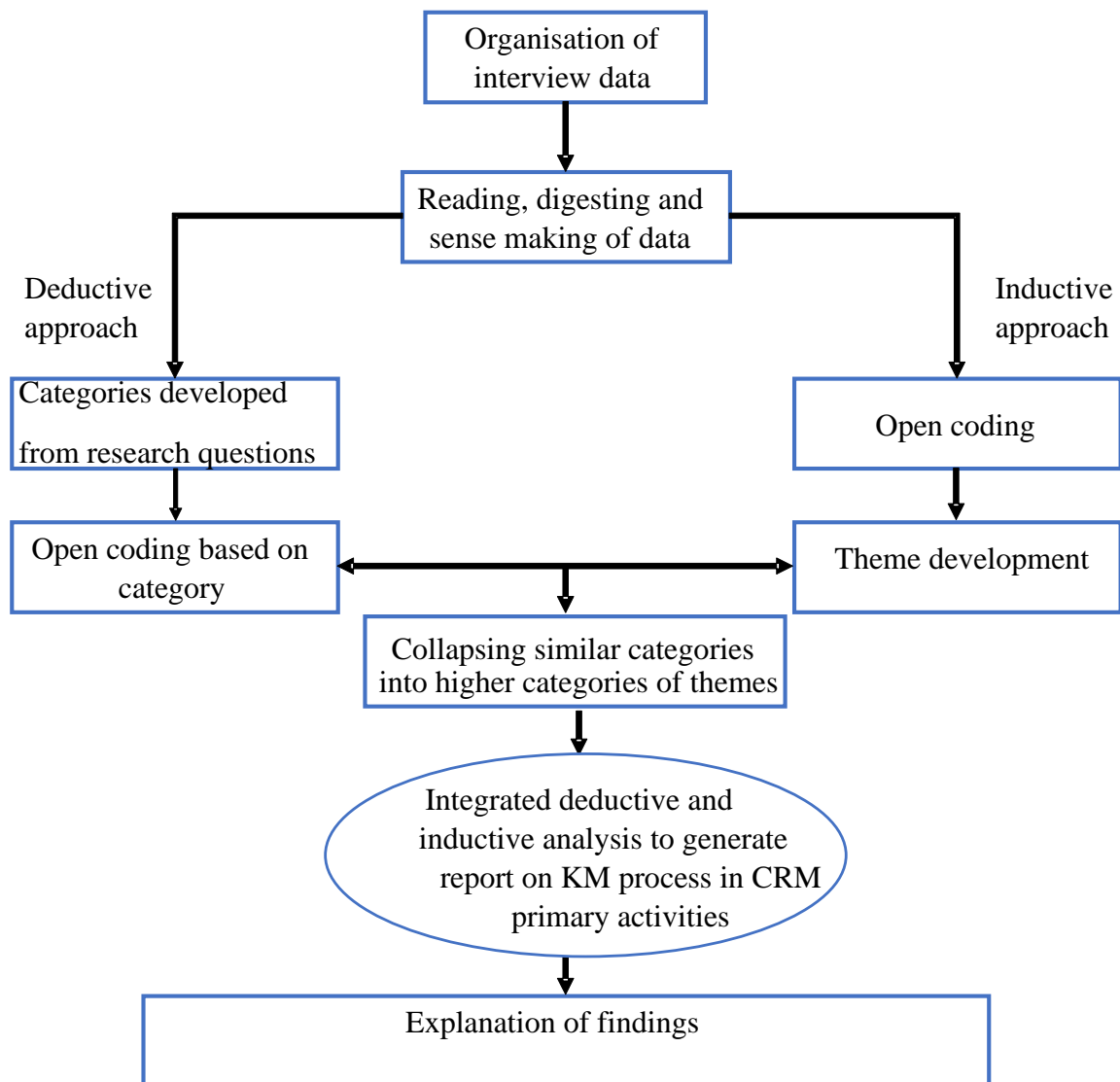
Figure 3. 3 Integrated deductive and inductive analytical approach in data analysis

Source: Adapted from Azungah (2018), Bingham, A. J., & Witkowsy (2022) and Percy, Kostere and Kostere (2015)

3.8 Research trustworthiness and validity of findings

Creswell and Miller (2000) define qualitative research validity as determining if the findings are accurate from the standpoints of the researcher, the participant(s), and the readers of the work. In this case, the researcher checks for the accuracy of the results using procedures to inform reliability (Gibbs, 2018). Reliability entails procedures, including checking transcripts, to avoid obvious mistakes made during transcription, avoid drifting in the definition of codes, double checking codes developed and cording codes to produce meaningful themes Gibbs (2007). Creswell (2018) put forward eight validity strategies: triangulating different data by examining evidence and using it to build a coherent justification for themes; using member checking to determine the qualitative findings (giving participants access to the polished or major findings or themes for their confirmation and feedback); using a rich and thick description to convey the findings (detailed description of settings, numerous perspectives on themes); clarifying bias of the researcher in the study; presenting discrepant or negative information that runs counter to the themes (presenting contradicting information since perspectives do not always coalesce; spending prolonged time in the field (developing in-depth understanding of the problem under study); using peer debriefing (locating a person who reviews and ask questions about the study to ensure interpretation beyond the researcher) to enhance accuracy of the account; and using an external auditor (unfamiliar person or person unfamiliar with the project) to review the entire project (Creswell, 2018).

The use of interviews and observation produced valid data that helped to achieve the purpose and objectives of the study because multiple data collection instruments ensure trustworthiness or rigour of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure reliability and validity of the analysis, the researcher sent the data transcripts back to interviewees for their validation. Further, the researcher discussed with two colleagues and his supervisor about the themes generated, they reviewed the initial themes and made comments and suggestions. Based on their suggestions, the themes were refined. The purpose of engaging peers and scholar was to avoid researcher's bias and ensure objectivity.

In addition, the researcher reflected on the raw data, data analysis, previous literature, the main findings, and the objectives of this study, and then bracketed himself as much

as practically possible and allowed the data to speak for itself in whichever way it behaved to preserve the originality of the meanings expressed by informants firmly in his mind throughout the entire data analysis process. A back-and-forth analysis and various tactics such as constant questioning and comparison of the true meanings behind the data enabled the researcher to bring together meaningful discussion that provided a rich explanation and understanding of the KM concept in hotel CRM value chain derived from data collected. The period of reflection allowed the researcher time to ponder the research questions and objectives as well as engage with the literature and data outcome. The back-and-forth data analysis and constant checks by the researcher further strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings. When readers observe and follow the tables, building blocks of coding frames in the findings chapter, it presents a better understanding of the phenomenon. A coding frame is presented under each relevant section throughout the result chapter. The reporting of findings also helped to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the analysis and interpretation. Further, member checking was carried out to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings.

A summary of main findings was prepared and sent to the hotel's managers/supervisors and rank-and-file staff who participated in this study. Thus, informants were invited to peruse the summary of main findings and provide comments of disagreements or agreements as a way of validating this study's findings (Appendix H) which satisfied trustworthiness via confirmability, transferability, and bracket subjectivity of the researcher as data triangulation and participants checking was used to confirm interpretations (Guba, 1990). A total of 12 informants returned their feedback. 10 evaluations received were positive which support the researcher's interpretation of their perspectives in general (AppendixI), one of them had resigned from the hotel and now working with a different company, and the other one was sick and so, both only acknowledged receipt of summary of main findings and did not provide feedback (Appendix H). In line with Turner, Cardinal, and Burton (2017) the rigorous process of data handling minimised the investigator's biases and increased confidence in the results. Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) were used to ensure the transferability of the results to similar comparable contexts.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics are the "standards of behaviour that guide your conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or are affected by it" (Saunders et al., 2019, p252-253). Saunders and his colleagues identify two dominant conflicting philosophical positions: deontological and teleological. Deontological view refers to following rules to guide researcher's conduct while teleological view means that the researcher decides whether an act of conduct is justified or not should be determined by its consequences, not by set of predetermined rules (Saunders et al., 2019). For this thesis, ethical issues were seriously considered. Ethics should be at the heart of research before, during and after the entire process (data collection and interviews) (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2013). Punch (2014) also indicates that standards, procedures, and codes should be followed by every researcher for a good research outcome. Further, ethical conduct in research requires both 'rules of ethical clearance' that are governed by institutionally based 'human ethics in research committees and other considerations to avoid causing harm to participants (Hillman, 2018). This ensures quality research while avoiding any harm to both the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2014). In light of this, the data collection for the study started after approval by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's Institutional Review Board (Application no.: HSEARS20210128002). The ethical considerations have been presented below.

The purpose of the study was clearly spelled out in the participation information sheet to inform participants what was expected of them (Appendix A), and participants were informed of their voluntary participation and consent forms were sent to them (See Appendix B). Obtaining consent from participants is indispensable in carrying out good research (Webster et al., 2013). It also ensures the privacy of participants and allows voluntary participation (Saunders et al., 2019). Prior to the face-to-face interviews, all participants were informed and required to sign a hard copy of the consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research, and to agree to the interviews being audio recorded. Tape recorded interviews were meant to help the researcher to revisit original data, expressions by interviewees, repeatedly for clarity in order to transform all expressions into written text for study (Seidman, 1998) and data analysis. Here, participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and they agreed. Confidentiality and anonymity in terms of the publishing of results were ensured

(Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2019; Webster et al., 2013) in order to prevent the identification of participants' (Punch, 2014). So, the researcher adhered to research standards and codes for this thesis; names of individuals and hotel enterprises were anonymised.

Finally, all data files, documents, and devices (consent forms, audio recorder and recordings, notes files etc) were kept in a safe lock at the university and were encrypted with passwords in the case of online storage. All other off-line devices, such as audio recorder, were also encrypted with passwords. The recordings will be discarded three years after the researcher's PhD study to avoid causing any potential harm to participants in future.

3.10 Chapter summary

The research design for this study was discussed in this chapter. The choice of constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology for this study was explained. Given the nature of knowledge, multiple realities and their form of creation, in-depth interviews were considered appropriate to obtain rich information from hotel managers. The data collection procedure, sampling technique, study population, and the method of analysis were also discussed. Further, issues bordering on trustworthiness, including quality, dependability, reliability, transferability, and transparency were discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study, including data protection, confidentiality, and anonymity, were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter reports on the hotels' KM process adoption efforts and practices in managing customer relationships of three- to five-star hotels in Ghana. Themes derived from the data analysis based on the objectives of the study are discussed: how KM process of knowledge acquisition, creation, storage, and use are applied in managing customer relationship primary activities in hotels in Ghana, perceived importance and role of KM, contextual influencers-facilitators and barriers to hotel KM adoption, and a framework to explain KM and CRM integration that aims to inform how hotels can effectively adopt KM in enhancing CRM. The theoretical underpinning of the thesis and its applicability in Ghanaian hotels is also presented. The chapter ends by presenting a summary of the findings. Throughout the chapter, the terms respondents and informants are used interchangeably to refer to the participants/interviewees of this study.

4.1 Participating hotels' and respondents' profiles

As indicated in chapter 3 (section 3.5-sampling), the analysis includes participating hotels' information and participants' profiles. The seven hotels are hotels of three- to five-star categories in Accra, Ghana. Two are international hotel chains, and five are local independent hotels. The key customer markets served include business and leisure customers from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, the United States of America (USA), and the United Kingdom (UK). The hotels ranged from 5 to 30 years old. Respondents from international chains make up 33% of the sample (n=12), with 67% working in local independent hotels (n=24). Table 4.1 shows the profiles of the participating hotels. Out of the 36 participants, 64% are female. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 59 years old with an average of 39.7 and 36.6 years for supervisors or above and rank-and-file staff respectively. Most of the participants are in the 30- to 40-year-old bracket. For educational level, most of the participants attained bachelor's degrees. The participants include managers, supervisors, and rank-and-file staff of FO (36%), FB (33%) and SM (31%). Up to 56% are of supervisory grade or above with an average of 9.3 years with their current hotels and 13.7 years in the hotel industry. The rank-and-file staff have an

average of 6.9 years with their current hotels and 11.5 years working in the hotel industry. This shows that the participants are familiar with their hotels and the hospitality industry. All participants were full-time employees and have at least one year of experience in their current role and more than two years of experience in the hotel industry. The participant with the least experience had worked in his current role for one year and in the hotel industry for two years. The most experienced participant has worked for 30 years in her current role and 32 years in the hotel industry.

4.2 Hotel operators' understanding of KM

Respondents were asked to describe what KM means to them and if it was being adopted in their hotels. Interestingly, a rank-and file informant (LPAG2 FO staff) of an independent hotel asked the researcher to explain the meaning of KM. The researcher tried to give examples of the common KM tasks and activities by using terms such as 'managing knowledge' and 'storing and sharing knowledge'. As the interview progressed, the informant understood KM to mean the generation of knowledge from customer data, expertise, employees' capability, and experiences to solve problems that may arise in the daily business operations and experience accumulated in dealing with customers. Informants' responses demonstrated that participating hotels are engaging in KM efforts with a strong practical focus to solving daily problems and staying competitive even though they may not be using the exact terms "knowledge management" or "KM" to describe the activities and processes. All the hotels engaged in their own KM efforts and based on the thematic analysis, three themes of respondents' understanding of KM emerged. The findings have been presented in the sub-sections following. Table 4.1 shows the coding framework for hotels' understanding of KM in Ghana.

4.2.1 Customer knowledge acquisition and management

All chain hotels and most independent hotels believe that KM is having customer data and information at their disposal and making sure that they make the most out of it by creating knowledge and experiences in taking care of the guests, which will guide

against inconveniencing the customer. Some managers and staff had this to say regarding the meaning of KM:

> *"Knowledge management is what you gathered from around and how you use it. It's collecting all data about your customer, putting it together and using it to better manage that customer in the future or better improve your services to the customers of similar expectations".*

(KGAG1 SM Director)

> *"We are already in a setup of knowledge management, in a way. OK, why? Because we are taking guest preference information and putting it into a CRM. OK. And then that is giving us information about how we can use it. It's up to us. OK. So, I think we are already in place when it comes to acquiring [customers'] preferences [information]".*

(KGAG2 FB Director)

> *"Knowledge management is our ability as a hotel to gather intelligence about guests and their taste for products and services to provide customized service offerings based on our experience for the guests".*

(GTAG4 FO staff)

> *"Knowledge management is the process of acquiring, documenting, sharing, and applying both customer and company data to provide tailored services and products to customers in order to achieve customer satisfaction and to give the hotel or restaurant business a competitive advantage".*

(MGAG3 FO staff)

To better manage customer relationships, hotels collect customer data internally and externally and create knowledge which is used in their CRM. Customers' names, check-in date, repeat guest's functions, phone number, preferences, record, or history of behaviours, geographic or background information etc. are collected and stored in the property management systems for retrieval to service guests (GTAG4 FO Staff, OPAG2 FO staff) and to manage their experiences (ARAG3 FB manager). The demographics and information collected about customers become data (GTAG2 FO Manager, LPAG2 FO Staff, ARAG6 SM Executive, KGAG4 FO Manager, OPAG5 FO

Supervisor). In this sense, data comprise customer profiles and the feedback hotels collect from customers during check-in, service delivery, interactions with the customers, and online review websites. When the data are organised and translated into information, hotels make deductions and data mining to produce knowledge about a particular customer (LPAG3 SM Manager) and the knowledge shared among employees to manage customers' relationships (KGAG4 FO Manager).

4.2.2 Product knowledge management

Few informants from the independent hotels view KM as gathering and managing product knowledge. To them, insufficient knowledge about product offerings such as restaurant menu, rooms type, and services offered by the hotel amount to providing unsatisfactory service to customers, hence inability to achieve daily operational objectives. Here, some informants had this to say regarding the meaning of KM:

> *"As a hotelier you should have knowledge about your products and what you sell so that you will be able to attend to customers well so that you can try to make recommendations for maybe customers who come in and don't know what foods or drinks to choose".*

> (LPAG6 FB staff)

> *"Knowledge management in hotel I think is about maybe product knowledge of the facility and then how you have to ensure that, you know, the knowledge acquired by the staff is maintained basically".*

> (ARAG1 FO Manager)

Interestingly, ARAG SM Manager partly viewed KM as the ability to possess the hotel's product knowledge and use the knowledge to attract, serve, and retain customers. She expressed that staff of the hotel who have product knowledge and know how and what the hotel needs to promote will build their capacity to effectively promote the hotel (ARAG5 SM Manager) and give advice to customers who either request for help or are not sure what services to choose. This theme suggests that if the hotel staff

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know the products 'inside-out' and manage them effectively, it can serve as a leverage to managing customer relationships.

4.2.3 Technology management

Besides interactions with customers to collect data, all hotels engage technology in the form of computer systems, databases, and software such as enterprise resource management system or enterprise resource planning (ERP) to collect and manage customer data. For example, some respondents added that KM can mean managing technology with regard to customers' need:

> *"All the data we've collected from the customers and our experiences with the customer, we keep them in the database, we have an enterprise resource software or call it enterprise resource planning that we use, so that we keep profiles of the customers".*

> (MGAG2 FO Manager)

> *"TrustYou is reputation management software we use in our hotel which gathers guests' reviews from different platforms and breaks down guests' reviews to the various departments, and this helps us to see if the department is doing well or it needs improvement as well as give us insights to improve guests experience in order to become a hotel of choice in the minds of customers".*

> (GTAG1 SM Manager)

Hotels collect data from customers through various means, including observations and interactions with the customer. Such feedback is logged into the ERP. That information in the ERP is managed by both employees and managers. But then employees have limited access as any recorded information cannot be changed by the employees, except the manager. *"The enterprise resource management system is restricted. The point of access is at the reception, so FO can log into the system and view. They can view only certain information, yes, they are limited".* (MGAG2 FO Manager)

Overall, these extracts based on the three themes of how hotel employees interpret KM depict data collection, knowledge capture, dissemination, communication, and access

to information sources for managing customers as well as managing expert staff knowledge. They also show that if employees possess and use the product knowledge of the hotels, it will determine how promptly hotels can respond to different customer questions and needs on products and service offerings, all culminating in tacit and explicit product knowledge use. Such subtle diversity of views notwithstanding, knowledge is essential in managing customer relationships. To the hotels, managing knowledge is critical because the *"goal of any hotel is to do better when the customer is coming back"* (KGAG4 FO Manager). Although three themes emerged regarding KM meaning, the customer knowledge acquisition and management and technology management correspond to Alavi and Leidner (2001), Wiig (1997) and Hislop (2013) findings on what KM meant. An important finding from this study was that some rank-and-file staff consider KM to be product management. Consequently, managing knowledge among hotel managers and staff has become an aim at the operational level as chain and independent hotels seek to enhance their CRM for competitive edge over their competitors. Because independent hotels do not have their own international brand hotels (unlike chain hotels that enjoy other standard trainings and customer information leverage from their international hotel brands), they tend to see effective product management as a competitive advantage, and hence consider this as KM.

Table 4. 1 Hoteliers' understanding of KM

Themes	Number of informants
KM meaning	
Customer knowledge acquisition and management	29
Product knowledge management	13
Technology management	4

4.3 Hotel operators' understanding of CRM

To find out if KM is being adopted in managing customer relationships, respondents were asked to explain and describe their understanding of what CRM is and how it is being implemented at their hotels. In general, hotels focus on three main functions when

describing CRM: IT system, process, and loyalty program. CRM as IT systems record customers' profiles. CRM is also a process consists of activities to satisfy the customers, create relationships, and ultimately creating customer loyalty to attract customers enabling repeat business for hotels. This shows that all the hotels perceived CRM as a mechanism to satisfy customers and to facilitate repeat patronage.

4.3.1 CRM as IT system

Across some independent hotels, CRM entails being able to record a customer's information into an IT system in order to know the customer. Hotels use systems like Opera and Fidelio to keep an account history of individual customers (KGAG1 SM Director) in order know the customer better and relate well. An informant in explaining her understanding of CRM said that:

"We even have CRM here in the property management system. It helps us understand our guests through their complaints, how we handle their complaints, how we manage them. So, the CRM is like an IT system that is used to collate information about our clients in the hotel and monitor the loyalty of the clients as well, if the client repeats or the client is one off"

(ARAG5 SM Manager).

4.3.2 CRM as process

Most of the hotels (both chain and independent) expressed that satisfying guests is fundamental to the success of their business and hence want to satisfy guests by providing exquisite services (ARAG6 SM staff) to satisfy the guests (ARAG1 FO Manager). *"All field sales teams visit their corporate accounts' premises to check on them as well as market any upcoming events"*, KGAG5 FO staff explained. Understanding customers' needs and exceeding customers' expectations are important (LPAG1 Asst. FO Manager). This results in courtesy phone calls to check on customers when they are in-house, sending thank you messages to customers, appreciating clients on occasions such as birthdays, Father's Day, and Mother's Day etc. Some respondents had the following to say:

"Customer relationship management is just a management process where companies or businesses take steps, usually in a structured way to make sure that there is a cordial relationship between the company and its customers".

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

"CRM is a chain of activities to understand what customers are looking for and their preferences and making sure that you give them that repeated value all the time".

(KGAG3 SM staff)

4.3.3 CRM as loyalty programmes

CRM is understood as creating loyal customers by means of loyalty programmes. All chain hotels and some independent hotels have instituted loyalty programmes to build relationships with customers for repeat visits. These programmes allow the hotels to maintain long-term relationships with customers by offering them loyalty points and benefits such as discounts. Some informants had the following to say regarding the meaning of CRM:

"We have this loyalty programme that we call 'Flavours' Instant Benefits and flavours itself where you get points awarded for your stay. So, if I would come and I would get points, then why don't I always come to this hotel and then accumulate the points. So, the loyalty programme is flavours. And Flavours Instant Benefits program offer discount to its users".

(GTAG4 FO Staff)

"Due to Covid-19, travel has evolved, and so have we. Information gathered from our customers has enabled the hotel to redesign a more generous and rewarding loyalty programme with the alliance with Global Hotel Alliance. This loyalty programme is called discovery loyalty programme. It will offer exclusive benefits both with or without a stay, and members will enjoy everything our hotel has to offer even closer to home".

(KGAG5 FO staff)

Although hotels may be interpreting CRM differently as IT system, human processes, and loyalty programme, the first two themes correspond with Lo et al.'s (2010) findings on what CRM meant to hotel managers in Hong Kong. An important finding from this study was that most non-managerial respondents consider CRM to be a loyalty program that facilitates customer loyalty. It motivates customers to continue to patronise the hotel products and services (Kandampully, Zhang & Bilgihan, 2015). Hotel employees in Ghana believe it is an important CRM tool to enhance their relationships with customers and to build loyalty as all respondents realised that the ultimate goals of those practices are satisfying and retaining customers. Table 4.2 presents the coding framework for how the hotel managers and staff understand and interpret CRM.

Table 4. 2 Hoteliers' understanding of CRM CRM

Themes	Number of informants
CRM meaning	
IT system	
Property management system	34
Process	
Visit corporate account premises	16
Looking out to providing exquisite services	9
Offer assistance to the corporates	6
Understand customer needs	15
Thank you, check-up and celebration calls and messages to clients	22
Loyalty programmes	
Loyalty programmes to build relationships and loyalty	11

4.4 How is the KM process incorporated in managing customer relationships?

The study explored whether and how Ghana hotels adopt KM process of knowledge acquisition, creation, storage, and use in managing customer relationships by investigating their presence in the different CRM value chain primary activities. KM processes are important to hotels because they are at the origin of most improvements in the customer value chain. It is important to briefly explain how the KM process was investigated and how the data was analysed. Knowledge acquisition describes how hotels identify and capture knowledge that exists inside and outside the hotel/facility. Knowledge creation informs how hotels generate new knowledge from the captured knowledge inside and outside the facility. Knowledge storage denotes how hotels codify and document information and knowledge from internal and external sources in technological databases and books for present and future work reference and accessibility to employees. Knowledge use defines how hotels carry out activities to ensure that knowledge is productively utilised or applied for its benefits. Technology in the form of knowledge repositories databases and for managing people (both internal and external customers) encompass the KM process.

Respondents were asked to describe what they and their colleagues in their departments do to manage customer relationships. They were asked to use examples to illustrate and describe the people, tasks, processes, and technology they consider key in driving value for the customers and the hotel. Based on the activities and tasks described by the respondents, six key types of CRM activities emerged and followed a progressive sequence. Five of them resembled Buttle's (2004, 2015) primary activities of the CRM value chain. In analysing the responses, the researcher tried to identify whether KM activities were adopted in the process of managing customer relationships. Generally, the findings show a similar form of KM activities across both chain and independent hotels except that chain hotels mostly engage in formal planning for knowledge activities while independent hotels sometimes engage in informal and ad hoc knowledge activities. The following sub-sections summarise how KM was adopted in the CRM value chain activities identified among the hotels.

4.4.1 Prospecting

When respondents described the CRM tasks and activities performed by them or their colleagues, they would explain that customers need to be found before they can deliver the services and manage their relationships. The journey of a hotel customer does not commence when they consume a product or service as a customer at the hotel. To the sales managers, they need to turn "suspects" into "prospects" then into "customers". This shows that prospecting is fundamental because hotels' SM staff search online and do cold calling and/or physical visits to identify potential customers. The researcher's observational experience in the field shows that all hotels have in place SM department and the staff (both managers and sales executives) carry out scouting and prospecting, market calls, and internet search daily. Staff mostly report to work at the hotel every morning and leave to the field in search for potential customers. Two main prospecting activities were identified as discussed below.

4.4.1.1 Physical visits to local market and abroad

All hotels designate SM staff to make physical visits to the local market (LBAG3 FBCBS Manager, LPAG3 SM Manager, OPAG3 SM staff) and only international chain hotels make overseas visits (attending travel trade shows/fairs and exhibitions like World Travel Market London, fairs in South Africa, Nigeria, Asia etc.) in search for potential corporate customers and sometimes leisure travellers (GTAG3 SM Executive).

At the local market level, hoteliers' prospect for customers through intentional visits to various firms and institutions in Ghana as well as attending conferences and events in order to access and attract corporates. The researcher noticed how involved the SM teams were in their visits to the city of Accra and beyond in search of potential customers. The SM teams' busy schedule did not make it feasible for them to be interviewed, but the researcher managed to interview most of the SM respondents.

4.4.1.2 Prospecting online

Generally, hotels try to identify suspects by paying attention to people who view their website and/or interact with their social media posts. The majority of the hotels use Google analytics to identify those who visit their websites and their location in order to target them. For example, LBAG SM Coordinator informant revealed that:

> *From our website analytics, we have America, Ghana, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, India, Russia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Angola as our customers"*

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

> *"We sometimes use Google search ads as it has a way of increasing traffic to your website, and we can identify the metrics and also target a specific geographic market".*

(OPAG2 FO staff)

To inspire suspects and direct them to the hotels' websites for more information about the hotels' offers or make reservations, all hotels employed social media platform such as Facebook and Instagram to reach out to suspects and prospects and *"respond to their questions, comments, messages, and feedbacks"* (OPAG2 FO staff). Other respondents added that:

> *"Um social media is becoming so powerful that every information gets there. For instance, in my department, I have a digital marketer, his duty is to be on the internet checking the information in terms of people interactions and guests' feedback"* (OPAG6 SM Manager).

> *"We use Myjoyonline, then other social media influencers like Zionfelix.com-a Social Media Marketer and Youtuber, and our international office does the international markets targeting for us".*

(GTAG1 SM Manager)

Only one independent hotel attempted to engage digital marketers to boost its online presence. For example, during a follow-up interview to ascertain how hotels conduct prospecting online based on KM, a staff recounted that *"we've reached out to digital*

marketing agencies like 'This is Accra' and 'iSupreme' who have pitched to us a plan. We are still looking out for one that will be cost-effective and good enough for us to gain momentum online" (OPAG3 SM staff). Chain hotels corporate offices support their hotel brands in digital marketing (KGAG5 FO staff). Most independent hotels seem to engage marketing intermediaries to lure customers before and during COVID-19, but this comes at an extra cost to the hotels as fees or commissions are charged. This notwithstanding, some hotels still engage local travel and tour companies like LandTours and Sun City to boost the hotel's online presence on the travel and tour agencies' websites to reach out to patenting customers (OPAG6 SM Manager). All these are attempts to boost the hotels' online presence for easy connection with suspects.

Based on the initial CRM activities reported by the participants, it can be observed that hotels adopted various KM processes at the prospecting stage. These include knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, and knowledge use.

Knowledge acquisition: Hotels may not have all the necessary knowledge they need to manage customer relationships. They either need to acquire knowledge externally or create knowledge internally or externally. Externally, SM managers and staff gather information about prospective customers through external sources such as reading newspapers and listening to TV and radio (media) news, being aware of happenings in the city, observing people's behaviour, and searching the internet and social media to catch knowledge glimpse of recent and future potential business opportunities. Daily, the SM teams monitor how people respond to the hotels' social media posts and where the hotel website searches are from; and conducts internet searches and physical market calls to gain first-hand knowledge of people who may show interest in the hotels' services. Internally, during informal conversations and regular staff meetings, other staff frequently volunteer information such as new corporates in town and new government policies that may attract new companies from overseas to Ghana. The act constitutes environmental knowledge for the SM staff to act on aided by their formal educational training received (academic knowledge) as hoteliers believe that formal education is necessary to help staff read, listen, and internalise and envisage what

business opportunities might be out there in the social space to explore. Some respondents had the following to say regarding knowledge acquisition:

> *"I will say prospecting is more like the inquiry stage where you meet people, take their details if they agree and seek to know if they have interest in the services the hotel provides. For example, in one of Angela Merkel's visits to Ghana between 2018 and 2019, she made a statement about a vehicle assembly plant, a Volkswagen assembly plant, establishment in Ghana in partnership with the Ghana government on Ghana national TV. So there and then we know that Volkswagen is coming into Ghana. So, it's up to you to get a contact or a lead in there to attract potential customers to your hotel. So, you can either get it through the government, google online, there are so many different ways to do it. It's more like you are an investigator, so you need to find avenues to reach the potential buyer, yeah".*

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

> *"When it comes to e-commerce, of course, it's the same, it's just trying to extract information online and looking at which promotions are catering to which needs. So, you sort of analyse demographics of those who are reacting to different promotions online on our social media platforms. And then you understand what works for you and that becomes knowledge for us to map out ways of attracting these prospects to the hotel".*

(KGAG1 SM Director)

Hoteliers believe that engaging with the media such as TV and radio constitutes both local and non-local external source of knowledge that provides information which can be used to respond to change in the environment and create value for customers in the hotel. All hotels view information from the media as tacit knowledge about potential customers while internet and social media searches provide explicit knowledge. This knowledge is described as declarative-'know-about' or 'know-what' to do knowledge for prospecting. Meetings, discussions, and brainstorming sessions are held to evaluate the information and devise convincing ways, tactics and speaking skills to appeal to a prospective client and new market (GTAG3 SM Executive). Useful information, knowledge, and skills are shared among managers and staff to identify potential customers (OPAG6 SM Manager).

Knowledge storage: Hotels keep records of potential corporates and markets information coupled with the 'know-about' knowledge in their databases such as map drive and books. Prospects could be recorded as banks, telecoms, oil industry, government sector, NGOs, U.N., churches, schools etc. Hotels acquired information and knowledge can also be stored as an e-learning prospecting guide/document, which can be referenced for effective prospecting (ARAG3 FB Manager, GTAG3 SM Executive, GTA1 SM Manager). A respondent further added that:

> *"Ok, so we are currently using a system called IDS. Ok. With the IDS that's where all the information is stored. Every single thing from the front office department to the conference and banqueting department to the F and B department, to housekeeping, to kitchen, to maintenance, to purchasing and account data are stored in the IDS system. So that's the central software that we have in the hotel. And we also store our client data and information in order to manage our relationship with the client".*

  (ARAG6 SM Executive)

Knowledge use: Both chain and independent hotels apply KM process efforts of acquisition, storage and use to enable physical visits to potential markets and online prospecting. The stored explicit and tacit knowledge is utilised by the SM team to identify and locate suspects (OPAG6 SM Manager, GTAG3 SM Executive). The sales managers use the 'know-about' knowledge, speaking skills and tactics to update their prospecting guide which becomes both a training manual and knowledge guide for team members to apply in prospecting. Tacit and explicit knowledge derived from potential customers is used to convert prospects into new sales. Thus, the outcome is turning suspects into prospects and grouping them. "*We group the prospects into the high producers, the mid-range producers, and the small producers in terms of how much business they may yield*" (GTAG1 SM Manager). The SM team creates a profile of the prospects by capturing essential information, including name of contact person, position, phone number and email address and then try to identify the preferences of these prospects and discuss with the hotel management (e.g., General Manager) on the need to 'chase' the prospects. So, tacit knowledge is generated to identify the prospects

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the hotel desire to do business with based on what kind of 'business' and gains the prospects can bring to the hotel. With the available tacit knowledge, the SM team does several follow-ups to convince these prospects to do business with the hotel:

> *I'm able to use the data gathered to plot a graph to visualize collectively all those pieces of information that come in, what are they saying? The data visuals provide a valuable insight to amend business strategies and enhance customer relationships. So, data collection is important and then management should also be committed in using the data that they get so that it will trickle down that the effect of their actions should be felt by the customer and the customer should feel comfortable that their feedback was relevant as in whatever management is doing is helping to better the services they provide. So, I think it's an all-encompassing approach".*

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

To handle prospects from digital campaigns, respondents mentioned that:

> *"Two people including me handle that. We log into the social media accounts and as and when we get comments, messages or the feedback from someone we try to engage them. We are still coming up with the manual like frequently asked questions and how to respond sort of, even if we are not around other staff could handle the prospective clients. Facebook advertising gives us some metrics like the conversion rates and click rates of potential customers or customers. The countries and other geographic areas of these customers are estimated or predictions of somewhere someone might be coming from, although some people try to anonymise themselves using VPN and all that".*

(OPAG2 FO staff)

4.4.2 Customer portfolio analysis

After hotels have prospected and turned suspects into prospect/potential customers, hotels analyse the data gathered and come up with effective interactive strategies to appeal to those customers the hotel deemed desirable to do business with through profiling. Profile analysis focuses on gaining insights into who the potential and current

customers are and what services or products he/she would desire from the hotels. For example, an informant explained that:

> *"Every potential customer has an expectation. So, we need to understand their needs through further interactions with customers before they come to our facility because they know what they expect to get".*

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

The KM process deployed in this stage has been presented below.

