

The role of trust, innovation and knowledge management in entrepreneurial survival strategies: a study of selected cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs in Ibadan, Nigeria

Sunday Samson Babalola¹

Department of Human Sciences, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia
sbabalola@unam.na

Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale²

Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
muyiwaking@yahoo.com

The field of Information communication technology (ICT) is very young in research terms, especially in developing economies. The business aspect of ICT is developing fast, but the challenge of stifling completion has made it imperative for the micro-entrepreneur to adopt various strategies to keep afloat. Therefore this paper examines how the concepts of trust, innovation and knowledge management have aided the cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs through a case study. The study reveals the uniqueness of the micro-entrepreneurs to effectively develop trust, use knowledge management strategies and innovation in advancing their entrepreneurial outfits.

Key words: Knowledge management, innovation, entrepreneurship, trust, cybercafé, Nigeria, Ibadan

Introduction

Contemporary global trends and the attendant global recession demand full participation of the citizenry in economic growth. One of the ways through which individuals could contribute to economic development is through entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship frees the investment savvy individual from total dependence on government in job creation and wealth generation. In fact, it unlocks the potentials in individuals for innovation in business development (McQuaid, Smith-Doerr, & Monti 2010; Robinson, Blockson, & Robinson 2007; Wennekers, Van Stel, Thurik, & Reynolds 2005). The entrepreneur's ability to pursue opportunity has led to the notion that an entrepreneur develops different knowledge frameworks, and that the knowledge gained from interaction with customers and markets influences his/her ability to recognise and exploit its worldview (Shane 2000).

According to Westhead, Ucbasaran and Wright (2004), entrepreneurs that have the tendency to search for variations in experiences tend to develop specific cognitive mindsets that influence their ability to effectively process and evaluate new information, and thus enable them to facilitate the development of entrepreneurial knowledge. Accordingly, as much as their potential creativity and innovation portend possible positive impact in entrepreneurial development, it is important to harness these potentials through effective knowledge management (Earl 2001; Fiore 2007). As Nonaka (1994) notes, the only sure source of lasting competitive advantage in an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, is improved knowledge management. But can this be applicable to a micro-enterprise?

Studies have shown that many micro-businesses, with few or no employees, suffer extremely from a 'liability of smallness' including poor access to various resources (Aldrich & Auster 1986; Ellis, 2010). Researchers such as Baldwin, Gray, Johnson, Proctor, Rafiquzzaman and Sabourin (1997) and St-Jean and Audet (2012) show that lack of experience and competence have been identified as triggering business failure, which is evidenced in lack of vision. Consequently, the use of others' ideas has been suggested as an antidote that gives the entrepreneur the opportunity to reflect on her own and others' experiences and competences to maintain and run a successful business (Bergh, Thorgren, & Wincent 2011; Florén 2005; Moensted 2007; Provan, Fish, & Sydow 2007). Conley and Zheng (2009) identify management and leadership support and organizational culture and structure as some of the contextual factors that are germane to successful knowledge management. These identified factors will help provide different expert opinions and viewpoints that foster increased knowledge (Florén, 2003) as the current study is geared at understanding the surviving strategies of the budding ICT entrepreneurs. This paper is therefore designed to examine how trust, innovation and knowledge management aid the business survival and sustenance of cybercafé entrepreneurs in the ICT sector.

1. Sunday Samson Babalola PhD is a professor in the Department of Human Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia
2. Ayokunle Olumuyiwa Omobowale PhD is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Literature review

Several studies have shown the relevance of trust in developing long-term relationships (Bejou & Palmer 1998; Kang, Jeon, Lee, & Lee 2005; Park 2011) as trust promotes collective benefits from information flows, supply structures and skills (Keeble, Lawson, Moore, & Wilkinson 1999). Trust has also been identified as a critical factor for successful relationships in the service sector (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985). In other words, for a meaningful relationship to exist between the business owner and his/her employee, a feeling of trust in sharing confidential information must be seen to be in place. Positive relationships not only turn the relationship into a stable one over time, but also provide a platform for knowledge sharing and implementation. Trust is however defined as the willingness to trust the other party in an exchange and also to believe in their integrity and good faith (Prause, Mendez, & Garcia-Agreda 2011). The risk involved in trust (Zins 2001; Salavou 2010) may lead a small enterprise owner to be apprehensive and worry about the risk of exposing sensitive and unique business concepts to even his/her employees. Despite this anxiety, studies suggest that building trust in order to gain experience and exchange knowledge is essential (Ariño, Torre, & Ring 2001; Welter & Kautonen 2005) for knowledge management. This is because when trust is high, the individuals are more prone to participate in knowledge exchange, resulting in knowledge creation (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998).

