

Knowledge Management and Achieving Competitive Advantage A Qualitative Review of Research Literature and Research Trends

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Abstract: The study aims at identifying the importance and objectives of knowledge management and competitive advantage in business organizations and the employment of knowledge management processes in business management organizations. As well, it seeks to highlight the role that knowledge management processes play in achieving competitive advantage in business organizations. The researchers used the documentary method by revising the previous studies production. Thus, after reviewing this research literature, the researchers ended up, through their findings and conclusions, a set of recommendations that help achieving competitive advantage through knowledge management. Namely, the researchers stressed the need to provide knowledge management processes in public and private sectors because of their vital role in the competitive advantage in the world of knowledge and informatics. As well, it is necessary to enhance the capabilities of employees and allow them to be creative, innovative and free to act on the issues they face during the exercise of their tasks. Finally, there is a need to work on developing strategic plans to employ the knowledge possessed by business management organizations in order to improve their practical capabilities.

Key words: Knowledge, management, knowledge management, competitiveness, competitive advantage.

Introduction:

The future of business organizations today depends both on the extent of their perception of resources and optimal investment in increasing them and on trying to present their products and services in a better way that would give them longer lasting and more distinguished competitive capabilities. In addition, among the most important strategic goals of the organization is to focus on its intellectual assets as a basic investment to achieve its prosperity and progress. This necessitated that there should be procedures for attracting and developing the human resources, as they are the ones who manage and develop the various resources of organizations.

In this regard, one of the most important resources that organizations rely on today is knowledge. Indeed, knowledge constitutes nowadays one of the most important assets of organizations that contributes mainly to determining the

nature of their performance. Knowledge is created in the human mind. It increases and is generated as a result of spreading and sharing with others (Nasimi et al. , 2013). The current knowledge depends in its building on the previous knowledge, as it is produced because of the information and experiences acquired by the human being that are organized and analyzed to form a knowledge that helps in decision-making and taking actions that contribute in developing work and improving production processes. (Mohajan, 2016)

With the rapid development in the business world, knowledge management has emerged, which is one of the modern management concepts that have received increased interest in business organizations in light of the shift towards knowledge economies. The latter has come to confirm that the source of wealth is not “the capital” but rather “the knowledge.” Therefore, investment in knowledge has gained the attention of various institutions. This, in its turn prompted business leaders to reconsider their strategic priorities. Therefore, and since the new knowledge economies will affect the forms of competition between companies, the administrative leader has become aware that the application of the knowledge management approach in the modern organization provides it with new capabilities and distinct competitive capabilities.

From this standpoint, the importance of knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage in organizations in the modern era has emerged. In this research, the literature on the topic in the field of knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage will be reviewed to know the research trends in this field and the level of this field research maturity. Accordingly, the subject of the study is determined in dealing with both knowledge management and competitive advantage in the field of business organizations and identifying research trends in the period from 1990 to 2020.

The study objectives:

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1- The importance and objectives of knowledge management in business organizations.
- 2- The importance of competitive advantage for business organizations.
- 3- Employing knowledge management processes in business management organizations in the twenty-first century.
- 4- Highlighting the role that knowledge management processes play in achieving competitive advantage in business organizations.
- 5- Identifying the research trends concerning the relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage from 1990 to 2020.

The study importance:

The importance of the study stems from addressing valuable concepts in the field of management and entrepreneurship in the field of organizations sector, whether they are civil or governmental, because of their great importance in the field of knowledge management in the twenty-first century. As well, it directs attention to distinguishing between the concepts of knowledge management and competitive advantage. The study also dealt presented comprehensively the most important research trends of knowledge management and competitive advantage in order to serve as a guide for researchers in addressing them in their future studies.

The study questions:

In this study, which deals with a presentation and review of knowledge management and competitive advantage in the research literature, the study questions can be formulated as follows:

- 1- What is the importance and objectives of knowledge management in business organizations?
- 2- What is the importance of competitive advantage for business organizations?

3- How are the processes of knowledge management used in business management organizations in the twenty-first century?

4- What is the role of knowledge management in achieving the competitive advantage of business management organizations?

5- What are the most important research trends of the relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage in the field of business organizations?

The study Approach:

The researchers used the documentary method by selecting productions from previous studies on the subject, including published research, studies, reports, theses, or conferences, in order to compile the various studies.

Second, the theoretical framework:

Definition of the study terms:

Looking at the literature on the topic of “Knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage in organizations”, we find that the main study terms are:

- **Management:** the process of dealing with or controlling things and people (Management, 2019).
- **Knowledge:** everything implicit or apparent that individuals evoke to perform their work perfectly or to make correct decisions (Al-Kubaisi, 2005).
- **Knowledge management:** the processes, tools and behaviors that are jointly formulated and performed by the beneficiaries of the organization to acquire, store, and distribute knowledge that will be reflected on business processes to reach the best applications with the intention of long-term competition and adaptation (Al Kubaisi, 2005)
- **Competitive advantage:** the organization's ability to accomplish any distinct or different activities from its competitors (Pitts, Lie, 1996).