Knowledge acquisition: Information and knowledge are acquired from customers during reservations, check-in/out and during customers stay. Both the FO and SM teams capture customers' information in terms of customer or corporate organisation name, organisation or company location, mobile/telephone number, type of customer (business or leisure), previous company's conference activities history and tentative future conferences, type of organisation (local or international) and employees (locals or expatriates), which becomes a form of working knowledge. Identifying useful knowledge is a challenge for most hotels. They try to conduct market research and competitor intelligence in addition to gain more customer knowledge. Hotels believe that formal training is an external source of knowledge relevant for effective market research and secretarial duties. It is also helpful in eliciting appropriate information from customers, observing, and acquiring knowledge of guests' behaviour for storage. Participants explained that the internet and social media are both internal and external sources of knowledge because technology and smart service in hotels in recent times are essential to KM efforts:

> *"Today, there are more avenues where we can find out about our clients and interact with them now than five years ago. Now there are so many platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Tiktok; five years ago, these were not the norm. Now we derive knowledge about how client's behaviour and knowledge of some markets than before".*

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

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"In the marketing department we have social media platforms that we are managing. So again, there's an interaction with an audience there, a wider audience, who could be our direct customer or could be an aspiring customer and we gather data from there and analyse. Yeah, that's knowledge for us to work with".

(KGAG1 SM Director)

Knowledge storage: All hotels have a data storage software. The customer data and information captured at reservation or during check-in/out are stored or documented in the hotel property management system by the FO:

"We segregate the prospects and customers in the hotel's system or database and try to follow up with replies and phone calls. Our system allows potential customers to indicate or tell us how they got information about the 'digital promotions' (be it Facebook, Instagram etc.), and then they want to book. So, in our database we segregate the revenue coming in as revenue from companies, online (i.e., digital platforms) revenue, special discount revenue, promotion revenue and all that for easy identification".

(LPAG2 FO staff)

Each SM manager can access some level of the customers' information and knowledge and has customised databases of customers' records within the SM department.

Knowledge use: Acquired customer information is used to create new initiatives to deliver an exceptional customer experience. The FO Managers of the independent hotels had this to say:

During guests stay, we collect information from them about their behaviour and likes which we analysis to derive knowledge in understanding the appropriate needs of our guests. Insights gained are used to strengthen customer relationships".

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

"We always need to learn what is going on and see what is happening. So, we use the knowledge we acquire to put in more of customer service because you can have a beautiful hotel, but if customers come and then your relationship with them is poor the guests will not come back. With this in mind, we use every available knowledge to teach our staff in a way that they practice and apply to manage customer relationships".

(ARAG1 FO Manager)

4.4.3 Customer intimacy

For various hotels, the inquiry stage where they meet the client is an opportunity for customer intimacy building that entails bonding with the customer to understand his/her needs. Pre-arrival email on upcoming stay is sent to guests to acknowledge the guest's preference and request for a type of room as well as informing the guest not to hesitate to contact the hotel for any further assistance before they arrive. Once the customer arrives, physical contacts are made and more detailed information about the customers are obtained. Hotels' KM processes have been presented below.

Knowledge acquisition: Most of the hotels acquire relational knowledge to be able to bond with customers. They also rely on procedural knowledge of experience-based know-how and procedures within the hotel to manage customers and look externally to generate specific explicit knowledge of customer behaviour and reasoning from social media and the internet, academic knowledge, public fora including conferences and industry expos. Before the customer arrives at the hotel, the hotels would acquire abstract knowledge (deductive knowledge from customer behaviour) through digital platforms such as social media contact (searches on Facebook, Instagram to have background information of the customer) to bond with the customers:

"Given travel restrictions now, we try to localise our campaigns by targeting the local base potential client on either Facebook or Instagram".

(OPAG2 FO staff)

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The continuous evolution of society presents to the current generation of hotel business different forms of knowledge that can influence customer relationships in the hotel industry. Hotels acquire knowledge from customer reviews on platforms like ReviewPro (GTAG1 SM Manager) in addition to collecting information and knowledge through market calls, personal conversations, and industry expos. Due to COVID-19, most reviews are based on the protocols and this information becomes knowledge to the hotels (GTAG1 SM Manager; OPAG6 SM Manager):

> *"It's customer focused selling more than anything. So, you identify what the customer requires by asking the customers what they want and observing customers sharing of experiences and reactions in previous service encounters elsewhere, and then you sell your products to meet their needs. You just don't start selling without understanding what the customer history is".*
>
> (KGAG1 SM Director)

Knowledge storage: These details are programmed in the hotels' property management system, including Opera, easyPMS, IDS, and ERP (GTA SM 1 Manager, LPAG2 FO staff, KGAG5 FO staff), and largely in the minds of employees because expert staff are requested to share the knowledge or skill with team members to avoid losing it when such staff resigns (KGAG5 FO staff). Regarding information and knowledge storage in databases, an SM staff had this to say:

> *"We store every detail of our customers in the IDS software. So, any time, let's say, I go on leave, or I resign, any staff taking over from me will be able to access all the information in the database to continue to work with ease and attending to the same customers seamlessly. So, we make sure that um our contact database is always up to date".*
>
> (ARAG6 SM Executive)

Knowledge use: Knowledge acquired is applied such that once the customer checks out, an automatic pleasant message of 'thank you for enjoying your stay with us' is sent to him or her (GTA SM 1 Manager, LPAG2 FO staff, KGAG5 FO staff). By putting

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knowledge of Covid-19 protocols to work, hotels help improve customer relationships. Abstract knowledge and customer service knowledge are also used to monitor customers and create deeper relationships with customers as well as plan and map comprehensive customer future journey:

> *"...our knowledge and skills of creating rapport and relating well makes the guests feel belonged, and they know that you know exactly what they want."*

(KGAG6 FB staff)

> *"That's a tricky part retaining them. Ehmm to build a relationship with them up to a point where you are always like the number one in their mind. So, call them, check up on them. You are not always calling to ask them to bring you a booking. Do a sales visit and take them stuff maybe breakfast one day or lunch one day".*

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

4.4.4 Network development

It was observed that hotel staff work with internal and external stakeholders in ways that will satisfy the customer. The internal stakeholders include employees and hotel management while the external stakeholders constitute government agencies like GTA, consultants (e.g., Lobster Ink), and digital marketers. The two categories of stakeholders provide knowledge services to the hotels, and they are the important networks hotels need to work in managing customer relationships. The KM processes identified in the network development stage have been presented below.

Knowledge acquisition: All hotels acquire knowledge from various internal and external sources. Internally, all hotels acquire knowledge from hotel management, employees, and customers. Hotel managers have lunch in the restaurant and observe FO staff engagements with customers to identify service deficiencies and then call for a meeting to address them. Through discussions, guest-related knowledge (tacit) is produced to deal with the present and future wants of guests, which better the food preparation and customer engagements (ARAG6 SM Executive). Hotels obtained tacit

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knowledge from individual employees who have novel ideas to share and customers and add that to the hotels' stock of knowledge due to knowledge potential to enhance performance and innovation:

> *"Guests complaints are very important; they give you feedback and help you understand emerging trends. Sometimes you don't know what's going on, but the guest knows. I read a book that says that if you want to know the best people in a story, read the comments, those who comment knows more about what is going on. So, the guests are the ones who are talking or writing the comments, so we have to listen or read to gain insights and generate knowledge to deal with the situation. Also, as staff when we see something new that is missing, we don't just bring it on board, we have to suggest to the boss, because I mean, there's a hierarchy, so anything that goes into F&B, the boss must know about it. So, anything that you have seen in town that is new you just have to first suggest to the boss that, I've seen this that and that and that I think it will be good, what do you think?".*

(GTAG6 FB staff)

Externally, all hotels acquire explicit professional knowledge from stakeholders such as government agency (GTA), consultants, digital marketing companies, social media websites, companies that provide professional online and offline trainings (e.g., South African Lobster Ink-online training programme) and Genius hospitality and Loophotel online learning (exclusive to one chain hotel). Such knowledge focuses on customer service, customer management, telephone and food ethics etc., and it is aimed at prospecting, profiling, and doing business with customers. Particularly, chain hotels are partners of the Global Hotel Alliance and have global sales offices' support across Africa and global partner hotels that direct customer traffic to them in Ghana and help the hotels to manage the customers through sharing experiential knowledge on the customers' preferences and behaviour through the partner hotel (KGAG5 FO staff, KGAG1 SM Director). Some respondents further added:

> *"The Ghana Tourism Authority occasionally provides us with professional knowledge, customer service, digital marketing, and tourism product knowledge, which we convert into know-how in our hotel. We also learn new knowledge from a consultant, Michael Porter, to enable us to manage our front*

office, customers, and all that. He's a customer service expert, a white guy. He flies in to train us and return to his home country".

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

"We have an online learning platform which is called 'Genius'. Our hotel is part of a global brand. So, we are in over 54 countries across the globe. Even currently we've an agreement with the biggest hotel in China called Jinjiang, we've merged with them. What Genius does is that it picks bits and pieces of hotel best practices information all over the world. So, it's worldwide and everybody can access it. So, Genius develops learning tools based on the information picked and we now go and learn from Genius. So, what we do is every salesperson log in and all the new things or the new trend there we do study and write an exam for them to know that what is being taught you understand. Once you get a pass mark you get a certificate, and now you have the appropriate knowledge to work with".

(GTAG1 SM Manager)

Knowledge storage: Knowledge is stored explicitly. Training manuals, technological platforms, handbooks, and reports contain the codified knowledge for all staff to refer anytime they miss a routine. Various department heads have copies for the department and staff are sometimes given the codified knowledge booklet for self-reference:

"...Like me as a staff, most of the time they give you some handouts or pamphlets or some resources to help you refresh your memory in case you forget about that. Okay".

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

Knowledge use: Through the explicit knowledge obtained, hotels FO, SM and FB are not only in a better position to serve customers but have the capacity to impress customers in many instances. Both chain and independent hotels informants all pointed out that explicit knowledge acquired from external sources has always been a refresher when the need arises, resulting in the production of tacit knowledge in hoteliers and its

application in CRM (e.g., LBAG1 SM Coordinator, ARAG4 FB staff, GTAG4 FO staff and OPAG3 SM executive).

The researcher's observational experience in the field found GTA as the quality and customer service control board in Ghana as all the hotels categorisation/grade and operational licence were given by GTA (e.g., grade and licence frames were seen on some hotels lobby/lounge walls). This convinces customers of the hotel's security/safety and service quality. GTA provide COVID-19 knowledge to hotels and conduct spot-checks, and annual hotels inspections aimed at enhancing the knowledge efficiency of the hotels.

4.4.5 Value proposition

A value proposition is what the company promises the customer as better benefits of filling a need than similar products on the market. In the case of hotels, innovation intended to make the hotel and its products attractive to customers constitute value proposition, which are communicated to potential customers through online advertisement and physical visits to potential customers. Hotels have also put in place loyalty programs and personalised service offerings. Loyalty programs are hotel membership schemes that enable customers to enjoy a variety of financial and service benefits from promotions, discounts, and point redemptions. Personalisation and customisation are important because everything cannot be right for everyone, and so it is more of tailor-made (KGAG2 FB Director).

Knowledge acquisition: Hotels use the information gathered from different sources at different stages of the customer journey and touch points to understand customer needs. Analysis can be conducted to derive tacit knowledge. Due to COVID-19, hotels leaned more towards Facebook and Instagram use where they acquire guest-related knowledge (explicit) from customers' and potential customers' comments online for designing better products and service that appeal to the customers' preferences so that the customers can see the value of doing business with the hotel. This resulted in various new creative service offerings to customers such as 'Sunday Family Lunch' and 'Saturday Sea Food Night' for healthy eating and 'Fun getaway and reconnect

with loved ones' based on comfort, hygiene and safety COVID-19 knowledge controls monitored by Merirux NutriScience and NSF international (GTAG5 FB Manager, KGAG6 FB staff) in the Covid-19 era:

> *"So, there is COVID and how has that changed people psychology and then you apply the findings…….are people doing more takeaways? Can I implement takeaways because the psychology of people has now changed? People were used to in-door events but now they are frightened. So, keeping updated with news is also key. So, obviously Sales and Marketing Managers get a copy of the daily guide almost every week. So, you know what is going on in Ghana and then how are people reacting to it. You are probably on the radio, social media…..you are viewing trends, you get it! So, it all supposed to help with the analysis of trends to obtain knowledge".*

(LAPAG3 SM Manager)

> *"Sometimes too, peoples' comments from social media, online travel agencies like Expedia, Booking.com, TripAdvisor with regards to the hotels services is a form of knowledge that help to refine the service offerings".*

(ARAG6 SM Executive)

> *"...So, in our meetings we all share; what have we been hearing people say? Then you say how can I rope in that…. Me as an individual person I eat outside the hotel, I don't always eat inside or in the hotel. When I go what I do is that I observe what people do and say. How did the people around me react to the service they had? How did I feel about the service I had? How do I inculcate it here in my hotel? You get it! This is where we gather the data from. So, the meetings are very helpful when we come together because we are always visiting different places doing our own things and then we share that information. Even at management meetings, we share oh I went here I saw this….so each time we are learning……. discussing how can we bring this knowledge here from these other hotels or places. Ok right!".*

(LAPAG3 SM Manager)

Knowledge creation: Most hotels create new knowledge through customers' feedback, research, and personal reading. Insights and experiences are drawn from individual managers and staff to create value. Through managers and staff meetings, evaluations of information and customers feedback are conducted to create social knowledge based on the collective action of the employees, and pragmatic knowledge, otherwise known as useful knowledge, to attend to the customer's needs. Such knowledge creation activities were expressed by respondents, citing menu engineering every six months based on knowledge obtained from customers:

> *"...Of course, I mean each and every day new things are happening, and we need also think and create ideas. Just before you walked, I was working on what we call the Suur, you know, Ramadan started today. And they have what they call the suur, which is the last meal they have before fasting. That's the dawn meal. So, one day I was just sitting here and I'm like, ok, we may have a Muslim guest that will need suur. So, I discuss this idea with the chef, and we evaluated it together, then we saw the need to further explore it. I sent in an email to all concerned, which is the front office who will be interacting with the guests before they check-in. So, the FO shared the suur idea with muslim guests who check-in, and we found out that it could work. So, this is an idea I thought about, shared with colleagues, we discussed it and it became knowledge for us to use in the hotel. So, it is my own knowledge creation. Hahahaaa (laughs)".*

  (GTAG5 FB Manager)

All the guest-contact departments (e.g., SM, FO, and FB) interact with one another and customers to acquire information and generate knowledge. Based on the interactions, tacit knowledge is derived from customers daily, leading to personalised service creation for customers:

> *"We all interact with guests. Even beyond our hotel, all SM managers in Accra have a WhatsApp group where we get newsfeeds and share the new things we are doing in our hotels. Although we are direct competitors it is good for us to work together as we can share knowledge for service personalization, refer customers and business to each other. Yeah, we do know what goes on in each other's hotels. Hahahaaa".*

  (OPAG6 SM Manager)

Knowledge storage: Information gathered is documented in property management systems such as Opera, easyPMS, and IDS, and largely resides in the minds of employees across the hotels (GTAG4 FO staff). *"I definitely will keep the information, ideas and knowledge of what my customer wants on my Opera system. But in this day of phones and stuff, we also have a departmental WhatsApp platform where information and any new knowledge we create on food and how to handle our customers better are displayed for staff to access"* (GTAG5 FB Manager).

Knowledge use: The documented explicit knowledge is available, accessible, and shareable for management and staff daily operational use. Knowledge acquired and created is used to develop knowledge products and services (GTAG5 FB Manager, KGAG2 FB Director). Hotels apply knowledge to make sure that whatever products, or service that customers experience is beyond expectation. Hoteliers identify items that need to be on the menu, and items that needs to be taken out based on customers' preferences, innovations, and occasions such as Christmas, Easter, and Ramadan (Muslims fasting season) (GTAG5 FB Manager, KGAG6 FB staff). An informant mentioned that:

> *"We created a Sunday lunch. The idea was born out of this whole thing, in a way where, you know, in Ghana, people go to church and after church they wanna go sit somewhere. So, myself and my former chef, he was Ghanaian, and so he could buy into the idea. You know, it was easy for us to discuss it and build it, you know, the menu is constituted with mainly Ghanaian. But because we appeal also to international guests, we have another section on the menu that is Continental".*

(GTAG5 FB Manager)

All hotels pride themselves in deriving both tacit and explicit knowledge from the Ghanaian way of life and societal behaviour, which has resulted in the provision of a touch of African traditional signature foods (e.g., 'waakye', fufu, jollof rice, 'ampesie', kenkey) as well as Western cuisines, making these hotels Afropolitan to the taste of various customers. Traditional African cultural artefacts that embodied African

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knowledge of leadership and hospitality were acquired and displayed in guests' rooms owing to hotels' intelligence gathered about these artefacts fascinating effect on international customers (e.g., ARAG6 SM Executive, GTAG5 FB Manager, ARAG1 FO Manager, LPAG5 FB Manager, LPAG6 FB staff, OPAG4 FB Supervisor, LBAG 3 FB & Events Supervisor).

During the data collection, the researcher observed a variety of African and Western cuisines. Also, hotel staff and clients wore nose masks, pens and clients' car keys were sanitized and placed in sanitised containers for reuse. All this boosted the confidence of customers to use these hotels.

4.4.6 Manage the customer lifecycle

The hotel market has become buyer's market where guests determine what they are ready to pay due to preference and trend (ARAG1 FO Manager, KGAG6 FB staff). Constant engagement with customers at different touchpoints before, during, and after customers' visits is important to reduce the cost of looking for new clients (OPAG6 SM Manager). Prior to customers' arrival, FO staff engages customers with emails and phone calls. On arrival, porters help guests with luggage and customers' details such as name, date of birth, telephone number, length of stay are entered in the property management system or registration card (in some instances). To ensure that, customers are well served, FO provides rooming list for in-house guests to FB and a reservation book for walk-in customers.

Knowledge acquisition: Hotels FO and SM staff gather background informant and pick detailed intelligence of customers through interactions and attending to complaints. Such complaints from customers may contain knowledge of service deficiencies and direction for improvement. They become customer complaint-related knowledge for hotels:

> *"Experience also counts, over the years we've dealt with guests and know exactly how every guest can be and all that and how to calm the situation. For instance, one of the courses we do a lot is complaint handling".*

(KGAG6 FB staff)

Chain hotels analyse feedbacks from ReviewPro and TrustYou (GTAG1 SM Manager), and all hotels carry out personal readings, internet, and social media searches, evaluating feedbacks from questionnaires, Booking.com, Expedia and Trip Advisor to identify better ideas on service operational related issues, new ideas on products, business partners and suppliers. This produces knowledge of flexibility, allowing hotels to embrace new trends (OPAG2 FO staff, GTAG1 SM Manager). During check-in and dinning, FO, SM, and FB staff interact with customers to gather intelligence about the customer (LBAG2 FO Manager). Due to COVID-19, customers' psychology and behavior have changed causing them to be frightened and behave differently. Hence, hotels acquire knowledge of safety on COVID-19 from customers and industry reports to work with (LPAG3 SM Manager). The managers and staff had the following to say regarding this probing question:

> *"Knowledge of safety and hygiene has become paramount in our dealings with customers in that it is the surest way of keeping your business afloat. I mean, once you make it known to whoever is coming in that this is a safe environment for you then people are confident to come in. So, everybody is now thinking safety".*

(GTAG5 FB Manager)

> *"We have acquired COVID-19 safety and hygiene certificate from Ghana Ministry of Health, and using sanitizers, fumigation, nose masks and all that which has boosted client's confidence in using our facility's rooms, conference, and restaurants".*

(LPAG2 FO staff)

> *"Yes. We have comment cards. And on the comment cards they are data gathered from the guests where they just tick. So, there are ratings on the card. What they see like the aesthetics, the television, the Wi-Fi, the customer service of the staff, you know, and everything. So, the feedback provides knowledge of how the guests view us. We've been able to identify that guest really like our uniqueness. They like the fact that we are Ghanaian owned hotel, and we portray more African stuff. So, with that, after knowing that they love it, they*

put it out there that we are unique, an African owned hotel, but they are of the international standard, and they provide quick service blah, blah, blah, blah. So, when you read comments like this, we try to protect it. We try to do more so that people will see your uniqueness and when they see your uniqueness it becomes your competitive advantage over other competitors like the Best Western, The Holiday Inn and all. From data and information, we have gathered and analysed from customers, our hotel is a bit different and appealing more to customers. See all the art works we have here, the Ghanaian proverbs emblem (pointing to hanged photos on the hotel lobby walls). See the photo of Asantehene wearing gold ornaments displayed on the wall, it shows the Asantes are powerful and then it's the city of gold. Ghana used to be called Gold Coast. Although the name has changed to Ghana, but its identity of we having gold hasn't change, it's still the land of Gold, this is why we have that artwork there on the hall. Our guests take a lot of interest, and they ask a lot of questions about them. So, these artwork and photos serve as information and knowledge that enhance our interactions with customers as well".

(ARAG1 FO Manager)

In the case of chain hotels and artefacts and artwork use, a staff described that:

"…We also have drums (photos on our walls) and entrance which depicts the Ghanaian culture of playing drums to welcome guests to our hotel. It also a tourism product and guests take pictures with it, and some ask a lot of questions leading to interesting interactive time with some guests. Hahaha (laughs), our hotel slogan is play time any time, which means that be playful but not wasting the time of the guest. I mean, our interaction with the guest must be nice".

(GTAG6 FB staff)

Knowledge creation: Mystery guests' programmes are used to detect weaknesses in hotels staff knowledge and service offerings inabilities. This creates causal knowledge of 'know-why' to understand service inefficiency to enable hotels combat any staff poor attitude towards customers. Again, hotels create tacit and explicit knowledge (know-that) from customers reviews and feedbacks to address service delivery and avoid

defects (GTAG2 FO Manager). Hotel staff meetings and departments quarterly appraisals constitute other sources of knowledge creation whereby employees discuss the effectiveness and weakness of previous knowledge and seek to modify the knowledge to upgrade service. Thus, management and staff evaluations of information and existing knowledge produce pragmatic knowledge useful for understanding and managing customer relationships. Hotel management makes extra effort to find, evaluate staff customer service delivery capabilities, and create knowledge to offering trainings to enhance their knowledge on issues or incidents reported to avert future occurrence:

> *"For example, the department heads, they encourage us to propose ideas so that the hotel can implement. Usually, during our staff meetings, some people propose ideas on how we can make better our interactions with and service to customers. These ideas will be debated amongst us, the strengths and weaknesses will explore and if found to have potentials in enhancing our ability to manage customer relationships, we embrace it. It is very interesting; we share our experiences and try to justify why it can or not work".*

(KGAG6 FB staff)

Based on both the acquired and created knowledge about customers' health and safety concerns, hotels have created smart service knowledge which has given presence to new knowledge of service offerings. QR code menu use is strongly coming up to provide contactless maximum satisfaction to clients' safety and health protection against COVID-19 pandemic:

> *"...so, now even the customer can scan the QR code menu and do their own food ordering. And the same system allows you to ask for your bill that's using your phone, your smartphone. So, systems are important, once you have those systems in place, the rest becomes easy".*

(ARAG3 FB Manager)

> *"I think data analysis has been way better now. And thanks to all the programming and picking up words more that we get in sync with artificial intelligence and putting information what the needs are, we will see a better analysis of what people want. So, over the five years, technology is also improving, and we will soon see it's not that obviously artificial intelligence will*

take over the job, it will go hand in hand with humans. The QR code menus were not in existence a few years ago, but we have it now primarily to reduce the touch during the time of Covid. It's extremely dynamic. The QR code menus are something which many hotels are using".

(KGAG2 FB Director)

Knowledge storage: Hotels encourage all customer contact departments to record customers' preferences in knowledge repositories such as hotel property management systems such as easyPMS, IDS, OPERA, and ERP, resulting in available and accessible explicit knowledge to staff. Guest relations department follow-up on in-house guests and take direct feedback on their stay, and chain hotels corporate office uses a tool called Samfex to measure the service gap on in-house guests for immediate redress (KGAG5 FO staff, ARAG 6 SM Executive). Although hotels have knowledge repositories for knowledge storage, some form of knowledge and skills such as 'thinking and acting' regarding unfamiliar situations are stored in employees' minds.

Knowledge use: The knowledge acquired and created by hoteliers is used to train and coach staff in order to provide seamless service for maximum customer satisfaction over competitors (ARAG3 FB Manager). Knowledge is deployed to help hotels become smarter in learning more about the customer by taking extra steps to interact with customers in order to sense or detect the subtlest shifts in customer behaviour. Circumstantial and situational customer data are analysed, and explicit knowledge is used to unpack patterns of various customers' behaviour to serve them better and stay proactive in shaping market performance going forward. Customer complaint-related knowledge acquired enable hotels to respond more precisely than competitors to the preferences of unsatisfied guests in the targeted segments, enhancing hotels market performance. *"We have created 'order what you like' in our menus. So, we are flexible, we go the extra mile, go everywhere to manage customers"* (KGAG6 FB staff).

Based on the researcher's observations, all hotels have and use knowledge repositories of property management systems such as Opera system, EasyPMS, and IDS etc. (Figure 4.1) to store and make accessible clients' information. FO managers conducted daily

briefings to enable staff perform at optimal level and this was a routine practice in nearly all hotels. Staff award based on customers recommendation of their knowledge of service were spotted hanging on walls of chain hotels (Figure 4.1). Hotels acquired explicit knowledge of COVID-19 and use knowledge to provide hand washing machines, COVID disinfection booths, and QR code menus which meant to cater to the health needs of customers (Figure 4.2). Other COVID-19 protocols of nose masks and sanitising hands and guest's car keys were observed across all hotels. This greatly appealed to customers to keep patronising these hotels amid COVID-19. Interestingly, an emblem of Ghanaian traditional proverbial knowledge of cognitive thoughts, people management and leadership attributes were hung in the hotel lounges and some guest rooms (Figure 4.3). This fostered interactions between the customers and the hoteliers as customers most often ask questions, which gave staff more opportunity to elicit more guest-related knowledge for managing customer relationships.
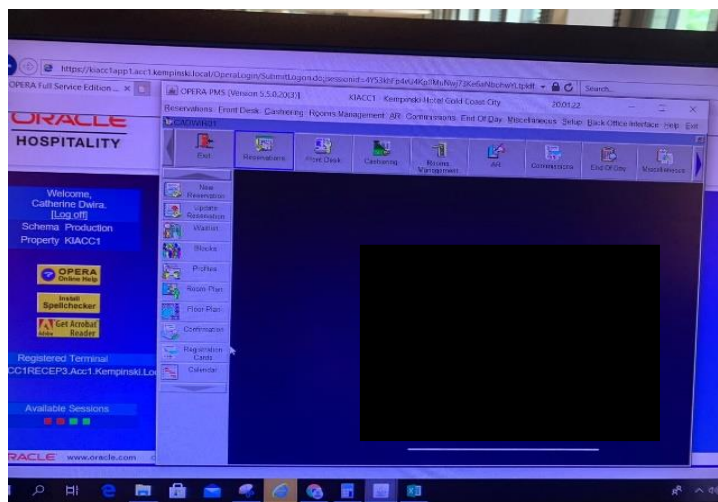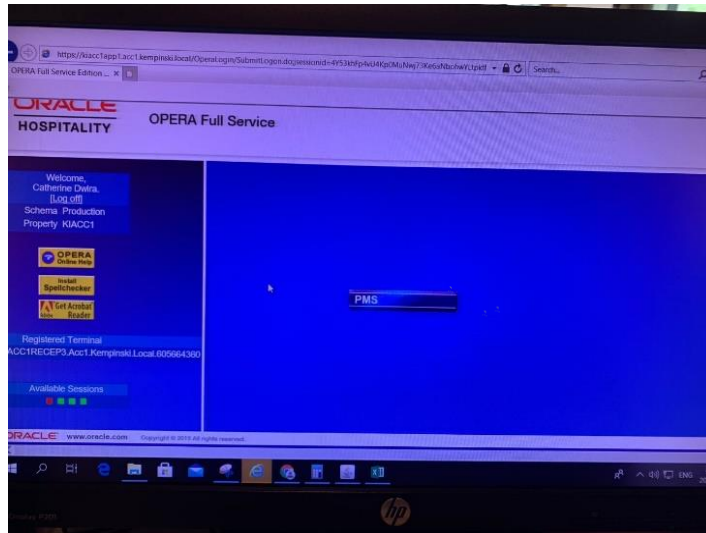
Figure 4. 1 Sampled hotels databases and staff awards (citations)

Figure 4. 2 Sampled photos of hotels QR code menu, and disinfection booth

Nyame Ne Hene – 'God is King'

To the Akan people, God is the sovereign ruler of the whole universe. An omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent being. This symbol embodies the supremacy of God in all ramifications.

ASHINƆ - 'Beads'

A Ga symbol of preservation/settlement.
Kε ashinɔ tse y3 onukpai aten lε eko elaajee –
When a string of beads is broken in the midst of elders no bead is lost. Every misunderstanding can be settled peacefully.

Ashinɔ kpakpa egbεε – Quality beads do not rattle. Genuine people do not boast.

HIŊMƐI SƐƐ - 'Eye brow'

A Ga symbol of respect
Kyεn ba to hiŋmei sεε – The beard came to meet the eyebrows.

No matter how long the beard grows it will not be older than the eyebrows.
In life, no matter how prominent you become, show respect to whom respect is due

Adinkrahene - 'Adinkra King'

This symbol purports to be the inspiration for all others. It consists of three concentric circles, one within the other. The symbol represents charisma, leadership and greatness. In a more abstract sense, it is the idea of an idea.

Figure 4. 3 Wise saying/social knowledge presentation in proverbs- Ghana Emblem

In summary, the researcher discovered "prospecting" as the first primary stage of the hotel CRM value chain and the other activities identified resembled the other five different primary stages of the CRM value chain defined by Buttle (Table 4.3). Based on the KM processes in CRM value chain primary activities discussion above, it can be observed that KM process appears dominant in some stages of the CRM value chain primary activities. KM processes of knowledge acquisition, creation, storage, and use consist of people, process and technology. Therefore, KM is a core requirement within each of the primary stages of the CRM value chain (Table 4.4).

Table 4. 3 Primary activities identified in Ghanaian hotels' CRM value chain

No	Themes	Description of the activities	Sources
1	Prospecting	SM team identify suspects and turn them into prospects and into customers	Researcher proposed (2022)
2	Customer portfolio analysis	Customers that the hotel would desire to serve are identified through assessing the customer's economic contribution.	Buttle (2004, 2015)
3	Customer intimacy	Servicing filtered customers through data collection	Lo et al. (2010)
4	Network development	Hotel interactions with its employees, customers, and external stakeholders through collaboration and partnership in ways that will satisfy the customer.	Buttle (2004, 2015)

5	Value proposition	Customized offerings to customers based on preferences	Minghetti (2003)
6	Manage the customer lifecycle	Journey of transforming a potential customer into an actual customer	Buttle (2004, 2015)

The findings show how KM is being incorporated in the CRM value chain primary stages and demonstrate that the role of KM is both complex and unique in CRM. The researcher found knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage and knowledge use were adopted across all the CRM value chain primary activities while knowledge creation was adopted only in value proposition and managing the customer lifecycle. KM practice was discovered to be more dominant in the network development, value proposition, and manage the customer lifecycle because different types of knowledge are acquired and created from internal and external sources. Internally, knowledge is created from staff, management, and customers. Externally, knowledge is created from the environment, including traditional media (TV and radio), social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn), government policies, government agencies, consultants, conferences and industry reports, and marketing intermediaries (OTAs, Booking.com, Expedia, TripAdvisor etc.). Only one independent hotel was found attempting to engage a third-party digital marketer. Different types of knowledge are acquired and created, including knowledge of acquaintance, academic knowledge, professional knowledge, architectural knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, social knowledge, professional knowledge among others as shown in Table 4.4. Technology and digital platforms are exploited by people (hotel employees, otherwise known as knowledge workers) to acquire knowledge through various processes. Knowledge is documented in both technology and human minds as hotel memory (existing knowledge for reference) for the purpose of managing the customers. The coding framework of the KM process used in the CRM analysis can be seen in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4 KM processes and CRM value chain primary stages integration

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
KM Processes	Search and target potential customers	Examine customers that the hotel would desire to serve are identified through assessing the customer's economic contribution	Bond and service filtered customers through data collection	Interact with hotels employees, customers, and external stakeholders through collaborations and partnerships	Creating personalized service and delivering value to customers	Manage the customer journey and different touch points
Knowledge acquisition	To identify and capture knowledge that exists inside and outside the hotel/facility					
Knowledge types	Technical knowledge- 17	Knowledge of acquaintance- 18	Knowledge of acquaintance – 27	Systemic knowledge - 7	Component knowledge - 15	Systemic knowledge- 4

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
	Academic knowledge - 7	Academic knowledge - 7	Technical knowledge- 19 Systemic knowledge– 7 Architectural knowledge- 6	Knowledge of acquaintance– 19	Technical knowledge- 21	Architectural knowledge - 3 Strategic understanding- 5 Knowledge of acquaintance – 2
Knowledge source	Internet-15, social media-22, Google search and analytics-17, business cards-11, events' participants' list-26, traditional media-TV/radio-16	Customers-30, bookers-11, e-commerce-8, company market research and competitor intelligence-22, OTAs-13, local travel agencies-9	Customer reviews-29, customer check-in information-26	External trainings and online training platforms-20, annual/regional meetings-17	Customers comments (online/offline)-27, employees' ideas-14	SOPs-, mystery shoppers and ReviewPro reports-20, customer feedback-29, internal communications-11, meetings-9, social media-13,

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
						appraisals-9, study abroad-6
Knowledge workers	Sales and marketing department	Sales and marketing department	Front office, food and beverage, and sales and marketing departments	Employees, managers, consultants, service vendors	Front office, food and beverage, and sales and marketing departments	Employees and managers
Process	Scouting, networking, sales calls, exhibitions, conferences, and tradeshows, internet search and analytics,	Customer databases analysis	Continuous interactions with customers	Meetings, trainings, social networking	Internet search, customers comments, initiatives	Mystery guests programmes, trainings, meetings

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
	gathering and analysing information from traditional media					
Technology	Internet	Property management system (PMS)			Internet, PMS	PMS
Knowledge creation	To generate new knowledge from the captured knowledge inside and outside the facility.					
Knowledge types				-	Pragmatic and social knowledge	Pragmatic and professional knowledge
Knowledge source					Customers-27, employees-14, internet-9, social	Brainstorming-8, discussions-9, evaluations-8,

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
					media-16, evaluations-15	Internet-7, social media-15
Knowledge workers					Front office, food and beverage, and sales and marketing departments	Front office, food and beverage, and sales and marketing departments
Process				_	Brainstorming, discussions, evaluations, Internet, social media	Brainstorming, discussions, evaluations, Internet, social media
Technology					Internet, PMS	Internet, Samfex, PMS
Knowledge use	To carry out activities to ensure that knowledge is productively utilised or applied for its benefits.					