To Lee and Choi (2003), trust is considered an important predictor of knowledge creation as interpersonal trust is empirically and positively linked to knowledge acquisition (Politis 2003). Researchers, such as Fleig-Palmer and Schoorman (2011), Janowicz-Panjaitan and Noorderhaven (2009) and Mehta (2005) observe that trust and knowledge transfer from superiors to subordinates/contemporaries are critical factors in knowledge management. In their study, Lopez *et al.* (2004) stress that an atmosphere of trust and security is essential to encourage innovation and risk taking in order to develop new knowledge and use the existing knowledge. Entrepreneurs (cyber café entrepreneurs) are more often faced with challenging situations and stiff competition that may threaten their business survival. They must therefore continually innovate in order to sustain their businesses.

As the literature indicates, knowledge plays a crucial role in determining a firm's innovation capability, in addition it enhances the quality of knowledge workers (Corso, Martini, Pellegrini, & Paolucci 2002). Knowledge is aptly created, shared, transferred and applied through people rather than information technology-based mechanisms within small to medium sized enterprises (Zhou, Tan, & Uhlener 2007). Knowledge and knowledge driven capabilities are the raw materials that nurture innovation to stem from the creative application of knowledge (Yusuf 2009). Thus, innovation signifies the utilisation of knowledge in order to create something new (Zhou *et al.* 2007). Similarly, Liao, Welsch and Stoica (2003) claim that internal sharing facilitates the speed and effectiveness of the innovation process. March (1991) suggests that there are two fundamentally different modes of innovation, namely exploration and exploitation. Exploitative innovation builds on or extends the existing knowledge, while exploratory innovation requires knowledge and capabilities that are new to the organization.

Knowledge management is a process through which an enterprise gathers, organizes, shares, and analyses its knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills (Cappellin 2007; Peters & Besley 2008). Babalola (2007) views knowledge management as relating to an attempt at using the right knowledge at the right time in the right way and at the right cost. Knowledge management is considered as not only concerned with the notions of knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing, but with the entire knowledge acquisition and utilization process, beginning with locating and capturing knowledge but followed by the enabling of that knowledge within the firm (Choo & Bontis 2002; Takeuchi & Nonaka 2004; Uhlener & Van Santen 2007). In their study, Christensen, Bukh and Bang (2008), identify two perspectives in knowledge management, the artefact oriented and the process oriented. The artefact oriented approach is said to focus on project memory (Kärreman, Alvesson, & Blom 2004) and manual for organizational processes (Malone, Crowston, Lee, Pentland 1993); while the process oriented one is based on the procedure in which knowledge is created and not on the documents or the rules; that is, 'the continuous and dynamic adaptation to real life' (Christensen *et al.* 2008: 4). It is considered as a continuous process where knowledge is transformed between tacit and explicit knowledge and between people and technology.

The common characteristic in these two perspectives is that knowledge is an important factor, which is structured in ways that ensure the applicability of knowledge (Christensen *et al.* 2008) to suit the user. In a word, knowledge management is essential for improving the utilisation of core capabilities and in reducing development time (Oshri, Pan, & Newell 2005). In today's economy that knowledge is recognised as one of the most competitive resources for creating a dynamic business environment (Sharif, Zakaria, Ching & Fung 2005); as knowledge is gained through experience and associated tacit and the explicit learning of specific individuals in a small business (Carson & Gilmore 2001; Wong & Radcliffe 2000). In addition, Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) suggest that small and medium enterprise highly rely on individual know-how, especially that of the entrepreneur and manager in the firm. It is crucial for every would be

successful business enterprise to have, in addition to a good understanding of the potential customer's requirements, also knowledge of the target market and how to reach it efficiently (Arntzen & Worasinchai 2007).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has stimulated an information revolution world wide while Nigeria keyed in to it from year 2000 with the advent of the Internet that was popularized by cybercafés. The Internet has revolutionized access to global electronic and virtual resources across the globe. Cybercafés are generally considered to be similar to any other small commercial venture in an urban setting. Haseloff (2005:54) defines cybercafé as a business centre for:

profit facilities, open to the general public to access the Internet, other network facilities and/or a variety of information technology tools on a temporary contract basis (pay per use) without the necessity for users to own hardware or software themselves.