The concept of knowledge and its importance:

The concept of knowledge is one of the most complex concepts which understanding constitutes a situation that may confuse researchers in this field, and this is due to the confusion between the concept of knowledge and the concept of both information and data. Data refers to a set of facts in its primary form (numbers, sounds, images) that have not been processed, or organized and analyzed and therefore not useful in the decision-making process. As for information, it is accumulated data that has been processed in a way that allows it to be used in making comparisons and some feasible classifications. Knowledge is a set of information that has been collected and processed in an advanced manner so that it becomes more meaningful in solving problems and making decisions (Cong & Pandya, 2003, Mohajan, 2017). As well, knowledge could be defined as a set of experiences and skills that are acquired during the learning process so that it constitutes the outcome of a theoretical and applied understanding of a position in a specific field. It is also referred to as an affirmative belief about a topic that increases the ability of entities to operate effectively (Tserng & Lin, 2004).

Another definition of knowledge is that it is the end product of a set of practices, traditions, values, contextual information, expert vision and common sense that provides an environment and framework for evaluation and integration of new experiences and information (Harrington, 2005). It is of a dynamic nature that appears when the forms and nature of relationships between assets and available information on a particular subject are determined (Mohajan, 2016).

Knowledge is also an applicable information that is available in the right form, at the right time, and in the right place for decision-making, which is based on the process of understanding information depending on its importance or relevance to the problem area (Bennet & Bennet, 2008).

Knowledge constitutes a source of strength in business organizations, as indicated by Francis Bacon, and represents one of the most important elements that organizations possess today and through which they can achieve many savings and benefits. In fact, the business world began to look at knowledge and use it as a weapon to achieve competitive advantage and a means to promote social, economic, and educational progress for any country (Igbinovia & Ikenwe, 2017).

The importance of knowledge is clear in the added value of data and information, which enables it to contribute to decision-making processes and solve various problems. Knowledge also constitutes a means to increase the motivation of individuals to work in an innovative way. Moreover, with the increasing interest in knowledge and its economic exploitation, some concepts have emerged that explain its importance in this field. These concepts are namely knowledge valuation that is, adding value to new knowledge to convert it into a new improved product or service to the market, knowledge marketing, i.e. earning money from knowledge with or without transferring it, and the term capitalization of knowledge, i.e. converting it into capital capable of creating a source of income. Accordingly, the importance of knowledge for business organizations can be determined as it transforms data and information into a manageable image that can be used in solving problems and making decisions. Knowledge also increases employees' creativity and motivation to work, enhances the participation of all employees in decision-making processes, helps enhance the organization's profits and create features that make the organization unique among other competitors, and it also reduces production and operational costs, especially if it is available at the right time and in the right way (Baycan, 2013).

The concept of knowledge management:

Knowledge management constitutes one of the branches of administrative sciences that is of great interest to researchers and workers in the administrative field. Researchers in the educational literature differ in giving a specific definition of knowledge management, where each of them has his own way of understanding its processes and comprehending and analyzing its different dimensions (Salem Deeb, 2012). Abu Hatab's study (2015) indicated that knowledge management is the effort that organizations make in order to collect knowledge, categorize it, organize it, store it and prepare it to exchanging and sharing among the members of the organization and its units, which contributes to improving the decision-making process and to raising the level of performance. It is the process that the organization uses to achieve its strategic goals by employing collective and cognitive intelligence for its intellectual capital (Arora & Raosaheb, 2011.) Knowledge management is also defined as an integrated system that aims to enhance participation in all the organization's information assets, including databases, documents, policies, procedures, employees' experiences and previous experiences and the knowledge they possess (Sweis et al., 2011).

Muhammad's study (2015) indicated that knowledge management is an organized systematic process that institutions adopt to manage activities and processes that enhance knowledge acquisition, generation, storage, sharing, distribution, development and dissemination by individuals and groups working in the organization in order to achieve its goals. It is the clear systematic management of knowledge related to the nature of the work of organizations and related to its creation, collection, organization, dissemination, use and investment, which requires transforming the knowledge possessed by individuals working in the organization into a participatory and cooperative knowledge shared by all individuals in it (Al-Adwan, 2019). Knowledge management is also a set of processes that seek to obtain a collective experience for the organization where its source was, whether in databases, stored in paper form or in the heads of employees and employed in a place that helps achieve the highest level of financial returns (Buheji, 2003). In the definition of the British Standards Institution, it was stated that knowledge management is "the formation and organization of the work environment in a way that gives confidence to the knowledge that will be created, transmitted, learned, developed, planned and used in order to achieve the interests of the company and consumers" (Alkatheeri, 2018, p. 30).