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
Process	Use the knowledge to turn suspects into potential customers	Profiling individual and corporate account information	Use knowledge to create attachment or closeness with customer	Apply professional knowledge to enhance operational efficiency and market performance	Utilised to enhance products and services customization	Use to move hotel from survivability to prosperity by reducing cost in looking for new customers
Knowledge storage	To codify and document information and knowledge from internal and external sources in technological databases and books for present and future work reference and accessibility to employees.					
Process	Tacit knowledge stored in the minds of employees, explicit	Explicit knowledge documented in databases and books	Tacit knowledge stored in the minds of employees, and explicit knowledge stored in databases	SOPs, minds of employees	Codified in knowledge repository of property management	Codified in knowledge repositories such as easy, ids, opera software databases,

	CRM Value Chain Primary Stages					
	Prospecting	*Customer portfolio analysis*	*Customer intimacy*	*Network development*	*Value proposition development*	*Managing customer lifecycle*
	knowledge (e.g., E-learning prospecting guide) stored in intranet.				system, in the minds of employees	reservations book, and in the minds of employees
Technology	Intranet, property management system	Sales databases	Property management system	Intranet	Intranet, Internet	Easy PMS, ids, opera

Source: Author's construct

4.5 Spiral knowledge conversion process in the Ghanaian context

The second research question of this thesis sought to determine how hotels apply KM process in managing customer relationships. Knowledge creation is critical for hotels to achieve competitive advantage. The SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) is relevant in this regard because it considers knowledge creation or conversion as a dynamic process in which there is continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge in an ontological level-at individual, organisational and inter-organisational (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). By investigating how knowledge is being created, we will get an understanding of the empirical relevance and validity of the SECI model in the hotel context and whether hotels should encourage their employees to participate in knowledge conversion activities. The knowledge creation process in Ghana's hotel context appears as follows.

It was found that hotels in Ghana engage in the knowledge creation process first through *socialisation*. The socialisation process is both internal (i.e., between individual employees in the hotel) and external (between two or more firms) processes. Internal socialisation occurs through employees learning by imitating, watching, and interacting with one another. This form of tacit knowledge conversion is found among employees in both guest contact departments (FO, SM and FB) and back of the house departments of the hotels.

> *"So, every work that you do, you learn as you go. So, as you learn as you go, as you keep moving, you don't only learn by being sitting down to train, because our work is a practical work. You keep learning from those who know what you don't know. So, as somebody is doing service, you can watch and ask questions. So, you can learn by asking questions. And you can also learn by observation. That is how you can be abreast with knowledge in the hotel".*

 (GTAG6 FB staff)

Externally, it is interesting to note that an unstructured inter-organisational learning seems to take place between hotels where tacit knowledge can be converted to tacit knowledge. When individual employees of various hotels visit other hotels as customers, they observe and learn how service is provided to customers. Also,

employees with experiences of working in other hotels contribute to the creation of new knowledge by sharing with colleagues his knowledge based on their previous work experiences. Experiences from and of how other hotels are acquired implicitly and that could be tacit knowledge.

> *''…We are staff here ok, but that doesn't mean that we are not customers. …….*
> *As customers we visit other hotels at our leisure time to dine or spend a holiday.*
> *Whilst there you can observe to learn a thing or two. Yeah. I sometimes dine in*
> *other places, and I observe, and I think I do see interesting things and learn*
> *how to manage my customer better from the experiences observed''.*

(OPAG6 SM Manager)

Tacit knowledge learned by employees are converted into explicit knowledge through the process *externalisation*. Hoteliers document the knowledge obtained through socialisation and personal interactions in databases like Opera, IDS, standard operating procedures (SOPs). This information is then shared as explicit knowledge with employees. The information of customers stored in the databases is evaluated to form guest-related knowledge, which is used to avoid mistakes in dealing with the customers (e.g., GTAG4 FO staff, OPAG5 FO Supervisor).

> *"… So, we are currently using a system called IDS, that's where all departments*
> *store the customer data and information, and staff can access the documented*
> *information, which is knowledge to us, anytime to attend to the customer".*

(ARAG6 SM Executive)

Employees combined different bodies of explicit knowledge to create new knowledge through sorting, adding, recategorising, and recontextualising. The new knowledge created through *combination* are used by the employees to perform their duties. Hoteliers search and retrieve information and explicit knowledge from different sources including industry reports, books and government agencies, databases etc. The explicit knowledge obtained is used to update the hotel's SOPs, intranet, and training handbooks through managers and staff review meetings in most times. They try to stay abreast and hence fine-tune their daily operations based on externalised knowledge. Suggestions based on daily-work experience from managers and staff are considered for amending the SOPs and training handbook to keep them in up-to-date working order

that can give insights to employees in solving daily problems (e.g., GTAG2 FO Manager, ARAG6 SM Executive). FO, SM and FB managers often see to the amendment of the SOPs every six months or as when deemed necessary. This creates procedural knowledge for employees to follow in performing daily tasks (Xiao & Smith, 2007). For instance:

> *"Um we have procedures, SOPs that is standard operating procedures. That's our documentation of what is expected of you here and is knowledge because is a document to guide you in providing service to clients. Things are changing every now and then, so we use the knowledge we acquire from experience and interactions with our customers to update the SOPs for meaningful usefulness".*

> (ARAG1 FO Manager)

> *"I always read and search for knowledge about appropriate ways of handling customers and managing our relationships with them. For example, I read books, industry reports and do research other databases, gather some ideas and raise them for discussions during our staff meetings, and if we agree on their importance, we use them to make some changes in our SOPs for staff trainings and use".*

> (LBAG2 FO Manager)

Hoteliers create operational knowledge through trainings. Knowledge in training manuals (explicit) can be converted into the minds of employees (tacit) as employees absorb the knowledge and internalise it during in-house trainings, shift briefings, and coaching of new employees. Individual employees go through the process of *internalisation*, i.e., to make sense of the explicit knowledge gained and use the knowledge to fulfil their daily tasks. This explicit knowledge is then transferred into tacit knowledge among employees. In addition, external stakeholders such as Lobster Ink and GTA provide trainings to employees and lessons learnt from trainings become working tacit knowledge (e.g., LPAG1 Asst. FO Manager, OPAG3 SM staff, MGAG2 FO Manager).

> *''...Another way to acquire knowledge is through training. We have department trainings and hotel-wide trainings, and it is also mandatory for us to brief whoever is taking over during shifts. So, we are taught through training and*

that is how knowledge can also be made available to staff to discharge daily duties''.

(GTAG6 FB staff)

"We train staff on how to do customer check-in, check-out…And when it comes to concierge or reservation, we train all staff in the front office together. For example, we train them on how to interact with guests, our customer service relationship to guests so that they can acquire the basic knowledge and refresh their minds".

(LBAG2 FO Manager)

The current knowledge generation practices in Ghanaian hotels suggests that the SECI model of knowledge creation can augment hotel business performance. In addition, hotels use of digital technology such as internet, google, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) in the CRM primary stages to obtain explicit knowledge from customers indicates that a virtual community of practice has emerged augmenting the space between hotel and customer interactions (ARAG6 SM Executive, KGAG5 FO staff, OPAG6 SM Manager). Thus, digitalisation is the process whereby hotels harvest explicit knowledge online and convert it into tacit knowledge for their daily operations. Hotels employees learn some new knowledge and acquire wanted knowledge outside the hotel by searching for and acquiring the knowledge on digital platforms such as Internet, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram among others to interact with and harvest knowledge from customers in all the CRM value chain primary stages. In addition, computer systems and software are used to store the information, and this allows staff to retrieve and analyse the information. Thus, the process involves customer-hotel interactions through online comments, virtual reviews/feedback, and internet searches and social media. Hence digitalisation is an important process, in practice, for hotels' knowledge creation or generation.

"An important thing I do is acquiring knowledge from the internet and reading customer reviews online about other hotels then I pick knowledge of best practice, and I teach my staff how to apply the knowledge. So, I acquire or get knowledge by learning from online platforms and others outside the facility and try to educate or train my staff, which has been helpful in managing our customer relationships".

(ARAG1 FO Manager)

"I also go on the internet, read and do research to know what a front office manager does, what should a receptionist do and put all the ideas together to create a training manual, notes, which is made available for staff to read, be trained on and practice".

(LBAG2 FO Manager)

"Every department has a data system, that is Opera software, where they keep their information, information that has been shared to staff and then guests' complaints and everything".

(GTAG6 FB staff)

Figure 4.4 mirrors the knowledge creation process in Ghana. It shows that tacit and explicit knowledge interacts to produce new knowledge. There are five knowledge creation processes and four of them correspond with the four stages of the SECI model. Digitalisation, a new process, is practiced in Ghana hotels. It is conceptualised as a process whereby hotels search for and acquire knowledge from customers footprints using digital technology efforts in order to understand customer experiences to meet changing market outlook. The five knowledge processes in Ghanaian hotels have been briefly explained below.

The socialisation process is where all guest-contact departments interact, observe, and imitate tacit knowledge and experiences from individuals, the hotel and environment. The externalisation process is where the FO and SM convert tacit knowledge to explicit from databases, documents, and environment.

Digitalisation process is the virtual or digital form of hotel knowledge searching and acquisition beyond the hotel setting, different from the traditional knowledge sharing, acquisition, and conversion (which is done between individual staff) within a hotel. It was found that the digitalisation process provides knowledge sharing from an individual in the virtual world (e.g., the internet, Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram whereby information and knowledge can be shared as online comments) to the hotel and then from the hotel to the individual employee through trainings for daily operational activities. Hotels appoint some SM or FO staff to be responsible for virtual interactions with the customer and collect external information and knowledge about

customer preferences and intelligence from competitor activities. This information is analysed and the knowledge is shared among staff for creativity and effective management of customer relationships in the hotel. Digitalisation enables rapid gathering of internal and external knowledge virtually. Given the prevalence of the internet and social media, the digitalisation process connects the other four processes-SECI to show that when individual staff search and acquire knowledge from the digital platforms, other staff can observe and imitate the recorded information and knowledge in databases, learn from SOPs, trainings and training manuals and handbooks when such knowledge is applied in updating the SOPs and preparing training manuals for hotels internal use.

Combination process occurs when SM and FO extract knowledge from books, industry reports and databases and use this knowledge to update their SOPs for daily work. The internalisation process involves all guest-contact departments drawing knowledge from internal and external trainings and then learning and internalising explicit knowledge to produce tacit knowledge.

As shown in Figure 4.4, digitalisation affects the SECI processes as explained below.

Socialization: Hotel employees watch videos using Lobster Ink, Facebook and YouTube to learn new skills. In addition, individual hotel employees go on digital communications platforms such as social media (e.g., Facebook, internet) to observe customer voices, footprints, and expressions and social interactions that influence consumer choices and behaviour. They acquire knowledge through observation of the digital space of social interaction, internalise it and apply it in day-to-day work. As they practise the knowledge and skill, their colleagues observe and imitate the knowledge and skill.

Externalisation: Mostly, some hotel managers articulate knowledge captured from digital communications platforms and then develop and record it in books, SOPs and computers for transfer to staff and reference for daily use. In general, hoteliers capture knowledge from social media.

Combination: Hotels' access to Lobster Ink videos and YouTube provides hoteliers digital knowledge. The videos can be stored as knowledge, accessible and transferred within the hotel anytime. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are growing in popularity

as powerful digital knowledge tools for hoteliers to access shared text or blog posts, images and video recordings from users.

Internalisation: The internet allows people to share knowledge and learn. Hotel employees are encouraged to read industry expos, articles and information on the internet, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to extract knowledge that suit their needs and modify it to make it their own.

Tacit

Tacit

'SOCIALIZATION'

Knowledge source:
Individuals, hotel,
environment

People involved: SM,
FO, FB

Process: Individuals
sharing tacit
knowledge, individuals
and hotel observing
and imitating
experiences

'EXTERNALIZATION'

Knowledge source:
Databases, documents,
environment

People involved: FO,
SM

Process: Searching
knowledge from
databases and
documents

DIGITALISATION

Knowledge source:
Internet, Google,
customers comments
online (from Facebook,
Instagram, and Twitter)

People involved: SM, FO

Process: Searching and
harvesting explicit
knowledge, reading
online comments, and
extracting knowledge

'INTERNALIZATION'

Knowledge source:
Trainings (from
management, expert
staff, and consultants)

People involved: FO, SM,
FB

Process: Department
specific trainings to
provide new tacit
knowledge, hotel-wide
trainings to learn new
tacit knowledge

'COMBINATION'

Knowledge source:
Books, databases,
industry reports,
government policies

People involved: SM,
FO

Process: Reading
books and industry
reports and updating
SOPs

Explicit

Explicit

Figure 4. 4 Knowledge creation components in Ghana-D-SECI

Source: Author's construct

4.6 Perceived importance and role of KM

Investigation was conducted to understand if KM helped the hotels to achieve their business objectives in creating values for the customers and the hotels and the extent to which hotel staff consider KM as an important component in their CRM process. The following are the key themes identified and the coding frame has been presented in Table 4.5.

4.6.1. Increase customer base and revenue

Business growth emerged as an important KM benefit to all hotels. A high level of customer base was achieved, resulting in revenue increase in the marketplace. Business growth in terms of increase in customer base, profitability, income, and revenue was significant and a key to success and laying a solid foundation for the future. Hotels acquire knowledge of customer background and preference and create product knowledge from the acquired knowledge of customer background and preference, store and apply the knowledge to retain guests and increase guests service patronage (e.g., KGAG1 SM Director, ARAG5 SM Manager, GTAG6 FB Staff, LBAG1 SM Coordinator). Interestingly, independent hotels apply KM in revenue management to evaluate occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room. To them, more clients mean more revenue to the hotels, although more customers may not necessarily mean higher revenue depending on how much these customers spend on the hotel. This somehow helps the hotels to measure the outcome of KM in CRM. Statements derived from some informants' description of KM importance include:

> *"...revenues are increasing. That means that the knowledge we gathered from the customers and using is helping us to build the business".*

(GTAG1 SM Manager)

> *"The hotel applies knowledge in revenue management, which enables the hotel to get more revenue. Yes, that's a result of active business".*

(OPAG1 FB staff)

4.6.2 Competitor intelligence

KM requires hotels to collect information about their competitors from customers, thereby enhancing their competitive intelligence. When customers go to hotels and experience dissatisfying services, they tend to look for other hotels that can exceed their expectation. So, when these customers find hotels they are happy with, the customers tend to complain about their previous insufficient or poor service experience elsewhere. The present hotels listen and take advantage of this information to exceed these customers' expectation (MGAG3 FO staff). Information gathered about competitors thus becomes a resource that can be used by hotels to enhance their products and customer service and subsequently give them competitive advantage:

> *"...the guests sometimes go and then come back to us, you know, and share their experiences. For example, often times we hear some of our guests tell us that I've been to one hotel, but the place looks scared, I'm just there nobody is even smiling at me. But here when I come here, I feel at home. When I see you guys, I'm happy! You know, guests say these things, yeah, sometimes they behave like children. Hahahaaa (laughs)".*

> (GTAG2 FO Manager)

> *"Um market intelligence. Knowing what is happening around you and knowing what is in fashion is key. I'm using the word fashion in quotes, meaning food and beverage trend".*

> ARAG3 FB Manager

Even though the extracts above suggest that competitive intelligence can provide competitive advantage, an SM manager felt that it can be difficult to measure how KM gives competitive advantage:

> *"Honestly, it be a bit difficult because I'm not in other hotels. I don't know how they use their knowledge databases. The system Opera I talked about is the same most hotels are using too. The question is, are they maximising theirs the way we are? I don't know. But I can tell you that this is how I use mine, and this is how it helps me because it's the same software, but the same software doesn't*

guarantee people a lot of maximising benefits. You can have like Android phone,
you will be able to use it extensively you probably, reply to emails on it, watch
TV on need it etc. But somebody will just buy an android phone the same spec,
but they will use it to check only emails. The question is, I don't know what they
are using theirs for. But if they are using the way we are then it will be a
scramble for markets, who gets to the customer first. So, that means time will
be of an essence. The only competitive advantage will not even be the knowledge
that you have acquired, but how promptly we use the knowledge we have
acquired because everybody now has access to the same information, the thing
now is time".

(LAPAG3 SM Manager)

4.6.3 Inform facility and product improvement

Hotels obtained information from customers through different channels about customers' preferences, likes and dislikes and convert such information into guest-specific knowledge. Hotels conduct facility renovation by changing rooms décor, upgrading the television sets in the rooms, and renovating lobbies, restaurants, and swimming pools, and bars. Renovations and the upgrade of facilities are informed by the hotels' knowledge about their customers and their changing needs and preferences. (LPAG5 FB Manager GTAG3 SM Executive, KGAG5 FO staff):

"...our infrastructure like this, customers used to complain. Now we have
refurbished the front office and made the lobby more spacious, created more
exit doors in our main conference room, and we have provided a lift service for
those customers who might not be able to climb the stairs. We did the renovation
and refurbishment based on the feedback the knowledge we got from the
customers".

(OPAG3 SM staff)

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4.6.4 Increase brand visibility

Branding is particularly significant when the behaviours of customers nowadays have changed along with the increase in communication technology. Both physical marketing and online marketing has increased hotels' brand presence and awareness. Existing and potential customers can see and access brands online and offline, which makes the hotel a visible convenient brand to many customers:

> *"...our physical presence as well as our online presence through our website, Google and social media has increased our brand visibility. So, visibility in terms of physical presence, visibility in terms of social media and all the platforms, visibility in terms that our hotel is easy to access. Due to the way we explore knowledge online and offline and use that to update and inform our operation, sometimes we have a lot of requests and booking from potential customers and existing customers for long-stay, although we don't have a very big facility. So many people know about us and can easily access us, and so, sometimes we have to even refer some of our customers to sister hotels. So, I think our visibility is very tangible and high".*

(ARAG5 SM Manager)

4.6.5 Service innovation and personalisation

Various hotels argue that KM has helped them to innovate and create personalised service to meet customer needs in servicing customers in the 21st century and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hoteliers use knowledge acquired and stored about customers' preferences to give them what they want, thereby minimising mistakes with customers booking and preferences. For example, based on the data gathered on repeat clients, some clients demand a particular type of room, and it is easy to assign what these clients want, which makes clients aware that the hotel knows what they want (GTAG4 FO Staff, ARAG6 SM staff, MGAG2 FO Manager). Thus, hotels harness various forms of knowledge and hold meetings to discuss creative ways to innovate service. Management and staff ideas are sought, and new ideas are experimented. Comments and reviews are used to refine the service and training is conducted to disseminate the knowledge to other staff. This helps the hotels to customise service

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offerings (OPAG3 SM staff). Thus, offering tailored services that suit the needs of clients is a culture among hotels in Ghana:

> *"...we personalise every guest experience, and I think that's one of the things that really impact the way we use and apply customer knowledge. It's not one size-fit-all. We don't just check you in and that's it, no! We use and apply customer knowledge. We even have a lady in red who will call you to understand what you need, and she keeps, again, put it into the system. So, it's more of we are using the information to personalize every guest experience".*

> (KGAG1 SM Director)

> *"Acquiring knowledge guides you to amend or tweak your offerings. The dynamism in the new generation has taught us to be, you know, flexible and always give room to tweak and changes, dealing with more customisation, than what is standard. Knowledge acquired helps us assess the situation and think outside the box to manage customers".*

> (ARAG3 FB Manager)

4.6.6 Efficient and effective use of resources

Respondents believe that KM enables them to possess cost benefit analysis knowledge where clues can be drawn from customers' preferences and needs in order to minimise cost and waste and channel the limited finances into supplying the specific needs and wants of the customers. Hotel management draws on costing knowledge, technical knowledge, and knowledge about clients to direct and redirect resources in terms of specific staff service customers want:

> *"When we acquire and use knowledge, it gives you a better um a better outlook of what a client wants, or it gives a broader spectrum of what the client wants. As a result, we make less mistakes and our services have become better. I'll say maybe knowledge of customer behaviour also helps management channel revenue to certain places, maybe management realised that most clients prefer*

more fish than meat. So, in their revenue allocation, the restaurant can forecast
the demand of different dishes on the menu and minimise waste",

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

Table 4. 5 Role of KM process

Themes	Number of informants
Role of KM	
Increase customer base and revenue	32
Competitor intelligence	24
Inform facility and product improvement	13
Increase brand visibility	8
Service innovation and personalisation	20
Efficient and effective use of hotel resources	6

4.7 Contextual influences of KM

One of the research objectives was to identify the contextual influences of hotels' KM adoption in their CRM activities and processes. These contextual influences of KM are facilitators and barriers. Based on the respondents' explanations, the facilitators and barriers to KM adoption were categorised into internal and external perspectives. The coding framework for this section has been presented in Table 4.6. The facilitators and barriers have been discussed below.

4.7.1 KM facilitators

KM facilitators are the drivers of the KM adoption efforts in hotels. Six themes emerged as the drivers of KM adoption in Ghanaian hotels, and they can be classified as internal and external facilitators.

4.7.1.1 Internal facilitators

The internal facilitators deal with how the internal environment of the hotel can facilitate the KM process in Ghana hotels. Participants outlined four internal facilitators which have been discussed below.

4.7.1.1.1 Company trainings

Training is important to refresh employees' minds and boost productivity. Hotels organise internal and external trainings with focus on KM. Although important, the training approach varies slightly between chain and independent hotels. Chain hotels have brand standards and brand promise for optimal signature guest experience in order to make guests loyal ambassadors. They also have core values of 'play time, anytime' and being people-oriented alongside commitment to creating traditions and beautiful performances for internal and external guests (customers) (KGAG5 FO staff, GTAG2 FO Manager, GTAG2 FB staff). This shows that chain hotels engage in intentional trainings while independent hotels engage in ad hoc trainings.

Internally, chain hotels have training departments responsible for conducting constant trainings for employees. For instance, both managers and employees revealed that they have 'train the trainer' models and various training programs to equip employees with tacit and explicit knowledge to improve innovation and performance. This means that employees stand a better chance of knowledge accumulation and use. KGAG5 FO staff informant noted that her hotel has 'train the trainer seminar' by taking supervisors and management through the skills of training other people so that they can transfer knowledge to manage customers:

"...we use the train the trainer model. So, train the trainer is we take the heads of departments, we take the supervisors, we take the deputies, and we train them. That's the regional head trainer will train the HODs, the deputy HODs and then the Supervisors. And in turn the supervisors will also train the staff. Bear in mind, at each given time there is an HOD, there is a supervisor. Or there is a deputy HOD or a deputy Supervisor. Even if the person can't attend to that, the person can escalate it to any of them".

(GTAG1 SM Manager)

"Also, new staff recruited goes through orientation. That is the period that we introduce to them whatever is happening currently. There's a general orientation that human resource (HR) carries out that boarders around the whole hotel and then the department. The respective department that the person is supposed to be working in also must carry out an orientation just for the new entrant to settle in easily. So, we need to carry out this orientation to ensure that new and old staff receive the appropriate knowledge to get in seamlessly. There are also refresher trainings to help staff remember things we have taught them. Sometimes too, we managers can just throw a question, I can call a staff and then ask a question and see the response that will come, it will inform me whether staff remember or not. Mostly knowledge is shared through trainings and refresher trainings".

(GTAG5 FB Manager)

For independent hotels, internal training is occasional and mostly involved management, and very minimal training is extended to the rank-and-file employees annually. This may imply inadequate skills and knowledge for staff to manage customer relationships. To remind employees of upcoming trainings, memos are sent to employees through the intranets. During trainings, employees are given training materials they can refer to in future (OPAG5 FO Supervisor). Some supervisors/managers acknowledged that training was inadequate as they expressed that:

"...by training us more will keep us in check. So, I think lack of knowledge will limit a lot of work. So, by giving constant training. Yes. And practice, so you train them, and you make sure that they practice what is being taught or what is being imparted in them".

(OPAG5 FO Supervisor)

"This place is very laid back. I've been to other places where it's very competitive among staff, that you will be forced to upgrade yourself otherwise you will lack behind. Here, it's more experience based. For example, I have worked with a chain hotel before, they champion both education and experience. So, they do a lot of training, and you get more experience and knowledge. Whereas I'm coming to a place where some people have been here for 30 years. So far, the training I have participated in this hotel has only been the same training on customer service, which is outsourced".

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

For both chain and independent hotels, participants responded that external trainings are done by a third party, which involves transferring explicit knowledge to employees for daily operational activities. Commonly, all hotels acquire knowledge and skills through online hospitality learning platforms such as Lobster Ink video trainings, and government agencies like GTA. Trainings on customer handling, the use of databases, and department specific knowledge needs are offered, and staff rehearse among themselves prior to application. This helps staff to record useful information in databases and apply knowledge to handling customers.

Interestingly, some independent hotels have adopted an overseas training mechanism to acquire tacit and explicit knowledge to enhance their competitiveness:

"Training is one. We organise training, we send people abroad to acquire product knowledge which may be lacking in our country and then when they are back, they share whatever they have learnt. And then we use that kind of knowledge to make sure that we serve our customers appropriately. For instance, our F and B senior supervisor has been sent to Mauritius to learn about wine, the grapes and everything about wine serving and foreign customers' taste. ...And our chefs too, some of them are sent abroad to learn

Western cuisines. All these things help us to understand the culture of foreign countries and their delicacies so that we can serve them better when they come to our hotel. At the hotel level too, sometimes, during a training session, a chef will prepare food for everyone to taste so that we can know whatever ingredients are being use in order to explain to customers if they so want to know. It helps us to make our customers happy, especially those who have food allergies and would want to know the ingredients used in cooking the food before they make an order".

(ARAG4 FB staff)

Participants' views on trainings clearly demonstrate that intended knowledge can be acquired internally and abroad coupled with learning the culture of a foreign country, which may be useful for the hotels when they serve customers from abroad. Product knowledge and knowledge of customers' behaviour acquisition and use are particularly important for the value proposition and managing the customer lifecycle stages of the CRM primary value chain.

4.7.1.1.2 Effective communication

Communication is crucial when it comes to knowledge use in managing the customer lifecycle. All hotels describe communication with guests and staff as very important to their business operation and customer satisfaction. Hotels believe that there should be a two-way communication in business. First, a constant communication of ideas, knowledge acquired, and communicating the technical knowledge to staff must exist in a hotel in order to inform all staff about whatever going on in the hotel. This ensures consistency and seamless service provision to customers. Enhancing communication in hotels is important to enable staff to know how to draw on creative ideas and knowledge in order to communicate effectively and impress guests. Second, effective communication with clients is important since it can contribute to repeat visit. For instance, hotels maintain constant communication with customers regarding occasions like Mother's Day, Father's Day, Founders' Day, and even a guest's birthday as guests' data are stored. Email messages and SMS are sent to guests to wish birthday celebrants

a happy birthday in an attempt to appreciate and care for guests and inspire repeat business (LPAG3 SM Manager, KGAG5 FO staff):

> *"...communication is very, very important, communications among yourselves and with your clients, everybody in all aspects is very important because as soon as it doesn't happen, it affects everything. Clients can easily tell that we the staff are either working as a team or not working as a team depending how wrong or good things turn out when dealing with the customer. For example, if our clients come and it's like the morning shift they've closed and the other staff at post do not know what happened previously, then what are you telling your client? So as for communication, it is this very, very important".*

(GTAG3 SM Executive)

> *"...every little feedback we get from clients who are coming to spend either the big spenders, the small spenders, even staff, wherever the feedback is coming from customers be it oral or review, it should be taken and considered because those can help in improving our service. So, it can help in improving some of the challenges that we have, so I think every or wherever feedback is coming from, we should take it because it is knowledge in itself, ok. So, knowledge can come from staff and clients".*

 (OPAG3 SM staff)

4.7.1.1.3 Passion and commitment for work

Respondents across chain and independent hotels view passion as a key drive to reach the customer, obtain, and manage knowledge. To the respondents, without passion, it is highly unlikely to generate and manage knowledge in hotels because employees will not take the necessary intentional actions to achieve KM goals:

> *"This job requires passion, if you don't have passion for the job, I don't think you should be in the hospitality industry because you might have issues at home and all that and you have to come to work to put a smile on your face and then make someone happy. So, passion drives the knowledge that you should acquire and use".*

(OPAG4 FB Supervisor)

"We ought to have passion for our work, otherwise it will be very difficult to work and even share knowledge. Even the hotel may not be able to provide everything hundred percent as they may be lapses. However, if you have the passion, that passion will drive you to strive for information and knowledge. And if you have a passion, whenever you are with the client, you flow, you flow, and it makes them happy and all that. It's then easier to obtain knowledge from customers in such situations".

(GTAG3 SM Executive)

An FO manager from the chain hotel category bemoaned that the commitment of employees appears to be weak, and this slows how they can approach the customer and acquire knowledge:

"It's about education at the beginning, you know, how do you educate the people and how actually the employees are committed to their jobs! In Asia, for example, I take Asia and Ghana, because they are two extremes. For most of Asia, the work is their number one priority whereas here work is not number one. I'm not talking as a generalized. For some of some staff here it would be the third or the fourth priority. And this is where the problem lies. Hospitality is a tough sector and if you're not committed, you lose knowledge and skills. You need to be committed 100 percent. Otherwise, how do you want to serve your customers? And how will you even acquire knowledge from customers?".

(KGAG4 FO Manager)

4.7.1.1.4 Employees' empowerment

The chain hotels category has empowered their employees as opposed to the independent hotels. In the chain hotels, employees are encouraged to go the extra mile to satisfy the guests. Talents are valued and staff are encouraged to use their talents in serving the customer. Staff are supported to propose new ideas in servicing the customer. This suggests that chain hotels KM activities implementation is both a bottom-up and top-down approach because sometimes initiatives come from the team

and are accepted by management, and management also gives directives on how things should be done. Independent hotels appear to use a top-down approach leadership style in implementing their KM activities as staff depend on management instructions. Chain hotels management support staff to tackle the complex challenges they may face.

More experienced staff provide less experienced colleagues with constructive feedback about their work and some managers, especially FO, make their professional experiences available to help those who might have difficulty in completing their work. For instance, FO managers encourage their staff to approach guests more to obtaining information and capturing and logging customer information into the property management systems (GTAG2 FO Manager, KGAG4 FO Manager).

In the independent hotels, participants only acknowledged the importance of staff empowerment, and this can be interpreted as lack of staff empowerment in these hotels. According to the participants:

> *"Empowering your staff is one of the important things to do to ensure that, I mean, they're able to handle your guests in a very professional and efficient manner because if you empower your staff then your staff knowns the jurisdiction in which he or she is able to work….. So, you need to empower and motivate your staff so that they are accountable for their actions.".*

(LPAG1 Asst. FO Manager)

> *"Sometimes, management wants to keep it to themselves, and they don't empower us. Though, the staff may be the lower people, but most of the time they are the ones with the clients. Yes. So, I think sometimes this thing of authority, like you have to be authorised to do and all that it inhibits us from creative knowledge. Sometimes like management have the knowledge but they won't impart it to the staff to be able to service the guest in the right way. And then the guests will leave unsatisfied, something that could have been avoided. Sometimes, something may be a straightforward thing to do, but because we staff have not been empowered, we don't want to do it and get into trouble, so it inhibits some of this knowledge creation".*

(OPAG3 SM staff)

"Well, a barrier is that, upon all the training we are still restricted as to what we have to do or not to do. Sometimes they are certain things you need to take decisions by yourself. But here is the case we have to wait for a manager, manager have to talk to this, so is like the hierarchy is long before you arrive at a decision though you've been trained to do, you still have to consult, wait, the back and forth. Yeah. So, it makes what you're even trained to do or they've told you to do slower instead of being more efficient at that time. You still have to wait, and it slows the work"

(OPAG5 FO Supervisor)

Participants' responses suggest that empowering staff is concomitant to considering successes, failures, mistakes, and past events as examples for future decision making. It has the tendency to bring everybody on board and embraces creativity and value for employees' extra-work skills, but the opposite seems to be the case in some hotels.

4.7.1.1.5 Technology and resources

Most hotels pointed out that technology is key to successful KM efforts in managing customer relationships because technology can speedily provide access to potential customers. The type of technology is decided by hotel management, and this involves owners if capital investment is required. Again, social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter etc. are important knowledge generating platforms to some of the hotels. Both chain and independent hotels actively use social media to acquire explicit knowledge to manage customers. For instance, *"You can get knowledge from public data such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a very good tool to get the background of the guest, but then anything you can get when the guest stays, it's even better"*, KGAG4 FO Manager, expressed. Most of the hotels have added Zoom package to their conference facilities and their systems are linked with intranet where information can be accessed anytime to attend to customers (e.g., OPAG6 SM Manager, KGAG5 FO staff, LBAG1 SM Coordinator). Some informants explained that:

"Yes, technology. There are tools which are being implemented by KGAG hotel to link guests' LinkedIn profiles and to link also their social media profiles. Of course, everything is done within the privacy policies in place. Everybody who

check in this hotel has to acknowledge that all data provided are in agreement with the general data protection regulation (GDPR) in Europe, I don't know if you're aware of GDPR, it's a data privacy protection policy to protect the guest".

(KGAG4 FO Manager)

"Technology is also improving so we sort of have to go with the flow, but not with the bad flow. We have to improve. At first when I came to OPAG five years ago, though, we had a social media presence, but it wasn't as huge as we have it now. Now, every single thing that we do we post it on social like Facebook, WhatsApp and all that because that's where knowledge has been like that is what appeals to people now. Now, when people are looking for you, they don't even look for your telephone number to call. They'll go to the social media and then follow you from there, then they get to know who you are and what you like. I think over the years that's a that's one of the things that we use to acquire knowledge and improve ourselves".

(OPAG3 SM staff)

The above notwithstanding, the respondents of some independent hotels expressed that their hotels were slow in engaging social media as some employees seem to desire more manual work due to experience as opposed to acquiring new skills to use technology. The respondents of some chain hotels also underscored the need for their management to invest in technology:

"...I've been trying to encourage them to make use of the social media platforms in engaging clients which I think it's helping them but going forward it will help them better. I will give you an example, WhatsApp, most people don't like engaging with clients on WhatsApp because they think is not official. But most of the time engaging clients on WhatsApp you get like better understanding. Sometimes you are able to send them pictures like in real time and customers are also able to make decisions in real time. Whereas maybe you might have to send an email, they're not always like behind the screen or yeah to check emails, I mean now everyone walks around with their phone and they can be easily contacted on WhatsApp".

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

"There is the need to invest in technology massively. I've read a book that says that data is the new oil. Everybody from the GM has to commit to technology. You know, you need to sort data in a way that you classify your customers with different data that you've collected. And then you come up with predefined marketing campaigns targeting specific customers that you had in the past. If, for instance, a young customer is from a specific region and you know that he is more into sports activities, so you may target sports activities on a campaign on the email. It's not happening at the moment here. That would be great, by the way. But you need to have the support of AI to store data and do data mining".

