

Title: Knowledge Management Strategic Orientation in SMEs

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Summary

Worldwide, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in strengthening national economies. SMEs generally have different characteristics and challenges in comparison to large organisations in many dimensions. These specific characteristics of SMEs may lead to different strategic practices towards organisational knowledge resources. This research project will investigate the relationship between business strategic orientation, knowledge management strategic orientation and IT/IS use among Saudi Arabian SMEs.

Research Questions

In the context of SMEs, the following *primary research question* is proposed:

- What are the interrelationships between business strategic orientation (BSO), knowledge management strategic orientation (KMSO) and IT/IS use in Saudi Arabian SMEs?

The following are the research subsidiary-questions:

1. What are the KMSOs of Saudi Arabian SMEs?
2. How do different BSOs impact on KMSO in Saudi Arabian SMEs?
3. How do KMSOs of SMEs in Saudi Arabian impact on their IT/IS use?

Research Approach

This research is considered as exploratory in nature. It aims to explore the strategic orientations of Saudi SMEs towards their knowledge. The type of research questions are described as “what”, “how” and “why” questions. Therefore, a case studies approach is considered to be the most appropriate method for this research. The case study approach has a significant value because it allows researchers to investigate the context in which the research questions are raised. It furthermore provides better understanding of the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the participants that affect their behaviour during interviews. Studying multiple cases provides in-depth analysis of the cases and can allow a comparison between

the research aspects or dimensions in different context to revise and support the proposed theoretical framework.

Contribution to knowledge

Theoretically: This research intends to contribute to knowledge-based view by exploring how strategic management of organisational knowledge could affect SMEs. This contribution will be presented through:

- Providing an enhanced understanding of KMSO in SMEs in developing countries.
- Providing an enhanced understanding of the influence of BSO on KMSO in the SMEs context.
- Elucidating the relationship between KMSO and IT/IS use and identifying the main barriers to the optimal utilisation of IT/IS for KM.

Practically: this research intends to contribute to the Saudi Arabian SMEs' context where there is a significant paucity of research in general and in the KM area in particular. The findings may help SMEs through the identification of the most significant aspects these organisations should consider to manage their knowledge and maximize the utilisation of their IT/IS activities.

About the researcher

Naief Azyabi is a Research and Teaching Assistant at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. He is also PhD student at the Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia starting from November 2009. Naief holds a bachelor degree in Management Information System from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, followed by a Master of Information Management and Systems from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Naief's research interests lie within knowledge management in SMEs; business strategy and IT strategy in SMEs.