Knowledge management factors in companies and their association with the performance of a tourist destination

Factores de la gestión del conocimiento en las empresas y su asociación en el desempeño de un destino turístico

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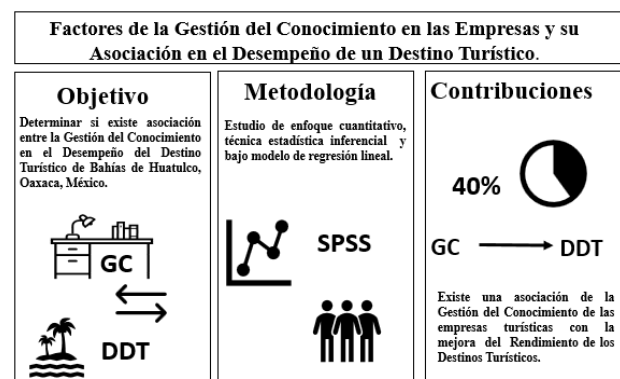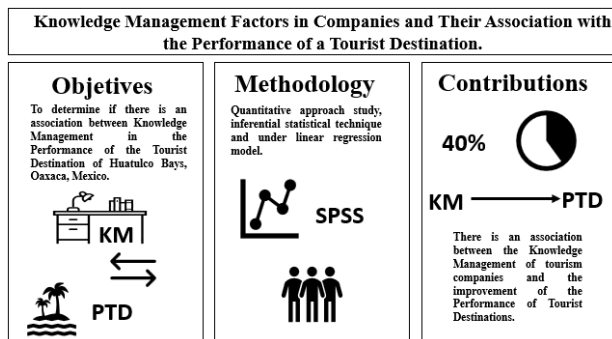[c] ROR Instituto Tecnológico de Sonora • 🆔 0000-0003-2729-8559 • 🌐 292542

Abstract

The present study aimed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between knowledge management and the performance of the "Bahias de Huatulco" tourist destination in Oaxaca, Mexico. A quantitative, correlational research approach was used, and the hypothesis was tested using inferential statistics through linear regression via SPSS software. The analysis revealed that knowledge management significantly impacts destination performance ($p < 0.05$), explaining 40% of the variability, thus confirming the research hypothesis.

Knowledge Management Factors in Companies and Their Association with the Performance of a Tourist Destination.

Objetives — To determine if there is an association between Knowledge Management in the Performance of the Tourist Destination of Huatulco Bays, Oaxaca, Mexico. KM / PTD

Methodology — Quantitative approach study, inferential statistical technique and under linear regression model. SPSS

Contributions — 40% — KM → PTD — There is an association between the Knowledge Management of tourism companies and the improvement of the Performance of Tourist Destinations.

Knowledge Management, Tourist Destination Performance, Tourism

Resumen

La presente investigación consistió en determinar si existe una relación significativa entre la gestión del conocimiento y el desempeño del destino turístico de Bahías de Huatulco, Oaxaca, México. El método utilizado fue con base en el enfoque de la investigación cuantitativa con un alcance correlacional, y para la aceptación o rechazo de la hipótesis se utilizó la Estadística Inferencial bajo el modelo de la Regresión Lineal usando el software SPSS. El análisis mostró que la gestión del conocimiento impacta significativamente el desempeño del destino turístico ($p < 0.05$), con un 40% de variabilidad explicada, confirmando la hipótesis de trabajo.

Factores de la Gestión del Conocimiento en las Empresas y su Asociación en el Desempeño de un Destino Turístico.

Objetivo — Determinar si existe asociación entre la Gestión del Conocimiento en el Desempeño del Destino Turístico de Bahías de Huatulco, Oaxaca, México. GC / DDT

Metodología — Estudio de enfoque cuantitativo, técnica estadística inferencial y bajo modelo de regresión lineal. SPSS

Contribuciones — 40% — GC → DDT — Existe una asociación de la Gestión del Conocimiento de las empresas turísticas con la mejora del Rendimiento de los Destinos Turísticos.

Gestión del conocimiento, Desempeño, Destino Turístico, Turismo

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Introduction

Knowledge management (KM) is a crucial process that involves the creation, storage, distribution and application of knowledge within an organisation to improve its performance and competitiveness. In the tourism sector, characterised by intense competition and rapid technological evolution, knowledge management becomes even more essential. An organisation's ability to effectively manage its knowledge can determine its success in a globalised and highly competitive environment (Anand et al., 2023; Benedek et al., 2023).