(KGAG4 FO Manager)

Although technology has been applauded by some respondents as good, other respondents sounded skeptical about its application (especially AI) in KM as far as managing customers is concerned. For example, a respondent from an independent hotel highlighted that:

"I've read about AI (robots) doing check ins. In the next few years, what are we going to do about managing customer knowledge? So, we need to start thinking can AI give the social feeling, the warm smile, the remembrance oooo we remember you, right! What did the nose masks teach us? We smile but it can't be seen. I've been thinking about things like this because I know that in Japan somewhere, it got to a point where if you entered a hotel the robots will come and sanitize you. So how do you do with the porter who used to come and say Oh Sir you're welcome? So, we have to emphasise the need for human contact. Customers still long for human interaction. And if anything showed us that there was significant need for human interaction, it was COVID-19, because even though we were told to lockdown the need for people to interact with people outweighed their sense of survival, people still wanted to hug, people still wanted to shake each other. And though they're still trying to conform, there's a drawback. That's why it's hospitality that makes your guests feel hospitable, I don't know how a robot is going to do that or even apply knowledge acquired in managing the customer".

(LPAG3 SM Manager)

In terms of resources, money must be invested in technology, computers, and software databases to reach the client and store knowledge of their needs. In this context, a participant mentioned that:

> *"...so, um the facilitators I will say it boils down to one you are looking at logistics. I will look at logistics in terms of money. Yes, you need money to be able to acquire the type of technology you want to facilitate knowledge creation. So, financial logistics is key".*

> (ARAG3 FB Manager)

Based on the extracts, it can be inferred that technology and the use of other resources are critical to the success of knowledge deployment in managing customer relationships. However, their availability and access are somehow inadequate at the present time, especially technology. That said, technology ought to work alongside human labour in order to service the customer appropriately. This requires more acceptance in adopting technology among hotels' senior management and owners and the investment in technologies and embracing human interactions that facilitate access to information sources and databases by the hotels.

4.7.1.2 External facilitators

The external facilitators account for the external environmental factors that serve as drivers of KM process in Ghanaian hotels. Hoteliers indicated some external facilitators of KM and they have been presented below.

4.7.1.2.1 Competitors' marketing tactics

Individual hotels in Ghana strive to become the market leader. In this view, hotels check the social media presence of competitors. For example, a respondent indicated that:

> *"We call it competition check. So, we go online and then we try to see what our competitors are doing that is working and getting people engaged, so we try to replicate that knowledge as well. So, yeah, we do online checks on our*

competitors. We have our in-house social media production that we host as a deliberate attempt to eagerly gain momentum."

(OPAG2 FO staff)

An FO staff described that "It's possible to consider what your competitors are doing on social media so we can map up our game to always be the market leader" (KGAG5 FO staff). Majority of the manager respondents are in the affirmative. For example:

"You read; you watch and observe trends. You don't just observe trends from yourself. You observe from other hotels. Ok, there is something we call competitor data; we gather data from the competitor, how's it going on at your end? Why is it this way? So obviously you don't expect everybody to be 100 percent honest, but you can set out the lie from the truth. So, as you go around looking at the market, why is this hotel doing better and why are they doing what they do, and why am I not doing that, probably you change your trend".

(LPAG3 SM Manager)

"So, in creating and acquiring products knowledge and themes, I will say sometimes it is it is just it is just an idea that, you know, drops in your spirit and you say you wanna try this. Sometimes it is what you have seen on the Internet. Sometimes it is as a result of the society or coming out from and how people behave".

(GTAG5 FB Manager)

In contrast, SM manager of GTAG hotel believes that although competitive check is good, copying blindly can inhibit or jeopardise the hotel's performance. According to him:

"Copying blindly is a barrier because what works for one hotel may not work for your hotel".

(GTAG1 SM Manager)

The extracts from the respondents show that apart from individual hotels generating knowledge from their own social media platforms, hotels make efforts to search and

understand competitors' social media presence and activities as well as data in order to identify knowledge resources such as new ideas and trends emerging, and customers likes and reactions or comments about the ideas and packages on offer and try to avoid the trap of creating an inefficient knowledge. Doing it so can help the hotels to reach and serve the customer better than competitors.

4.7.1.2.2 Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building

Interviews with hotel managers and staff show that some hotels try to acquire knowledge of the Ghanaian social climate in terms of the tactics and antics of Ghanaian relationship building friendliness. Drawing on this knowledge and applying it can help to manage customer relationships in hotels (MGAG2 FO Manager, KGAG3 SM staff). The Ghanaian hospitality is an aspect of the Ghana national culture that was found as both a facilitator and hindrance to knowledge acquisition and use in customer relationships among some Ghanaian hotels. Customarily, Ghanaian hosts are expected to extend warm welcome and friendliness to strangers and relations during informal and formal occasions, which symbolises acceptance. *"Umm the West African market here have a lot of human interactions. They are very much into talking and they like this feeling of somebody is taking care of them. Sometimes you can even speak with one client more than 10 to 15 minutes, and you don't realise it because they enjoy it. In the Arabian market and elsewhere there is less human interaction due to technology. But here, they are very much into human interaction",* KGAG4 FO Manager described. Hotels derive a lot of knowledge from Ghanaian hospitality and lifestyle of living together, frequent human interactions and sharing things among themselves (communal living) to manage their CRM. This suggests collaboration in the creation and use of knowledge, thereby denoting collectivism in acquiring and using knowledge in groups. For example, the FO staff of ARAG hotel had this to say:

> *"The Ghanaian hospitality makes guests feel happy and recommend to others. We draw knowledge from what local customers like. For example, we have knowledge of staple local food such as apepremsa, sobolo and a whole lot of Ghana foods, and we use this knowledge to build relationships with customers. hahahaa (laughs)".*

(ARAG2 FO staff)

The hospitable nature of Ghanaians was found to reflect femininity, signified by nurturing and caring behaviours. Hotel managers and staff with this nurturing tendency, a common Ghanaian practice, more readily enhanced KM practice through helping efforts and some level of sacrifice to achieve team goals. The Ghanaian independent hotels seem to be doing a better job in attracting and retaining local customers through acquiring and using knowledge based on the Ghanaian communal way of living for uncertainty avoidance. Thus, hoteliers tend to prefer precision in their work which may have the tendency to acquire and codify knowledge. For example:

> *"...we like relationship, and it's easy to impress a Ghanaian than a foreigner because of where we come from. So, if you see your brother, even if you speak different languages, but because you are in the same environment some of the values overlaps. So, we observe and derive knowledge out of this into our minds and attract and keep mostly local customers. With this knowledge of friendliness acquired, it helps a lot in keeping customers like family. And customers also help us in the other way around by referring people, if your friend, a typical Ghanaian attitude, recommend something for you, even though you have not tasted it yet, but because it came from your friend, you'd be willing to try it out. So, that aspect is helping us, and that same aspect is killing us if it turns to be the other way around, bad recommendations. Laughs".*

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

4.7.1.2.3 Government support

Ghana government support hospitality and tourism development through a Ghanaian state agency, the GTA, to regulate, market, promote, classify, research, and develop hospitality and hotels facilities. Respondents explained that GTA trained them on COVID-19 protocols from which they gained considerable tacit and explicit knowledge for their business operation (OPAG2 FO staff, KGAG5 FO staff) and *"there was government fund to support the hospitality industry during COVID-19, but I did not know the amount my hotel have received or not"* (KGAG5 FO staff). According to the FB Manager of LPAG hotel:

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> *"GTA does inspections of our hotel and point out by writing to us our service defects and weaknesses to improve our service. They make sure that we are on point and up to standard. So, we get some form of customer handling knowledge and product management and safety knowledge and how to ensure environmental safety from government agencies like Ghana Tourism Authority, Food and Drug Authority, and Environmental Protection Agency".*

(LPAG5 FB Manager)

During the interviews, some respondents pointed out that government's COVID relief support items, including nose masks and hand sanitisers, were distributed to the hotels by GTA. They were also responsible for coaching and monitoring the hotels to ensure that they were following the COVID-19 protocols in attending to customers (LBAG1 SM Coordinator, OPAG2 FO staff). The researcher observed that some respondents pride themselves in the fact that GTA's annual inspections and spot checks to upgrade or downgrade the hotels based on good customer service or poor customer service and annual awards for best performing hotels has made them the market leaders so far as they keep winning best hotel of the year in their category. For instance, *"We are the first 5-Star hotel in Ghana. And we've been the first consistently over the years. So, it's given us a competitive edge where people patronise our hotel a lot"*, LBAG1 SM Coordinator, expressed.

4.7.1.2.4 Industry association support

Ghana Hotels Association (GHA) is a private mother association of all hotels in the country, and it aims to promote training and technical assistance to its members. Most of the hotels are members of the GHA, and the hotels believe that GHA promotes the hotel industry by providing special trainings like customer service and negotiate imposed levies on behalf of hotels to ease financial burden. Hotel staff acquire explicit knowledge from the trainings to help manage customer relationships. Members with special knowledge are called upon to offer trainings to other hotels staff on request. Hotel managers view that GHA offer knowledge acquiring assistance in many ways to various hotels. For example, a respondent described that *"My hotel, OPAG, and other hotels in Accra are members of GHA. Now KGAG hotel has expatriate staff and some*

of them could be called upon to offer special trainings to any hotel that needs it. GHA can negotiate with any hotel that has expertise in customer service or any service need to offer it via training to other hotels that may be in need. The training depends on any hotel request, if you request GHA will assist you gain knowledge to serve your customers better. It's on request, unless of course you don't request for it. Another thing is that, if there is any training outside the country and a member needs to travel, but has Visa issues, GHA steps in to assist in that regard" (OPAG6 SM Manager). Other respondents described that:

> *"Ghana Hotel Association sometimes help us acquire skills and knowledge through customer service trainings and other service needs we may have. I will say knowledge for managing customers is important nowadays, yeah"*
>
> (GTAG4 FO staff)
>
> *"Yes, in a way industry knowledge to manage customers is also gained from our mother association. Our mother association is Ghana Hotel Association, that we can get support if we ask for it"*
>
> (LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

4.7.2 KM barriers

Barriers to KM adoption involve factors that impede KM process efforts in hotels. Eight themes emerged as the barriers to KM adoption in Ghana and they have been categorised into two main groupings: internal barriers and external barriers.

4.7.2.1 Internal barriers

The internal barriers encompass factors within the hotels that pose a threat to successful KM adoption in Ghana. Participants described eight internal managerial barriers that affect KM adoption.

4.7.2.1.1 Bureaucratic organisation

Most of the respondents reported that their hotels have a tall organisational structure, comprising supervisors, department managers, general operational managers, general managers, and CEO/owners of hotels. This means that when staff acquired personal knowledge of customer service and knowledge of emerging products and trends on the market through reading newspapers or industry reports, the knowledge must go through each chain of command or hierarchy structure of the hotel for approval before implementation. GTAG4 FO and LPAG2 FO Staff informants reported that the chain of command is long, and this potentially causes delay in customer feedback implementation. In another hotel, ARAG2 FO staff informant reported that "*if the top management like the GM or the CEO do not buy into an ordinary staff idea deemed right for implementation, then whatever the staff does will not fly*". Using phrases such as 'if top management don't buy into an ordinary staff's idea' clearly suggests there may be a hierarchy to follow before employees' creative ideas and knowledge to managing customer relationships can be accepted and utilised. For example, LAPAG3 SM Manager said that:

> "*The point is: there are certain things that need approval. When I go and observe the market, I don't come and just talk. After the talk, I have to put down something and say based on these trends I observed, based on the discussion and then competitor data, I would like to put it into a document, I would like to seek for approval abc…this is how I use the knowledge I acquire, this is the procedure. So, I have acquired knowledge from the market, I've brought it up at our meeting, everybody thinks it's a good idea. Ok! Now you put it in a memo, take it to the General Manager for approval. Ok, now that it is approved, down to implementation. When it is signed, it is ready for implementation*".

> (LAPAG3 SM Manager)

Another informant emotionally presented that:

> "*...upon all the training we are still restricted as to what we have to do or not to do. Sometimes they are certain things you need to make decisions by yourself. But here is the case we have to wait for a manager, manager have to talk to this, so is like the hierarchy before you arrive at a decision though you've been*

trained to do, you still have to consult wait the back and forth. Yeah. So, it makes

what you're even trained to do or they've told you to do slower instead of being

more efficient at that time. You still have to wait, and it slows the work"

(OPAG5 FO Supervisor).

Even though both chain and independent hotels are affected by their company policies in terms of bureaucratic organisation, the impact is greater for the independent hotels because there were limited company trainings for employees and low value for educational qualifications as opposed to the chain hotels.

4.7.2.1.2 Uncertainty of KM application success

The uncertainty of KM application success is a challenge to some independent hotels because hotels are not sure if previous knowledge acquired can be applied immediately or in future due to continuous changing needs of customers. Thus, it appears there is no guarantee to success in using KM due to changing preferences of customers every now and then. Some hotel managers acknowledged that the KM process is a complex approach because sometimes they do not get the information that they require, or they get overwhelming feedback from customers. Amid so much information, it is sometimes difficult to make decisions. An informant described this challenge as follows:

> *"Sometimes you can get knowledge, information, and that knowledge or information you're getting, you put a stream of them together in the ERP to analyze, you may get an outcome such that when you take steps, you know, to apply that knowledge that you have acquired, sometimes you see that that step would be misleading because customers might have switched from the previous information supplied to demanding a different thing at the time of knowledge application. So, there sometimes can be uncertainty of knowledge application in CRM. For example, based on data collected and analyzed last month, I made up my mind that, this season demand for these rooms is always high, so I intend to respond to that one. Then I've more of such rooms, but you realise that in the middle of that decision or even when that approach has been taken, you'll see that demand will fall short of expectation. So, sometimes not being sure of how*

to apply KM makes employees hesitant whether to become selective as to which decision to take, even though the information is at your disposal and the application becomes somewhat a problem sometimes because of the accuracy of the information".

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

"The challenge is that although we capture knowledge, its application becomes questionable sometimes because of the complex and changing behaviour of our customers. For instance, what you know about a customer yesterday cannot be applied dealing with the same customer today and tomorrow because the customer might have changed in behaviour and need. So, the previous knowledge about the customer will point you somewhere not in the present need of the same customer".

(LBAG3 FBCBS Manager)

The extracts suggest a risk of improper knowledge application due to either management not being certain if knowledge acquired and created previously can be applied at present or in future due to inability to understand the dynamic customer market, misinterpreting customer data collected or applying inappropriate expertise to analyse. This was more evident in the independent hotels.

4.7.2.1.3 Dynamic nature of the hotel market

The hotel market is dynamic, giving rise to uncertainty of knowledge acquisition and use in managing customer relationships. The dynamism of the consumer market implies that preferences are complex and may not easily be discovered. Some chain and independent hotels' informants described that the dynamic nature of the hotel market affects KM:

"Our market is very dynamic. I mean, the customers' needs changes with time. It changes and it's very personal. What you think works could go very wrong with the second customer, so you can't collect and generalise it for all customers and even you can't keep using the same knowledge for the same customer all the time as the customer preference may change overtime. So, it's a tedious daily

exercise that you have to do. You can't imagine that you do it every year, once a year. This is a daily exercise. Say, for instance, a guest has been coming on holiday, like they want to visit a safari property, the guest is coming on holiday every year, but they divorce. So, what they used to like together may not be what he likes now. You have to collect the data every single time. So, it's crazy! I think that's one of the challenges that the need of the client is constantly changing. So, you cannot sit back and imagine that you have enough and that answers to that customers' needs years to come. That's one of the biggest challenges".

(KGAG1 SM Director)

"Of course, new trends, fashion and consumer behaviour are surfacing daily. This new dynamism can be confusing because selecting the appropriate information can be very difficult".

(ARAG3 FB Manager)

The extracts suggest that the hotel market is dynamic, giving rise to difficulties in acquiring knowledge that can be generalised for all customers. Consequently, obtaining knowledge from each customer at every point in time and updating this information is challenging.

4.7.2.1.4 Limited resources

Based on respondents' views, limited resources can be categorised into financial barrier, human resources barrier, and time barrier (manpower and expertise). Financial resources in terms of cost associated with acquisition of knowledge management databases can be challenging for independent hotels (LBAG2 FO manager) and chain hotels as management may think that there is no guarantee for success and may not want to financially commit to the idea (GTAG5 FB Manager). Staff believe that they need to convince management with evidence of projected benefits in acquiring databases for KM while management also think that it is challenging to getting hotel owners to understand and agree to allocate money for KM technologies and trainings as hotel owners seem not to comprehend the practical benefits of KM in the short-term.

Both independent and chain hotels' managers mentioned that inadequate capital investment in technology limits the extent to which technology can be utilised:

> *"...hmmm it is challenging because hotel owners may not support the suggestion to purchase computer systems for record keeping because buying and installing these systems can be very expensive. And the money to do that may not be available, especially now that ravaging COVID-19 is ruining our business".*

(MGAG1 FB Manager)

> *"At the moment, technology is the barrier. And especially if you're living in Hong Kong, China, Dubai when you walk there in the street, then you can feel this level of technology it's very different, you know, they're very advanced in this. Yeah, this is what Africa needs to start working on because every year you lose, actually you're going to be way behind, you're going to lose even much more in the implementation, you know".*

(KGAG4 FO Manager)

Regarding human resources barrier, all the hotels do not have dedicated Knowledge Managers or KM departments, except to work with all staff in various departments in their KM activities, unlike some healthcare sectors (Boutcher et al., 2022), financial services, and IT companies that have Chief Knowledge Officers and other knowledge analysts. This poses a technical challenge as staff may not have all the expertise in monitoring and growing KM activities in hotels. Independent hotels struggle with frequent staff turnover possibly due to poaching and individual staff resigning in a short-term after they have been trained, causing knowledge loss, labour shortage, and more financial cost to the hotels. For instance, a supervisor who had been poached by a chain hotel but now working with an independent hotel had this to say:

> *"I was working with one independent hotel and got poached by a chain hotel, before I came to work here"*

(OPAG4 FB Supervisor)

Although the process is automated such that customers making reservations provide information of their preferences, which are captured in the hotel's PMS, collecting

information from customers through informal conversations during their stay in the hotel by staff and plugging in every single information into the hotels' property management systems can be problematic in terms of identifying the right information at the right time and storing all pieces of information about customers in order to manage customer relationships. It seems extremely difficult to immediately identify and keep track of customers' preferences because staff are always busy either attending to customers or attending meetings. Accordingly, a chain hotel respondent made the following comment:

> *"The biggest challenge is to have the correct information plugged into our database, see garbage in, garbage out. OK. And knowledge management can only be successful when you collect the right data and put it in the correct way in the database. What is the use of information if it is not analysed well? OK. So, for us, I think it is very important that once we get all this feedback, how are we doing the recording of analysis? And that is what is the biggest challenge, because you only have this many people working. Everyone is interacting with different guests. But how are we able to collate this information? What is the right CRM, which is very easy? You know if something is very complicated at the grassroots level, a person will never begin to put in all that information. It has to be easy. It has to be as easy as putting it on WhatsApp because it's easy and fast to post information on WhatsApp".*

(KGAG2 FB Director)

Time was found to be a barrier to acquiring and creating knowledge. Lack of time coupled with running daily operations seems to be the major barrier for all hotels (GTAG1 SM Manager, KGAG6 FB staff, OPAG4 FB Supervisor). There appears to be no clear written formal policy that is implemented as part of day-to-day operations so that hotels are not dependent on ad hoc directives to pursue KM initiatives. Having a clear written policy in hotels will help the hoteliers to dedicate time to engage in KM initiatives. The following statements from managers and staff of both independent and chain hotels assert time pressures as a major barrier:

> *"Time is also a factor as in, for instance, as we are here now there's a lot of things, I'm taking care of. I have to go back and forth to attending to many things at the same time. The same way that maybe when trainings are organized, they*

have to be calling us back and forth because as trainings are going on customers are also here demanding service. So, we have to be everywhere at the same time which really is an issue".

(ARAG2 FO staff)

Time is a barrier. The available time and speed to reach the customer seems a challenge to meeting the end goal".

(LPAG3 SM Manager)

"...Getting the time to train and work is challenging because our time don't synchronise. Some staff are on the straight shift, some staff on early shift, mid shift, late shift. So, to get all those staff to come together it's sometimes a little bit of a difficulty".

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

4.7.2.1.5 Poor inter-departmental relationships

It was found that the chain hotels have good inter-department relationships as opposed to the independent hotels. There seems to be 'power play' of seniority and which department has the most say in KM decision making and implementation among some independent hotels departments. This subtly affects KM efforts in the hotels. Some participants pointed out that:

"...hmmm when you exhibit a certain knowledge which makes you different from others, they may side-line you and not support the idea because they may feel you're more intelligent than them. They would prefer the knowledge comes from them instead.".

(GTAG3 SM Executive)

"Another barrier is inter-department relationship. Where just an information or suggestion being passed from a staff to a manager might make the manager think it's an instruction. So, there is always this defensive and attack perception. Some managers would feel good receiving information and suggestions from colleague managers instead of a staff because they feel that only a colleague

manager can teach them better. If the departmental relationship is very good, and there is an understanding even if it's a correction for anybody it's taken well. If it's an information being passed again, it's taken well".

(LPAG2 FO staff)

"...now in the hotel, the fact that the departments are not ready to sink into understanding what the knowledge bit of it is going to benefit us as a hotel is a challenge. For example, marketing department is bringing on a good idea and front office protests or F&B protests, then it means that the idea is being attacked and may not work. Yeah. Hahahaa".

(ARAG5 SM Manager)

Furthermore:

"...it has to do with authority, that's a bit of a challenge that we have here, like disseminating knowledge to people down there. Sometimes management want to keep it to themselves, and they don't share".

(OPAG3 SM staff)

The extracts suggest that power play and lack of trust covertly weaken KM efforts across most of the hotels.

4.7.2.1.6 Poor communications and relationships

This theme describes inadequate language skills and poor communication among staff. Chain hotels seem to face language barrier in knowledge transmission in some departments like FB as some expatriate staff can neither speak English nor the local language. These staff have the expertise and knowledge required by the hotel but sharing it to team members is a challenge due to language barrier:

"One barrier I have noticed so far will be something like language because our place like this, you have a lot of people from different walks of life working here. So, somebody can be good at, let say, a particular skill and knowledge. The person can't speak English especially some of the expats who come here are not good in English so they can either speak Arabic alone or their home country

language. So, such people like this if they have a skill, it will be very difficult for them to either document or teach. Maybe some local staff who are fast learners may learn through observation, but that may be limited because there may be the need to ask questions".

(KGAG5 FO staff)

Independent hotels, on the other hand, feel that some customers from francophone countries cannot speak English language and the hotels also lack proficiency in French. This impedes tacit knowledge acquisition from these customers:

"Unfortunately, we don't have a staff who can speak a bit of French to assist in one way or the other. When solely French or Spanish speaking customers come to our hotel, collecting the right data and intelligence from them can be a challenge because of language difference".

(LBAG2 FO Manager)

Communication is a major barrier to KM practice in all hotels. It is also seen as a major facilitator or driver to KM practice as noted earlier. If knowledge (both tacit and explicit) is effectively communicated to all employees to attend to customers satisfactorily, it becomes a driver and if there is inadequate or lack of communication among staff it becomes a barrier. Open, effective informal and formal communication could encourage staff to generate new ideas and share existing knowledge which can later be enhanced and utilised. Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of knowledge transfer and exchange among staff. Sometimes, the intended message may not be received. At other times, the message may be received but not understood, or it be partially received due to distorted communication. This hampers knowledge flow among management and staff to managing customers. Hoteliers viewed communication as a big challenge to KM practice and appears to be everywhere. However, this barrier was more dominant in the independent hotels. Participants in this study described the communication barrier as follows:

"Communication, I believe is one barrier or the most significant barrier in the dissemination of information of information, how the information is put out there and the medium you use. Depending on the culture, so if people are used to hand delivery of information and there is a knowledge I have acquired of a

guest and I want to disseminate and that day I decide to use email that could be a barrier, that is if they are used to hand delivery. But where they are used to email version, then it will not be a barrier. But again, the trickling down of information is if the information is not written down and is verbally communicated before it gets to the fourth or fifth person by departments it gets distorted. So, I think one of the biggest barriers is dissemination of verbal information and then a handing over of, again, verbal information. So that means everything must be written. If you don't write, the information gets distorted".

(LPAG2 FO staff)

One participant described the communication barrier to KM practice as more intense in the independent hotels compared to the chain hotels category based on her work experience in both chain and independent hotels. Accordingly:

"...sometimes communication worries because it's one of the most important things or is one of the key things in this hospitality industry. When something is not communicated or when information is not passed on to the right channels or to the right person, it becomes flat and the person who's supposed to benefit suffers. Constant communication. I'm not sure it's being done in this hotel unless the guests are still in the hotel. But one thing my former workplace, a chain hotel, was doing was constant communication".

(OPAG4 FB Supervisor)

4.7.2.1.7 Employees' knowledge hoarding and resistance

Individual behaviour, attitude, and capability was identified as an inhibitor to knowledge creation and management across all the hotels. This is evident in staff resistance to an idea, policy, or direction implementation and employees' hoarding of knowledge. Some individuals can accidentally or intentionally forget to accept and share knowledge acquired and this can block knowledge flow in the hotel and create a knowledge gap in service delivery. The respondents described this situation in the following quotes:

"Sometimes you could miss a critical aspect of a guest stay because maybe someone didn't realise how critical it is".

(KGAG1 SM Director)

"The other aspect too is that if the customer relay information or complain to a staff whose behavior didn't satisfy the customer, that staff, there is a probability that that staff is going to sit on that information for fear of being dismissed or chastised. So that will hinder the information from reaching us to manage the customer in future".

(MGAG2 FO Manager)

Also:

"If the idea is coming from you or the knowledge is coming from you as the head, I won't be the only one to implement it, I need the whole team to come onboard. So, you sell this knowledge to the team they say yes, Sir, but deep down deep down they're not happy, you know, some of them the staff thinks that this new idea may just be a headache, you know, we're doing our job normal this is how we have been doing that's the statement you get all the time. This is how we've been doing it for the past one year, why do you think this idea will work and all that? So, the opposition is one of the main challenges".

(GTAG5 FB Manager)

4.7.2.2 External barriers to KM adoption

The external barriers are environmental factors that inhibit KM adoption in hotels in Ghana and two main issues were found. The coding framework for these barriers has been presented in Table 4.8.

4.7.2.2.1 National culture

This theme describes national culture that affects customers' and staff behaviour. Generally, Ghana has a very hospitable, friendly, and peaceful sociable climate that

aids hotel managers and staff ability to acquire knowledge from customers. Conversely, the national culture seems to subtly inhibit local customers from expressing their feelings and experiences, thereby hindering the knowledge acquisition process as hotels are not able to get a full scale of certain information and knowledge from customers due to cultural biases. For example, *"...laughs. You see! Sometimes, you will get some clients who will share very little information, and some clients will share more. It's like both extremes, it's very difficult to get the balance"* LBAG3 FBCBS Manager expressed. Culturally, at home, Ghanaians can be mostly calm and quiet as a sign of respect. This can affect their ability to extensively share their feelings and opinions regarding service experience even in the hotels as highlighted in the extracts below:

> *"...Ghanaians want to keep peace, it's a thing. For example, what happens? Oh no everything is ok. So, because of that respect that they don't want to tell you something went wrong, then probably you miss data that could help you maybe structure better experience for the customer. Again, I think the Christian bit of it, erhmmm I would want to bring a bottle of the finest champagne to your CEO on his birthday, but before someone tells you he takes alcohol is a struggle. For instance, just an example, so I think due to the calm nature, sometimes we might not be able to get the real experience or the real expectations because they want to keep this calm. Yeah, then you keep missing it over and over again and then you lose the customer without understanding that probably there's something that is just not working for them, but it's never come up because they do not want to be seen to complain".*

(KGAG1 SM Director)

The Ghanaian culture, although friendly, can negatively affect knowledge creation in groups given the way Ghanaians are culturally raised. A complete acceptance of the views of an elderly person, calmness, and silence are considered attributes that show respect. Consequently, some Ghanaians seem to exhibit this trait at the work environment (KGAG5 FO staff). This can impede knowledge acquisition and sharing among employees. To illustrate, an expatriate FO manager of a chain hotel disclosed that:

> *"I've worked only in front office and guest facing department of this chain hotel for basically 9 years. Within these years, I've worked in Asia at Jakarta, Dubai,*

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Djibouti in East Africa and now in West Africa in Ghana. So, I've gained a lot of experience in working in different markets, especially the Asian market is very much different than the Middle East or the African market. The East African market and a West African market is actually completely different. Here, most of them are introvert, the Ghanaians. They don't go enough towards the guests. They seem to have this cultural barrier; they create a barrier with the customer sometimes and don't go enough towards the customers, which limits knowledge generation".

(KGAG4 FO Manager)

Within the independent hotels work force, the cultural norm of serving the elderly first reflected in some hotel managers work behaviour regarding trainings attendance. One participant in the independent hotels expressed that the existence of a culture of 'serve the elderly first' whereby hotel managers consider training attendance a prerogative for managers, barred the rank-and-file employees from attending certain trainings to acquire knowledge. For example:

"...the Ghanaian culture of the old person is always right or serve them first. So even if you actually need a training for knowledge, because you are not at the top yet, you don't get it. So, say you are like a pool attendant you are actually the front-facing person when it comes to people, but when it comes customer training, they will let your boss go and take it even though you need the training more than your boss".

(LBAG1 SM Coordinator)

These sentiments suggest that international chain hotels may not fully understand the cultural norms in Ghana as they are guided by their company policy, and this can be a challenge in dealing with the local customer. Furthermore, local customers who appear not to complain because they do not want to be perceived as complainers pose a challenge to hotels as far as collecting appropriate data and information is concerned. This can lead to poor customer relationships management since hotels may not be aware of the likes and dislikes of the customer in order to prioritise.

4.7.2.2.2 Unwillingness of customers to share information

Even though hotels have initiated KM activities, they still face the challenge of collecting the required information from customers. Respondents reported that most customers are hesitant to provide personal information, especially during check-in, because of thoughts of fraud and feeling of being exposed to the public (as some people prefer to secretly use the hotel and do not want to be known as patronising hotel service) (e.g., GTAG FO staff, MGAG3 FO staff, LPAG1 Asst. FO Manager):

> *"People also serve as barriers because they don't want to give information out. They are guests who come even though is a standard procedure to fill the registration card, you can't force him. Number two, some guests' procedure false information like phone number, wrong email address, which will all bounce back if try reaching such guests".*

(LPAG3 SM Manager)

> *"OK I don't know whether customer unwillingness to share information impedes knowledge creation, but I think it does impede a lot in our relationship with customers because customers are unwilling to share much information".*

 (GTAG5 FB Manager)

That said, hotels have measures in place to ensure the privacy of customers. For example, chain hotels try to ensure that customer data and information collection and storage are guided and protected by GDPR data protection policy of the European Union:

> *"In this hotel, we do GDPR trainings on yearly basis. We do that through Venza. Venza is our GDPR training provider to be really satisfied that, you know the rules governing and using people's personal data and credit cards. Disclosing a guest detail to a third party is prohibited in our hotel. We the staff are trained and tested on this, for example, you can get an email in your inbox that from payroll, give your employee number, your details and everything, to see if we are alert in terms of such, if there is something like that come into our hotel. So, mostly we pass our phishing attack we've been receiving from Venza also. So, it means we are very careful when it comes to data protection. Also, with the*

GDPR, we are told that, a guest can tell us to delete their data from our database. We also use payment card industry data security standards (PCIDSS) and within the hotel we ensure confidentiality to safeguard customers data. So, customers have the right to tell us to delete their data from our system and yes we have to do it".

(KGAG5 FO staff)

All hotels, irrespective of category, described the customers as significantly strong in determining how hotel businesses are run, thereby requiring the KM process to effectively serve customers. Local clients' unwillingness to share information causes an inability on the part of the hotels to identify and collect appropriate information and ideas from the clients. This makes it difficult for hotels to meet the client's service offerings expectation benefits. Hotels also try to ensure the protection of customers' data through GDPR, PCIDSS and local regulations on safeguarding privacy and confidentiality. The coding framework for the facilitators and barriers of KM presented above has been presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4. 6 Contextual influences (facilitators and barriers) of KM

Themes	Number of informants
Contextual influences of KM	
KM facilitators	
Internal (organisational) facilitators	
Company training	17
Effective communication	7
Passion and commitment for work	7
Employees empowerment	5
Technology and resources	4
External (environmental) facilitators	
Competitor's marketing tactics	11
Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building	8
Government support	6
Industry association support	3

KM barriers

Internal (organisational) barriers

Organisational structure	21
Uncertainty of KM application success	13
Dynamic nature of the hotel market	19
Limited resources	13
Poor communications and relationships	
Inadequate communication among employees	9
Inadequate language skills	5
Poor inter-departmental relationships	4
Individual employee behaviour of knowledge hoarding and resistance	3

External (environmental) barriers

National culture	
National culture affecting customers' behaviour	15
National culture affecting staff behaviour	9
Unwillingness of customers to share information	14

4.8 Framework of KM in CRM value chain primary activities

KM has been pinpointed to affect competitive advantage in organisations as it can enable the generation of tacit and explicit knowledge, which can inspire the formulation of strategies to impact the efficiency of employees' knowledge acquisition and distribution for managing customers. A framework in this direction can serve as a pathfinder to effective KM in hotels. Based on the data analysis and findings of this study, a theoretical framework was created to develop a body of conceptual notion of the absence of KM process in CRM primary activities, and to practically present a framework that will directly affect how KM can be meaningfully incorporated in CRM primary activities in improving hotel business efficiency. The framework contains six CRM value chain primary activities (prospecting, customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development, value proposition, and manage the customer lifecycle) integrated with KM process and its influences (drivers and barriers), resulting in

dynamic capability to enhance hotels performance. As can be observed, tacit and explicit knowledge are created and applied through the various stages of the CRM value chain primary stages ranging prospecting to manage the customer lifecycle. This is broadly informed by the D-SECI knowledge creation process in Ghana.