The current study researchers believe that knowledge management is a set of processes that ensure the transformation of knowledge into an image that can be shared and benefited from in order to achieve the objectives of the organization. (Matar, 2014).

Knowledge management goals:

Knowledge today is one of the most important resources that organizations rely on in their work and in achieving their goals, and like other resources, they must be dealt with according to special methodological foundations that enhance the possibility of their use and increase their effectiveness. Thus, and in order to achieve this target, the knowledge management process comes as a tool that enhances the process of transforming knowledge into an effective component capable of contributing to raising performance efficiency and productivity and as a resource that achieves organizational effectiveness, competitive advantage and high efficiency (Al-Barassi, 2018).

Knowledge management contributes to raising the level of knowledge for all members of the organization and not monopolizing the presence of knowledge in specific people. It helps to create an interactive environment that contributes to the transfer of experience through the process of searching for tacit knowledge and extracting it from its sources and then transforming it into explicit knowledge that can be disseminated and shared among all members of the organization (AlKarriri, 2017). The most important goals that knowledge management seeks to achieve can be identified according to the studies of Al-Khalifa, 2020, Munir and Abdul Latif, 2019, and Arhim, 2018 as follows:

- Extracting knowledge from its sources and transforming it into usable forms, where effective knowledge is extracted and processed in accordance with organizational needs.
- Providing knowledge to all individuals working in the organization to allow them to use it in achieving the organization's goals.
- Providing innovative and creative solutions to the problems facing organizations.
- Spreading a culture of knowledge and continuous learning within the organization and creating a cooperative work environment that encourages the exchange and sharing of knowledge among employees.
- Raising the efficiency of workers and their ability to obtain knowledge and invest it in the appropriate context when needed.
- Improving the level of performance and productivity by making the right decisions based on accurate information that can be obtained at the right time.
- Benefiting from the experiences of human competencies by sharing them collectively.
- Reducing the total cost of training operations, by building learning bases, spreading a culture of knowledge and stimulating the development of educational capabilities. Knowledge management contributes to activating internal self-development by identifying groups of employees who work in similar duties and observing how they can learn from each other in a way that will improve their understanding, integrate and organize them to generate new knowledge.
- Increasing the financial return and opening up to global markets.
- Improving the quality of services provided, improving customer service, and upgrading the organization's reputation and competitive strength in the markets.

The current study researchers believe that the knowledge management process aims primarily to invest the existing knowledge in the intellectual capital of the institution and employ it to support the competitive advantage and quality of performance and reduce the negative effects of the crises faced by the institution in a creative and innovative way.

The importance of knowledge management:

The importance of knowledge management is that it is a means to achieve competitive advantage, as knowledge constitutes one of the most important resources of institutions that play a key role in the success of organizations and their ability to achieve their goals. Indeed, some believe that managing this resource effectively is the only way in the twenty-first century to achieve competitive advantage. In fact, investing in individuals' previous knowledge and experiences and sharing them with employees contributes to finding a greater number of alternatives and creative solutions to the crises and challenges they face at work without wasting time and efforts. On the other hand, knowledge management helps in developing and improving the organizational learning process necessary to enhance the level of performance and generate new opportunities to gain competitive advantages and develop business strategies that advance the organization's ability to accomplish its functions at a lower cost, in a shorter time, and at a higher quality compared to other competitors (Ahmad, 2010).

Moreover, knowledge management constitutes a means of retaining and protecting expertise from loss, and mitigating the knowledge gap between experts and new employees (Al-Khalifa, 2020). Besides, Al-Madhoun (2020) believes that the importance of knowledge management lies in the generalization of administrative processes and their reformulation, which contributes to improving development processes and keeping abreast of developments in the work environment. It also enables decision makers in institutions to collect all scattered information and compile it into databases to improve its use and help in creating greater opportunities to reduce costs and raise the quality of the provided products and services.

The current study researchers believe that the importance of knowledge management is in achieving competitive advantage, improving the quality of performance and the level of services and products provided by the institution, as well as retaining knowledge and protecting it from loss and dispersal.

Knowledge management in business organizations:

The changing nature of the twenty-first century has cast its shadows over business organizations. Hence, they are witnessing great challenges today due to the great development and successive updates in global markets. Accordingly, these organizations assign great importance to working hard to keep pace with these changes and achieve the largest possible response. Consequently, they began to develop strategies aiming at reducing the negative effects of crises and their resulting risks, and even turning them into investment opportunities to increase their market share and create high competitive value. Based on this vision, institutions began to rely on knowledge as one of the most important resources they own and invest in it in order to raise the level of performance and bring it to the ranks of creativity and excellence. This would enable organizations to achieve a solid reputation and base at the level of local and global markets (Mohajan, 2017).