At the early stage of the introduction of the Internet in Nigeria, a very privileged few had access to it. Many Internet users thus had to depend on cybercafé operators and this consequently led to the rapid spread of cybercafés round the country (Adomi, Okiy, Ruteyan 2003; Alao & Folorunsho 2008; Mutula 2003). Similar conditions seem to operate in most emerging countries as Rangaswamy (2008) reports that with low penetration of personal computers, and high costs of hardware, Internet cafés/cybercafés readily became high-tech access nodes.

With increasing individual access to the Internet and stiff competition among cybercafé operators, many cybercafés have collapsed. As most middle class Internet users access the Internet at their offices or through subscription to the services of mobile phone operators, there is a limited customer base and profit accruing to the operators (Alao & Folorunsho 2008). Notwithstanding the very dicey business environment, some cybercafés are still able to survive and become profitable.

Methodology

This study focused on two-cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs who agreed to be studied as a special case study. A case study approach offers the prospect of observing in a flexible manner and describing complex research in a way that permits a logical conclusion of the observations (Eisenhardt 1989; Tsoukas 1989). A micro-enterprise is defined as a commercial enterprise that has 10 or fewer employees (Ajibefun & Daramola 2003; EUROPA 2003; USAID 2002). Getting this category of entrepreneurs' willingness to disclose their innovative and knowledge management strategies was difficult due to stiff competition among them. The two-cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs that agreed to be studied were university graduates and they also have their cybercafés located within the University of Ibadan. The value of knowledge advancement within the university environment must have contributed to their participation in the study. Thus, pseudonyms are adopted to protect their identities.

The cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs are Mrs Tae and Mr Ade. Mrs Tae is a 50-year-old trained typist/secretary. She also has a diploma in industrial relations from the University of Ibadan with work experience in both public and private bureaucracies. Her cybercafé is located at a student hostel at the university. The café has 17 computers with Internet facility, two photocopying machines, a scanner, printer, and spiral binding machine. Mr Ade is a 31-year-old, has B.A. and M.Sc. degrees from the University of Ibadan. He manages a collection of cybercafés located in and around the university environment. One is located at the Agbowo, just a short distance from the University of Ibadan, while two cybercafés are located at the university. Each of Mr Ade's cybercafés has about 18 computers with Internet facility, photocopying machines, scanners, printers and spiral binding machines. Data for the study were collected through observation and oral interviews. Non-confidential records were also accessed. The data generated were subjected to content analysis.

Findings

Case 1: Mrs Tae

The two-cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs studied gave insights into the innovations they have brought into their businesses. Both entrepreneurs have also consolidated their investments and businesses over the years. Mrs Tae started investing in the acquisition of an electric typewriter in the early 1990s when many commercial typists carried on with manual typewriters. This gave her an edge over other commercial typists as electric typewriters produce better and neater prints. From this modest beginning, Mrs Tae invested in setting up a business centre when personal computers became the preferred word processing machines in the early 2000s. By 2005, she had shifted her focus into cybercafé entrepreneurship. She describes her most effective innovation so far as having good and cordial relationship with both staff and customers, as one is selling ones services and what one believes in.

Moreover, as much as personal computers are almost ubiquitous in urban cities, not all customers are expert in everyday use of the computer. She thus lends support bearing on her training and experience as a certificated typist/secretary. Of course, the secretarial services she provides to customers who are unable to use the computer come at a fee and this further enhances the earnings of the cybercafé. Thus, she ensures all her staff has some training in secretarial and word-processing skills.

Cybercafés usually sell Internet access to customers in limited bits of between 30 and 60 minutes, although an extension could be sought for up to five hours for access by special arrangement. Special software, which cuts off Internet access, is usually installed in computers. A customer who has exhausted his or her time is by rule expected to purchase more time (at least 30 minutes) in order to finish ongoing transactions even within a few minutes of completion; this is taken to be pure business. Mrs Tae has however innovated by devising a means whereby customers would not have to pay more for short access to complete an on-going transaction. She calls this “clients’ management”. Through the system of clients’ management, Mrs Tae allocates about 20 minutes of Internet access to each staff member. Each employee could transfer between 2 to 5 minutes to a customer needing short additional time at no extra cost. This saves the customer funds that could have been spent to purchase an extra 30 minutes, which may not be exhausted and thereafter lost. She says: “I believe it is exploitation to ask customers to purchase 30 minute access for a job that would not last more than 5 minutes”. Mrs Tae also allocates up to one hour of “clients’ management” to herself daily. This is meant to compensate customers who could not accomplish their tasks on the Internet due to slow Internet speed, which happens occasionally.