With an aim of enhancing CRM value chain to deliver greater value to customers, hotels employed KM due to its importance in ensuring creativity in customer onboarding, service offerings personalisation, marketing segmentation and forecasting, and enabling high occupancy for more revenue generation. Hotels deploy KM activities of identifying customers, creating different tacit and explicit knowledge, storing, and applying this knowledge to meet customers' needs in the CRM value chain primary activities and to create value for both customers and the hotels (Figure 4.5).
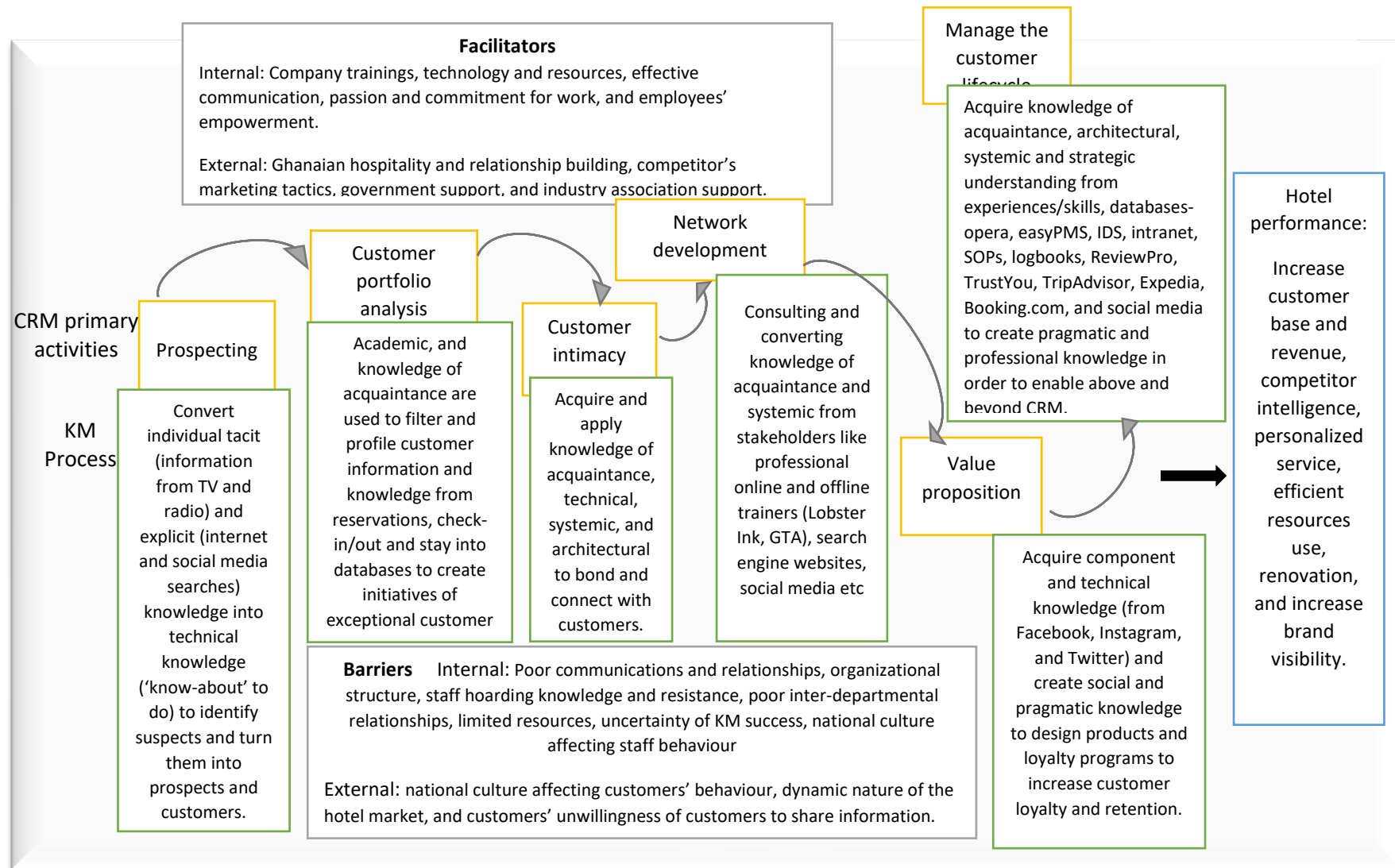
Figure 4. 5 Framework of hotels KM practice in CRM value chain primary activities

4.9 Summary of findings

Based on a rigorous data analysis of the Ghanaian context, the empirical findings of this research were presented in this chapter. The meaning of KM and CRM were defined. KM, although viewed with subtle differences among managers and line staff of chain and independent hotels, is generally understood as the deliberate act of obtaining customer data and information, evaluating for knowledge, sharing, and applying information and knowledge intelligently to meet guests needs and achieve overall success. CRM, on the other hand, is understood to be a process of activities and loyalty program in engaging and interacting with the customer in order to satisfy him/her.

This study expands Buttle's (2004) CRM value chain primary activities. Six CRM primary value chain activities were found, with prospecting being discovered as a new and the first CRM value chain primary activities in hotels. The rest were in line with Buttle's (2004) CRM value chain primary activities. KM processes of knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage, and knowledge use was adopted in all the CRM value chain primary activities whereas knowledge creation was only adopted in the value proposition and manage the customer lifecycle of the CRM value chain primary activities in hotels. Although all the CRM value chain primary activities engaged KM process in one way or the other, network development, value proposition, and managing the customer life cycle activities were found to have dominant KM processes of different tacit and explicit knowledge. This contributes to new knowledge of key areas of emphasis in KM in CRM primary activities. Academic and professional knowledge was discovered as new type of knowledge in KM in CRM primary activities. The incorporation of KM in CRM revealed general perceived KM importance in the hotel industry, such as increase customer base and revenue, competitor intelligence, hotel innovativeness and brand visibility, innovative service and personalisation, and efficient hotel resources usage.

The results of the study revealed that the D-SECI model of knowledge conversion process is broadly valid and applicable, especially in the value proposition and manage the customer lifecycle of the CRM primary activities. This outcome demonstrates its validity and significance in generating knowledge for hotel business operation nowadays, contributing new

knowledge to effective knowledge creation in the present digital/technology age and business world.

In terms of contextual influences of KM, it was found that KM process application in CRM could be driven by a range of factors, including facilitators previously identified in the literature review for this study (i.e. company trainings, technology and resources, effective communication, empowering employees) and new facilitators discovered (passion and commitment for work, Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building, competitors marketing tactics, government support, industry association support). Barriers of KM were found to include internal factors previously identified in literature (inadequate communication among staff, inadequate language skills, organizational structure, individual employee behaviour of knowledge hoarding and resistance, poor inter-departmental relationship, limited resources). This study also presented new barriers of KM such as uncertainty of KM application success, CQ, national culture affecting staff and customer behaviour, unwillingness of customers to share information, and the dynamic nature of the hotel market in the developing country context of Ghana hotels.

Based on how hotels have incorporated KM in their CRM primary activities, the intersecting contextual factors and the general performance outcome, a KM framework was developed to illustrate the process in the context of a developing country. This framework may be applicable in other developing countries and can be tested in other contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of this study. The study aims to examine KM processes in CRM primary activities in hotels. Significant findings based on the research objectives are discussed vis-à-vis the relevant literature presented in chapter 2 and further literature in order to substantiate and contextualise the findings. It begins by discussing how KM and CRM were understood by hotel practitioners and how the KM process is being incorporated into managing customer relationships, the perceived importance and the role of KM in CRM, the facilitators and barriers of KM, and the underpinning theory of this study. A framework for managing KM in CRM primary activities is then presented, and this chapter closes with a summary of the discussions.

5.2 How the KM process is incorporated into managing customer relationships

The objective of this section is to explore how KM and CRM were understood by hotel practitioners and how KM is being incorporated into managing CRM primary activities in hotels in Accra-Ghana. Much debate revolves around the meaning of KM as many individual scholars' views differ widely regarding its aims, activities and meaning. It is therefore essential to understand KM in the Ghanaian hotel context to attempt to generate a holistic understanding of KM and the ways in which it could be incorporated into CRM. This is because a better understanding of KM in hotels could enable effective knowledge creation that would facilitate a more effective management of customer relations in today's knowledge-oriented era.

The findings revealed that KM in Ghanaian hotels seems to have different but interesting mosaics of meanings among chain and independent hotels, and managers and rank-and-file staff. One subtle difference noted regarding the interpretation of KM was that, while a majority of hotel managers across all hotels view KM as the acquisition of intelligence about customers through informal and formal interactions (which is then stored in computer databases, analysed through technology, staff meetings and discussions, and applied to meet customer needs), some rank-and-file staff see KM as managing expert staff knowledge by sharing among team members and using knowledge to deliver service (Petty & Guthrie, 2000). Although hotel

managers and line staff described KM in different ways, their understandings are similar because the end-goal is to use knowledge as intelligently as possible to attain overall success (Wiig, 1997). This study further argues that although the interpretation of KM in the study context aligns with some earlier scholars' views of KM as 'managing knowledge using ICT, social processes and people' (Bhatt, 2001; Cooper, 2018, 2015; Earl, 2001; Hislop, 2013; Wiig, 1997) and 'managing intellectual capital' (Bashouri & Duncan, 2014; Petty & Guthire, 2000; Earl, 2001; Rastogi, 2000), its understanding demonstrates subtle differences between industry understanding and academic definition and, as has been noted, between hotel managers and rank-and-file staff, and chain versus independent hotels. Across both chain and independent hotels, a common explanation for KM that emerged was acquiring, storing and managing customer knowledge, as well as managing intellectual capital, which is in line with Cooper (2015, 2018,) and Hislop (2013). Interestingly, some managers and rank-and-file staff of independent hotels view KM as managing product knowledge, whereby knowledge is incorporated into product design and creation to enable value creation for customers through the offering of high-quality products. As has been shown in this study, all hotels seek knowledge, but it seems that those with the greatest number of external knowledge links have access to more capabilities, skills and companies that enable them to create new knowledge and capabilities (Badaracco & Badaracco, 1991). In this case, chain hotels, having corporate support and standards, have access to a wide range of resources, while independent hotels without corporate support are responsible for designing and updating their products. This may account for the differences between chain and independent hotels as well as employees' perceived meaning of KM in the study context. This subtle diversity demonstrates the on-going debate about KM meaning, which the current research presents as an up-to-date definition as interpreted by hotel practitioners in Ghana.

With regards to hotel practitioners' understanding of CRM, respondents described CRM as an IT system (Rababah, Mohd & Ibrahim, 2011; Rajola, 2003) and process (Lo et al., 2010) for managing customer relationships. A potentially important finding from this study was that the interviewees consider CRM to be a loyalty program that facilitates customer loyalty. When compared to an IT system and the different hotel processes and procedures, a loyalty program is more tangible to the customers and comprehensible to hotel employees. It is either a reward or recognition framework allowing customers to see their progressive achievements and to motivate them to continue to patronise the hotel or hotel chain (Kandampully et al., 2015). The results of this study support Lewis's position that loyalty programs have a positive impact on

customers' re-patronage decisions. Although Henderson, Beck and Palmatier (2011) doubted the effectiveness and financial performance of loyalty programs, hotels in Ghana believe it is an important CRM tool to enhance their relationships with customers and to build loyalty.

In the process of investigating if and how hotels adopt KM in managing customer relationships, the researcher first identified and classified the CRM activities based on Buttle's (2004, 2015) CRM value chain activities. Six primary CRM value chain activities were identified among the hotels. Prospecting is a new primary activity identified and it is the first core primary activity of the hotels' CRM value chains in Ghana. It is essential to emphasise that by observing Buttle's (2004, 2015) CRM value chain primary activities, the model starts with customer portfolio analysis, probably because Buttle's (2001) original proposed CRM value chain was initially piloted in IT, telecoms, software, media, retail, manufacturing, and construction businesses that may not share characteristics with hotels. It is important to emphasise that understanding the customer journey is critical, because before one becomes a customer one starts as a suspect and a prospect. In the hospitality industry, companies attempt to target and attract prospects that do not yet know the company (Hu & Olivieri, 2021). Thus, the customer journey starts before one becomes a customer. The hospitality industry requires frequent direct contact and careful consideration of warmth and care (Min & Hu, 2022; Min & Joireman, 2021) when searching for potential customers and managing existing customers. In practice, every hotel in this study, whether chain or independent, deemed prospecting to be very important as all respondents indicated that prospecting is the key to starting and keeping their business afloat. Thus, prospecting places great emphasis on converting potential customers into buyers and preventing the erosion of the customer base due to customer attrition. In service organisations, marketing literature suggests that an increasingly competitive market can be a trigger for businesses to seek effective ways to improve sales (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay, 2000). Consequently, prospecting is key for the service sector to identify, segment and pursue markets according to the different values and benefits sought by the customer.

Besides identifying prospecting as a new process, this thesis also found network development to be one of the CRM primary activities as identified in Buttle's model, although not supporting Lo et al.'s (2010) study in its Hong Kong hotel context. The present study indicates that diverse knowledge from various stakeholders is generated and merged, which produce a dominant KM process in the network development activity for hotels, thus extending Buttle's (2004) finding of the importance of stakeholders in CRM. Whether and how the KM processes of knowledge

acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge storage and knowledge use are being incorporated in the CRM primary activities are discussed in the following subsections.

5.2.1 Knowledge acquisition

The research examined knowledge acquisition adoption in CRM and found that it has been adopted across the six CRM value chain primary activities or stages (prospecting, customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development, value proposition and management of the customer lifecycle) in Ghana hotels. The study further found that among the CRM primary stages, knowledge acquisition adoption is dominant in network development, value proposition and management of the customer lifecycle, because various knowledge workers interact to enable efficiency in the CRM practice.

In hotels, knowledge acquisition is vital for prospecting because it enables hotels to observe, search for and identify people who may show interest in the hotel's products and services. Hotels also extract information from customers during check-in, check-out and residence as working knowledge to manage the customer portfolio analysis and analyse customer feedback, as well as drawing insights from customers' social media activities in order to bond with the customer. Based on the fragmentary information hotels gather about customers, they analyse and extract knowledge that should be incorporated into managing customer relationships.

Previous studies on knowledge acquisition largely focus on the role of information technology (Motta, 2013) and neglect the behavioural perspective (Rusly et al., 2015), often emphasising that the knowledge acquisition process involves employees referring to corporate databases to obtain knowledge for tasks in business organisations (Wang et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2015). This study supplements previous studies by delineating areas of knowledge acquisition for managing customer relationships.

For prospecting, in addition to employees referring to corporate databases to acquire knowledge (architectural knowledge) (Henderson & Clark, 1990), hotels depend on media, government policy direction on new businesses in the country, and tradeshows, exhibitions and conferences market avenues to acquire environmental knowledge, which in academia is considered declarative 'know-about' or 'know-what' knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Grant, 1996) or technical knowledge (Child & Rodriques, 1996). Technical knowledge is obtained through searching and seeking (Coasta & Monteiro, 2016; Rusly, et al., 2015) from

external sources such as customers, policymakers and other stakeholders (Andreeva & Kiato, 2011) as well as e-commerce (i.e., online comments) (Xia et al., 2022) in order to identify and attract potential customers. Hotels in the study context prospect for suspects by acquiring potential customer information from Google analytics and hotel website searches, and apply reasoning and judgments on data and information gathered to enable decision-making (Beckman, 1999) that aids both predicting potential customers' location and interest and targeting them (Yang et al., 2019).

Knowledge acquisition is important for customer portfolio analysis. The finding clearly shows that hotels intentionally acquire knowledge from customers' check-in and check-out information as well as formal and informal conversations with customers at the hotel level to manage customer portfolio analysis. This shows that knowledge is not only acquired from check-in information but can be obtained throughout the customer's stay in the hotel (Andreeva & Kianto, 2011) and from the internet to determine the customer's behaviour for segmentation. For customer intimacy, the majority of the hotels' customer data and information collection processes are guided by the European Union's GDPR policy, which is a generic policy applicable to all customers; PCIDSS; and local rules and regulations for safeguarding customers' data. It constitutes architectural knowledge (Henderson & Clark, 1990), all of which are intended to enhance intimacy with customers and assure their privacy in information sharing. This study's findings show that the collection of appropriate marketing intelligence enables hotels to bond with customers and comprehend their preferences, special requests and likes, which can then be disseminated to all employees to enable effective interactions through the possession of relational knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) and deductive knowledge (Fowler, 2000; Xiao & Smith, 2007), otherwise known as knowledge of acquaintance (Spender, 1996). This aligns with and extends Bouncken's (2002) types of knowledge usage-guest-related knowledge (dealing with customers wants) and task-specific knowledge (strategies and actions taken in fulfilling a task). It also supports Wong et al. (2015) regarding internal knowledge acquisition from customers as all hotels believed that spontaneous interactions with customers are significant opportunities for knowledge collection, which has the likely effect of helping hotel management and employees to manage the present and future relational needs of customers.

As indicated earlier, hotels' knowledge acquisition process dominates more at the network development, value proposition and customer lifecycle management stages because the acquisition of different types of knowledge from different sources provides value and

effectively manages customer lifecycles. Hotels acquired knowledge from internal knowledge workers such as hotel managers and staff who share what they know with the hotel. This is congruent with Shu-Chen and Farn's (2010) finding that knowledge could be acquired from internal sources such as firms' routines and staff expertise. Hotels also search for and acquire knowledge from external knowledge workers including the GTA, Lobster Ink online training programs, consultants and the GHA who share and provide guest-related knowledge, hotel industry knowledge and digital knowledge to hotels to enable them manage customer relationships. Guest-related knowledge enables hotels to deal with the changing behaviour and needs of customers (Bouncken, 2002). All hotels use similar methods to acquire knowledge from the internal and external knowledge workers. This includes training experiences and training manuals, regular staff meetings, and internet searches as ways to search, analyse, identify and find novel ideas and teach staff (McElroy, 2003). This supports Andreeva and Kianto's (2011) view that knowledge could be acquired from external sources such as customers and suppliers. The internet (Wang et al., 2006) and social media represent explicit knowledge acquisition platforms where hotels look for knowledge to manage CRM.

Although all hotels collaborate to acquire knowledge, chain hotels enjoy more leverage from Global Alliance Hotels, regional offices news and information feeds, training experiences, and models. This leverage takes the form of industry knowledge (i.e., systemic knowledge) (Child & Rodriques, 1996), customer knowledge and geographical background knowledge regarding foreign customers (i.e., strategic understanding) (Child & Rodriques, 1996). It shows that chain hotels may have a strategic advantage over most independent hotels in acquiring knowledge to manage customer relations. Importantly, some hotels consider travelling overseas as part of participating in the knowledge community with whom they collaborate to acquire strategic understanding. Hotels that need knowledge on products such as wine or who require other job-related knowledge intentionally send employees overseas to train to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. The trained employees then return home to provide that knowledge to the hotel to manage local and foreign customers.

5.2.2 Knowledge creation

Reviewing the knowledge creation process of KM by hotels in the context of Ghana through the lens of the SECI model's theory of organisation knowledge creation sheds light on how hotels adopt the knowledge creation process in managing two stages, value proposition and

customer lifecycle management, of the CRM value chain's primary activities. This study provides empirical evidence to supplement previous, mostly conceptual, studies on the SECI model's theory of organisation knowledge creation (Gourlay, 2006). Furthermore, contrary to Bratianu (2010) and Farnese et ail. (2019), this study found the SECI model applicable to the creation of knowledge through the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge in Ghanaian hotels, advancing the research stream of knowledge creation in hotels by providing specific stages of CRM primary activities (i.e., value proposition and customer lifecycle management) where knowledge creation is vital and emphasised. This study showed that hotels collect data and information from customers reviews, feedback and complaints, and ideas from employees gained through interactions. Hotels then organise department meetings, hotel-wide meetings and annual appraisals to discuss, evaluate and make sense of the information in order to obtain useful knowledge (i.e., pragmatic knowledge) and social knowledge to create value in service offerings to customers and manage their lifecycles. This study further expands on knowledge creation by pointing out that explicit knowledge creation from digital platforms (social media and the internet) based on customers' comments and behaviours is not only emerging but has gained dominance in demand and exploration over tacit knowledge for managing value proposition. In management studies, it has been argued that the knowledge acquired can become obsolete with use (Drucker et al., 1997). This appears to be supported by the finding of the present study that acquiring and creating knowledge about customer needs and behaviour is never-ending for Ghanaian hotels, hence new knowledge is required to innovate and to make the hotel and its products better than similar products on the market.

Customers' feedback and reviews are analysed via third-party services such as ReviewPro and TrustYou (albeit only by chain hotels) to create knowledge from online hotel reviews (Xia et al., 2022), which produce social and pragmatic knowledge types useful to employees for improved operational efficiency (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) and attracting more customers (Xia et al., 2022). Again, whenever a member of staff proposes an idea, it is first discussed and evaluated during staff meeting and, once passed, it becomes pragmatic knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) with which employees are trained. This aligned with Nonaka's (1994, p14) theory of organisational knowledge creation, in which "organisational knowledge is created through a continuous dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge". Market sensing to identify 'new' trends and fashions is conducted by employees and the information obtained is relayed to supervisors and managers at the individual level and during staff meetings. All hotels use market calls and in-house guest interactions to listen and acquire tacit knowledge whilst

harvesting explicit knowledge from customers' comments on social media platforms. The information and ideas acquired are analysed, discussed and scrutinised by other employees at staff meetings in order to create new knowledge (Nona & Takeuchi, 1995; Wang et al., 2006) and to design responsiveness through planning activities, with a view to implementing them in practice. For example, 'Sunday family lunch' menus have been created by gathering information on Ghanaians' behaviours of need and want on Sundays and evaluating it to produce tacit knowledge on Ghanaians' need for social gatherings on Sundays to either dine or 'drink'.

Another important finding was that Covid-19 social distancing measures made it difficult for hotels to engage with customers, yet hotels continued to operate and create knowledge from Covid-19 protocols and offered safety and hygiene (e.g., a touchless FB menu in the form of QR code and takeaways) that derived from external awareness such as the internet, customer behaviour, GTA, industry reports, government policies, etc. At the same time, they continued to offer products and services that appealed to the needs of their customers, such as celebrating their religions and cultures through different themed food and beverage menus and events. This was meant to create competitive advantage in line with the KBVT that competitive advantage lies in the application of knowledge rather than knowledge itself (Grant, 1996). These steps appealed to the psychological and emotion needs of potential customers for hygiene, safety and convenience, which enabled business continuity amid COVID-19. This in turn kept these hotel businesses going, confirming knowledge use for survivability and competitiveness (Grant, 1996). This finding also extends our understanding of the knowledge application significance posited by Bohn (1994) as "how much does your organisation know?" (p.61) and mitigates the underexplored awareness of external knowledge sources in tourism and hospitality (Sainaghi, Phillips & Zavarrone, 2017). Thus, it improves understanding of how hotels capture internal and external knowledge (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018). This demonstrates that obtaining knowledge of customer behaviour provides causal knowledge to understand why customers behave the way they do, necessitating pragmatic knowledge application (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) and the understanding that the capability of information technology and its availability and prompt use is important for customer retention and attraction. When the guests are in-house, (chain) hotels rely on human interactions to gain knowledge from customers through their guest relations team, aligning with very recent studies that found that the combined use of human interactions and technology could aid competitiveness (Di Vaio et al., 2021; Lee, Choi & Lee, 2020). This study further revealed that chain hotels apply tacit and explicit

knowledge, obtained from customers, to enhance their FB products through the creation of 'order what you like' (i.e., open order) menus. Thus, customers can make an order beyond what can be seen in the menu.

5.2.3 Knowledge storage

Yang and Wan (2004) in their study on hotel knowledge storage found that the traditional storage of organisations' information and knowledge, at the time of their study, included use of logbooks, SOPs, sales reports, employees' newsletters, and situational 'bibles'. The use of computers was not common because most employees were IT illiterate. Technology has advanced over the two decades since that study was performed and IT databases are commonly used to store information and knowledge (Pinho et al. 2012) in Ghanaian hotels. This finding is important as it shows a sharp and rapid growth and shift from traditional knowledge storage system usage to technological knowledge storage tools. The use of computer databases and the internet in hotels shows that IT plays an important role in hospitality operation and management, meaning that it may be beneficial for hotel managers to stay informed about developments and advances in IT (Law et al., 2013) as it has the capacity to ease knowledge acquisition and storage for future use. IT use for knowledge acquisition and storage contradicts Myers's (1996) claim that a person must "identify, interpret and internalise knowledge" (p.2). All hotels in Ghana FO and SM store or document their information and explicit knowledge in databases such as Opera, EasyPMS, IDS, intranet, and logbooks to manage all the stages of the CRM primary activities, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies that information and knowledge can be stored via electronic and IT support repositories and databases (Hong et al., 2011; Olivera, 2000; Pinho et al., 2012; Sun & Scott, 2005; Wong et al., 2015). Thus, knowledge acquired and created is stored in centralised repositories accessible to all staff to enable them to perform their daily duties. Hotels believed that knowledge about each customer can always be accessed by employees and that even in the event of staff attrition, new staff can always access the existing customer-specific knowledge to offer consistent service to the customer. This finding empirically addresses Olivera's (2000) question of how firms can store experiential knowledge and how employees can access it. Interestingly, a fraction of knowledge considered to be personal and experiential knowledge is stored in the minds of employees as they access knowledge from databases, because they internalise and

work closely with customers daily. Other employees observe and imitate the experiential knowledge or are taught through hotel internal training experiences.

5.2.4 Knowledge use

Utilisation of knowledge is important for hotels to achieve competitive advantage. That is, hotels apply knowledge for an effective management of each stage of the CRM primary activities. All hotels in the study context identified their SM department as being responsible for their prospecting stage of the CRM, and the SM managers use experience and analytical skills to identify individuals and draw them into the hotel as potential customers (Peesker et al., 2022). Based on environmental knowledge, the SM team prepare questions to inquire about the interests, hobbies and preferences of the prospects in order to potentially gauge and identify the right products for the potential customer before they contact them, present a more persuasive contrary view if the need arises, and capture tacit knowledge from the prospects. It implies that tacit and explicit knowledge are critical for hotels to pursue potential customers, and that hotels are putting to good use the knowledge they acquire, aligning with Wiig's (1997) view that knowledge use is applying knowledge that has been acquired by people and organisations.

For effective prospecting, hotels capture financially viable individuals and groups like new businesses in town, family members, friends, NGOs, government agencies, schools and religious groups (churches and mosques). They then categorise them, suspects, into family, business and social groups, which extends the idea of contextualising information and making it actionable to create value (Cooper, 2015, Rowley, 2007). Importantly, most hotels use knowledge to identify prospects and categorise them into three distinct groups: high producers, mid-range producers and small producers, based on their potential economic or spending contributions to the hotels. This finding provides new knowledge to understand the types and categories of prospects, which by and large have not been the subject of discussion in KM-CRM interfusion literature. Ghanaian hotels are gradually becoming tech savvy and some independent hotels are slowly embracing third-party digital marketers who, based on society behaviour knowledge and customer behaviour knowledge, craft a marketing strategy that uses the knowledge acquired to reach large-scale local and international markets.

At the customer portfolio analysis stage, as discussed earlier, all hotels attempt to acquire knowledge of customers' behaviour, preferences and choices from customers' information at check-in and through informal conversations and customers' complaints. They then analyse this information to detect customer needs and create personalised value (Goerzig & Bauernhansi, 2018). As hotels acquire knowledge, the knowledge is used to enable segmentation (Buttle, 2004) and value creation for each customer (Lo et al., 2010), which allows both hotels and customers to benefit from the interactive strategies, enabling pleasant surprises for the customer leading to more customer retention. Interestingly, while pre-digital literature emphasises tacit knowledge as the primary driver of an organisation (Nonaka, 1994), this study's findings contend that explicit knowledge is becoming the new driver of innovation in the hotel as explicit knowledge harvested from social media and stored in technology databases compensate for reduced human interaction, especially in Covid-19 era. This is an important key finding because it contradicts several studies in the pre-technology era, requiring further studies on explicit knowledge harvesting and the significance of the digital era context. Wessel et al. (2021) believed that information technology and digital transformation, though similar, may differ in terms of their key activities and outcomes. The authors, speaking on the conceptual level, argue that information technology involves the enhancement of an organisation's identity (i.e., leveraging digital technology in supporting value creation) whereas digital transformation refers to the emergence of a new organisational identity (i.e., leveraging digital technology in redefining value proposition) in terms of how organisations think of themselves. All hotels through their SM team search for knowledge regarding customer interests to better understand the customers and accelerate their services, which aligns with Wong et al.'s (2015) description of the knowledge acquisition process as searching, brainstorming and applying other knowledge sources to obtain knowledge.

At the customer intimacy stage, without the appropriate knowledge of who customers are and what they want, it becomes practically impossible to service them, which means loose bonding and little to no business for hotels. Hotels try to seize every opportunity to interact with and listen to customers in order to explore customer background knowledge and store in the hotel repository or databases (Olivera, 2000) and then apply it to satisfy customers choices and better relate with customers as task performance (Baloh et al., 2011). Individual staff sometimes use their tacit knowledge to bond with customers and later onboard them to the hotel for business. Explicit and tacit knowledge are used to develop training manuals to enhance frontline staff knowledge in bonding with customers. However, this practice seems minimal in the

independent hotels as most respondents described the need for intentional training for all frontline staff to be knowledge workers bonding with customers to collect information and knowledge directly from them. It shows that independent hotels in this study need to enhance their engagement strategies by training all guest-contact staff to ensure all staff are involved as knowledge workers, to achieve an intentional hotel-wide KM strategy of customer intimacy. All hotels use knowledge acquired from suppliers, customers and other stakeholders to upgrade their products and services as well as better manage the customer, as per the internalisation process of the SECI model (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and that knowledge is used to transform the organisation (Wong et al., 2015). This supports the contention that collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders play crucial role in knowledge generation to enhance customer relationships (Hameed, Nisar & Wu, 2021; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

Further, consistent with Jones (2012), Polanyi (1966), Wiig (1997), and Wong et al. (2015), respondents believed that acquiring and applying both tacit and explicit knowledge are vital to their daily business operations for value proposition development because value is needed to convince customers to choose one hotel over its competitors. Hotels apply multiple types of knowledge at this stage to create experiences that meet the customer's preferences (Lo et al., 2010). To manage the customer lifecycle, hotels integrate knowledge into the hotel by teaching and sharing among employees (McElroy, 2003). Currently, some scepticism still exists regarding the difference between information and knowledge. To this end, most hotels in Ghana consider information as knowledge at some points of the KM process because situational meanings are attached and the need for information has already been influenced by their expectations. This leads to its identification and collection, consistent with Tuomi's (1999/2000) argument.

In chain hotels, KM is applied as going 'above and beyond' to serve customers and is perceived as an intentional act of know-what and know-how interplay to welcome and retain customers in the chain hotel category. Above and beyond KM may inform or signal customers how these hotels are willing to 'sacrifice' more and 'die' for their customers to be satisfied, which may exceed customers' expectations and result in more customer acquisition and retention opportunities. The knowledge acquisition, creation and application by the hotels to delight and exceed customers' expectation is line with KBVT theory, as the hotels seek to create a competitive advantage through above and beyond service provision to customers (Grant, 1996).

Overall, knowledge use helps hotels to move from merely surviving (identifying the immediate elements of business that differentiate between success and failure) to prosperity (developing and extending a business high-performance philosophy amid acquiring and creating new knowledge and creating value over a business period), consistent with Chen and Mohammed's (2007) finding in the construction industry that knowledge use enables more intense and active responses to market changes and client needs. Thus, all hotels acquire, create, store and apply multiple types of knowledge to solve problems for enhanced operational efficiency, products and services, and market performance.

5.2.5 Knowledge types and sources

Previous research has shown that knowledge can broadly be categorised as tacit and explicit (Grant, 1996). In the context of hotel knowledge types for managing customer relationships, this study found various specific types of knowledge. Declarative knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001), which respondents described as environmental knowledge, implying 'know-about' knowledge of customers, was found to be useful to the prospecting stage of the CRM. Hotels considered academic knowledge important for market research to enhance prospecting whereas academic knowledge and professional knowledge were deemed vital for customer portfolio analysis as well as network development. This study contributes new findings, of both academic and professional knowledge, to knowledge types in the KM field. Academic and professional knowledge can be cognitive expertise or skills important for organisations (De Long & Fahey, 2000). These knowledge types are considered critical because they affect how employees relate with customers, search for information and record customer information. Respondents disclosed that possessing academic and professional knowledge is important to CRM because they help to elicit information and knowledge from customers and record it in databases for future reference. Possessing and applying the types of knowledge is useful because identifying useful knowledge is difficult due to continuously changing customer needs at different times coupled to the race against time to service customers. As discussed earlier, the relational knowledge, procedural knowledge (for customer intimacy), guest-related and professional knowledge (for network development), guest-related knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, social knowledge and causal knowledge (for value proposition and customer lifecycle management) are all consistent with previous findings on knowledge types (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Bouncken, 2002; Grant, 1996; Fowler, 2000; Nonaka, 1995; Kogut & Zander,

1992; Xiao & Smith, 2007). This study further identifies technical knowledge as a new type of knowledge. Hotels obtain technical knowledge from using social media and interpreting reports from the different online platforms. Technical knowledge enables the hotels to interpret the performance of online marketing campaigns as well as manage revenue.

Regarding knowledge sources, this study found two main knowledge sources, internal and external, that were applicable across the CRM primary activities. Hotels explore knowledge from internal sources such as customers and employees. Nowadays clients do not demand standard service: they look for specific quality service offerings and are more aware of competitors' products and services. Importantly, this study revealed that most independent hotels consider direct interactions with customers a great source of competitive intelligence. For example, some clients share their service experiences, especially the awful encounters, elsewhere, and suggest how the current hotel can make it better. This result supports and extends Yang and Wan's (2004) finding on knowledge acquisition in four-star hotels that knowledge can be acquired from customers' complaints when they are in-house and from comments/reviews after their stay. These pieces of knowledge acquired from customers, when acted upon, enable some of the independent hotels to strongly compete with some chain hotels in creatively marketing products of value to the customers (Spinello, 2000; Wiig, 1997). This is congruent with Doloreux's (2015) view that customers can be a highly accurate source of knowledge. This study also finds that most hotel employees share personal knowledge and knowledge in databases with colleagues, consistent with previous findings that employees can collaborate and share knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Externally, all hotels acquire knowledge by collaborating with external agents such as the Lobster Ink online training program, GTA, GHA and competitors. Hotels receive training and study materials on CRM from the external agents in order to enhance their knowledge and also attempt to develop intelligence on effective ways in which their competitors are progressing in managing customer relations. This agrees with prior studies that found that organisations could acquire knowledge through collaboration with external agents (Doloreux, 2015; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Lane et al., 2006; Leiponen & Helfat, 2010; Spinello, 2000). Importantly, hotels acquire explicit knowledge on potential and existing customers' behaviour and preferences from the internet and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn, expanding the understanding of external knowledge sources for hotels. Overall, the study contributes to enhancing the understanding of external sources of knowledge in tourism and hospitality (Sainaghi et al., 2017; Thomas & Wood, 2014). Thus, the qualitative exploration of

the internal and external sources of knowledge for hotels expands the understanding of how hotels obtain knowledge (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018) and establishes the appropriate informal and formal mechanisms hotels use to capture and transfer knowledge (Ordanini & Parasuraman, 2011).

5.2.6 People and technology

As discussed earlier, this study's findings provide understanding of knowledge workers in the KM process in the CRM primary activities and explain how technology is being used. Tacit knowledge acquisition depends on people (Jain, Aagja & Bagdare, 2017; Nonaka & Konno, 1998) and explicit knowledge acquisition depends on both people and technology, making people the building blocks of KM in CRM. The findings of this study revealed that such people as hotel owners, management and employees were considered internal knowledge workers while GTA, GHA, and consultants (Lobster Ink, Genius Hospitality and Loophotel online learning) are external knowledge workers. They are considered knowledge workers working together by providing knowledge to hotels to enable them to manage customer relationships. People are the initiators of the search for knowledge and they are the users of knowledge by invoking it (Wiig, 1997) across the CRM primary activities. Indeed, people acquiring and applying knowledge is a critical resource for an organisation (Uden & He, 2017).

