



Knowledge management and competitiveness in the hotel sector in Arequipa

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to determine the relationship between knowledge management and the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa. To carry out this research, a quantitative, basic, non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational approach was used. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 350 hotel workers in Arequipa. The results show that knowledge management had a favorable perception rate, with 61.7% of respondents agreeing. Meanwhile, competitiveness showed a 51.1% favorable perception (agree). In the hypothesis correlation analysis using Spearman's rho statistic, a strong positive association of 0.873 was found between knowledge management and competitiveness. It is concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge management and the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa. The findings demonstrate that companies perform better in their respective sectors when they foster the right aspects related to knowledge production, storage, transmission, and application.

Keywords: knowledge management, Competitiveness, Hospitality sector, Companies

Introduction

In today's fast-paced, globally interconnected business world, knowledge management has become a crucial strategic element for companies seeking to survive in the market (Huamani et al., 2024; Ramos et al., 2024). According to Núñez and Estrada (2023), to gain a lasting competitive advantage, organizations must practice knowledge management, which includes creating, storing, transferring, and applying knowledge effectively. In that vein, in the hospitality industry, where customer satisfaction and service quality are paramount, organizational knowledge includes not only the basic aspects of business management but also intangible elements such as employees' tacit knowledge, which helps stimulate creativity and progress (Luyo & Ñañez, 2023; Işık et al., 2021; Mansoor et al., 2025).

On the other hand, companies can be more competitive when they leverage knowledge management to their advantage, enabling them to offer customers unique products and services, adapt quickly to changing market demands, and maintain high quality and efficiency (Patwary et al., 2024; Elizalde-Holguín & Feijó-Cuenca, 2024). Due to its status as one of Peru's most popular tourist destinations, Arequipa is an excellent place to study

the effects of knowledge management on the competitive capacity of the hotel industry (Zirena-Bejarano et al., 2025).

In this context, depending on how they manage organizational knowledge, the various companies in Arequipa's hotel sector exhibit highly disparate levels of competitiveness (Cornejo et al., 2024). However, there are insufficient data or clear evidence to support the association between knowledge management and competitiveness in this hotel sector (Alcívar & Jama, 2024). Likewise, the lack of studies that quantitatively examine the correlation between knowledge management (knowledge creation, acquisition, transfer, and application) and competitiveness metrics makes it difficult to develop effective strategies to boost business performance.

Furthermore, management decisions cannot be based on evidence when there is a lack of clarity about how knowledge management affects firms' competitive capabilities (García-Cediel et al., 2023; Moghavvemi et al., 2025). Consequently, since knowledge management can have a significant impact on the growth and sustainability of industries, it is important to study the connection between the two concepts to identify how they function together (Srbulović et al., 2024).

The need to strengthen the hotel industry by introducing and refining knowledge management strategies that drive competitiveness and sustainability justifies the present research. Therefore, the present study poses the following research question: How are knowledge management and the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa related? Furthermore, the main objective of the study is to determine the relationship between knowledge management and the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa.

Due to the potential of knowledge management to revolutionize operations and the industry's competitive landscape, this study is of great importance. Since hotels can improve their operational efficiency and offer more personalized, high-quality services by enhancing their management knowledge. This, in turn, helps improve customer loyalty and positions the hotel as a competitive tourist destination at the national and international levels (Ludeña et al., 2024; Khalaf et al., 2025). Therefore, job creation, investment promotion, and the strengthening of the tourism value chain are directly influenced by this research topic (Marulanda et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The study followed a quantitative method, as it used numerical assessments and statistical analyzes to support the hypothesis and validate the research problem (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). Furthermore, the study is classified as basic research, which aims to expand human knowledge for its own sake, regardless of any potential practical relevance. That is, its purpose is to help people better understand the real world (Escudero and Cortez, 2018).

Since the study variables were not intentionally manipulated and the data were collected at a single point in time, the research is considered non-experimental and cross-sectional (Arias, 2016). Additionally, the study was correlational, as its primary objective was to identify the connection or association between several variables, ideas, classes, or events within a given context (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

On the other hand, the population is the sum of all

things, people, or measurements that share an attribute at a specific point in time. In this study, the selected population consisted of 1,533 lodging establishments located in the department of Arequipa (Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism, 2023).

According to Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza (2018), a sample is a carefully chosen subset of a larger population or universe, which is guarantyd to be representative of the whole thru the use of various sampling techniques. In other words, for a sample to be considered representative, its attributes must match those of the entire universe. Consequently, workers at lodging establishments in Arequipa were the unit of analysis in this study.