Knowledge management in business organizations has a positive impact on four different aspects: The performance and learning of employees, the internal processes and functions of the organization, the outputs of the production process, in addition to investing in knowledge resources. Knowledge management contributes to promoting cooperative learning among employees, which contributes to the acquisition of a body of knowledge and the consistency of the learning process that raises the level of the organization and its ability to meet market requirements and keep pace with technological development (Tartar and Halimi, 2011).

Moreover, knowledge management contributes to improving the functions and processes within these organizations, as it increases the effectiveness of its activities and develops them continuously, and it is positively reflected on the outputs of the production process. Accordingly, knowledge management contributes to raising the quality of the products and services provided by these organizations through its focus on knowledge, which gives it an added value that achieves excellence and competitiveness. On the other hand, the presence of a human force with high knowledge efficiency constitutes a motive for these organizations to continuously search for investment opportunities that enable them to provide distinguished products and services that increase their profits and achieve their goals (Mohajan, 2017).

Competitive Advantage:

Globalization and openness to world markets have contributed to increasing the intensity of competition between business organizations, as they have become compelled to keep pace with the most important developments to meet the needs of markets and establish a market base that guarantees the continuity of work. Dash, 2013; Nuryakin, 2018).

The concept of competitive advantage:

Michael Porter used the concept of competitive advantage for the first time in 1985, where he published a research paper in the Harvard Business Journal in which he pointed out the importance of this concept and its impact on the performance of enterprises and business institutions (Negulescu, 2019). Porter defined competitive advantage as a mechanism through which organizations can transform general strategies into practices that enhance the value they provide to their customers, whether by reducing the price or adding characteristics to products and services that exceed those offered by competitors (Porter, 1998).

Competitiveness can be defined at several levels. At the world level, many international bodies have defined the concept of competitiveness. The World Economic Forum defines it as “the ability to provide an appropriate environment to achieve high and sustainable growth rates” (Abdel-Raouf, 2007, p. 7). The American Competitiveness Council defines competitiveness as “the ability of a country to produce goods and services that compete in global markets and at the same time achieve steady standards of living in the long term.” It also defines global competitiveness as “the current and latent performance of economic activities related to competition with other countries.” The definition of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assumes that it is “the extent to which a country produces, under free and fair market conditions, products and services that compete with global markets and at the same time achieve an increase in the real income of its members in the long run” (Zaher, 2020, pg. 4). The International Institute for Development Management defines competitiveness as “the ability of a country to generate more wealth than its competitors in global markets” (Nweer, 2002).

In the industrial sector, competitiveness is defined as “the ability of the institutions of a particular industrial sector in a country to achieve continuous success in international markets without relying on international support and protection, and thus that country is distinguished in this industry” (Abdel-Raouf, 2007, pg. 9).

The concept of competitive advantage at the level of organizations refers to the ability of business organizations to adopt strategies that enable them to take a better position in relation to their competing organizations that are operating in the same field. It is the ability of organizations to meet the needs of their customers in order to achieve a solid ground for them in the markets, increase their market share and raise the level of their profits. (Hassan, 2017).

(Al-Atrash, 2018) assumes that the competitive advantage is the ability of the organization's products or services to meet the needs and aspirations of customers compared to its competitors. It is a set of distinctive characteristics of the organization and of its products that constitutes important features in the target market.

Competitive advantage is also defined as a resource, technology, skill, or strategy that allows the organization to provide services and innovate products that provide distinctive value and benefits to a higher level than what other competitors offer from the point of view of customers (Baroud, 2018). They are the components owned by the institution that contribute to increasing the demand for its products or services in the market compared to competing institutions (Hosseini, Soltani, & Mehdizadeh, 2018). Moreover, competitive advantage is defined as the organization obtaining an advanced position in the markets because of owning an element or characteristic that helps the organization to excel and is achieved due to following a competitive strategy (Išoraitė, 2018). As a result, the organization acquires a set of traits or elements that allow it to outperform its competitors (Cegliński, 2017).

Accordingly, the current study researchers define competitive advantage as a set of elements or features that are achieved because of following a specific competitive strategy that gains the organization and the products or services it offers a value that distinguishes it from other competitors from the point of view of customers.

The importance of competitive advantage for business organizations:

The importance of the competitive advantage for business organizations lies in its ability to achieve many advantages, as it contributes to increasing the market share of the organization, increasing customer satisfaction and achieving greater financial returns and profits for the organization. On the other hand, the competitive advantage is a tool for facing the challenges that exist in the markets as it depends on creativity and innovative processes. It also constitutes a means to ensure business continuity and establish a distinguished reputation compared to competing organizations (Shamalakh, 2019).

The study of (Safi, 2017) indicated the importance of competitive advantage in achieving a process of continuous improvement and development of products, services and the technical system used in the organization, finding new specialized markets, finding new outlets for distribution, finding new raw materials and establishing a strong financial center for the organization. In addition, it positively affects the customer and enhances his/her trust and loyalty to the organization because of the added values that its products and services bring to them, making it achieve a quantitative and qualitative advantage over other competitors (Aliwa, 2019).