Furthermore, the study discovered that technology, in the form of software such as ERP, Opera, EasyPMS and IDS, as well as the internet and social media, is being adopted across the CRM primary activities. Twitter use by hotels in the United States was identified as a potential strategic tool for hotels' business operations and customer service provision (Kim & Chae, 2018). This study's findings support Kim and Chae's finding and further add that Facebook, Instagram and Google are crucial prospecting tools and explicit knowledge-generating tools regarding potential customers. From the travel and tourism perspective, many consumers use social media networks to determine their intention to visit (Hoed & Russo, 2017), which has made social media a powerful advertising tool (Law, Leung, Au & Lee, 2013). Indeed, the rapid development and adoption of technology such as the internet and social media has created a virtual community of interactions transcending hotels and geographic boundaries, creating free-flowing knowledge in the form of consumer comments and suggestions, and knowledge collaboration forums where hotels can obtain explicit knowledge from customers to use in their particular work setting.

In the KM domain, technology and digital transformation have become critical for knowledge development (Machado, Secinaro, Calandra & Lanzalonga, 2021). In Accra-Ghana, hotels derive explicit knowledge such as customer know-how from customers' comments on the internet and social media, which they then use to create e-guide and e-learning (explicit knowledge) prospecting manuals amid their own know-how (implicit knowledge). They then apply this knowledge in their day-to-day operations and customer relations management. This supports previous literature that suggests that digital transformation is emerging as a strand of great interest, as digital transformation can play a role in KM, promoting new business and optimising new knowledge (Machado et al., 2021). Likewise, Di Vaio et al. (2021) acknowledged that the internet of things and big data enable the current world economy to significantly increase companies' competitiveness while guaranteeing access to large flows of data and information. On this topic, the empirical finding of this study on Ghana's hotel industry expands on how hotels generate knowledge from technology and social media and digitally prospect or look for future customers. This shows that hotels not only employ human interactions to derive knowledge for KM, they also digitally prospect and acquire explicit knowledge from prospects online, which enables hotels to reach a wider prospects market base of both the conventional and digital customers. Although this falls within the ambits of KM, much is yet to be accomplished using big data.

Interestingly, in Ghanaian hotels, the common culture of social and human interactions alongside the internet explosion (e.g., the readily available virtual community platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) have all led to more knowledge access from internal (Shu-Chen & Farn, 2010) and external (Adreeva & Kianto, 2011) sources. To keep their businesses afloat, hotels need be knowledgeable about the development of hospitality technology and online platforms that allow them to explore explicit knowledge. This will enable them to identify knowledge of strengths and defects and remove any form of ambiguity. Some of these online platforms include ReviewPro, TrustYou, TripAdvisor and other social media networks. This supports Schuckert, Liu and Law's (2015b) study that online consumer reviews are considered a rich data source that reflects consumers' experiences and evaluations of products in hospitality and tourism. Similarly, Xiang, Du, Ma and Fan (2017) concluded that TripAdvisor and Expedia have largely been identified as one type of review website for customers sharing service and travel experiences in most hospitality and tourism research.

5.3 Importance of KM adoption in CRM value chain activities

As was presented in the findings chapter, KM can make positive impact on hotels if it is effectively initiated and practised. Hoteliers believe that their KM performance can be assessed according to several factors. This study demonstrates that KM enables some levels of competitiveness, in line with earlier findings that KM triggers competitive advantage in the global space (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Pandey & Dutta, 2013; Raisi et al., 2020); positively influences the degree of internationalisation of hotel chains (as was seen in Spain) through vision and the formulation and implementation of adequate knowledge strategies (Ubeda-Garcia, Rienda, Zaragoza-Saez, & Andreu-Guerrero, 2021); and creates effective value (Dayan, Heisig & Matos, 2017) through service personalisation and innovative capabilities (Migdadi, 2020; Veiga et al., 2022). KM is used to create customers' perceptions of being treated as important and special at every service touch point. KM helps hotels to better understand clients' expectations and preferences, creatively create empathy and rapport, and skilfully communicate the 'wow' effect. Once hotels understand customers' needs and wants, they outperform the promises by going the extra mile. Knowledge is created and applied to satisfy complaining customers in order to regain goodwill and confidence from such customers. Improved customer satisfaction becomes an indication that KM activities such as collecting and storing knowledge of customers' backgrounds and preferences in hotels' databases are being implemented and that customers are sharing knowledge with hoteliers. KM practice in hotels results in an increased customer base and revenue. Increase in revenue can be reckoned financially through return business, which may translate into a highly productive success process (Martensson, 2000). Supporting the results of previous studies, this study found that service innovation and personalisation are the outcomes (Salem, 2014) of KM creating value to customers (Kianto et al., 2018; Nonaka, 1995; Omotayo, 2015; Valmohammadi & Amidi, 2020).

Importantly, unlike other previous studies that doubted the practical benefits of KM (Grant 2011; Serenko & Bontis, 2013), this study is the first to make evident that KM plays the additional key roles of enabling competitor intelligence, informing facility and product improvement, increasing brand visibility, and making resource usage efficient and effective in hotels in Ghana.

In terms of competitor intelligence, KM enables hotels to pick up valuable insights about competitors through informal conversations with customers and listening to their complaints

as most customers frequently pinpoint the service weaknesses, deficiencies and failures of past and present service experience with other hotels. This insight and information pinpointed by the customers immediately become a working knowledge for the hotels to outperform its competitors. Not only that, but it also helps hotels to think outside the box and better design their products suitable to the preferential requirements of the customers as well as enable the hotels to incorporate fashionable renovation, refurbishment, and additional of facilities to servicing the needs of the customers, based on product or facility improvement knowledge gathered and customer service knowledge obtained from the customers. Thus, facility renovation prowess can be triggered as knowledge is developed and applied through collaborative efforts and employee learning.

KM efforts help hotels to diversify their content marketing strategies by optimising online presence to reach and sell to the customers, as well as tracking how their brand is being perceived in order to ensure a consistent brand identity. Although Chauvel (2002) argued that KM application means cost in terms of personnel efforts and money, this study acknowledges but counters that argument by finding that KM allows and enhances efficient and effective use of resources in hotels as limited monetary resources are channelled into purchasing items and products specific to the needs of customers. This is where the KM practices result in cost savings by enabling the hotel to cut down cost and reducing the opportunities to erroneously spend on things unlikely to appeal to customers, thus minimising service mistakes. Respondents' views show that hotel managers assess the customer information collected and process the relevant data into knowledge through constructive discussion; they carefully extract useful information in order to offer quality products and services to suit guests' needs. Meetings are then organised to keep staff updated on new knowledge. Overall, KM in CRM enables the efficient flow of knowledge to enhance service offerings to customers.

5.4 Contextual influences (Facilitators and Barriers) on KM adoptions in hotels

The contextual influences on KM constitute both facilitators that drive or catalyse, and barriers that impede, KM process in hotels.

5.4.1 KM facilitators

Most of the facilitators/drivers of KM were consistent across chain and independent hotels. They seem complex and serve as situational cues that can evoke knowledge generation, storage and effective application in hotels. In line with the findings of previous studies, this study's findings establish and extend the usefulness of information technology systems such as computers, intranets, software and databases such as easyPMS, IDS and Opera as being instrumental in collecting customer data and enabling KM efforts in Ghanaian hotels (Ajmal et al., 2010; Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Hadad, 2017; Josiassen et al., 2014; Mao et al., 2016; Pinho et al., 2012; Ruan, 2019; Salem, 2014; Sun et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011). At the same time, this thesis recognises the impact of standardising technology systems such as ERP and web technology in KM practice (Chae et al., 2014). As a case in point, the evolution and revolution of the internet of things and internet of everything (e.g., AI and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, etc.) enable content creation and exchange (Chan, Fong, Law & Fong, 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), while the emergence of big data seems to provide a greater volume of information than can be explored in KM. The current level of technology enables businesses to engage with local and international customers virtually. In contrast, although standardised technology such as AI adoption appears to be accelerating (Dahlbom et al., 2019; Wamba-Taguimdje, Wamba, Kamdjoug, & Wanko, 2020), the result of this study revealed that individual hotel employees have concerns about the use of AI in the hotel business as they feel AI may be limited when applying tacit knowledge to make guests feel hospitable. This confirms that technology infrastructure is not the be-all and end-all of KM (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000) and not all KM initiatives necessitate IT for acquiring and creating knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This can further be explained based on Pauleen and Wang's (2017) view that knowledge ecosystems such as big data and social networks may present challenges of control and management in KM due to their large volume of information.

The finding of this study indicates that technology stands to benefit knowledge acquisition and storage, with a technology push needed to enable access to volume of information and make hotel employees understand AI (Makowski & Kajikawa, 2021) and come up with ways to deal with any challenges that may hinder the access to AI, cloud computing and the abundance of knowledge from the internet (Almunawar, Islam, & de Pablos, 2022). On the other hand, this study extends knowledge by proposing that AI may pose a sociological challenge for

knowledge creation as it is not clear how trust can be created from AI. AI may reduce human capability and technological algorithms lack empathy and human judgement to create unbiased knowledge that can be applied to managing customer relations. Overall, the thesis proposes that an augmented intelligence of human reasoning and AI interactions may be required for an effective KM process in hotel CRM now and in the future, in line with Jarrahi's (2018) study. Jarrahi (2018) highlights the complementarity of AI and humans, explaining that while AI can extend human cognition to address complex things (by collecting, curating, processing and analysing data), humans can offer a more holistic, intuitive approach to decision-making and dealing with equivocality (i.e., they can negotiate, build consensus and rally support due when dealing with the conflicting interests of customers, policy makers and stakeholders) and uncertainty (making swift intuitive decision in the face of the unknown) in organisations.

Previous studies point out that motivating employees can enhance KM in an organisation (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This suggests it is beneficial to reward individuals for voluntarily and actively sharing knowledge (Disterer, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2013) because the absence of suitable incentives will most likely stop or decrease KM initiatives (Ajmal et al., 2010). In Ghanaian hotels, it has been found that apart from motivation, passion and commitment for work drives KM. Hotels need a passionate and committed workforce to be able to generate and utilise knowledge effectively. Passion is described as the 'fire of desire' that drives an employee's daily efforts (Cardon, Wincent, Sigh, & Drnovsek, 2009 p. 515) and an employee's commitment is critical for success (Baron & Hannan, 2005). Employee passion enables positive work and goal clarity, which in turn triggers commitment (Breugst, Domurath, Patzelt, & Klaukien, 2012). The interviews revealed that employees who are passionate and develop sense of commitment to duty are more willing to share tacit and explicit knowledge and collaborate to deepen social interactions with colleagues and customers, thereby enabling dependencies in tacit knowledge extraction and discharge of responsibilities. This finding appears unique as it has not been accounted for as a driver of KM process in the literature, making this a novel contribution to KM literature. The findings, therefore, suggest that passion and commitment to work is an important trigger for KM processes in the CRM primary activities of Ghanaian hotels.

Consequently, staff empowerment can also facilitate KM in hotels. In organisational management and KM efforts, senior management support and commitment (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) and good internal coordination (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) are important factors. In Ghanaian hotels, senior management support and good internal coordination alone are not

sufficient for KM. How staff are empowered to discharge duties matters a great deal because they constitute frontline, guest-contact, workers. This shows how important it is for organisations to empower staff to enable optimising performance (Okland, 2001). Meyerson and Dewettinck (2012) argue that empowering staff creates motivation and trust between staff and top management, which, in turn, eliminates boundaries. Rank-and-file staff across all hotels in the study context discussed the need for staff empowerment. This, therefore, should be considered one of the most significant internal drivers of KM, affecting employee knowledge level and the way in which employees behave towards customers in their interactions. When staff are empowered, it makes them more resourceful and willing to take risks to achieve organisational goals and vision (Pooratkari & Gbanbari, 2012). This agrees with the finding of Ajmal et al. (2010), who discovered that the lack of authority for employees to perform KM initiatives impeded business in Finland. This current study deepens our understanding that the current wavering business environment suggests the need to empower staff to be able to attend to customers and obtain knowledge from them promptly. Staff empowerment can thus be considered a KM facilitator as it allows staff to bring to bear their talents, knowledge and experience, and reach out to the customer more interactively to elicit their feelings and information before and during service encounters.

Respondents revealed that training is a fundamental driver of KM. Although hotels engage in numerous training programs, chain hotels regularly train to disseminate acquired and created knowledge among employees, which can influence frontline staff learning and performance regarding KM (Lan et al., 2022; Shamim, Cang & Yu, 2017). Independent hotels were different as training was more for hotel managers while rank-and-file staff seemed to experience training occasionally. Indeed, training has recently become more knowledge focused (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Although training enables education and development in an organisation (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Wang et al., 2006), this study contributes further by proposing more focused and intentional regular training for frontline staff in preference to managers training the staff on knowledge audits, best practice and transfer (Grant, 1996). This will enable staff to acquire and share knowledge and ideas of current trends, and subsequently engage customers in the best possible ways for easy and creative data and information collection, facilitating an effective KM practice.

The findings of the study also revealed that there are external facilitators of KM. Management, organisation and anthropology literature reveal that culture and organisational culture differ from one geographic location to another. Moreover, organisational culture is shaped by society

(Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984). Ghana is noted for its hospitable environment and communal living translating into a unique core KM driver: Ghanaian hospitality and relationship-building. Karlsen and Gottschalk (2004) report on how culture shapes beliefs about what knowledge is worth sharing, and Hofstede et al. (1980, 2010) conclude that cultural orientations, whether individualistic or collectivist, exist across societies. This shows that variations in assessment of KM practice may exist in different cultures (Hussinki et al., 2017).

At the time of writing, Ghana has been tagged in the international community as a hospitable country, and Ghanaian hospitality describes an informal and flexible interactive ability, warm friendliness and acceptance. This has the potential to elicit data, information and knowledge from customers. For instance, respondents reported that, in Ghana, 'Akwaaba' (denoting a warm welcome), a concept that welcomes visitors and guests with greetings, a friendly reception, generosity, helpfulness, kindness and neighbourliness, involves the business environment from the airport to homes. These are elements traditionally instilled in Ghanaians. Ghanaian hosts are expected to extend warm welcome and friendliness to strangers and intimate relations on informal and formal occasions, creating room for more consistent human interactions. This reflects feminine nurturing and caring behaviours (Compare countries, 2020). Ghanaians' warm welcome and caring behaviour becomes a way for hotels to consciously and unconsciously acquire knowledge of and about customers through frequent informal conversations. Knowledge gained and applied by hotels have a 'wow' effect on customers, especially foreign customers. This indicates that Ghanaian hospitable environment creates feelings of excitement and a sense of belonging, which can spark information and knowledge exchange between the hotels and their customers, especially foreign visitors. Therefore, understanding and exploring Ghanaian hospitality can further KM efforts in knowledge acquisition and creation. By extension, it can be seen that business enterprises that choose to be sensitive and harness their local cultural abilities, norms, flavours and values as working knowledge, managing and applying it to serve the customer in an authentic way, may stand a good chance at strengthening CRM.

Second, competitor marketing tactics is a driver of KM. This driver has been described by respondents as a 'competition check', whereby hotels attempt to collect information and knowledge about their competitors' performance either on social media or by in-person visits to competitors' properties. Anecdotally, KM seems to be argued as internal to an organisation as it may inform what an organisation does. However, KM, in practice, requires an understanding of driving factors beyond the organisation for success. A case study in the

ceramic and tile industry of the provinces of Yazd and Kerman in Iran show that KM that applies competitive intelligence and shares information obtained in an organisation allows different levels of management to think strategically and make better decisions about scheduling and production goals (Tooranloo & Saghafi, 2019). Although supported, the findings of this thesis indicate divergent views between hotel managers and staff on the impact of competition checking. Staff argue that checking the competition by viewing competitors' websites and social media activities (Cohen & Olsen, 2013) helps to obtain knowledge about competitors' quality performance, which can be incorporated into planning and marketing strategies. Meanwhile, managers argue that frequent competition checks could lead to copying blindly as KM ought to be hotel-specific, in that what works for one hotel might not work for another hotel. This study, therefore, contends that while knowledge of competitor tactics can be valuable to a certain degree, hotels should be mindful not to lose their own 'know-what' and 'know-how' identity that anchors their performance and differentiates them from competing hotels.

Government and industry association support also constituted external drivers of KM in this study. The hotel sector has always been supported by the GTA and government of Ghana. This support has mainly been supervisory (GTA's quarterly and annual spot checks and inspections of hotels to assess weaknesses, strengths, and knowledge to improve performance) and offered knowledge-base training including on product knowledge, marketing strategies, digital marketing knowledge and customer service knowledge, among others. According to Hameed, Nisar and Wu (2021), collaboration with external partners brings external knowledge to an internal system and adds value to customer relationships and service innovation. This is particularly evident in the knowledge support given by GTA and GHA to hotels to boost knowledge production in Ghana. Accordingly, these stakeholders act as support systems and are seen as influences that help hotels access industry knowledge, market research knowledge and customer service knowledge for handling and interacting with the customers. In this qualitative inquiry, government and industry support emerged as a uniquely external knowledge provider to nearly all the hotels in the study context. This enables Ghanaian hotels to add more knowledge to their knowledge catalogue for managing customer relations, helping them to resolve some of their operational problems.

5.4.2 KM Barriers

As it was presented earlier, barriers to adopting KM for managing customer relationships in the hotel context are complex in nature and most of the barriers revealed in this study seem similar to those previously identified in the literature. The majority of the findings revealed internal barriers, with few external barriers that influence KM practice.

All the hotels involved in the study emphasise several internal barriers and difficulties limiting KM practice. Inadequate communication among employees hindering knowledge acquisition and sharing is one of the foremost limitations faced by hotels practising KM in Accra-Ghana. Earlier findings on KM process barriers in organisations include poor internal and external coordination and communication, which can be a socio-organisational barrier (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Pinho et al., 2012; Sun & Scott, 2005; Wang et al., 2000). This barrier, internal communication, affects KM practice in places like Ghana. For independent Ghanaian hotels, this barrier may be profound when knowledge is not properly communicated to staff, and when staff might not understand instructions but choose whether or not to follow and apply the knowledge. The consensus among hotel managers and rank-and-file staff is that inadequate communication limits knowledge acquisition and application, degrading consistency in managing customer relationships.

In addition, independent hotels are particularly confronted with inadequate language skills in terms of a lack of professional ability to speak languages such as French and Spanish among staff, posing a barrier to acquiring knowledge from custom speaking these languages. Ghana is surrounded by francophone countries such as Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, La Cote D'Ivoire and receives French-speaking as well as Indian-, Chinese-, and Spanish-speaking customers. Previously, Bures's (2003) study on language use in organisations suggested that unintelligible language use among employees in an organisation may be a barrier to KM. This thesis finds, instead, that the absence of linguistic knowledge can lower the staff confidence and their ability to interact with such customers. This is consistent with a study on hotel employees in Thailand that found that people with high cultural intelligence (CQ) build competence in dealing with intercultural interactions and show organisational citizenship and discretionary behaviours (Afsar, Shahjehan, Shah & Wajid, 2019). CQ generates in hotel employees the capacity to understand and adapt interactions to accommodate cultural differences (Lam, Cheung & Lugosi, 2022). According to Earley, Ang and Tan (2006), there are four types of CQ: cognitive, metacognitive, behavioural and motivational. Cognitive CQ deals with an individual's general

knowledge of cultural beliefs, customs, practices, norms and values in a different cultural setting while metacognitive CQ implies one's ability to intentionally perceive and purposively identify, learn and examine the cultural norms of and knowledge possessed by others' cultures when interacting with them (Ang, Van Dye & Koh, 2006). Behavioural CQ emphasises the adoption of appropriate behaviours towards people of different cultures (Ang et al., 2007) through conversations and facial expressions or gestures (Earley et al., 2006), while motivational CQ encompasses an individual's efforts to learn and functions well across cultures (Ang et al. 2006). This thesis found that language, a cultural element, amounts to the absence of motivational CQ, posing a barrier that hampers employee's interactions with customers of different cultural backgrounds and limits knowledge acquisition and application in managing customer relations. Hence, the presence of CQ could be very important in KM practice. It is consequently essential for hotels to train employees in the languages of their key market sources.

The interviews also recognised that tall organisational structures hamper knowledge implementation efforts due to bureaucracy and hierarchies. Indeed, the rank-and-file staff of independent hotels indicated that knowledge acquired and created by staff must first receive management approval before implementation, resulting in delay, unlike chain hotels where employees are encouraged to exhibit their talents in managing customer relationships. Tall organisational structures present high levels of bureaucracy which thwarts efforts (Disterer, 2001) and can lead to the unintended consequences of hampering and limiting collaboration and knowledge-sharing across departments (Gold et al., 2001). This finding expands on Singh and Kant's (2008) findings in their literature review that the absence of organisational structure is a barrier to KM. In the case of Ghanaian hotels, it was realised that even when organisational structure is present, its tall, multi-level hierarchy can impede KM practice. The tall organisational structure of a hotel is therefore likely to limit its KM practice.

Nevertheless, both chain and independent hotels face the challenges of individual employees hoarding knowledge and resisting its sharing, which occurs because some employees consider knowledge sharing a secret revelation (Barson et al., 2000). Thus, some hotel employees become reluctant to share knowledge (Newnham & Dutt, 2022). When hotel employees seek uniqueness, job promotion, and control/power, they may regard knowledge as an individual asset and keep certain knowledge to themselves, because they may think that their futures depend on the knowledge they generate and use rather than what they share and teach others to generate (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). This limits knowledge sharing in the hotels. Sometimes, too,

the work environment can be competitive, and some managers may deem their knowledge to be their own asset, keeping their experiences to themselves so as to weaken any threat to their position. Simply put, individuals may hide knowledge to differentiate them from their peers in the labour market and increase both their job security (Barson et al., 2000) and mobility. This can derail KM to the extent that hotels may not be able to maximise the benefits of KM because implicit knowledge may never be shared. Thus, the outcome may be inconsistent service and ineffective customer relations management. This supports a recent study position that knowledge-hiding erodes a firm's innovative capabilities and the sustainability of its competitive advantage, and may not enhance KM visibility (Donate et al., 2022).

In addition, poor inter-departmental relationships create a gap in knowledge distribution (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Riege, 2005; Rosen et al., 2007) and a gap in awareness (Bures, 2003) in hotels if departmental rivalry and power plays emerge; this was an issue presented by the respondents in the study context. Individual employees may not make the much-needed difference in KM activities if teamwork is downplayed. The findings show that employees need to work as a team, while various departments (e.g., FO, SM, FB, Housekeeping) need to understand how to collect data from the guest through observation, guidelines and intentional interactions with guests. It supports Koseoglu et al.'s (2019) findings that there is no collaboration or guidelines on how to collect intelligence among employees in hotels in Hong Kong and that frontline employees should play critical role in competitive intelligence practice. Teamwork to enhance KM efforts would mean that various departments should be encouraged to collect structured and unstructured guest information, and be able to embrace information and knowledge insights drawn and made available by other departments from the customers. This is because employee involvement and effective management in competitive intelligence may improve day-to-day operations and performance (Koseoglu, Okumus, & Altin, 2019; Koseoglu, Ross, & Okumus, 2016).

Limited resources (i.e., human resource, finance and time) were identified as weaknesses that impede KM in Accra-Ghana. Human resource barriers in terms of staff turnover are a key issue in the study context, transcending hotels to affect the labour market in general. Local employees with good hotel work experience become highly visible in the labour market and get poached between chain and independent hotels, and some may leave for job roles in other industries due to higher pay and benefits. High staff attrition is a barrier to the implementation of KM (Singh & Kant, 2008), which leaves hotels unable to find suitable replacements. The hotels then burden remaining staff with workload and this extra burden can ultimately lead to

more attrition. Overall, some hotels in the study face significant levels of knowledge loss and leakage, and reduction in the storage of knowledge, which appears to weaken KM activities in these hotels. Staff turnover is comprehended as a main problem that increases the loss of important knowledge acquired by employees in the hospitality industry (Silva, Silva, & Martins, 2019).

Financial barriers also impede KM in Accra-Ghana. Findings show that many hotel owners may resist capital-intensive investments for fear of unpredictable outcomes. Although financial investment in technology appears good to respondents, obsolete technology was still being used, which slows KM efforts and presents drawbacks limiting or preventing KM operational efficiency and reducing more innovative KM programs in the hotels. Although lack of technological infrastructure and poor technical skill is one of the main barriers to implementing KM (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Ajmal et al., 2010; Chua & Lam, 2005; Pinho et al., 2012; Singh & Kant, 2008; Wang et al., 2006), this study found that some long-serving managers of independent hotels seem to prefer the manual approach over digital, perhaps due to familiarity with the traditional tools used. This suggests that the issue is not only about acquiring technology, but the willingness of the individual to use available technology in hotel KM practice. The interviews further revealed that new technology acquisition could come with costly training of employees in its use, while its inappropriate use could lead to wastage of the time and money invested in that training. This is an important finding, which provides the basis for hotels to effectively use their resources to update the relevant knowledge of their employees commensurate with any available technology use at present and in future.

Time constituted a barrier to KM practice in the study context, in line with previous studies (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Indeed, the present study disclosed that time is of essence to achieve KM in hotels. When there is a lack of time, employees of Ghanaian hotels (especially independent hotels) are torn between attending to customers and attending training sessions. Even when staff manage to attend the training, there is hardly any time to read and revise the explicit knowledge in the form of the training manuals, models and handouts provided, although management expect staff to revise training manuals in order to adopt specific knowledge and tools for their daily work. This could mean that any major new knowledge being introduced explicitly might not achieve the needed or desired outcome since employees may be too time-poor to read and know what it is.

Consequently, the uncertainty of KM application success is identified as a barrier to some independent hotels. The interviews revealed that the frequently changing needs and preferences of customers, coupled with the capital-intensive investment on technology and databases for KM activities, raise concerns around 'what if it does not work out as expected?'. Hotel managers and rank-and-file staff across some independent hotels believe that the customers' needs and behaviour change as they age, as the emotional and psychological states of the customer alter, in response to natural disasters, and as affected by societal and business dynamism at any particular time. Thus, knowledge obtained becomes obsolete with use as postulated in the field of management (Drucker et al.,1997), suggesting new knowledge acquisition, creation or generation at every material moment. To hotel managers, knowledge generation and management are endless processes, requiring continuous examinations and judgments to identify appropriate knowledge to solve organisational problems.

External KM barriers presented in the findings chapter included national culture affecting customers' behaviour, employees' behaviour, and the unwillingness of customers to share information. National culture in this context informs how people behave, act and think in society. As a result, it could be considered external to an organisation. Although it transcends the individual, it may influence their cognition and behaviour in organisations.

An interesting barrier identified is national culture affecting staff behaviour. How individuals think, react and behave can be influenced by their societal cultural values and norms (de Mooij,2017; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). In the study context, both chain and independent hotels encounter challenges socialising local employees into the organisational culture, the 'hotel way of doing business'. Some local employees seem embedded in their local culture of conflict avoidance (i.e., sometimes being silent, which shows a level of permissiveness or tolerance given to guests in a bid to please, respect and satisfy them), which may make it appear as though they are not doing enough to reach out to guest. This behaviour, although a 'cultural hospitality spirit', may sometimes limit data or information and knowledge elicitation from the customers. For example, some managers believe that some staff appear introverted and do not seem to interact enough with the customers, which does not augur well for information collection from guests. This cultural behaviour can be interpreted to be a lack of CQ because Afsar et al. (2019) found that in hotels, CQ will enable staff to raise their voice and be more interactive if they understand others' culture better. More specifically, there may be the absence of behavioural CQ as insufficient interaction with guests may demonstrate a seemingly negative behaviour towards people of different cultures (Ang et al., 2007) due to a lack of

verbal and non-verbal communication (Earley et al., 2006). Hence, the CQ identified in this thesis makes an important contribution to KM literature in managing customer relationships.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that hotels have recognised that the Ghanaian national culture affects the way both customers and employees behave, act, perceive, think and decide, which is similar to the effect of national culture in management, marketing and business literature (de Mooij, 2017; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). National culture impacts the Ghanaian hotels' operations in terms of workers' knowledge of cultural beliefs and religious affiliations and its attendant consequences on managing customer relationships, showing that nations are characterised by different behaviours and values (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), resulting in expected differences in their approaches to innovations (Choden et al., 2019). It is therefore important for hotel businesses to acknowledge that the Ghanaian culture of silence and conflict avoidance affects staff and customers' behaviour. They should also acknowledge the pitfalls of cultural insensitivity and find out how to immerse themselves in the culture in order to augment their business performance through KM. Failure to do so will have an untold effect on business performance given that Covid-19 has restricted international travel and hoteliers in most countries, including Ghana, are depending on local clients to stay in business.

Another key finding was that all hotels encounter challenges in eliciting appropriate data and information as customers are unwilling to share information due to privacy concerns. Most customers tend to preserve privacy, which inhibits KM within the hotel, especially knowledge acquisition and data storage. It takes precedence over the better functioning of KM. Although nearly all hotels enforce GDPR, PCIDSS and local rules and regulations to safeguard customers' data and information, most customers are hesitant to provide information. For instance, there are situations where customers do not want to share non-mandatory personal information, especially during check-in as some customers feel their details should not be recorded in the property management system or reservation books. More specifically, the local customers especially do not like to speak up on their service experience with hotels, even when asked. This means that hoteliers are unable to collect the appropriate data nor generate the right knowledge in managing these customers, and this failure could be damaging for the hotel. This finding shows the difficulty hotels face in ascertaining data and the specific requirements of the customers, the absence of which may create huge customer dissatisfaction as hotels may lack knowledge of their preferences, and it could amplify the negative consequences of losing customers without known causes. Cultural values could affect customers' unwillingness to provide information, especially locals, since conflict avoidance dominates their behaviour. A

similar result can be found in a previous cross-cultural comparative study that showed that culture affects customers willingness to share information in hotels as Chinese guests tend to forgive and forget while Americans guests seek remedy (Ekiz & Au, 2010). In other words, the result of this thesis indicates that the Ghanaian hotel market appears different from other markets, hence the need and warning to deal cautiously with customers (particularly locals) when eliciting data and information from them.

The dynamic nature of the hotel market has been revealed as a new barrier to KM in the hotel industry. Business organisations constantly face issues of changes in the business environment and to their competitiveness (Khumalo & Van der Lingen, 2017). Organisations and their management in the 21st century face relentless changes in the social and business environment due to the diversity and rapidity of changes that create volatility, complexity and uncertainty (Rimita, Hoon & Levasseur, 2020). Similarly, constant customer behavioural changes, and changes in the business environment at large due to issues like COVID-19, result in uncertainty and complexity that have bedevilled the Ghanaian hotel market and its KM practice. Dynamism therefore impedes identifying and capturing appropriate knowledge from the market to service customers daily in hotels.

5.5 Underpinning theory of this study and knowledge generation

The quest for competitive edge in an uncertain global economy appears to turn organisations increasingly towards KM (Handzic, 2003). Nonaka and Takeuchi provided an SECI model to aid organisations in their bid to create knowledge, and it appeared that the model, developed in the manufacturing industry, focused on describing human processes. Today's age of societal changes and technology use in business suggests that there are likely to be different knowledge creation processes for organisations. Importantly, previous scholars have criticised Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model for its lack of sound empirical grounding (Bratianu, 2010; Gourlay, 2006), inconclusive results (Farnese, Barbieri, Chirumbolo, & Patriotta, 2019), its limited universal validity and its controversial outcomes (Andreeva & Ikhilchik, 2011). This makes it imperative to assess the SECI model of organisational knowledge creation that emerged in the 1990s both in order to understand its relevance now and for hotels and the service industry to update their KM processes.

The results of this study suggest that the SECI model is sufficiently relevant to be able to augment Ghanaian hotel business performance in this modern, fast-changing society and business environment. Therefore, this study contributes to knowledge by filling the research gap Adesina and Ocholla (2019) established on the application of the SECI model in West Africa and by extending its application to the hotel business to understand how it works. Knowledge is susceptive to members' distinct cultural values and assumptions as well as its interpretation (Hosftede, 1984; Hong, 2012). The Ghanaian cultural norms and values appear to vary from other countries as femininity (caring for others) and high-power distance are practised in the country. This study did not assess the cultural effect on the SECI model implementation in the study context. Since hotels have standards to provide experience to customers, Ghanaian hotels knowledge conversion process was the focus of the study. In this view, the socialisation process appears highly practised in Ghana where human interactions dominate the hotel context. Hotels create knowledge through dialogue, observation, meetings, conversations with customers and by receiving training from internal and external organisations (Farnese et al., 2019; Nonaka, 1994). These acts constitute dynamic interactions that make knowledge creation and management (Farnese et al., 2019) at the hotel level easier. This results in frequent tacit knowledge flow and exchange among employees. Staff share experiences and technical know-how with colleagues and observe and imitate colleagues' ways of performing duties through interactions and in the hotel (Nonaka, 1994). This shows that the socialisation process is important and highly practised in Accra-Ghana, so hotels should pay considerable attention to this mode that facilitates knowledge sharing for effective KM. Regarding the externalisation process, this study reveals that tacit knowledge is made explicit through SOPs, handover briefings and databases where staff can access knowledge, confirming tacit to explicit knowledge conversion in the externalisation process (Nonaka, 1994). In line with Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), the combination process is observed to be practised by hoteliers perusing explicit knowledge resource libraries and centres such as industry reports, social media and the internet; they then convert this knowledge to produce secondary information such as SOPs and training models for the hotels. As shown in this study's findings, internalisation takes the form of staff training in Ghanaian hotels where knowledge is disseminated by internal (managers and expert staff) and external (Lobster Ink, Genius and Loophotel platforms, GTA, consultants) knowledge workers to employees. Employees obtain the knowledge and revise, read and practise through thinking and simulation in order to internalise it through practice and evaluation (Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001) to develop the judgment required in order to apply it in daily routines. The internalisation process appears to

be more frequent in chain hotels due to frequent training. For example, chain hotels have training departments solely responsible for providing frequent training to employees. The enablement of frontline staff to effectively access knowledge through training and internalise it for use in daily routines shows a subtle imbalance between chain and independent hotels. In the independent hotels, instructions are passed down from managers to staff for execution only occasionally. This shows that the SECI model is critical for business knowledge creation (Prompreing, 2021a) and employee collaboration in knowledge activities can increase their knowledge-sharing behaviours and KM practice (Prompreing & Hu, 2021b).