Aside from Internet service, Mrs Tae also provides other services such as printing, photocopying, scanning and spiral binding. On the cost of printing, which is usually NGN20 (\$0.13) within the University campus, Mrs Tae gives a special rate of NGN5 (\$0.03) for students who form the greater proportion of her clientele. The relative cheapness of printing service at her cybercafé attracts student-customers desirous of saving cost. She recently added bulk messaging to the services she provides at her cybercafé. Mrs Tae disclosed she got the idea from some of her customers who appreciate her disposition to clients. She further stated that she buys bulk-messaging packages ranging between 100 units to 500 units from banks and other outlets that sell such packages and resell to customers. She organises conference meetings with her employees on a monthly basis; during this period, they review activities within the month, provide training where need be and take contributions from everyone present. This arrangement allows services to proceed even when she is absent.

In terms of employee management, Mrs Tae tries to build trust and make the employees realise that she is interested in their welfare. She gives a weekly specific amount of money for the running of the cybercafé and when an employee spends their personal funds when the money left with them is exhausted, she reimburses them immediately. Hence, even in her absence, shortage of funds does not stall the functionality of the cybercafé. Any time the cybercafé makes extra income, she shares the extra profit with employees. She says she does this so that her employees will realise she is not the “eat it all” type, and also to prevent stealing from the business fund.

Mrs Tae has also educated her employees on basic accounting skills, which allows them to run the business and keep the accounts in her absence. She, however, technically monitors the business proceedings (the resources used and profit made daily) through the basic accounting elements installed in the ICT equipment to forestall mismanagement and embezzlement. Her computers are equipped with special software that monitors Internet access purchased and utilised by customers while the printers and photocopiers have counters that record the volume of prints or photocopies. This system has helped her in allowing her employee to run the cybercafé freely, monitor them and also relieves her work associated stress and tension coming from employees’ unethical behaviour.

Case 2: Mr Ade

Mr Ade commenced his ICT business career in 2004. He started with web designing and subsequently diversified into cybercafé entrepreneurship in 2009. Mr Ade disclosed he ventured into ICT business and cybercafé entrepreneurship in particular due to the dicey nature of job opportunities in Nigeria. This is because having credentials alone is not sufficient for securing a job. Jobs are hard to secure because the economy is at a low and receding tide. Mr Ade has uniquely ventured into the management of a consortium of cybercafés. He established his first cybercafé in the Agbowo area of Ibadan. This is quite strategic as Agbowo is a community just opposite the University of Ibadan that attracts a huge youthful population as a community where many students reside and which they patronise. From Agbowo, Ade extended his reach into the university premises. His initial strategy is partnering with units within the institution with available spaces that could be converted to cybercafés. With the partnership Mr Ade provides all necessary equipment and manages the cybercafé on agreed terms with the unit. He has been able to secure such spaces at a location within faculty and student hostel buildings. He has a staff strength of 10 employees.

A major impediment to the success of cybercafés in Nigeria is poor and irregular signals from Internet Service Providers (ISPs), which has resulted in the collapse of many cybercafés. To overcome this, Mr Ade subscribes to three ISPs with relatively cheaper charges, thus, when one ISP's signals are not forthcoming, he switches to the back-up ISPs. Consequently, at every point in time, his cybercafés are open and functional. According to Mr Ade, the expensive ISPs charge as much as NGN600 000 (\$4 000) monthly; notwithstanding the huge cost, the signals also fluctuate. He opted for ISPs where he pays NGN20 000 (\$133) only for each ISP, which put the cost of the entire three ISPs at a total sum of NGN60 000 only (\$399). Mr Ade hence receives signals from 3 different ISPs at a little below 10% of the cost of the expensive one. Since Mr Ade subscribes to the cheaper ISPs, he is also able to offer relatively cheaper Internet access (NGN80 [\$0.5]) than other cybercafés' charge of NGN120 (\$0.8), all stated as per-hour usage.

Likewise, because of irregular and unpredictable national grid supplies of electricity for power in Nigeria (the university campus inclusive), Mr Ade supplements this with electrical generators to ensure an uninterrupted electricity power supply in his cybercafé. Because his cybercafés depend on personal generation of electricity most of the time, he has to provide other services (such as printing, photocopying, binding, cybercafé management and ICT consultancies) to help augment the extra cost of electricity power generation. Each of Mr Ade's cybercafés offers scanning and printing services at cheaper rates, with printing at the rate of NGN5 (\$0.03) per page as against NGN20 (\$0.13) and NGN30 (\$0.2) per page by most other business centres. Furthermore, in order to attract news savvy customers, Mr Ade puts at least a national newspaper in each of his cybercafés. The newspaper attracts readers, many who subsequently patronise the cybercafé.