On the other hand, the studies of (Sukhtian, 2019 and (AL-Hadid, 2017) indicated the importance of competitive advantage in many aspects, as follows:

1. The importance of competitive advantage in the field of strategic management, where business organizations prepare and manage their strategies in light of achieving competitive advantage as a primary objective.
2. The importance of competitive advantage in the nature of the work of business organizations of all kinds and forms, and it is the basis on which the competitive strategy is built.
3. Competitive advantage is a tool to meet the challenges faced by business organizations through the company's endeavor to develop its competitive knowledge and ability to meet the needs of the customer in the future and standardize production techniques and skills that enable it to adapt quickly to changing opportunities.
4. Competitive advantage is a very important criterion for successful business organizations, because they find distinctive new forms and models that are difficult to imitate, as long as their old forms have become widely known and available.

Third, review the literature on the topic:

The study boundaries:

The subject literature in the field of knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage is covered in this review through the following boundaries:

A: Objective boundaries:

The subject literature review covers the following thematic axes:

- knowledge management
- Knowledge management and competitive advantage

B: Formal boundaries:

The subject literature review on the topic of knowledge management and competitive advantage covers literature written in the field from:

- University Theses: Master's and Ph.D
- Research and scientific articles published in periodicals, conference proceedings and scientific reports.

C: Time boundaries:

The literature review of the publications on the topic covers two periods:

- o The period from 1990 AD to 2010 AD, in order to carry out a general analysis of research topics in this field, without going too far in reading the abstracts, in an attempt to track the appearance of the research subject.
- o In-depth reading of relevant research from 2010 to 2020.

D: Linguistic Boundaries:

The subject literature review covers publications in both Arabic and foreign languages.

Literature review:

This review covers the written literature on the subject of knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage. It seeks to determine the dimensions of development and renewal in this field and to present the current trends in this subject within a period of time starting from the emergence of the term and the first study about it, and then with a more in-depth study of the period from 2010 to 2020. It also tries to define the future trends of the research topic from the point of view of the two researchers.

The emergence of the terms related to the literature of the subject:

Looking at the terms of the research topic, we find that the first term to appear is the term “management” according to management educator Peter Drucker (1909-2005). The primary task of management includes marketing and innovation. The practice of modern management arises from the sixteenth century study on the low efficiency and failures of some institutions that was conducted by English political leader Sir Thomas More (1478-1535). Thus, management consists of the interlocking functions of creating the organization's policy, organizing, planning, controlling and directing resources in order to achieve the objectives of that policy (management, 2018).

The first appearance of the term knowledge was in quoting from (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 1995) when Marshall (1965, Marshall) stated, "Capital consists of a large part of knowledge and organization. Knowledge is the most powerful engine of production."

The term knowledge was also mentioned when the first American National Conference on Artificial Intelligence was held from August 18 to 21, 1980 at Stanford University, Stanford California, when Edward Feigenbaum launched his famous phrase “knowledge is power”. Since that time, started a new field of knowledge called knowledge engineering, in which a new job titled “knowledge engineer” was created.

The concept of knowledge management was first invented by Karl Wag in a symposium of the International Labor Organization of the United Nations in 1986 (Al-Shayab, Abu Hammour, 2014).

While Peter Drucker heralded the term knowledge management in 1988 with an article titled “The Coming of the New Organization.”

As for the emergence of the idea of competitiveness, it dates back to the late seventies, through the McKinsey and Company consulting firm, based on the success achieved by the Japanese who invaded global markets despite the change in environmental conditions. That was due to their ability to know the choice of fields of competition that enabled them to engage in battles from a position of strength.

In light of the above, the discussion of the topic of the research, which contains the above key terms, could not have started before 1984 AD. The reason for this is that the term knowledge management was started from about 1986 AD, and therefore the time range of research that discussed the literature of the topic can be limited to approximately starting from 1990 AD.

Conferences, workshops and scientific societies that dealt with the topic

One of the first held conferences that dealt with knowledge management was in 1994 at the first international conference on data engineering in Los Angeles, America and presented a paper entitled "The manager's assistant: An application of knowledge management" by Dan Kogan, (1984). At the same conference, another research paper entitled "The Transition from Data Management to Knowledge Management was presented by Charles Kellogg, (1984).

During the period from June 30 to July 2, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, the International Islamic University organized the Conference on Innovation in Knowledge Management for Competitive Advantage in Malaysia. Several axes were discussed, including knowledge management for competitive advantage and maintaining a competitive advantage, developing knowledge-based strategies in organizations, in addition to side discussion panels on managing the knowledge efficiency of organizations and developing intellectual capital in organizations (KMedu Hub, 2020).