To calculate the sample size, a non-probabilistic, non-random technique was used that took into account individuals' accessibility and their availability to participate in the sample within a specific time frame (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). In this case, 350 employees from the hotel sector in Arequipa were selected, including managers, executives, administrative assistants, coordinators, and area heads.

The data required for the research were collected using an adapted questionnaire developed by Ortega (2023) and employed as a survey instrument. Using a 1-to-5 Likert scale, the first variable—knowledge management—assessed twelve items distributed across four categories: generation, preservation, dissemination, and utilization. In the second half, ten questions measuring competitiveness were included. These questions were divided into three categories: cost leadership, differentiation, and market segmentation.

On the other hand, in the instrument's reliability assessment, knowledge management and competitiveness variables had reliability coefficients of 0.940 and 0.978, respectively, indicating high reliability and internal consistency of the instrument (Villasis-Keever et al., 2018).

Additionally, the study ensured compliance with all relevant ethical requirements, such as obtaining informed consent from participants, not disclosing their identities, and protecting the privacy of their data. For data management and analysis, two main statistical processes were established. First, a

descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the behavior of the quantitative responses using frequency and percentage tables. In the second stage, the study’s hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was used to determine whether the data were parametric or nonparametric. The results of this test indicated that the data does not follow a normal distribution, so the hypothesis test uses

Spearman’s rho statistic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A descriptive analysis of the data was conducted. Data visualization tools, such as frequency tables, bar charts, and percentages, make it easier to understand the results.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of the knowledge management variable and its dimensions

Scale	Creation		Storage		Transfer		Application		Knowledge management	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Totally disagree	26	7.4%	11	3.1%	21	6.0%	13	3.7%	13	3.7%
Disagree	12	3.4%	17	4.9%	24	6.9%	51	14.6%	26	7.4%
Neither agree nor disagree	64	18.3%	91	26.0%	77	22.0%	89	25.4%	75	21.4%
Agree	194	55.4%	190	54.3%	210	60.0%	159	45.4%	216	61.7%
Totally agree	54	15.4%	41	11.7%	18	5.1%	38	10.9%	20	5.7%
Total	350	100.0%	350	100.0%	350	100.0%	350	100.0%	350	100.0%

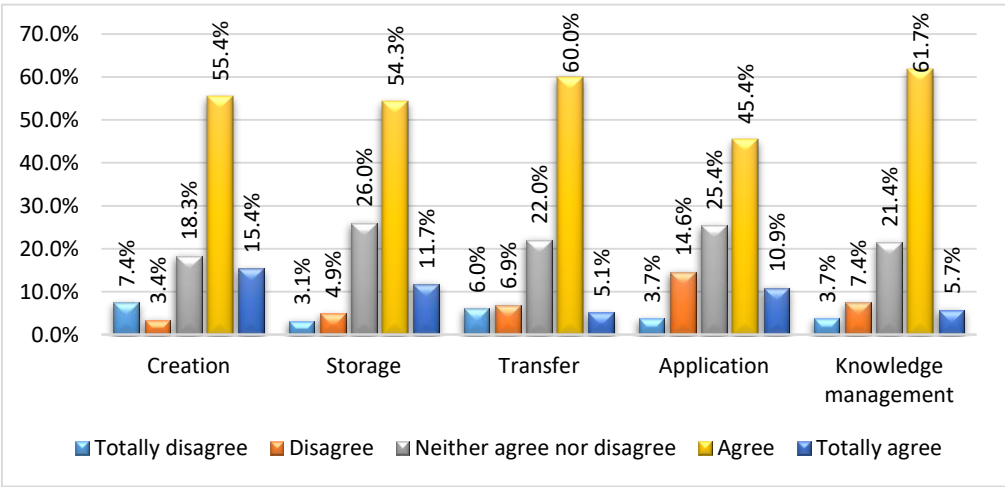


Figure 1. Frequency and percentage of the knowledge management variable and its dimensions

Table 1 and Figure 1 demonstrate that respondents have a positive impression of the knowledge creation dimension. Of those who participated in the survey, 55.4% said they “agree” and 15.4% said they “strongly agree,” resulting in a total approval rate of 70.8%. This level of agreement indicates that the environment examined is highly conducive to the development of new knowledge, information, and skills.