Unlike many cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs, Mr Ade has registered with the National Communications Commission, Nigeria's ICT regulatory body, making him the only private cybercafé entrepreneur within the university environments that is officially registered. This gives him an edge over other cybercafé entrepreneurs in dealing with formal institutions. The formal registration seemingly insulates Mr Ade's cybercafés from cyber criminality, for which many cybercafés in Nigeria are noted, especially while dealing with formal organisations. Besides, Mr Ade consults with weekly bulletins of ICT related organizations that include the Information Technology Association of Nigeria Weekly Bulletin, Computer Society of Nigeria Weekly Bulletin and Computer Professional Association of Nigeria Weekly Bulletin. With these publications, the employees are educated more on the latest developments within the industries.

In addition, Mr Ade pays higher remuneration to his employees, with a monthly pay of between NGN8 000 (\$53) and NGN10 000 (\$66.) whereas others pay an average of NGN6 000 (\$40). He does this in order to retain their loyalty as they consider their pay as a privilege compared to what obtains in other places. Mr Ade has also indicated that he carries his employees along as much as possible by building trust. This he does by allowing his employees to handle the cybercafé account while he supervises. By so doing, he somewhat internalises in them the value of trust. He, however, does not entrust the accounts to one employee, as he makes sure that every employee has some basic accounting skills. Thus, accounting responsibility alternates among employees at scheduled intervals (usually on a daily basis). Similarly, irrespective of their primary skill, Mr Ade trains everyone on basic computer management and repair skills so that the cybercafés are kept running optimally, especially if faults detected in the machines are minimal, and are what their basic repair skills can handle. As much as Ade strives to entrust cybercafé accounts to the employee and transfer basic ICT repair skills to them, he insists on discipline, without which the organization could collapse. He hence affirmed that whereas he may give verbal sanction for late coming, any employee nabbed committing fraud is instantly fired. Mr Ade affirms that he maintains a relatively large employee size so that the enterprise can still function even if an employee is found wanting and is consequently sacked.

Finally, Mr Ade places himself on a salary; without mentioning the exact amount, he says it is within the range of NGN20 000 (\$133). For him not to encroach on the running cost and extra profit made, he has separated his personal account from the business account. He also endeavours to limit his monthly expenses to his stipulated salary, irrespective of extra profits. Mr Ade tries to diversify as much as possible within the ICT sector and accommodates some of the diversity in his cybercafé business.

Discussion and conclusion

The case study showed that the two micro-entrepreneurs adopted the principle of "asset parsimony" which according to Hambrick and MacMillan (1984) is the skill of deploying minimum assets needed to achieve the desired business results through gradual acquisition of assets over a certain period of time. Through their activities, it could be deduced that none of them has full financial and material resources to start their micro-enterprise, but must have used their cash flows to step-up their business expansion. Similarly, their behaviour could be linked to what MacMillan (1986) described as having had many an opportunity to attempt a business and recognize opportunity, which has afforded them to build on their past experiences in arriving on their current state of enterprise. First Mrs Tae started as a commercial typist with manual

typewriters until 2005 when she began to invest in cybercafé entrepreneurship. Likewise, Mr Ade started with web designing and subsequently diversified into cybercafé entrepreneurship in 2009. He is able to lean on the 'use of social capital' (Starr and MacMillan 1990) by forming a partnership with Units within the University on agreed terms for his business operation. This case study also confirmed previous studies of entrepreneurial learning, that entrepreneurs seem to develop knowledge either by utilising their previous knowledge in new projects or by developing new knowledge in the ventures they are involved in (Minniti & Bygrave 2001; Rae & Carswell, 2001; Sullivan 2000).