At the Sixth International Conference on Industrial and Informatics Systems, a knowledge management model was presented providing a competitive advantage to the small and medium-sized software industry in Sri Lanka, authored by Nawinna, et.al. (2011).

However, the first Arab conference, which was held by the Arab Union for Human Resource Development in cooperation with the International Federation for Human Development Institutions, was on "Knowledge Management Building Competitive Advantage in the Information Age" during the period from 22 to 26 February 2015. The conference's themes and issues were new models for organizations in the countries that have made tremendous progress in the knowledge society industry, the methods of collecting information in governments and advanced organizations in the world, and the ways of organizing and purifying them to benefit from them. As well, governments, cities and idea organizations are an alternative to knowledge organizations: new approaches to knowledge management and the roles of information technology in leading knowledge governments, cities and organizations.

Research directions in this field:

Review of the subject literature from 1990 AD to 2010 AD:

Based on a review of the literature related to the subject of the study, we find that the beginning of research interest in it began approximately in 1990 AD in scientific publications, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, when (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) proposed the concept of basic competence related to the internal capabilities of organizations. The title of the paper was "basic competence of the institution". They listed three tests to be applied to determine core competency: (1) it must provide access to a variety of markets, i.e. have advantage potential; (2) it must be relevant to the customer's key purchasing criteria; (3) It must be difficult for competitors to imitate. They emphasized the application of "invisible" assets, innovation, leadership, competencies or knowledge as a basis for competitiveness.

Whereas (Hall, 1992) presented a paper entitled "Strategic Analysis of Intangible Resources" that aimed to create a framework for strategic analysis of intangible resources that lead to sustainable competitive advantage, which formed the basis for a national survey of UK CEOs. The results of the study indicated that employee knowledge and reputation are among the most important resources that make a significant contribution to business success and that the analysis of intangible resources should play a major role in the strategic management process.

On the other hand, Grant (1996) discussed in his scientific paper entitled "Towards a cognitive theory of the company" aspects of knowledge integration and coordination capabilities that are a source of competitive advantage for the company. The results of the paper indicated four mechanisms for integrating specialized knowledge: (1) rules and directives, (2) sequencing, (3) routine, and (4) collective problem solving and decision-making.

While (Spender, 1996) indicated in his research paper entitled "Making knowledge the basis of the dynamic theory of the company" that the knowledge of the organization and its ability to generate new knowledge is the key to achieving competitive advantage. Similar to the resource-based firm's view, he also argued that this competitive advantage arises only from the use of the firm's own scarce and intangible knowledge. He also identified four exploratory techniques

that managers can use to help them define the company as a system of knowledge-based activity, and understand their relationship to it. The four empirical approaches include (a) explanatory flexibility (b) border management (c) identification of institutional effects and (d) differentiation between systemic features and components.

Whereas (Brown & Duguid, 1998) suggested, in a paper titled "Organizing knowledge", that capabilities can be a source of competitive advantage for an organization. The main premise is that knowledge will reside in different areas of the organization. However, the firm's focus should be on organizing that knowledge by providing translators, knowledge brokers and border switches. They also emphasized the role of groups of practice in providing a common environment for the transfer of expertise.

Zack (Zack, 1999) assumed in his paper entitled "Developing a knowledge strategy" that competitive advantage arises due to the strategic use of resources and capabilities, in which knowledge is believed to be the most important. He provided a blueprint for describing and evaluating an organization's knowledge strategy. Zack's approach to integrating knowledge strategy with business strategy is illustrated by cases taken from a number of notable organizations. Its knowledge strategy framework is aligned with the traditional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis.)

Review of the subject literature from 2010 AD to 2020 AD:

Research continued to increase due to technological development, as (Nguyen, 2010) declared in a study entitled "Knowledge management ability and competitive advantage: a field study of Vietnamese enterprises" with the aim of identifying the basic dimensions (the processes of knowledge acquisition, transfer, application and protection) of knowledge management ability and competitive advantage among Vietnamese companies. The study adopted the mixed approach as a research methodology, using quantitative and qualitative methods, where questionnaires and interviews were developed as tools for collecting the necessary data. The research community consists of senior managers in Vietnamese companies, where (1000) of them were selected as a sample, and questionnaires were distributed to them, of which (362) were retrieved, valid for the statistical analysis process. The results of the study indicated that knowledge management is a multi-dimensional structure consisting of the capacity of the infrastructure for social knowledge management, the capacity of the technical infrastructure for knowledge management, and the capacity of the knowledge management process. Three dimensions determine social knowledge management capacity: organizational culture, organizational structure, and people. While four dimensions define the capacity of the knowledge management process. They are knowledge acquisition, transfer, application, and protection processes. Whereas, the capabilities of the social and technical knowledge management infrastructure are closely related to each other. The study recommends the need to develop a comprehensive approach to start developing the infrastructure for social and technical knowledge management, which in turn will provide the necessary platform to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge management processes.