Regarding knowledge storage, a favorable assessment is also presented: 54.3% of respondents indicated that they “agree,” suggesting that there is some transparency or clarity in the management of knowledge repositories. Likewise, knowledge transfer received a 60.0% “agree” rating, suggesting that most people think information is disseminated sufficiently well within the company.

Likewise, among those who had a favorable impression of the knowledge application component, 45.4% said they “agreed.” Despite the availability of knowledge, obstacles to its effective application in daily practice persist, as indicated by the lowest figure across all dimensions. Finally, 61.7% of

participants had a positive impression of the knowledge management variable. As a result, respondents consider knowledge management to be generally well-structured, although some aspects such as execution and stakeholder engagement still have room for improvement.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the competitiveness variable and its dimensions

Scale	Cost leadership		Differentiation		Market segmentation		Competitiveness	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Totally disagree	24	6.9%	24	6.9%	16	4.6%	24	6.9%
Disagree	36	10.3%	44	12.6%	33	9.4%	43	12.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	63	18.0%	57	16.3%	28	8.0%	63	18.0%
Agree	198	56.6%	150	42.9%	194	55.4%	179	51.1%
Totally agree	29	8.3%	75	21.4%	79	22.6%	41	11.7%
Total	350	100.0%	350	100.0%	350	100.0%	350	100.0%

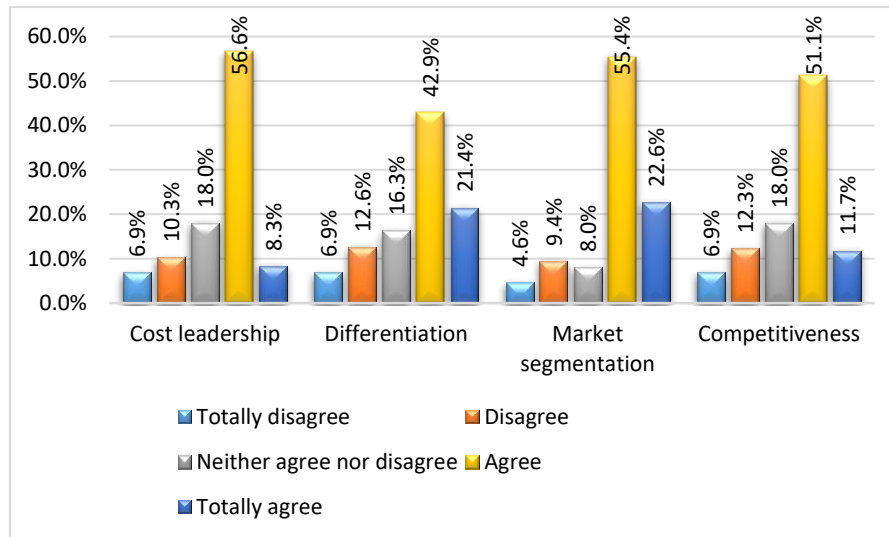


Figure 2. Frequency and percentage of the competitiveness variable and its dimensions

Figure 2 and Table 2 reveal that most respondents had a favorable impression of the cost leadership dimension. More than half (56.6%) of respondents selected “agree,” the highest score in this section. And yet, this area can still grow. Regarding the differentiation strategy, a balanced distribution is observed. The highest proportion in this dimension was the 42.9% who responded “agree,” but it’s also worth noting that 21.4% responded “strongly agree,” which together amounts to a 64.3% positive perception. This shows that many employees recognize that their company offers unique services and products to customers.

With 55.4% of respondents selecting “agree” on the market segmentation dimension, it is clear that hotel companies are doing a good job of dividing their clientele into various categories and meeting their individual needs. Regarding the competitiveness variable, 51.1% of survey participants agree. While most respondents consider their company competitive, a small percentage perceives problems or confusion in this area, as indicated by the 19.2% who disagree and the 18% who remain neutral.

Normality test

The data behavior was assessed using the

Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, which gave nonparametric statistics when testing their researchers the option to use parametric or hypotheses.

Table 3. Test of normality of the data

Variables/Dimensions	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Creation	0.332	350	0.000
Storage	0.311	350	0.000
Transfer	0.352	350	0.000
Application	0.273	350	0.000
Knowledge management	0.361	350	0.000
Cost leadership	0.340	350	0.000
Differentiation	0.280	350	0.000
Market segmentation	0.349	350	0.000
Competitiveness	0.313	350	0.000

According to the normality test results, all values are statistically significant at the 0.000 level, as shown in Table 3. A p-value below 0.05 clearly indicates that the study data does not fit a normal distribution. For this reason, the nonparametric statistic known as Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient is used to determine the degree of agreement between the hypotheses.