Problem

Knowledge creation refers to the generation of new knowledge and innovative solutions within an organisation. In the tourism sector, this capability is critical to differentiate in the marketplace and to offer unique products and services that meet changing customer expectations. Benedek et al. (2023) highlight that tourism companies that invest in knowledge creation can develop personalised customer experiences, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Knowledge storage involves the documentation and preservation of information and best practices within the organisation. This process ensures that valuable knowledge is not lost, even with the high staff turnover that characterises the tourism sector. Anand et al. (2023) point out that proper storage of knowledge enables operational continuity and informed decision-making, thus improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

While effective knowledge sharing fosters collaboration and communication within the organisation. This process is essential for the continuous training of employees and to ensure that everyone is aware of the latest trends and techniques in the tourism sector. Zhang et al. (2022) stress that knowledge sharing facilitates an organisational culture of continuous learning and improvement, which is crucial for maintaining competitiveness.

The application of acquired knowledge in day-to-day operations leads to improved service quality, reduced costs and increased operational efficiency. Tourism businesses that are able to effectively apply their knowledge can make more informed strategic decisions and respond nimbly to market changes. Koo et al. (2022) show how the integration of smart technologies into knowledge management can significantly improve the tourist experience and provide a competitive advantage.

However, despite the obvious benefits, the implementation of knowledge management systems in the tourism sector faces several challenges. These include resistance to change, lack of adequate technological infrastructure and the need for an organisational culture that is conducive to knowledge sharing.

Therefore, identifying these challenges, the enabling factors, as well as providing a basis for understanding these dynamics and suggesting strategies to overcome them, is crucial for developing effective KM strategies that can be successfully adopted by tourism enterprises (Anand et al. 2023; Zhang et al. 2022).

Therefore, the following question was structured: What is the relationship between knowledge management and the performance of tourism enterprises in the tourism destination?

Objective

Competitiveness is a critical factor for success in the tourism sector, especially in a globalised and highly competitive environment. This objective focuses on how knowledge management can improve the competitiveness of tourism enterprises by enabling them to innovate, adapt to change and optimise their resources. Studies such as Benedek et al. (2023) have highlighted the importance of knowledge management in improving business competitiveness.

Similarly, Abuanzeha et al. (2022) refer that there is a connection between knowledge management and competitive performance, where knowledge generation is an asset, a strategic source that allows companies to obtain better performance.

For Esparza et al. (2022), knowledge management is a process on an intangible resource of the organisation, which must be accessible for its use, since it allows for improved decision-making, as well as the development of competencies and capabilities of team members.

Based on the literature reviewed and the description of the problem of knowledge management and its association with the performance of tourism destinations (DDT), the research objective was proposed to determine whether there is a relationship between knowledge management and the performance of the tourism destination of Bahías de Huatulco, Oaxac, Mexico, in order to determine its association for its strengthening.

Therefore, the working hypotheses were:
Hi: Knowledge management in service companies impacts on the performance of companies in the tourist destination of Bahías de Huatulco.

Ho: Knowledge management in service companies does not have an impact on the performance of companies in the tourist destination of Huatulco Bays.

Theoretical foundation

The relationship between knowledge management and firm performance in tourism destinations can be analysed from different theoretical perspectives.

According to the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), knowledge management is linked to the strategic results of organisations, in a relationship that emphasises the role of physical and intangible resources in determining the competitiveness of an organisation; according to this theory, tourism companies must effectively manage their resources to maintain their competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Anand et al., 2023).

On the other hand, Knowledge-Based Theory (KBT) postulates that an organisation's competitive advantage comes from its distinctive knowledge assets and its ability to effectively use and share these assets within the organisation (Grant, 1996; Benedek et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory highlights the importance of a firm's ability to continuously learn, adapt and innovate in order to remain competitive. In the tourism context, this implies the ability to integrate new technologies and KM practices to improve customer experience and operational efficiency (Teece et al., 1997; Zhang et al., 2022).

Additionally, Kiseli and Senaji (2016), consider that firms perform well and create value, when they implement strategies that exploit their internal resources and capabilities; where knowledge management (acquiring, converting and applying existing and new knowledge); enables the organisation to remain competitive in the marketplace.

Also, in the analysis of Institutional Theory, the role of external factors, such as business rules, industry policies and quality procedures, in shaping an organisation's competitiveness can be highlighted. This theory is relevant for understanding how tourism industry regulations and standards influence the implementation of QA practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Benedek et al., 2023).