The study of (Mundra et al., 2011) entitled "Achieving a competitive advantage through knowledge management and innovation: empirical evidence from the Indian information technology sector" aimed at identifying the factors that provide an innovative and competitive advantage of knowledge management in global organizations and comparing them to the Indian sector. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach, through questionnaires distributed to employees working in technology companies in India. The results of the study indicate the close relationship between the knowledge management process and the processes of organizational innovation and creativity.

The study of (Rahimli, 2012) entitled "Knowledge Management and Competitive Advantage", aimed to identify the importance of knowledge management to achieve competitive advantage. The study adopted the descriptive approach, by reviewing the relevant literature and studies. The results of the study indicated that the goals of the organization could be achieved through strategic management. The study also showed that to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage, the organization must realize how to create, distribute and use knowledge and link it to the organizational process. In addition to the importance of management realizing the type of knowledge that it should seek to enhance organizational activity to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage.

The study of (Sheng & Chang, 2013) entitled "Barriers of knowledge, knowledge transfer and the competitive advantage of innovation in healthcare settings" aimed to study the mediating role of information and communication

technology (ICT) competencies in promoting knowledge transfer and mitigating the effects of the two main knowledge barriers of cognitive stickiness and cognitive ambiguity, thus increasing the competitive advantage of the company's innovation. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach, where a questionnaire was developed as a main tool for collecting the necessary data. The study community consists of employees of administrative bodies in hospitals in Taiwan. A total of (160) questionnaires were distributed, (112) of which were retrieved ready for statistical analysis. The results of the study indicate that ICT competencies enhance knowledge transfer within hospitals. Despite the negative impact of both cognitive stickiness and knowledge ambiguity on the knowledge transfer process, these effects can be mitigated by specific ICT competencies in terms of competencies in education with the help of Computer, interactive video conferencing, and manual technology. The study recommended the necessity of applying models based on information technology competencies to enhance the role of knowledge management in achieving competitive advantage.

The study of (Gichuki, 2014) entitled "Achieving competitive advantage through knowledge management practices by hotels in the coastal region of Kenya" aimed to identify the knowledge management practices adopted by hotels in the coastal region of Kenya in achieving competitive advantage and the factors that affect the adoption of knowledge management for the competitive advantage of hotels. In order to achieve this goal, the study adopted the descriptive analytical approach, where the necessary data were collected through a questionnaire specifically developed to achieve the study's objectives. The research community consists of general managers and human resource managers in (47) hotels located in the coastal region of Kenya. The results of the study indicated that hotels adopt knowledge management practices in the areas of knowledge creation, knowledge acquisition, knowledge filtering, knowledge storage and representation, knowledge application, distribution, and exchange. The study also showed that hotels have a comprehensive and sufficient database available to all employees and that these hotels document problems and their solutions for future benefits. On the other hand, the study showed that in order to ensure the application of knowledge, hotels have a follow-up program to ensure that subordinates use and apply the techniques acquired during training. The study also showed that in knowledge distribution and exchange practices, hotels maintain a database that includes a list of the names and addresses of experts to call for consultations, and employees use e-mail to share and exchange knowledge with others in addition to using the intranet. The study also found that the factors affecting the adoption of knowledge management practices in hotels are organizational culture, organizational structure, information technology, institutional capacity and the level of training. The study demonstrated that knowledge management is important to help hotels develop innovative products and reduce the loss of valuable knowledge. The study recommends the need for governments to develop relevant policies that support the culture and awareness of owners and employees of various hotels about the importance of adopting knowledge management.

The study of (Abdul Rauf, 2016) entitled "Achieving a competitive advantage through knowledge sharing: Inferring the determinants of knowledge sharing towards a new concentric model: a review" aimed at deducing all potential factors or determinants of knowledge sharing, by adopting the descriptive approach and reviewing relevant literature. The results of the research indicated four types of factors that affect knowledge sharing, which are individual factors, group factors and level of interaction, organizational culture, practices and institutional strategies.

The study of (Xue, 2017) entitled "Examination and criticism of the use of knowledge management in achieving competitive advantage and sustainability in business," aimed at examining and criticizing the use of knowledge management in achieving competitive advantage and sustainability in business with a focus on British Airways, where knowledge management was used in strategic planning and communications and customer experience. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach through the British Airways case study. The results of the study indicated that there is a strong correlation between knowledge and innovation, which has become a long-term driving force for the success of organizations. When new knowledge is created and incorporated into the organizations' innovative new products, competitive advantages will be built and the advantages of knowledge management will be achieved.