This thesis finding accords with the position adopted by Ngulube (2003), who investigated the application of SECI model to communicate and manage African indigenous knowledge (albeit not in the context of business) and who found the model applicable. Thus, in colonial African traditional knowledge management, socialisation occurred through riddles, folktales, songs, storytelling, proverbs and myths. Externalisation occurred through documenting images in the form of rock paintings and clay pots, and preserving artefacts for other people to retrieve the information. Combination occurred when a secondary form of knowledge was used to make another form of secondary knowledge; internalisation occurred when knowledge from artefacts, databases and documents was used to create new knowledge in a person's mind which can be transferred to other persons. However, this thesis assessed how the SECI model was applied in hotel knowledge creation or generation processes in Ghana. As the results of the study show, it is evident that knowledge can be created and transformed from one state to another without any particular order. Thus, knowledge creation could be managed using the SECI model in Ghanaian hotels as the model provides knowledge creation possibilities in the study context.

Interestingly and importantly, the findings of the study suggest that, based on how KM is incorporated in the six primary stages (i.e., prospecting, customer portfolio analysis, network development, value proposition and customer lifecycle management) of the CRM value chain, social media and the internet are playing key roles by providing stimuli for interaction and communication among staff and between hotels and customers. Across the globe, the growing importance of social media use has been recognised since the start of Covid-19, as it has become an important virtual community for the consumer decision-making process (Mason, Narcum, & Mason, 2021). This has heightened virtual community technology use beyond Covid-19 (Gretzel et al., 2020). This implies that in the service industry today, many consumers are tech savvy and frequently search for information and post comments and reviews on virtual

platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, TripAdvisor and hotel websites. For example, the emerging Facebook metaverse seeks a new era of social interaction enabled by the metaverse technology and appears poised to become the future centre of gravity for online social interactions (Kraus, Kanbach, Krysta, Steinhoff & Tomini, 2022) for the purpose of working, entertainment and gaming (Forman, 2021). With over 2.8 million users by 2020 (Facebook, 2021b), Facebook has a significant market and adoption potential (Needleman, 2021) and seems to inhabit the present and future with different technological developments (Velazco, 2021), adding to the ongoing virtual reality community interactions.

The point raised above shows that digitalisation has emerged as potentially common and interesting knowledge creation process for hotels and the service sector. Consumers' online footprint information is of value to businesses as it can be converted to actionable knowledge. In the study context, consumers' use of social media and the internet provides explicit knowledge to hotels-a new search for knowledge outside the hotel. In the international lexicon of communication theory and philosophy, this is argued to be digitalisation. Digitalisation entails the adoption or increase in use of digital or computer technology in an organisation and shows how many domains of social life are restructured around the convergence of different media (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). The authors found that scholars have recognised that digitalisation has facilitated the rise of globalisation and shaped the contemporary world beyond national borders. Thus, in a world of social media platforms, knowledge production has sprung up through the unique affordances of digital technologies and online media. This supposes that for the transmission, extraction and conversion of information and knowledge via virtual platforms, the SECI requires improvement because the virtual world has brought about potentially important changes in the way humans interact and how knowledge can be created or generated through the process of digitalisation. The thesis results suggest that it is a clear defect that the SECI model only explains knowledge conversion between individuals in organisations but does not address the knowledge conversion from online platforms or virtual communities between individuals and organisations and between organisations in the current digital age.

Data from the Ghanaian hotel sector provides evidence that human interactions are not the only route to knowledge creation. Digitalisation as defined earlier constitutes another method of knowledge creation. Digitalisation processes occur in the study context through the virtual community interactions whereby customers or other hotels convert their tacit knowledge into (explicit) comments and activities online. Hotels that seek knowledge tend to explore the online

explicit knowledge and convert it into tacit form for their own action; that is, they convert it from tacit-explicit from individuals and other hotels to explicit-tacit for hotels seeking knowledge from digital technology. Thus, hotels interact virtually with customers and also draw knowledge from competing hotels online. Right from the prospecting to the customer lifecycle management stage of the CRM primary stages discussed earlier, nearly all hotels employed websites and internet searches, online comments, reviews, and online newsfeeds to gain knowledge to create better products and manage customer relations effectively. This indicates a virtual community of practice which appears different to the physical traditional organisational interactions between hotels and customers and between hotels and hotels in the past. Overall, as hoteliers go online (using the virtual space of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google), they connect and collect customer comments composed of individual customers' or other hotels' experiences, beliefs and values, and make sense of them from the online environment. Meanings are derived through judgments to produce knowledge, which is used to reconnect with customers for meaningful relations and also to compete with other hotels. Therefore, the digitalisation process (how customers share and transmit knowledge and how hotels interact with, search for and acquire knowledge from online environment users), if added to the SECI model, could be an essential process for hotels and the service industry at large. Against this backdrop, the SECI should be extended to include the virtual world's knowledge creation or generation process, i.e., digitalisation, which may be the new virtual channel for transmitting and transferring knowledge. In this case, the SECI model becomes D-SECI, D standing for digitalisation. The researcher, however, notes and cautions that digitalisation may not follow the spiral process, but its role in knowledge creation or generation is indispensable because it enables individual and cross-organisation knowledge searches, transfers and sharing that produces and converts tacit-explicit knowledge from individuals and organisations to explicit-tacit knowledge for hotels, offering transformative possibilities to hotels. The result of this study, therefore, supports and extends Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model, showing that the SECI model prevails in Ghana's hotels' KM process, mixed with different types of tacit and explicit knowledge and an emerging digitalisation process to reach the growing virtual communities' engagements: thus, the model now becomes D-SECI (Figure 4.4), as shown in the findings. The digitalisation process observed can be applied in other contexts as customer and business interactions and exchanges through internet and social media use are common across the globe. Hence, digitalisation emerges as potentially common and interesting knowledge creation process for hotels and the modern service sector.

5.6 Framework for managing KM process incorporation in CRM primary activities

The results of the study demonstrate how KM processes are being incorporated in the primary activities of the hotel CRM value chain. KM aims to enable an organisation act as intelligently as possible to secure viability and overall success (Wiig, 1997). Figure 4.5 depicts the transition of knowledge in explicit, tacit, and multiple forms ranging through the prospecting to the customer lifecycle management stages of the primary activities of the CRM value chain. Tacit knowledge is predominantly infused in the first three stages of the value chain whereas different and multiple types of tacit and explicit knowledge are infused and interact in the last three stages of the value chain. Carlile (2004) and Rosenlund, Rosell and Hogland (2017) believe that different knowledge communities interact to produce a process of knowledge transfer and that knowledge processing, storage, technologies and retrieval are important to managing knowledge. The study findings suggest that examples of individual tacit knowledge are converted into organisational knowledge, aided by a prospecting e-guide to help hotels prospect and reach a broad spectrum of potential customers. Once customers are acquired, constant and continuous interactions among employees and between employees and customers are significant for collecting knowledge from and applying knowledge to customers in order to please them. A community of knowledge workers is formed whereby knowledge can be generated externally and internally to manage customers. Collation is ideal and brings to bear great insights, experience and skill to manage service encounters (Hameed, Nisar & Wu, 2021) and provide good experiences and create value for the customer (Lo et al., 2010).

The finding argues that the KM process in CRM is intersected by drivers and barriers. Consequently, hotel managers and staff should be willing to change current knowledge practices that impede knowledge generation and utilisation and be more willing to respond to the drivers of KM to enhance KM visibility in the hotels. The finding extends the literature on KM in the hotel context by presenting a harmonious interplay between KM and CRM as a 'game changer' for hotel businesses. The finding highlights a complex picture in that multiple types of knowledge can be acquired, created, managed, used and stored simultaneously or consecutively as they are required in the CRM primary stages. It suggests that constant search, observation, scrutiny, judgments, and expectations (Wiig, 1993) are crucial to producing the appropriate knowledge for sound action (Mach et al., 2020), because complexities and variables are rife due to constantly changing internal and external environments (Okumus et al., 2020). More specifically, the hotel level, the individual level and the external environment

all present varied drivers and barriers, with national culture affecting how the KM process can play out in CRM primary activities. The framework for managing KM process incorporation in CRM primary activities was thus developed (See: Chapter 4 Figure 4.5).

5.7 Summary of chapter

This chapter has presented a discussion of how KM is incorporated in the primary activities within the CRM value chain in hotels in Ghana. The chapter started with a discussion of how KM and CRM were understood by hotel industry practitioners vis-à-vis previous literature. Hotel managers' interpretations of KM in this study largely substantiate existing literature as the KM process is commonly perceived as collecting, storing and managing customer data as well as managing intellectual capital. It records that some hotel practitioners also considered KM as managing product knowledge as they believe it is as important as managing hotels' guest-related and task-specific knowledge. The inconsistency in hotel practitioners' understanding of KM corresponds to the fact that KM is a complex phenomenon, and its actual meaning remains subtly debatable among academics and industry practitioners.

KM processes of knowledge acquisition, knowledge storage and knowledge use are found to be incorporated across the six primary stages of the CRM value chain while knowledge creation was specific to value proposition and customer lifecycle management stages of the CRM primary activities. KM practice is dominant in the network development, value proposition and customer lifecycle management stages due to multiple types of knowledge acquisition and use. All the KM processes in CRM primary activities are influenced by the contextual factors of facilitators and barriers. This study discovered that the primary activities of the hotel CRM value chain begin with prospecting, which enables hotels to reach suspects and through knowledge application turn suspects into prospects and then into customers. This extended the current knowledge of the CRM value chain and how KM is adopted in newly identified primary activities from previous literature: prospecting provides new knowledge to understanding some categories of prospects in KM (e.g., the top producers, the mid-range producers, and the small producers). Furthermore, it is evident that multiple types of knowledge are utilised in the three activities of value proposition, network development and customer lifecycle management in the CRM value chain. And two knowledge types – professional knowledge, and academic knowledge– were newly identified. Again, contrary to pre-digital studies that believed tacit

knowledge is the driver in organisations, this study has found that explicit knowledge is an emerging strong driver in the customer portfolio analysis stage of CRM. External and internal knowledge sources were found to be relevant to obtaining knowledge in managing CRM primary activities, with the internet and social media playing pivotal roles. It was realised that chain hotels (with regional and global support offices) have more access to knowledge resources including knowledge acquisition and creation compared to independent hotels in the network development stage of CRM. Again, in an effort to accommodate customers' special needs, chain hotels have created an 'open menu' option in which customers are 'free' to order 'anything' not in the menu, thus going above and beyond standard KM practice.

Through the exploration of how the SECI model was being practised by hotels to generate knowledge in managing customer relationships, this study found the SECI model broadly applicable in Ghana and learned that the socialisation process in practice has very high impact on hotels' CRM. In addition, the results of the study have proven that the SECI model must be extended to include the important process of digitalisation to become the D-SECI model as the adoption of technology and digitalisation of knowledge increase.

Regarding the perceived importance of KM in CRM, the study supports previous studies' view that KM enables competitor intelligence, creates effective value through service personalisation and enables brand visibility. Unlike some previous studies that doubted the practical benefits of KM, the findings of this research shed light on some KM benefits (although KM seems bedevilled with uncertainty of application success in one independent hotel), as it emerges as a great source for informing facility and product improvement and aiding the effective and efficient use of financial resources in hotels. This study has also identified emerging (new) knowledge ecosystems (e.g., big data and social media) that have the potential to affect the KM efforts in the hotel industry, congruent with very recent KM literature on big data, digital transformation and AI.

In terms of the contextual facilitators of KM, the study supports previous studies' position that training and technology are drivers of KM. At the same time, although very recent literature professes AI to be a potential technological infrastructure for KM, this study contends that AI must work alongside human labour to create the hospitality that customers need as the service industry seeks to create a warm, caring and hospitable interactive environment for customers. In so doing, this study expands the literature. While technology, training and communication are strong drivers of KM identified in existing literature, this study identified new drivers of

KM not previously recognised, including passion for and commitment to work, competitor tactics, and government and industry association support. Although 'competitor tactics' is noted as a strong driver, the study cautions practitioners to avoid copying competitors' tactics blindly.

Inadequate communication, organisational structure, financial barriers, time, the unwillingness of customers to share information due to cultural values, and individuals hoarding knowledge are all KM barriers found by this study and in previous literature. To them, this study contributes language (involving employees and customers), uncertainty of KM application success, the dynamic nature of the hotel market, and employee poaching between chain and independent hotels as barriers to KM practice. Culture in the form of CQ has been identified as both a facilitator and a barrier that plays a significant role in Ghanaian hotels' KM practices and, as such, the Ghanaian culture of hospitality and relationship-building is pivotal to the success of its KM. For example, Ghanaian culture affects staff and customer behaviour. A new framework for managing KM process incorporation in CRM primary activities has been developed to augment hotels' KM efforts.

The discussion points of this study answered all the objectives of this study. Notwithstanding the context of this study, the findings may present some generalisation for hotels abroad. By understanding this hotel management and employees can acquire and create knowledge to meet the demands of customers. The next chapter (6) summarises and concludes this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter constitutes the final chapter of the thesis. This chapter will revisit the problem statement, research questions, and objectives of the study; presents the summary of the thesis, followed by a discussion of theoretical and practical contributions, limitations, future research directions and the researcher's concluding remarks.

6.2 Summary of research problem, questions, and objectives

Although young, KM has grown into a discipline. CRM on the other hand has been in the limelight denoting managing of customer relationships in the service industry. As an emerging area of research in the hospitality and tourism industry, only a few empirical studies on KM exist as opposed to in other fields. Current discussions on KM point to the role of technology and people in creating competitive advantages for companies. At the same time, some scholars argue that the understanding of KM lacks consensus and its application in organisations may not yield meaningful results. As a people's business, it is understood that managing customer relationships plays an important role in creating value for the customers and the business; yet the adoption of KM processes in various CRM primary activities in the hospitality literature has not been adequately examined. As such, given the limited current state of knowledge on this aspect, the study aimed to understand how KM process is adopted in CRM value chain primary activities in Ghanaian hotels. There is a great need for empirical KM research in the hospitality context to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of KM in hospitality (Cooper, 2018; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008). In Ghana, chain and independent hotels, staffed by locals and expatriates, face fierce competition in managing customers. Further, NTDP (2013-2027) seeks high level of customer patronage in hospitality enterprises by the year 2027 (GTA, 2019, 2020). Given that there are different categories of hotels (chain and independent), there may be different approaches to KM practices. It is valuable to explore how competing hotels can improve their business performance by employing KM, thus understanding how and to what extent Ghanaian hotels may have incorporated KM processes into their CRM primary practices and the contextual factors facilitating or hindering the adoption. To address the

academic research gap and industry need, the overarching research question was: how does KM shape hotel CRM primary activities in Accra Ghana? The research question was divided into: (i) what is the importance of the KM process for CRM in the Ghanaian hotel sector context? (ii) how do hotels in Ghana apply the KM process (knowledge creation, acquisition, and use) in the primary activities of the CRM value chain and particularly investigate if the SECI model of knowledge creation is applicable? (iii) what are the contextual influences (facilitators and inhibitors) on KM in the hotel sector of Ghana? (iv) What theoretical framework can be developed to explain how KM can be incorporated in CRM primary activities? The answers to the sub-questions answered the main research question as well as the objectives.

Ensuing the enumerated research problem and questions above, the main objective of the study was to: examine KM process adoption in the CRM primary activities in Ghanaian hotels. To address specific issues, the central objective of the study was sub-divided into four specific objectives: (i) to explore the importance of performing the KM process for CRM in hotels in Ghana; (ii) to identify and analyse how hotels in Ghana apply the KM process (knowledge creation, acquisition and use) on CRM value chain (primary) activities; (iii) to examine the contextual influences (facilitators and inhibitors) on the KM process in the Ghana hotel sector and to discuss how hotel experience of managing knowledge has changed overtime in the last five years; and (iv) to develop a theoretical framework for managing the KM process in CRM primary activities. Following this logic, chapter one provided the background and problem statement (including the research objectives and questions), chapter two presented the literature review, chapter three provided the methodology and methods engaged (qualitative inductive and deductive in-depth semi-structured and observation interviews based on purposive and snowball sampling of 36 FO, SM and FB managers and rank-and-file staff of three-to-five star hotels in Ghana) through constructionist interpretivist approach, chapter four reported on the findings and chapter five presented the discussion.

6.3 Thesis summary

Based on the constructionist interpretive exploratory approach, this study investigated the adoption of KM process in hotel CRM primary activities. It was found that CRM value chain primary activities may only be fully realised when KM process of knowledge acquisition,

creation, storage, and use are integrated with it, which enables the hotels to conduct data mining, text mining, evaluate customer value, preferences, and complaints to aid marketing planning, product management and personalisation of customer service (See: Table 4.6). Most importantly, the acquisition and storage of knowledge can affect the level of knowledge of a hotel and employee access to and application of this knowledge in managing customer relationships can enhance the overall performance of the hotel.

All hotels collect information about clients' which provide the basis for the determination of client's behaviour in managing the CRM value chain primary stages. Thus, a successful CRM requires deep knowledge of the customer (Garcia-Murillo & Annabi, 2002). For most hotels, knowledge acquisition, storage and use the processes to enhance their customer relationships. Knowledge acquired could be tacit or explicit in nature, thus hotels' employees having in mind (tacit) where particular clients come from and need, and sometimes too hotels codify this knowledge in manuals or store in computer systems or database (explicit) to constantly remind employees of clients' needs. All participants interviewed in the study had a perception that they needed knowledge about clients in order to determine behaviour and deliver differentiated quality products and services to meet client needs. Knowledge about clients could be gained through government policies and news on new business enterprises in the country, customers, and the hotels experience, social media and the internet, industry reports, and expos. These demonstrate that KM is perceived to be important to all hotels in many ways. An important finding was that although there has been technology revolution, some long serving managers seem to prefer the manual approach to digital, perhaps due to familiarity with the traditional tools used. Other managers raise ethical concerns about how technology such as AI can provide hospitable moment to guests since COVID-19 lockdowns that saw people breaking COVID-19 protocols revealed how humans long for warmth, love, and hospitable interactions with one another. This raises concern about how promptly such managers can take advantage of the knowledge world through technology and AI to manage customer relationships.

Five critical aspects that derail KM in hotels are communication, employee behaviour of knowledge hiding, and national culture affecting staff and customer behaviour, customers' unwillingness to share information and the dynamic nature of the hotel market. One of the challenges hotel operators face in rendering service to customers is communication. Communication appears to be a global problem. Hotel operators really need to be able to communicate effectively with customers almost instantly and provide the right information to colleagues and to the right customer in the right space of need at that particular moment the

customer requires. It will help prevent knowledge ambiguity and obsolescence. Regarding knowledge hiding, if the staff are not motivated enough and unwilling to share their experiences and knowledge, then knowledge cannot be shared, and no meaningful knowledge can be obtained from internal trainings to enable consistency of quality service and managing relationships. Staff being encapsulated in the national culture of conflict avoidance may risk losing vital information and knowledge collection from customers. Also, customers not sharing information impedes the hotels' ability to determine their exact needs in order to avoid mistakes. There may be a huge failure if hotel operators are unable to arrest these impediments.

This study has several new findings. Prospecting as the first stage of the CRM primary activity value chain in the study context. Further, contrary to previous studies, this research found that explicit knowledge from social media and technology appears an emerging primary driver of hotel KM, hence technology and digitalisation are critical to supporting real-time decision making alongside excessive human efforts nowadays. In addition, some of the study's findings on the contextual influences of KM have not been identified in previous studies. Facilitators different from previous literature include CQ, government and industry association support (external environment), and competitors marketing tactics (internal environment)-it is deemed so because KM has been viewed as an internal resource within the hotel. Second, the new barriers of KM include unwillingness of customers to share information (external environment) and uncertainty of KM application success (internal environment). The professional, and academic types of knowledge identified also constitute new types of knowledge discovered in this study.

The outcome of this study presents a KM process in CRM primary activity theoretical framework in the context of a developing country-Ghana. KM process provides tacit and explicit knowledge across six different CRM primary value chain for managing customer relationships. The Ghana hotel market is considered the hospitality hub of Africa and presents a flavour to the international community as a peaceful and welcoming destination. The SECI model is extended to become D-SECI, applicable in Ghana and may be transferable to similar comparable context due to the rigorous data collection process of interview and observation (i.e. multiple data collection instrument used) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and rigorous process of data analysis (i.e. interviewees validated the result), which minimised the researcher's biases and subjectivity (Creswell, 2018; Turner et al., 2017), and enabled thick descriptions of the result (Geertz, 1973).

6.4 Contributions of the study

The findings of this study made some significant contributions to knowledge and hold practical implications. These theoretical and practical implications are presented below.

6.4.1 Theoretical contributions

Firstly, this study fills the research gaps left by Cooper (2018), Hallin and Marnburgh (2008) and Lo et al. (2010) by elaborating on how the KM processes of knowledge acquisition, creation, storage and use are integrated in each CRM primary activity. In contrast to previous studies that view CRM and KM separately, this study combines these two concepts to understand their integration in the hotel context. Hotels are concerned about how KM can be effectively developed and incorporated into their CRM primary activities. KM is eventually considered a core process and requirement in each of the primary stages of the CRM value chain. A deeper understanding of how KM process is incorporated into CRM primary activities and its effects on hotel performance contributes to the literature on the role of KM in customer centricity, which emphasises the application of knowledge based on contextual customer needs. For example, the Ghanaian hotel market distinguishes itself from other African markets by focusing on warmth, friendliness and human interactions. Therefore, hotel employees and customers show different behaviours, and understanding such differences can help identify those behaviours that can either enhance or disrupt knowledge generation.

Secondly, this study adopts, evaluates and uses the SECI model to understand if and how KM is being incorporated into CRM primary activities. The application and assessment of this model offer potentially profound insights into the KM process in hotel CRM activities. Ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches have modified the SECI model to include digitalisation and subsequently give birth to the D-SECI model, which shows how 'KM meets technology and digitalisation' in the modern society and economy. In sum, digitalisation may be a harbinger for present and future service businesses to explore the plethora of knowledge from human and technology platforms.

Thirdly, this study highlights that dominant KM processes and multiple types of knowledge are identified at the last three stages (i.e. value proposition, network development and managing customer lifecycle) of the CRM primary value chain, which may inspire other

researchers to approach the model or its other aspects from alternative angles to further nourish future research. Two new types of knowledge (i.e., professional and academic) are also discovered to expand our understanding of different knowledge types and their use in KM.

Fourthly, this thesis empirically extends the framework of Buttle (2004, 2015) for CRM primary value chain activities by including prospecting as the first stage of the CRM primary activities of hotels. At this stage, different KM processes are used to acquire customers. In other words, prospecting shows how KM transforms potential clients into customers and how they are managed and onboarded to the customer portfolio analysis stage.

Fifthly, the proposed integrated framework for eliciting KM adoption in CRM primary activities breaks the traditional model that focuses on tacit knowledge activities and simultaneously contributes to research on the KM practice of Ghanaian hotels and the service industry. Appendix J presents some examples on how each KM process is implemented in each CRM primary activities. This framework can further be developed to evaluate the extent to which hotels engage in KM in managing their customer relationships.

Sixthly, this study identifies the contextual factors or facilitators that influence KM adoption in managing customer relationships. Enlightening ontological knowledge is obtained by providing insights into how Ghanian hotels view KM drivers. Although the influential factors of KM may be applicable to other management processes, this study focuses on the integration of KM into the CRM primary activities of hotels because these activities greatly differ from other industries' requirements (Bouncken, 2002; Min & Hu, 2022). Company trainings and competitor market tactics are the most widely mentioned hotel internal and external KM process facilitators, respectively. This study expands the literature by identifying novel elements of KM process facilitators (e.g., Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building, government and industry association support and passion and commitment to work) from a developing country and highlights the need for collaboration with knowledge workers and communities in the KM domain.

Seventhly, this study identifies some barriers to KM adoption, amongst which organisational structure (at the hotel level) and CQ affecting staff behaviour (at the individual level) are the most influential internal contextual barriers, whilst national culture affecting customers behaviour and their unwillingness to share information are the most influential external barriers. This study provides a holistic perspective by proposing that the values and norms of cultural groups can be identified and differentiated (de Mooij,2017; Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

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In this case, this study may be replicated in other societies to understand how they socially construct KM or how their cultures contribute to KM adoption in CRM.

Lastly, this thesis offers methodological contributions. To date, KM research has mostly relied on surveys and secondary data (Serenko, Bontis, Booker, Sadeddin & Hardie, 2010). By contrast, this study applies the qualitative approach of constructionist interpretivist paradigm, which combines purposive and snowball sampling, deductive and inductive approaches and observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews to investigate the KM processes in CRM primary activities. This methodology provides deep insights for answering the research questions and achieving its objectives. This study may be amongst those few to adopt a qualitative method in investigating KM (Serenko et al., 2010).

6.4.2 Managerial implications and recommendations

Some practical implications and recommendations for chain and independent hotels are also provided. Practically, this study draws insights from hotel managers and rank-and-file professionals about the desirable configurations of KM in CRM primary activities for managing customers, improving competitiveness and ensuring sustainability.

The organisational and operational implications, human resources implications and technological implications of this work are outlined below.

Firstly, encapsulating the KM process in CRM primary activities and highlighting the contextual influences and importance of KM can guide the development of a theoretical framework for an effective KM-CRM practice. Hotel managers should focus on how individuals, groups and organisations can affect the 'integrated process' or interconnectedness of knowledge processes in CRM primary activities, which would shed light on the tacit and explicit knowledge that can be merged in corporate business environments. Such knowledge is relevant to practitioners seeking an in-depth understanding of the KM processes dominating the CRM primary activities of Ghanaian hotels.

This study also transforms conceptual KM processes into different activities that can be implemented by practitioners in the CRM value chain. The findings can guide hospitality practitioners in understanding those KM processes and activities that help them manage their customer relationships (Appendix J and K). Hoteliers can also benefit from a better understanding of the KM facilitators and barriers in CRM. The diverse range of drivers and

barriers of KM identified in the literature may confuse hoteliers as to which one is central to the KM process in CRM primary activities. The findings of this work can inform hoteliers about the appropriate facilitators and barriers to the implementation of KM processes in hotels. Hotel managers can embrace (by investing their time, money and energy) these facilitators to contribute to the success of their hotels whilst minimising the barriers. The D-SECI model can also offer a deeper understanding of knowledge creation or generation in CRM. Hotels need to create, acquire store (as knowledge resource centres) and apply knowledge due to its potential to strengthen their CRM.

Secondly, per the African proverb 'ubuntu' (i.e. 'I am because we are'), hotel managers should empower their employees to exhibit their knowhow and talent when serving their customers and learn more, share and constantly apply their knowledge in their daily duties. These employees should be inspired to show passion and commitment to their work to promote teamwork and knowledge sharing. Also, providing frequent knowledge-based trainings to employees has great capacity to create a hotel knowledge memory to produce knowledgeable workforce. CQ and national culture can also affect staff and customer behaviour. Knowing the societal norms and values governing the way of life of people can help managers adjust and propose ways of identifying potential employees, onboarding new recruits and hiring staff with high CQ.

Third, technologies may provide a critical support for enhancing KM in hotels. However, such resource can be difficult to acquire due to limited finances. Hotels should acknowledge that the society evolves with time. Nowadays, customers tend to use digital tools to discover products and experiences and provide instant feedback through social media channels. Accordingly, hotels should use technology platforms as consumer distribution channels to receive instant customer feedback and obtain real-time insights about their customers' behaviour and preferences. Hotel owners and managers should recognise the benefits of technology and acknowledge the need for change according to their hotels' requirements. Social media has become a prominent platform for hoteliers in using big data to manage their customers. Hotel managers may use other big data systems, such as AI and cloud services, to achieve high-speed data acquisition, analysis and storage and to realise a data-driven decision making. However, hotels should not abandon the traditional mode of human interactions, which remain their major channel of providing hospitable, caring and warm services that meet the psychological, physiological, sociological and emotional needs of their customers.

Several recommendations for both chain and independent hotels in Ghana are also presented as follows.

Firstly, hotels should enhance communication amongst their staff and between their staff and managers given the importance of communication for the daily operational activities in KM. Constant and effective communication in hotels can minimise uncertainty and motivate the commitment and involvement of employees, hence leading to pertinent information and knowledge sharing and exchange (Husain, 2013), which enable the staff to draw on creative ideas and knowledge when communicating with their customers. Frequent open communication can trigger the sharing of new ideas across the hotel and promote continuous learning. Therefore, knowledge sharing behaviour can affect employee learning and performance (Prompreing & Hu, 2021b). As the D-SECI model informs human and digital knowledge creation sources, hotels should complement human interactions with more advanced technologies, such as AI, to make intuitive decisions during the moment of truth and to swiftly collect and analyse high volumes of data (Jarrahi, 2018) that can help them manage a generation of tech-savvy consumers and expand their market coverage (Makowski & Kajikawa, 2021).

Secondly, hotels should strengthen their human resources through training and retention strategies, which would minimise or eliminate barriers, such as staff turnover, poaching and language. A successful execution of KM processes largely depends on the frontline staff as they often interact with colleagues and customers. Therefore, hotel policy and practice should create exit barriers to retain employees and benefit from their acquired knowledge and experiences. For example, hotels may introduce long-term labour contracts coupled with appropriate motivators, such as incentives, regular promotions and talents recognition and awards. Motivating staff is critical to induce voluntary and active knowledge sharing and use (Kim & Lee, 2013). Hotel managers can enhance KM amongst the frontline staff by influencing their learning and performance (Shamim et al., 2017).

Thirdly, hotels should organise more knowledge training activities and advocate KM. Frequent and more knowledge-focused trainings (Alavi & Leidner, 2001) can contribute to employees' knowledge audits, best practices and transfer abilities (Grant, 1996). The training departments and department managers of Ghanian hotels should consider designing more KM-focused training programmes to inject a common KM vision and passion into their staff and enhance their proficiency in data collection and knowledge acquisition, creation, storage and use. These

outcomes, in turn, can enhance the KM and motivate employees to act as knowledge workers. Advocacies, including interdepartmental conversations during breaktimes, job rotations, inter-hotel quarterly and annual knowledge generation retreats and weekly and monthly or quarterly KM newsletters, can help promote the flow of knowledge and cognitive activities. The flow of oral and documented information across departments can trigger an enormous ripple effect that can break cultural biases, resolve conflicts amongst employees and customers and facilitate the implementation of KM processes in CRM primary activities.

Fourthly, hotel managers should create additional job portfolios, such as Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO), in the long term because converting data into information and then into knowledge is a challenge that requires knowhow (Borodako, Berbeka, & Rudnicki, 2021). At the property level, only chain hotels may have quality and sustainability managers, whose roles in KM may seem unclear as their core responsibilities include quality goods delivery and waste management, respectively. To reap profits from their effective use of KM in CRM primary activities, Ghanian hotels should establish a long-term goal of creating CKO or KM Manager roles or establishing a Research and Knowledge Analysis department that specialises in knowledge analysis in order to navigate the dynamic nature of the hotel industry. A CKO can orchestrate KM programmes and be accountable for the knowledge framework (Earl & Scott, 1999) of hotels to maximise the returns in KM investments.

Given the diverse workforce of Ghanian hotels, their managers should employ staff with a high CQ. Hotels should assess, recruit and employ staff with a potential to develop good CQ to deal with customers from all backgrounds, send their staff to international training programmes to further improve their CQ (Costers, Van Vaerenbergh & Van den Broeck, 2019) and instil in them an in-depth passion to learn about one another's cultural backgrounds to accommodate cultural differences (Afsar et al., 2019; Lam et al., 2022). For example, learning about the Ghanian culture of people behaviour can prevent personal biases and create a unified team for KM. Hotel managers should also design policies and procedures that integrate CQ to increase the sensitivity and compassion of their staff to divergent behaviours, perceptions and opinions. Doing so creates a culture of harmony and promotes healthy competition amongst staff, hence bolstering their confidence in their interactions, communication skills and knowledge sharing (i.e., eroding knowledge hoarding) and inspiring their creativity, strategic thinking and KM efforts.

Hoteliers should take advantage of the 'branding' of Ghana as a hospitable destination (i.e. the Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building drive the KM process in Ghana) and focus on eliciting feedback from their customers through formal and informal conversations. By interacting with their customers at any length, hotel managers and staff can easily solicit an abundance of customer knowledge that would help them stay competitive.

Hotel managers and owners should invest in technologies and encourage their adoption in the workforce. Technology plays a crucial role in developing knowledge for dealing with customers (Machado et al., 2021). For instance, the Internet of Things and big data can significantly increase the competitiveness of companies by providing them access to large amounts of data (Di Vaio et al., 2021). Ghanaian hotels should further employ enterprise resource planning (ERP) and embrace AI to frequently capture and analyse large volumes of data, especially considering the tech-savviness of modern consumers. ERP data analysis can also generate knowledge, identify problems and improve KM efficiency (Acar et al., 2017). Meanwhile, AI can rapidly analyse large volumes of information about potential and existing customers and about competitor activities from social media, the internet and the business environment, thus enabling faster decision making (Jarrahi, 2018).

6.5 Limitations

As in any research, this study has some limitations in which caution needs to be taken when interpreting the results. These limitations provide the basis for future research direction.

The study was conducted in Ghana by interviewing employees and managers of three-to-five-star hotels. The results cannot be generalizable to hotels in other locations because the cultural and social norms and values of the employees and mangers can shape the knowledge management processes adopted in the hotels. The other limitation pertains to COVID-19. Although the study initially sought to explore about 10 hotels with 60 participants, due to COVID-19 protocols and restrictions, only seven hotels with 36 respondents agreed to participate in the study. Each hotel had a lean workforce with fewer staff in each shift. This resulted in busy work schedules for the few staff at post. The interview participants were occasionally called to attend to customers and returned to continue the interview, due to time constraint. In this view, time constraint on participant's part and their COVID-19 protocols and restrictions as well as interruptions during interviews, limited the number of interview

participants. Since the data collection was conducted when the whole world, in particular the hospitality industry, is under the impact of COVID-19, the findings may be reflecting how COVID-19 has impacted the way the hotels adopt knowledge management in managing customer relationships. The managers' views on resources planning and allocation may be affected by the challenging business environment under the doldrum of COVID-19. Furthermore, the researcher was faced with the challenge of access to hotels' performance data such as their occupany and average daily rate data, monthly or annual financial reports, and customer satisfaction survey reports. The researcher had wanted to obtain these data to assess the outcomes of the application of KM in the CRM value chain activities. Due to the confidentiality of the financial and business performance data, participating hotels were not able to share that information. Despite these limitations, the data collection methods of interviews and observations were deemed appropriate, as it captured the views and actual behaviour of the employees and the mangers and generated thick and rich descriptions for the analysis. And the research objectives have been achieved.

6.6 Future research

Given this study's focus on how the KM process is being incorporated in CRM primary activities, and the limitations pinpointed, it is necessary for further studies to be conducted. To that end, it is recommended that future study on the subject matter should focus on the Northern part of Ghana to unpack if and how budget hotels incorporate the KM process in CRM primary activities.