The development processes in this study are built around the micro-entrepreneurs' unique knowledge resources, in a way that may make it difficult for competitors to adopt or follow whole-heartedly. Thus, the exhibited behaviour in the case study could be regarded as innovative if Hall, Clark, Sulaiman, Sivamohan, and Yoganand (2003) and Spielman's (2005) definition is taken into consideration, in that innovation is regarded as the continuous process of upgrading, using new knowledge or the new combination of existing knowledge, which is new to the local environment. For instance, Mr Ade's alternating accounting responsibility on a regular basis among employees and also using three ISPs to cut costs and solve the problem of Internet failure which is common in an emerging economy. Just as Mrs Tae also introduced customer friendly additional timing and assistance to customers that are having problems with completion of their work on the computer; while her interaction with the customers brought about the introduction of bulk messaging, thus confirming Shane's (2000) idea that relationships with customers could lead to business recognition and exploitation. This also confirmed Ellis's (2010) assertion that local knowledge may be a vital part of business development, which might be picked up through face-to-face interaction with the locals in the area.

The introduction of extra business activities such as provision of printing, cybercafé management and ICT consultancies by each of the micro-entrepreneurs amounts to the use of knowledge as a competitive force in stabilising their enterprises. Equally, providing their employees with the basic training in account management and repairing minor computer system faults can be classified as factors that are appropriate to knowledge management (Conley & Zheng 2009). The use of account control and administrative systems encourages the gathering, analysing and subsequent disseminating of formalized knowledge. The fact that informal knowledge sharing taking place daily on a "face-to-face" contact between the micro-entrepreneurs and employees is of the greatest strategic importance. This type of activity could be of great benefit as it might serve as a source for routine solutions where explicit knowledge can be reused (Markus 2001).

The micro-entrepreneurs made knowledge available to their employees and customers through the provision of magazines and journal articles (explicit knowledge) in their workplace and also through internal weekly assessment and discussions on problems and issues (tacit knowledge) encountered during the week. Belonging to a professional association by an entrepreneur according to Gray (2003) is a driver for networking, exchange of business and technical knowledge, as well as social interactions among smaller firms. The constant interaction between the micro-entrepreneurs with their employees must have enabled them to personalise and tailor-make services that contribute to an atmosphere of trust in running their enterprises. Borrowing from Feld's (1981) terminology, trust must have provided focus for both the employees and their employer to become 'interpersonally tied'.

A careful analysis of the styles of operations of the micro-entrepreneurs showed the use of trust, knowledge transfer through mentoring and good relationships with employees and customers. It also affirmed that trust building is important for the entrepreneurial development, most especially a micro-enterprise. According to Lopez, Peon and Ordas (2004), once employees' loyalty is secured, knowledge transfer through mentoring, technology and diversification could be rightly harnessed for optimal results in entrepreneurial development. Likewise, by ensuring customer trust in the organisation (in this case, the cybercafé), customer patronage is retained. Thus, when innovations are introduced, both employee and customers potentially trust the entrepreneur's ingenuity at delivering good services.

The micro-entrepreneurs used a combination of push and pull strategy in implementing knowledge sharing across the organizations. Push strategy makes a decision on what information is to be allocated to whom and automatically alerts users of changes, while pull strategy is based on user requests and needs (Davenport & Prussak 1997). For instance, through physical meetings, the micro-entrepreneurs attempted to internalise knowledge to more persons so that through this process, the employees' experiences become transformed into useable knowledge within the organisation. Damodaran and Olphert (2000) as well as Edwards, Shaw and Collier (2005) have argued that in general a push-strategy, that is, when information and knowledge are 'pushed' through to the potential users, is less effective than a pull-strategy, which is based on creating a basic organizational culture and context, which encourages organizational learning – and where the employees have access to knowledge when needed.

In summary, it can be said that the micro-entrepreneurs had the right attitude, built on their skills and aptitudes, created the right organizational culture and provided direction using their leadership as micro-entrepreneurs to work towards their enterprises' growth. In addition, the experientially acquired knowledge over time seemed to provide each

of the micro-entrepreneurs with knowledge that improved their ability. This paper thus concluded that as much as innovation is essential for entrepreneurial success, knowledge management is particularly germane to the success and development of entrepreneurial organizations. With these cybercafé micro-entrepreneurs, this paper identified contextual factors of employee welfare, self-discipline, customer relations, knowledge transfer, diversification and technology in not only building trust, but to enhance knowledge management and innovation. Hence, this paper concluded that trust building is imperative in innovation and knowledge management, especially as regards the entrepreneurs studied.

Limitations and recommendation

There is no doubt that this study has some limitations; notwithstanding, it serves as a springboard to understand the working challenges and strengths of micro-entrepreneurs in an emerging economy. Future studies should encourage multiple respondents so as to give a different and more accurate picture of the situation and also combine both qualitative and quantitative measurement to strengthen and enrich future findings.

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