Having mentioned the different theories on the KM variable and its influence on performance, we first discuss the conceptualisation of the KM variable, which is described as a process of acquisition, transfer and application of knowledge, between the organisation and individuals, which helps to solve problems, make decisions, enabling the organisation to achieve high productivity and competitiveness (Meihami & Meihami, 2013).

Additionally, knowledge management is understood as the optimisation of knowledge seeking to obtain better performance in the organisation, advantage over competitors and profitability, all this making use of specific methods (Farooq, 2019).

In particular, Mota et al. (2020), state that knowledge management within a hotel involves the development of a plan focused and oriented to the management of the flow of knowledge in the company as part of an asset; where technological and non-technological infrastructure, internal and external knowledge is considered, in order to generate the exchange of knowledge and achieve the maintenance of these practices.

According to Yadav et al. (2020), knowledge management is the way to take advantage of past learning in the present and future with the intention of becoming a more effective organisation. Knowledge management seeks to constitute and put into practice the accumulations of knowledge generated (Obeso et al., 2020).

According to Zoogah et al. (2020) knowledge management refers to the constant process of reviewing knowledge to meet needs that arise in the organisation, as well as to detect opportunities in the environment.

At the same time, within knowledge management, smart technologies, such as augmented reality, the Internet of Things (IoT) and the use of big data, are transforming the way tourism companies manage knowledge. These technologies facilitate the collection, analysis and application of large volumes of data, improving decision-making and personalisation of services. Zhang et al. (2022) demonstrate that the implementation of smart technologies can significantly improve the tourist experience, increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty, and provide businesses with a competitive advantage.

On the other hand, to understand the performance variable of tourism destinations, it is necessary to make a conceptual reflection on competitiveness. For Nunes et al. (2017), the competitiveness of the tourism sector refers to the capacity that prevails in the market where physical and human resources generate benefits in favour of a country's economy.

Hafiz and Izzat (2019), refer that the competitiveness of tourism destinations involves the ability to attract visitors and income by offering unforgettable stays, while at the same time generating economic dividends for the benefit of the inhabitants of the tourist destination by taking care of natural assets for the benefit of future generations.

For Teixeira and Ferreira (2019), the competitiveness of a tourist destination is achieved when it offers comparative and competitive advantages. The former are the result of natural conditions (climate, flora, landscapes, etc.) and the latter are generated by the physical infrastructure generated by human resources and governmental lines.

The competitiveness of tourism destinations refers to the capacity of the site to satisfy the needs of visitors through products or services, surpassing other sites that also offer similar aspects and are considered valuable by visitors (Honore et al., 2023).

Complementarily, some empirical studies show a significant relationship between the variables knowledge management and performance. Meihami and Meihami (2013), for their part, conducted a study of manufacturing companies located in industrial areas, in which they found a direct correlation between knowledge management and organisational performance, finding that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the variables was equal to 78%.

Similarly, Kiseli and Senaji (2016), in a study applied to hotel managers in Nairobi, supported by SPSS 21 software, and using linear regression analysis, found the knowledge management process (Beta= .873) to be highly significant in its effect on the competitive advantage of five-star hotels.

In the same vein, Esparza et al. (2022), when analysing hotel and restaurant SMEs, related to meeting tourism, using the statistical technique of structural equations with the support of SMART PLS software to test the causal relationships between knowledge management and business competitiveness found a positive and significant relationship ($\beta=0.577$).

Similarly, Abuanzeha et al. (2022), analysed public higher education institutions in Jordan, using questionnaires and using a PLS SEM approach, inquired about the effect of knowledge management on competitive performance, however, they found a non-significant effect ($\beta = 0.060$, $t = 0.809$, $p < 0.419$).

Based on the analysis, knowledge management can be considered as an essential component to improve the competitiveness and performance of tourism companies in a dynamic and globalised environment.

Thus, integrating relevant economic and management theories, together with the use of smart technologies, can provide a solid basis for developing effective KM strategies. Addressing the challenges and leveraging the enablers in the implementation of these practices will enable tourism businesses to stay ahead of the curve and deliver exceptional customer experiences. Based on the above, the following theoretical model was presented (Figure 1).