Further, it is suggested that future studies include hotel occupancy and financial records to understand how hotels are performing in relation to the extent to which KM processes are being adopted in the CRM primary activities. In the course of the analysis of the barriers to KM process, it was found that poaching and labour turnover was a challenge; therefore, it may also be interesting to investigate knowledge protection – that is, how hotels, or the service industry more generally, sets rules to regulate and protect knowledge boundaries. It is also suggested that future studies adopt a quantitative approach to assess to what extent the different KM processes are being implemented in the CRM value chain activities and to determine the impact of the facilitators and barriers on KM implementation and business goal attainment. Given that the hotel industry in Ghana is faced with poaching and staff attrition, it will be interesting to research how to manage knowledgeable employees.

Another future research avenue may be to analyse the complementarity between KM and AI and how their interaction can generate value to both customers and hotels. The KM process in CRM primary activities framework developed and D-SECI model of knowledge creation can be tested in different context to ascertain its generalisability. The cultural embeddedness of Nonaka's SECI model has long been questioned in prior literature (Glisby & Holden, 2003; Gourlay, 2006; Hong, 2012). In view of the study's unique context, one possible area that can be further explored is how the institutional conditions in Ghana can affect SECI model's local application, thus furthering the universal and particularistic debates of knowledge management (Örtenblad, 2014). Finally, a future direction for research on SECI model would be to compare the diverse patterns of knowledge process in both domestic and foreign operations of hotels (i.e., devise an international comparative study) (Hong, 2012).

6.7 Final Remark

The study has demonstrated the complexity and uniqueness of KM process in CRM primary value chain for hotels. More precisely is the fact that KM is being incorporated in CRM interfaced with tangible and visible drivers and barriers than was thought initially. There are internal and external knowledge sources besides the customer that are knowledge generating points for hotels to strengthen their CRM in managing customers.

The findings answered all the research objectives and questions regarding if and how KM is being incorporated in CRM. The identification of context-specific influences of KM were very interesting and ought to be regarded as critical influences of KM process in CRM. By and large, the researcher believes that the study findings has enhanced the understanding of how KM is being incorporated in CRM primary activities in this under-researched context.

6.7.1 Researcher's Personal reflections on the PhD journey

This section provides a recount of my research experience taking into cognisance the fieldwork, data analysis, and the outcome of the thesis. Through the lens of a reflective-narrative framework, my engagement with the informants of this study reveals that a lot of patience is needed in order to elicit more information from respondents during interviews. A lot of in-depth information was collected, and the researcher has learned through the interviews that

patience, calmness, and perseverance and appreciating the interviewee at every stage before, during, and after the interviews are triggers of a good interview and pave the way for follow-up interviews. When the researcher made follow-up interviews, and most respondents were responsive. Also, through the use of member checking to confirm the findings, it was identified that one respondent had moved to a new company which may provide support for frequent labour turnover or poaching finding observed in the study. This observation may have been missed if extra steps were not taken to follow up on the respondents.

During the data analysis, the researcher after transcribing the data did not immediately create a framework for analysis, which got him conducting analysis beyond the scope of this study's objectives due to messy data. The researcher had to pause and re-conduct data cleaning and worked out a framework based on the study's objectives, and that paved a clear way to analysing the data. This took the researcher a lot of time to get through analysis and the writing of the findings. The comments and suggestions of my supervisor helped shaped this thesis, and the researcher learned that both mind frame and paper frameworks are essential to productive qualitative data analysis.

The PhD journey was full of highs and lows for me as I had to combine it with managing my family (wife and children in my home country, which is of a different time zone-8 hours difference precisely, so many sleepless nights to enable me to provide telehealth (e.g., virtually babysit our newborn son, give emotional support to mother and baby and all that), but I still enjoyed my PhD. Sadly, soon after my oral exam, I received the news of the sudden demise of my father, Hon Robert Bakah Wavei… Quite a challenging PhD journey for me!

Academically, I learned a lot and obtained good life lesson and counsel from my supervisor, professors, and staff. I learned how to question things and do my best to answer interesting questions. I am now even more interested in KM theory wanting to also bring more awareness to theory building and practice through future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research information sheet for participants

An Investigation into the Adoption of Knowledge Management in Hotel Customer
Relationship Management Value Chain in Ghana

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Ernest Balutie Wavei and I am undertaking research at the School of Hotel and
Tourism Management (SHTM)-Hong Kong Polytechnic University. This study will investigate
the concept of knowledge management (KM) process on CRM value chain in hotels (see
subject matter above). KM is crucial in business performance whereby it enables knowledge
acquiring, planning, storing/documenting, sharing and applying both customer and company
data to give the hotel a competitive advantage. In particular, KM process (acquiring, creating,
filtering and using knowledge) is key in organizations because it creates or acquire or capture
knowledge to allow for survival, market intelligence and competitive advantage(s). KM
involves knowledge created or acquired and controlled, knowledge saved, shared and used as
information to give your hotel a competitive edge over its competitors. In view, I am interested
in getting a better understanding on how KM process (acquiring, creating and using new
knowledge) is performed on the CRM value, and the importance of KM in your hotel. The
study also seeks to understand the facilitators and inhibitors/barriers of KM in your hotel, and
how knowledge has changed in your hotel management over the last five years. The findings
or results of this research will be used to inform your hotel of the measures that can be taken
in order to improve CRM value chain and minimize negative outcomes within the hotel sector.

To enable relevant findings, this research involves gathering the views, perspectives and
opinions of you, because of your experience as a department manager/supervisor. As a result,
I would greatly welcome your assistance in allowing me to interview you. The interview will
be face-to-face-one-on-one and will last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. It will be recorded
and then transcribed later.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and if for any reason you do not wish to participate or continue, please free to decline. Confidentiality and anonymity will be applied in this research as the transcribed data will only be used for the purpose of this research, and data may also be used for academic publications and conference presentations. You will be required to complete a consent form to indicate your willingness to participate or otherwise in this research. To the knowledge of the researcher, there is no known risks involved in this research interview and your participation once again, is purely voluntary.

Should you require further information before participation in this study, please feel free to contact my research director, Dr. Ada Lo at ada.lo@

I would like to thank you in advance for your assistance with this research and I am looking forward to interviewing you soon.

Thank you!!

Ernest Balutie Wavei

PhD Candidate
School of Hotel and Tourism Management
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
17 Science Museum Road
TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

APPENDIX B

Participation Consent Form

Research study title: An Investigation into the Adoption of Knowledge Management in Hotel Customer Relationship Management Value Chain in Ghana

Please answer the following questions by ticking the right box (response) that apples.

YES   NO

a. I have read the information sheet for this research and have had details   ☐   ☐
    of the research study explained to me

b. I understand that I may ask further questions at any point for answers   ☐   ☐

c. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I may   ☐   ☐
    Withdraw from participation at any given point

d. I wish to provide information under the ethical guidelines (confidentiality   ☐   ☐
    and anonymity) set out in the information sheet that I have read

e. I wish to participate in this study   ☐   ☐

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____   Date: _____

Contact details:
_____

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

Researcher's contact details:

(Refer to information sheet)

Interview sample questions and literature sources

Concepts	Sample questions	Resources
Experience of the manager/supervisor	How many years have you been working in the F&D, M&S, F&D, KM/CRM field?	
Understanding CRM	What is your understanding of CRM? What role do you and your staff play in managing customer relationships?	
KM process within the hotel sector in relation to SECI model	Based on the operation of your department, what kind of knowledge is needed to manage customer relationships? Follow up: Explain how your department acquires, documents and applies knowledge? Explain the lay down process or procedures that your hotel or department follow in creating, acquiring and using knowledge	Gold et al. (2001); Grover and Davenport (2001); Gronau (2002); Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

Concepts	Sample questions	Resources
Applying KM in CRM value chain	How is knowledge made available or accessible to your department for use or application? How does your department access customer data, records and transactions? How do you identify, attract and retain customers in your hotel? Follow: what do you use the customer data or record for? Do you use a customer past data and record in marketing and service provisions? How do you do it?	
		Buttle (2015), Lo et al. (2010)
	Do you measure customer value? How?	Garrido-Moreno et al. (2015)
	Have you heard of KM and CRM integration? Will you consider integrating KM and CRM? How? Why? What would you say are the operational improvements in your hotel since you started creating, acquiring and using knowledge in customer relationships?	
		Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez
KM importance	How (in what ways) does knowledge acquisition and use benefit your hotel operations?	and Sabherwal (2004); Gold et al. (2001); Holsapple and Singh (2001).

Concepts	Sample questions	Resources
	In what ways does KM give your hotel a competitive advantage over other establishments? What hotel or department challenges/problems has knowledge creation, acquisition and use helped to address in your hotel?	
KM facilitators	What knowledge types can facilitate customer relationships and create value for both the customer and your hotel? How does your hotel practice knowledge creation, acquisition, retrieval and sharing?	Cooper (2018)
KM inhibitors	What are some challenges you have encountered with regards to knowledge creation, acquisition and use in your department? Follow up: How does your existing organizational culture affect knowledge creation and use in your hotel? How does the Ghanaian culture affect your knowledge creation,	Compare countries (2020) Hofstede (1980)

Concepts	Sample questions	Resources
	acquisition and use in managing customer relationships?	
Changing dynamics of society and knowledge	Has your knowledge in managing customer relations changed over the past five (5) years? How? Why? Follow up: What are some ways this change in perception has affected your operations or decisions? In what ways is your department or hotel encouraging knowledge retention among employees?	Tomlinson (1976)

Demographic questions:

1. Name of Respondent/participant
2. Gender
3. Age (Year of Birth)
4. Job position/portfolio
5. Number of years in current role
6. Number of years in hotel work in general

Thank you!!

APPENDIX D

Sample letter from GTA to the hotels

Appendix C-Sample letter from GTA to the hotels

Ghana Tourism Authority

HEAD OFFICE: No. 2, Haile Selassie Street, Ridge P.O. Box GP 3106, Accra
GhanaPost GPS: GA-053-3602 **TEL:** 233-0302-682601/8, **FAX:** 233-0302-682510
EMAIL: info@visitghana.com **WEBSITE:** www.visitghana.com

GTA/HRD/PF -106

12TH FEBRUARY, 2021

THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
LABADI BEACH HOTEL
ACCRA

Dear Sir/Madam,

RESEARCH PROJECT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT VALUE CHAIN IN GHANA

The Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) presents its compliments and wishes to introduce to you Mr. Ernest Balutei Wavei.

Mr Wavei is a staff of GTA and currently pursuing a PhD at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management-Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He is undertaking a research which investigates the concept of Knowledge Management (KM) process (acquiring, creating, filtering and using knowledge) on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) value chain activities in hotels in Ghana (see subject matter above).

We shall therefore be grateful if you could assist Mr. Wavei with this important research by granting him access to your hotel as well as participate in the interviews to be conducted.

This research ultimately has potential benefits for the Hospitality and Hotel sector of Ghana as the findings or results will be used to inform your Hotel of the measures that can be taken in order to improve the CRM value chain and minimize negative outcomes within the Hospitality sector.

The research is intended to start in **March 2021.**

We wish to thank you in advance and count very much on your co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

KWASI ANIM-LARBI
HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCE
FOR: AG. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

OMI   WTC   BIC   Member, United Nations World Tourism Organisation

APPENDIX E

Sample research acceptance letter from a hotel-1

Appendix D-Sample research acceptance letter from a hotel-1

HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCE

FOR AG. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

GHANA TOURISM AUTHORITY

APRIL 12, 2021

Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: RESEARCH PROJECT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT VALUE CHAIN IN GHANA

Reference to your letter dated February 12, 2021 requesting us grant **Mr. Ernest Balutei Wavei** a PhD student in Hong Kong access to Golden Tulip Accra Hotel to conduct interview with some selected staff.

Management hereby grant him permission to conduct his interview for his academic purposes and we require of him not to request for any figures from our staff during the interview session.

Thank you and best regards.

Yours faithfully,

GOLDEN TULIP ACCRA

Stephane Robert
General Manager

CC: Human Resource Department

Glahco Hotel & Tourism Dev. Co. Ltd,
Golden Tulip Accra, Liberation Road,
P. O. Box 16033, Airport, Accra, Ghana
Tel: +233 0302 21 31 61   Fax: +233 0302 77 53 60
info@goldentulipaccrahotel.com,
www.goldentulipaccrahotel.com

Playtime. Anytime.

Researcher's thank you letter to hotels

School of Hotel and Tourism Management

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

17 Science Museum Road, TST East

Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR

19th July, 2021

The General Manager

Golden Tulip Accra Hotel

Accra, Ghana

Dear Sir/Madam,

RESEARCH PROJECT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ADOPTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN HOTEL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT VALUE CHAIN IN GHANA

Thank you for participating in the research project- **"An Investigation into The Adoption of Knowledge Management in Hotel Customer Relationship Management Value Chain in Ghana"**. Through your approval of my request to conduct the research project with your hotel, and the participation of managers and staff from the FO, SM and FB departments of your hotel in this project help in the ongoing efforts to strengthen hotels customer relationship management value chain through knowledge management in Ghana hotels' business, in order to achieve both competitive advantages and professional success.

The research project represents an important strategy for Ghana to strengthen its hotel industry in the midst of changing clients' needs, changing business environment and dynamic society. You have made a significant contribution to the success of this research project; indeed, I could not have done it without you.

Thank you again for your participation, and I am looking forward to working with you in future.
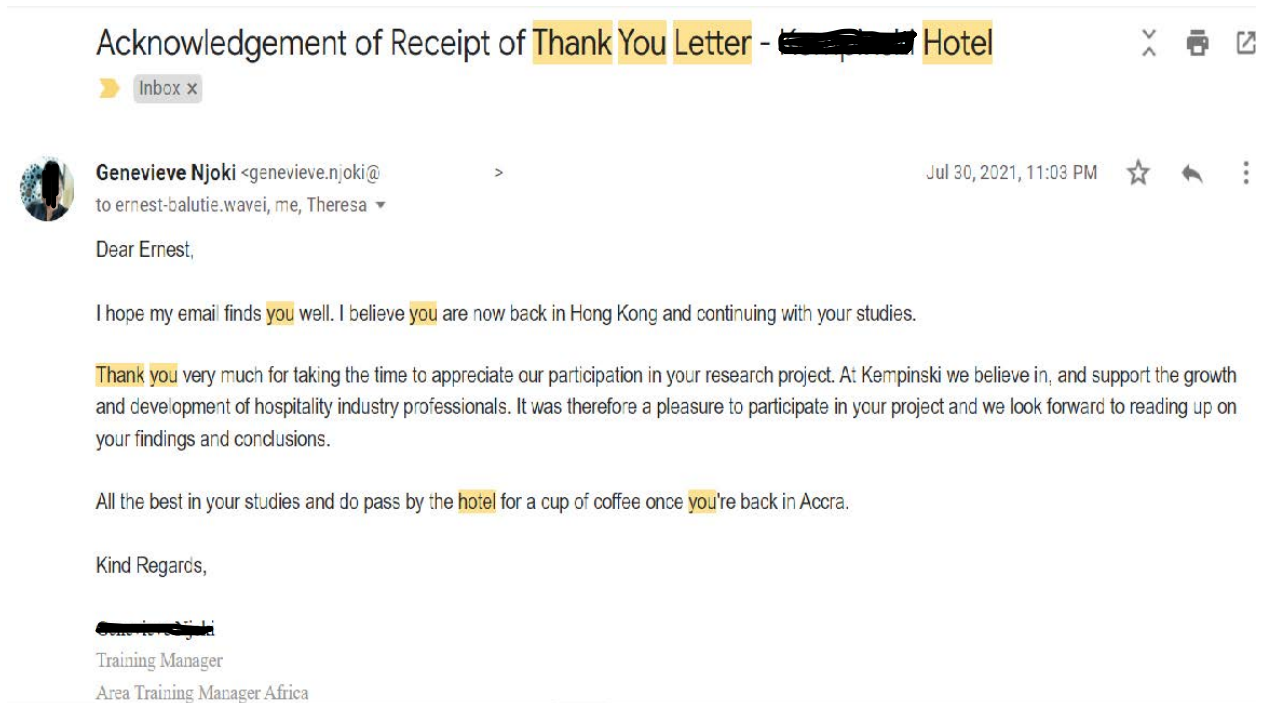
Regards

Ernest Balutie Wavei

PhD Candidate

Cc: The HR, Golden Tulip Accra Hotel

    The HR, Ghana Tourism Authority Head Office

APPENDIX G

A hotel acknowledgement of the researcher's thank you letter

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Thank You Letter - ▬▬▬ Hotel

Inbox ×

Genevieve Njoki <genevieve.njoki@   >   Jul 30, 2021, 11:03 PM
to ernest-balutie.wavei, me, Theresa

Dear Ernest,

I hope my email finds you well. I believe you are now back in Hong Kong and continuing with your studies.

Thank you very much for taking the time to appreciate our participation in your research project. At Kempinski we believe in, and support the growth and development of hospitality industry professionals. It was therefore a pleasure to participate in your project and we look forward to reading up on your findings and conclusions.

All the best in your studies and do pass by the hotel for a cup of coffee once you're back in Accra.

Kind Regards,

▬▬▬▬
Training Manager
Area Training Manager Africa

Note: Respondents/participants consent forms and interview transcripts can be requested via email: ernest-balutie.wavei@

APPENDIX H

Note to participants to review the research findings

Topic: An investigation into the adoption of Knowledge Management (KM) in Hotel Customer Relationship Management (CRM) value chain in Ghana

(For participants' review)

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for your participation in my research project titled: An investigation into the adoption of Knowledge Management (KM) in Hotel Customer Relationship Management (CRM) value chain in Ghana.

Further to our conversation over the telephone this morning (28 January 2022) regarding the summary of main findings, please find the attached (summary of findings) for your perusal and validation. These findings present the common understanding of all interviewees in this research project in Ghana. Please feel free to comment in disagreement or agreement with the findings.

I look forward to your feedback.

Thank you for your continuous support.

Overview

This study aims to investigate KM process on CRM value chain in hotels. KM is deemed critical in business performance whereby it enables knowledge acquiring, planning, storing/documenting, sharing and applying both customer and company data, which may have potential competitive advantage benefits. In view, this study seeks a better understanding on how KM process (acquiring, creating and using new knowledge) is performed on the CRM value, and the value it creates in your hotel amid the facilitators and inhibitors/barriers of it and how knowledge has changed in your hotel management over the last five years. The findings

or results of this research will be used to inform your hotel of the measures that can be taken to enhance your CRM value chain and minimize negative outcomes within the hotel sector.

To enable relevant findings, this research gathered the views, perspectives, and opinions of hoteliers, because of their experience as a department manager/supervisor and rank-and-file staff in 3-4-5-star hotels. A voluntary semi-structured face-to-face-one-on-one interview was conducted which lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 20 minutes with each participant in each hotel. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and thematically analysed using NVivo 12 software. Ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity were observed and applied in this research to avoid any potential harm to participants.

The findings highlight value of KM to hotels, knowledge creation, types, storage and use in hotel CRM value chain as well as the facilitators and barriers to KM guided by SECI model with Ghana national culture interplay.

Research Findings:

A. KM meaning:
1. Customer knowledge acquisition and management
2. Technology management
3. Product knowledge management
B. CRM meaning:
1. IT system
2. Process of activities to satisfy clients
3. Building loyalty

C. How KM process is being incorporated in CRM primary activities in Ghanaian hotels:

S/N	CRM value chain	Meaning	Knowledge management processes			
			Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge use/manage data	Knowledge storage/retention
1	Prospecting	Searching for potential customers			Identify suspects and turn into potential clients	In the minds of employees (tacit).

							E-learning prospecting guide (explicit)
			Knowledge management processes				
2	Customer portfolio analysis	Customer identification through data analysis				Profiling individual and corporate account information	Documented in databases and books (explicit)
3	Customer intimacy	Bonding with customers				Create personal bonding with customers	In the minds of employees
4	Network development	Internal stakeholders (Hotel management, customers) and External stakeholders (e.g., customer service and knowledge trainings from GTA, Lobster Ink etc.)				Applied professional knowledge to enhance operational efficiency and market performance	Documented in SOPs, and in the minds of employees
5	Value proposition	Convenient location, variety of hotel facilities (e.g., conference venues) available personalized services to customers etc				Utilized to enhance products and services customization	Codified in knowledge repository of property management system, and in the minds of employees
6	Manage the customer lifecycle	Journey of transforming a potential customer				Use to move hotel from survivability to prosperity	Codified in knowledge repositories such as

			Knowledge management processes			
		into an actual customer (e.g., mystery guests and loyalty programs, butler service etc.), complaints resolution, and knowledge acquisition, storage and daily use.			by reducing cost in looking for new customers	easyPMS, ids, opera software databases, reservations book, and in the minds of employees

Knowledge acquisition: Bookers (companies) and e-commerce, Company market research and competitor intelligence, Government policy, Internet and Google, Prospecting and Scouting, Conference expos, Industry reports, Studying the society and clients behaviour, Media and new papers, Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc), YouTube, Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Hotel Association, ReviewPro, Expedia, Booking.com, Individual staff initiatives and networking, OTAs and local travel agencies.

Knowledge creation

Evaluations, discussions and judgments of ideas and information.

Knowledge use and management

Knowledge storage and retention

Knowledge types: Product knowledge, Environmental knowledge, Social media and digital understanding, Customer knowledge, Academic knowledge, Professional knowledge, Guest relations or customer service, Hotel industry knowledge, love the job/passion, Bloggers and influencers, Technical knowledge, Covid-19 protocols (hygiene and safety) mindset of customers, High-tech and smart service.

How to retain knowledge: Management supervision and spot checks, Software data storage and electronic display and WhatsApp, Manual data storage, Standard operation procedures (SOPs), Company trainings and constant communication

D. Role of KM in managing customer relationships:

- Increase customer base and revenue
- Competitor intelligence
- Inform facility and product improvement
- Increase brand visibility
- Service innovation and personalization
- Efficient and effective use of resources

KM Facilitators: *Internal (organizational) facilitators:* Company training, Technology and resources*,* Effective communication, passion and commitment for work, and Employees empowerment.

External (environmental) facilitators: Ghanaian hospitality and relationship building, Competitor's marketing tactics, Government support, and Industry association support.

KM Barriers: *Internal (organizational) barriers***:** Inadequate communication among employees, Inadequate language skills**,** Organizational structure, Individual employee behaviour of knowledge hoarding and resistance, Poor inter-departmental relationships, Limited resources, Uncertainty of KM application success, National culture affecting staff behaviour, dynamic nature of the hotel market.

External (environmental) barriers: National culture affecting customers' behaviour, Cultural insensitivity, and Unwillingness of customers to share information.

APPENDIX I

Feedback from the informants

Feedback from informants

<u>GTAG3 SM Executive</u>

I absolutely agree with your findings regarding Knowledge management adoption in hotel CRM value chain in Ghana. Below are some examples based on your findings for your information:

- Prospecting: Looking for potential customers who are not yet our customers
- Customer Portfolio Analysis: Analyzing the current and future value of customers for developing a balance customer structure through effective resource.
- Customer Intimacy: Tailoring and shaping products and services to fit an increasingly fine definition of the customer.
- Manage the customer lifecycle: Managing by acquisition, conversion, retention, royalty etc in order to be competitive. Resolution and implementation (Seeking customer feedback, strengthen your team, using CRM Platforms and leveraging multi-channel servicing).

On the other hand, I agree that all those highlighted was perfectly explained as practice.

<u>GTAG4 FO staff</u>

Thank you for involving me and my organization in your research. It was a great privilege. From the analysis and findings sent I can say you did a great job and I commend you for that. I must say you have enlightened us on knowledge management and Hotel customer relationship management. Your findings are a true representation of the data collected about our KM practice in the hotel. Great job.

<u>KGAG5 FO staff</u>

I have reviewed it, findings accurate. Good job.

<u>GTAG5 FB Manager</u>

Thank you for sending to me the summary of the research findings. I read it; it's an interesting piece of work. I think it's ok.

<u>ARAG5 SM Manager</u>

Hello please I have gone through the summary of your research findings, and everything is fine.

KGAG2 FB Director

Well done!! I just spent some time reading it. Concise and precise.

LPAG2 FO Staff

It's ok.

MGAG2 FO Manager

The findings are solid. It will be interesting to read details of your report discussion, and statistical analysis of the data gathered, if any.

OPAG4 FB Supervisor

Food and beverage service is different from other industries that produce or offer products and services at a fee because it satisfies one of the important physiological needs of customers that is hunger and thirst. It increases tourism awareness and provides knowledge about food and beverage all over the world. Impacting knowledge either by training or through demonstration is very important. Knowledge of good communication skills increase customer relation in the hotel.

OPAG6 SM Manager

It is important to manage customer lifecycle to reduce the case of looking for new customers. We provide value through innovation intended to make our products attractive to customers.

ARAG6 SM Executive

Ohkk noted. Please I'm no longer working with this hotel. I'm now with a different company not a hotel and my schedules may not permit me to get back to you. Thanks for understanding.

KGAG6 FB staffPlease, am out of town receiving treatment as I have been sick and on leave for some months now. I'M out of Accra now for treatment. Please contact some of my colleagues. My apologies on reverting late.

APPENDIX J

List of items representing how each KM process is being implemented in each CRM primary activities.

This can be further developed as an instrument to assess the extent that hotels are engaging in KM in managing their customer relationships in future study.

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
Prospecting	▪ Carry out environmental scanning to identify unstructured knowledge sources and access to suspects including tradeshows/conferences, government poly direction, media, internet etc ▪ Management takes steps and use experience to extract knowledge about suspects from staff	-	▪ Store knowledge as e-learning prospecting guide for easy access ▪ Encourage staff to keep unstructured knowledge in their minds (tacit)	▪ Develop persuasive language and knowledge for targeting suspects ▪ Group suspects into family, business, and social groups for easy identification and managing relationships ▪ Apply knowledge to turn suspects into potential customers (prospects)

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
	▪ Sales and marketing team conduct market intelligence to understand the business environment and suspects background information ▪ Informally converse or interact with suspects to explore tacit knowledge about suspects potential preference and behaviour ▪ Explore explicit knowledge from digital technology (e.g. internet and google analytics) and social media (Facebook, Twitter,			▪ Categorize prospects into high producers, mid-range producers, and small producers, in order to know which category of prospects to channel more energy in managing relationships

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
	Instagram, YouTube) search and comments by suspects			
Customer portfolio analysis	▪ Explore tacit and explicit knowledge from customers check-in information ▪ Analyse customers behaviour and preferences to acquire knowledge ▪ Note customers' complaints and extract knowledge ▪ Harvest explicit knowledge from customers online comments (e.g. social media)	-	▪ Store knowledge in databases such as opera, IDS, logbooks etc ▪ Encourage employees to keep knowledge in their minds for ready use	▪ Use knowledge to segment customer market for value creation and effective management of customer relationships ▪ Identify customer specific knowledge and use to customize service for each customer ▪

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
Customer Intimacy	▪ Obtain market intelligence about customers and identify knowledge of their bonding behaviours ▪ Cultural intelligence	-	▪ Store knowledge in databases such as opera, IDS, logbooks etc ▪ Encourage employees to keep knowledge in their minds for ready use	▪ Use knowledge for spontaneous interactions with customers to keep customer in the know that the hotel is ever ready to make him/her happy ▪ Train to instil knowledge in all guest-contact staff to be able to bond effectively with customers to encourage retention. ▪ Apply knowledge of cultural intelligence to build interactions and

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
				managing relationships
Network development	▪ Collaborate and partner with internal knowledge workers such as hotel owners, management, employees and customers to acquire knowledge through suggestions, proposals, and novel ideas sharing ▪ Collaborate and partner with external knowledge workers such as hospitality online learning platforms (e.g., Lobster Ink hospitality), consultants, industry	▪ Based on the tacit knowledge garnered from internal and external stakeholders, merge the different types of knowledge (tacit and explicit) acquired to create a new form of knowledge suitable for daily operations or a particular need ▪ Create knowledge from the training manuals and models	▪ Store knowledge as standard operating procedures (SOPs), manuals, notes for access ▪ Encourage employees to keep knowledge in their minds for ready use	▪ Merge multiple types of knowledge and use to manage customer relations ▪ Map out a knowledge-based customer journey relationships management ▪ Appy knowledge in knowledge-based tasks

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
	associations and government.	received from collaborators ▪ Based on the explicit knowledge from stakeholders and the tacit knowledge from experience with customers, create knowledge suitable for the hotel's present and future use		
Value proposition	▪ Conduct continuous market sensing to identify knowledge trend of customers preferences and behaviours	▪ Hold hotel-wide meetings to discuss individual's experiences and situational encounters with customers to create knowledge	▪ Store knowledge in manuals, logbooks, intranet etc ▪ Encourage employees to keep knowledge in their minds for ready use	▪ Use knowledge to create products to fill a need better than similar products on the market to enhance customer retention.

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
	▪ Hold staff meetings and discuss among staff to come out with appropriate knowledge with regards to modern fashion to target and manage customer relationships ▪ Acquire high cultural intelligence	▪ Merge diverse types of tacit and explicit knowledge identified to create a new form of knowledge ▪ Employees brainstorming, discuss, and provide judgments to shape knowledge acquired		▪ Use knowledge to stay responsive by creating videos and online persuasive communications of new hotel's products to create customers' awareness and induce interest ▪ Apply knowledge to provide personalized or tailor-made service for customer ▪ Apply knowledge of cultural intelligence to provide products that appeal to the cultural needs of specific customers

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
Manage the customer lifecycle	▪ Acquire customer knowledge from internet and explicit knowledge from customer reviews online platforms including ReviewPro, TrustYou, TripAdvisor. ▪ Acquire knowledge of and about customers from social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn ▪ Acquire customer knowledge from	▪ Staff discuss customers practices and pass judgments on appropriate knowledge to manage customer relations. ▪ Hotel employees to merge multiple types of tacit and explicit knowledge to create new knowledge suitable for a task ▪ Employ individuals and groups experiences with	▪ Store knowledge in databases such as EasyPMS, IDS, opera, intranet, logbooks etc. ▪ Encourage employees to keep knowledge in their minds for retention and ready use purposes	▪ Use knowledge to create above and beyond KM practice to cater to and satisfying the special needs of customers as well as managing customer relationships ▪ Apply knowledge to offering customers products and service personalization and timeliness ▪ Use knowledge for continuous teaching and learning by

CRM value chain primary activities	KM process			
	Knowledge acquisition	Knowledge creation	Knowledge storage	Knowledge use
	informal and formal interactions with customers ▪ Acquire high cultural intelligence	customers to create new knowledge		employees to enhance their customer relationships management capabilities ▪ Use knowledge of cultural intelligence to understand customers cultural practices and values in order to enhance interactions and managing relations

Appendix K

How hotels can use the findings of my study to enhance their adoption of KM in managing customer relationships: Summary of findings in layman's terms

My study assessed how knowledge management (KM) can be combined with customer relationship management (CRM) value chain to manage customer relationships in Ghanaian hotels. Findings from hotel managers and employees showed that CRM entails the establishment and maintenance of relationships with customer. More importantly for industry, the focus is on maintaining a relationship that retains customers. Since the goal of CRM is to get every potential, new and repeat client to come back, CRM has the following core activities:

- Prospecting: looking for potential customers who are not yet your customers
- Customer Portfolio Analysis: analysing the current and future value of customers for developing a balance customer structure through effective resource

- Customer Intimacy: tailoring and shaping products and services to fit an increasingly fine definition of the customer

- Network Development: partnering and collaborating with different stakeholders to provide value for customers

- Value Proposition: differentiating your products from the market to gain competitive advantage

- Manage the Customer Lifecycle: managing by acquisition, conversion, retention, royalty etc in order to be competitive. Resolution and implementation (Seeking customer feedback, strengthen your team, using CRM Platforms and leveraging multi-channel servicing)

CRM is highly successful when it is combined with KM. KM entails the gathering of information and know-how from the market. It involves the collection of data and information (knowledge/know-how) about a customer inside and outside the hotel, synthesizing it and using it to better manage that customer in future or to improve your services to customers with similar expectations. In Ghanaian hotels, KM occurs through the following processes: knowledge acquisition (identify and capture knowledge that exists inside and outside the hotel/facility from employees, customer reviews/comments, internet, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook,

YouTube, e-commerce, Google analytics, OTAs, local travel agencies); creation (generate new knowledge from the captured knowledge inside and outside the hotel through brainstorming, discussions and evaluations by managers and employees to identify useful knowledge); storage (codify and document the information and knowledge acquired and created in technological databases (such as easy PMS, IDS, Opera) and books for reference and accessibility to employees; and use (carry out activities to ensure that knowledge is applied for its benefits). For example, most hotels apply their understanding of hotel market, potential and existing customer information from Google analytics and observations about Ghanaian attitudes and behaviour to identify interested people and turn them into potential customers. Hotels also profile individual and corporate account information to help them offer personalised products and service to customers.

Combining KM and CRM leads to many benefits, including efficient and effective use of hotel resources to satisfying specific customer needs, retaining customers, improving products and the facility, roping in more revenue, and conducting market forecasting and segmentation. Although Ghanaian hotels combine KM and CRM to attain some level of success, attaining maximum success requires hotels to pay attention to several factors that can drive (facilitate) and hinder (limit) the effectiveness of KM. In Ghana, the drivers of KM in hotel business operation includes the frequent training of employees. Such training enables employees to acquire and share knowledge and skill, use technology databases (e.g., easy PMS, opera, IDS) to store information, learn best practices (from competitors, government agencies, industry associations and consultants) and communicate effectively. The training also seeks to empower employees to think and act as well as motivate them, instil in them a sense of passion and commitment to share knowledge with other colleagues and apply the Ghanaian culture of hospitality (warmth and friendliness) to foreigners in order to wow customers. The barriers to KM include the following: bureaucracy, communicating poorly/inadequately to employees, the hoarding of information by employees, the unstable and changing dynamics, inadequate time to understand existing knowledge in the hotel and the unwillingness of customers to share information due to data protection.

Since KM influences CRM success, it is important for hotel managers to employ mechanisms that help them apply KM on CRM meaningfully and beneficially. The following recommendations have been outlined to help hotels to effectively combine KM and CRM:

- Ensure constant and effective communication in hotels to minimise or eradicate uncertainty and gain employee sense of commitment and involvement to dialog and share knowledge with colleagues.
- Empower employees through consistent training (e.g., Lobster Ink) and advocating knowledge sharing and teamwork. Also employ retention strategies and motivations such as prompt job promotions, increase in salary and 'showering praises' on hard working employees to minimise or eliminate staff turnover and poaching.
- Put in place a long-term KM strategy by creating additional job portfolios such as Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) to help manage specifically KM issues in the hotel.
- When recruiting employees, employ staff with high cultural intelligence (CQ) because they will help to build a strong workforce. CQ staff will be able to identify the cultural needs of others and imbibe them to create a congenial and caring work environment for both employees and customers.
- Hotel managers and owners should invest in advanced technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) and encourage all employees to embrace technology. This will enhance easy tracking and harvesting knowledge about tech-savvy customers' footprints, voices and activities on the digital space and the knowledge can be used to discover products and experiences to delight customers.
- The psychology of customers demand that hotels constantly observe them and make necessary changes to suit customers' needs.