The study of (Kolton, 2018) entitled "Knowledge Management in Achieving a Competitive Advantage in the Tax Consulting Market" aimed to clarify the concept of knowledge management in creating a competitive advantage for enterprises, especially in the tax consultancy industry. The article adopted the descriptive approach by reviewing the relevant literature and studies. The results of the study indicated that knowledge management based on continuous improvement, knowledge sharing at all levels of the project team, and its organization, contributes to increasing the

quality of services provided, and works to create a competitive advantage by maintaining the trust of current and new clients.

The study of (Novianti, 2019) entitled "Achieving a competitive advantage through knowledge management practices: a knowledge-based vision (KBV) strategy for the electricity sector in Indonesia" aimed at analyzing knowledge management practices through knowledge-based presentation (KBV) to gain a competitive advantage in the Electricity sector in Indonesia rather than resource-based competitiveness. The study adopted the qualitative approach through the case study method, where interviews and observational processes were used as tools for collecting the necessary data. The results of the study indicated that the competitive advantage is achieved through the processes of sharing and exchanging knowledge, and that the company under study has improved individual and organizational performance by enhancing the role of knowledge management processes. The challenges that the company faced in the knowledge management process were knowing the internal and external sources of knowledge, the lack of sufficient transfer and exchange of knowledge, and the difficulty of choosing sound knowledge transfer methods.

The study of (Tumonglo et al., 2020) entitled "The Impact of Innovation, Market Orientation and Knowledge Management on Competitive Advantage and PT Performance," aimed to determine the impact of innovation, market orientation and knowledge management on the company's performance with competitive advantage as a mediating variable. The study adopted the analytical descriptive approach, whereby a questionnaire was developed as a main tool for collecting the necessary data. The study community consists of (PT) employees located in Jakarta, where (73) were selected as a sample for the study. The results of the study indicated that innovation and market orientation have a positive but not strong impact on competitive advantage, knowledge management has a positive and significant impact on the competitive advantage, innovation has a positive and important impact on the company's performance, market orientation has a positive but not strong impact on the company's performance, knowledge management has a positive and important impact on the company's performance, and competitive advantage has a positive but not strong impact on company performance. In addition, innovation indirectly has a positive but not strong impact on the company's performance through competitive advantage, market orientation has a positive but not strong impact on the company's performance through competitive advantage, and that Knowledge management indirectly has a positive and insignificant impact on the company's performance through competitive advantage.

Commenting on previous studies:

All studies sought to find the link between knowledge management processes and competitive advantage. The studies of (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Hall, 1992; Grant, 1996; Spender, 1996; Brown & Duguid, 1998; Zack, 1999; Rahimli, 2012; Abdul Rauf, 2016; Kohton, 2018) used the descriptive approach and by reviewing the relevant literature and studies, while the study of (Novianti, 2019) used the descriptive approach through a case study and prepared interviews. As for the studies of (Nguyen, 2010; Mundra, Gulati, & Vashisth, 2011; Sheng & Chang, 2013; Gichuki, 2014; Tumonglo, Alam, & Sobarsyah, 2020) the descriptive-analytical approach was conducted through the questionnaire tool, while the study of (Xue), 2017) employed the case study method to achieve its goals. With regard to the research community, most studies agreed with the selection of business organizations and companies, except for the study of (Gichuki, 2014), which relied on hotels as a research community, and the study of (Sheng & Chang, 2013) which chose hospitals as a research community.

Fourth: Findings and Recommendations:

By reviewing the literature on the subject of knowledge management and its role in achieving competitive advantage according to the digital index of tracking knowledge and knowledge management terms in foreign databases, there is great interest by researchers, academics and entrepreneurs in holding conferences, scientific seminars and workshops to share and transfer knowledge.

The interest in knowledge management began in the mid-nineties of the last century and the beginning of the 2000s. Knowledge management among researchers, writers, and within organizations is receiving increasing and accelerating interest because of its essential contribution to growth and achieving competitive advantage, which lead

to the emergence of associations and consulting offices for knowledge management. However, there is a severe deficiency in the contributions of Arab researchers, universities, academics and graduate students in this subject.

Based on the foregoing, the current study researchers believe that knowledge has become one of the main and important resources in organizations that help achieve or create a competitive advantage. The knowledge capital (the tacit knowledge) that exists in the minds of the organization's employees as well as the customers through feedback, which can be invested or transferred to an added value to the organization, is one of the main pillars for obtaining a competitive advantage.

Through the findings and conclusions of the researchers, the researchers suggest a set of recommendations that help in achieving competitive advantage through knowledge management, which are as follows: -

- 1- The necessity of providing knowledge management processes in the public and private sectors because of their vital role in the competitive advantage in the light of the world of knowledge and informatics.
- 2- Enhancing the capabilities of the workers and allowing them to be creative, innovative and free to act and deal with the issues facing them during the exercise of their duties.
- 3- The need to work on developing strategic plans to employ the knowledge possessed by business management organizations in order to improve their practical capabilities.

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