Box 1

Figure 1

Theoretical model of the research
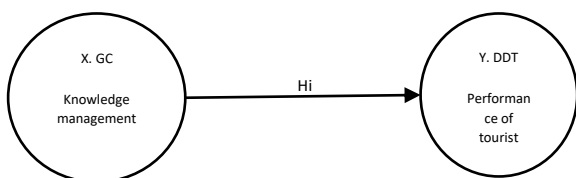
$$Y_o = \beta_o + \beta 1 X 1_i + e_i$$

Source: Own elaboration

Methodology

The research design was quantitative with a correlational scope on the variable of knowledge management and its association with the performance of tourism destinations. The data collection technique was non-experimental, as the study subjects were not manipulated. For the validation of the research hypotheses, inferential statistics were used by means of the Linear Regression parametric model using SPSS version 25 software, since the data presented a normality greater than $p>0.05$. For the reliability analysis of the knowledge management variable and for the destination performance variable, Cronbach's Alpha was used. This method is used to assess the internal consistency of a set of items in an instrument, ensuring that the questions consistently measure the same construct.

For the knowledge management variable, the analysis included 19 items (GCO1 to GCO19), so the Cronbach's Alpha value obtained was above 0.80, indicating high reliability. This shows internal consistency, which validates the instrument used for its measurement. For the reliability of the destination performance variable, seven items (DDT1 to DDT7) were included in the data collection instrument. Thus, the analysis reveals that Cronbach's Alpha for this scale is above 0.80, indicating a high level of reliability.

The sample consisted of 132 study subjects and was composed of tourism service providers from the Bahías de Huatulco, Oaxaca, Mexico; which was representative. Based on Mercado's (2008) literature, it was determined that an adequate size was maintained to avoid errors derived from the heterogeneity of the information.

Results

A Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable, and values above 0.80 are interpreted as evidence that the set of items has a strong correlation and coherently measures the construct in question (Table 1):

Box 2

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha for each construct

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Management	0.894
Tourism Destination Performance	0.909

Source: Own elaboration

Analysis of results

The relationship between the variables knowledge management (independent variable) and tourism destination performance (dependent variable) has been evaluated in order to determine whether there is a statistically significant association between these two variables, i.e. whether effective knowledge management in tourism companies has a positive impact on the performance of a tourism destination.

Based on the coefficient of determination (R^2): it is indicated that the variability in the performance of the tourism destination is explained by knowledge management. This indicates that 40% of the variability in destination performance can be attributed to how firms manage their knowledge. In addition, a t-value of 6.790 was obtained which is greater than 2.54 which means 99% confidence. With the ANOVA test it is determined that the regression is statistically significant, in which the p-value is less than 0.50 so the research hypothesis is accepted (Table 2).

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Box 3

Table 2

Correlation table

Dimension	V- Beta	V- "t"	Sig.	Res.
GC → DDT	0.401***	6.790	.000	Accepted

Source: Own elaboration

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained and having answered the research question, it can be concluded that knowledge management is an important factor in the performance of tourist destinations.

This is derived from the results of the linear regression analysis which show that knowledge management has a positive and significant impact on the performance of the tourism destination, with a strong association between the two variables. Once obtained a p-value of less than 0.05 in the ANOVA test thus confirming that the association is statistically significant.

In sum, the coefficient of determination is positive and significant, indicating that an improvement in knowledge management has a direct positive impact on the performance of the tourism destination.

The above results are in the same direction as those presented in the research of Meihami and Meihami (2013), who found a correlation between KM and performance, as well as the results found by Kiseli and Senaji (2016), in which they found a significant effect of KM and competitive advantage in five-star hotels. And in the same direction as Esparza et al. (2022), in testing the causal relationships between knowledge management and business competitiveness.

Additionally, these findings are aligned with the studies of Benedek et al. (2023), who highlight that knowledge management is key to improving the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism enterprises, as it facilitates innovation and adaptability in dynamic environments. Likewise, Anand et al. (2023) underline the importance of knowledge management to improve decision-making and operational efficiency within the sector.

This refers that better knowledge management within tourism enterprises contributes to improved performance of tourism destinations; it also contributes to the literature, which proposes that enterprises that manage to effectively implement knowledge management strategies not only improve their individual performance, but also contribute significantly to the success and competitiveness of tourism destinations globally (Zhang et al., 2022).

Declarations

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. There are no personal relationships that could have influenced what is reported in the article. The funders had no role in the design, collection, analysis or interpretation of results.

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study.

Research, formal analysis, methodology, writing and review [*OEHP*].

Conceptualisation, supervision and project management [*ADY*].

Conceptualisation, preparation of original draft and editing [*CRG*].

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

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