Table 4. Correlation between knowledge management and competitiveness

Variables	Rho	p
Knowledge management Competitiveness	,873	0.000

Table 4 shows that the competitiveness of Arequipa’s hotel sector is positively correlated with knowledge management ($r = 0.873$), representing a strong and statistically significant association. This suggests that companies are more likely to succeed in their respective sectors if they manage their information effectively (Mekimah et al., 2024). Furthermore, improved performance and market positioning can be achieved by investing in systems, procedures, and an organizational culture that foster effective knowledge management, highlighting the importance of this strategy (Li et al., 2020; Hbabi & Alomari, 2020).

This finding aligns with the research conducted by Esparza-García et al. (2020), who identified elements suggesting that knowledge management—through training, innovation, motivation, creativity, and

information—can also contribute to the development of competitiveness, as demonstrated by technological advances, acquisition costs, and financial performance. For their part, González et al. (2022) established a connection between the two factors by demonstrating that knowledge management has a direct impact on the formal growth of an organization’s intangible assets thru the processes of knowledge creation, acquisition, preservation, and dissemination. Meanwhile, competitiveness is based on continuously improving the competencies of human capital through learning, both at the individual and organizational levels (Hoichuk & Lyubomudrova, 2024).

On the other hand, García-Méndez (2021) agrees that in the current context, knowledge management is crucial because it helps create a sustainable competitive advantage. This is how the underlying activities of the hotel sector contribute significantly to national and global economies. Consequently, by implementing knowledge management strategies, more effective procedures are designed to enhance the service quality perceived by guests, leading to improvements in the tourism sector’s supply chain and, by extension, impacting the quality of life of local residents.

Likewise, Paredes et al. (2022) assert that companies can reduce costs, develop new product lines, and provide better services through effective knowledge management, which in turn offers a variety of development and growth options. Where the company’s organizational culture is crucial and has a

direct impact on efficient knowledge management.

Table 5. Correlation between knowledge management and the dimensions of competitiveness

Specific hypotheses	Variables	Rho	p
HE1	Knowledge management Cost leadership	,829	0.000
HE2	Knowledge management Differentiation	,765	0.000
HE3	Knowledge management Market segmentation	,695	0.000

Table 5 demonstrates that there is a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.829$) between knowledge management and cost leadership in the hotel sector in Arequipa. The statistical significance of this relationship is further supported by the p-value of 0.000. This suggests that a company's ability to cut costs and operate efficiently is closely linked to its knowledge management practices.

Similarly, a Rho coefficient of 0.765 indicates a highly significant association between knowledge management and differentiation in Arequipa's hotel sector. This association demonstrates that when companies have good knowledge management, they are able to create distinctive goods and services that set them apart from their competitors. Finally, the relationship between knowledge management and market segmentation in Arequipa's hotel industry was evaluated, and a Rho of 0.695 was found, suggesting a relatively high positive relationship. Therefore, knowledge management remains crucial in helping companies identify and successfully serve diverse market segments.

According to Calderón et al. (2021), it is agreed that companies' competitiveness has been determined by low sector growth, cost leadership, and a lack of knowledge about prices, profit margins, and cost structures. Similarly, Orellana-Bueno et al. (2020) states that management focuses on cost strategies, including improvement policies, decision-making for continuous improvement, and the pursuit of a competitive cost advantage, with the aim of offering comparable products in a shared market at a reduced

cost.

For their part, Gaitán and Golovina (2021) emphasize that, in order to govern and optimize resources, company managers conduct an internal evaluation, and that to capitalize on opportunities and counter competitors' actions, they carry out an external evaluation, developing differentiation and segmentation strategies. For this reason, it is crucial that managers and business owners acquire and use this information to enhance their competitiveness, which will ultimately lead to sustainability and expansion.

CONCLUSION

This study found that knowledge management has a favorable, strong, and statistically significant correlation with the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa ($r = 0.873$). The findings suggest an association between a company's ability to compete and its emphasis on knowledge production, storage, transfer, and application.

The results also show that knowledge management is closely associated with competitiveness, as measured by cost leadership (0.829), differentiation (0.765), and market segmentation (0.695). It is concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge management and the competitiveness of the hotel sector in Arequipa. Consequently, knowledge management is more than a set of procedures; it is an essential component of any successful business strategy, as it improves operational efficiency and, if managed correctly, can serve as a competitive differentiator in local markets.

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