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Normalising the Influence of Knowledge Internalisation on Market Offerings of Professional and Technology-Driven Firms

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NORMALISING THE IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE INTERNALISATION ON MARKET OFFERINGS OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Internalisation of knowledge plays a vital role in improving the overall performance of the organisation. This internalised knowledge increases the level of individual understanding and it actualized practically inform of new product being offered to customers. Internalization enhances individuals to expand, extend and transform their own tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge but still, organisations are faced with challenges of the individual knowledge can be turned to valuable asset. Therefore, this study examined the effect of internalisation of knowledge on market offerings of the selected IT and professional firms in Nigeria. This study was descriptive and also adopted a sequential explanatory approach to elicit information from staff of selected IT and professional firms. The use of quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (structured interview) were adopted. The quantitative data were analyzed using measurement and structural modelling while the qualitative data used the thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the selected IT and professional firms encouraged their staff by adopting 'learning by doing or using' where individuals virtually learned the explicit knowledge to enhance their tacit knowledge. Based on the above, there is need for both the IT and professional firms to improve employees' competences (skills and abilities) through training and development in order to keep up with changes within the organization or from an outside environment.

Keywords: Knowledge, Internalisation, Market offering, performance, innovation

Introduction

Nonaka (1994) sees the last mode in the knowledge creation theory to be internalisation of knowledge. This internalised knowledge has continuously helped firms to increase the level of individual understanding and absorptive capacity. Nonaka and Toyama, (2004) suggested that through internalisation, new explicit knowledge is converted into organisational memory and is actualized practically inform of new product development. Studies have shown that the internalisation stage is used by individuals to expand, extend and transform their own knowledge which is tacit and once the explicit knowledge is internalized into individuals' tacit knowledge base, it turns into a valuable asset. Yet, studies on internalisation (Nonaka and Toyama, 2004; Saghier and Nathan, 2013) are linked to firm performance without specific focus on perceived market offerings to the customers.

Nonaka (1994) that internalisation is more of what we learn which can also be referred to as "learning by doing" which connotes that the employees within the organisation learning on the job or learning when by practicing. Jordan (2012) in his work effect of organisational knowledge creation on firm performance asserted that an individual can absorb tacit knowledge through demonstrations and other means in the internalisation process. The author also showed

that part of the internalisation practices are efforts usually taken to accept best practices from other areas and projects within the firm.

Anand *et al.*, (2010) argued that internalisation practices includes on-the-job training which captures how the new explicit knowledge is transformed into useful materials that would be well understood by others working in the processes. In internalisation of knowledge process, there is usually improvement which enables the conversion from explicit to tacit knowledge easier for employees and it also gives better and clearer understanding to team members on the best way to accomplish work.

Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal (2003) are of the opinions that internalisation practices which includes control charts and error-proofing procedures makes individual employees to re-experience what ave been pass through by others which then help to creates tacit knowledge in the individuals thereby making the firms improve on their product, services or processes which will give them competitive edge over their competitor.

2. Literature review

2.1 Knowledge Defined

Roska (2003) defined knowledge as a well-organized set of information about crucial facts, datas, laws, inference rules and notions that are linked to a particular area of human experience which is also rooted in a given thought. Knowledge can also be seen as the mix of contextual expert insight, information, values, and framed experience that provides a platform for the incorporation and evaluation of new experiences and information. In today’s organisations, knowledge do not come only inform of repositories or documents, but it can also come inform of organisational norms, practices, and routines, processes, practices and norms (Davenport & Prusak, 2000).

Takeuchi (1995) developed a knowledge-based theory (SECI Model) which examined how knowledge is created and managed within an organization. This theory argues that two types of knowledge exists namely explicit and tacit knowledge. Four basic processes are needed to create and transfer knowledge within the task environment. These processes are socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (SECI). Nonaka and Von (2009) defined tacit knowledge as embedded knowledge in the mind which is difficult to articulate. The first widely acceptable classification on knowledge by Polanyi (1966) and being popularised by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) is known as explicit and tacit knowledge as presented in Table 1

Table 1: Knowledge Typology

Tacit Knowledge (Subjective)	Explicit knowledge (Objective)
This is difficult to formalized and it is highly personal which makes it tough in communicating and sharing with others, thereby making them difficult to communicate to others.	This is usually expressed in numbers and words. It can also be effortlessly communicated and shared inform of procedures, hard or difficult data, scientific formulae, codified and universal principle.

<p>Key Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simultaneous knowledge (that is, here and now) • Analog Knowledge (that is, practice) • Knowledge of experience (body) 	<p>Key characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequential knowledge (that is, there and then) • Digital knowledge (that is, theory) • Knowledge of rationality (mind)
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Source: Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

2.2 Internalisation of Knowledge

This is explicit to tacit knowledge. It is a process in which continuous individual continually reflect, see connections and recognize patterns and capacity to make sense between ideas, and concepts (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2004). Internalisation converts explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) hold that conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge results in knowledge. Accordingly, they developed four-mode model of knowledge creation and transfer as follows

Internalisation is the action of using organisational explicit knowledge to create tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994) by being exposed to other individual's knowledge. Nonaka (2000) feels that some action is needed by the learner such as learning-by doing, training, or exercises for the conversion from explicit to tacit knowledge to occur. Marwick (2001) identifies text searching and document categorization as effective information technologies that can promote the process of internalisation.

2.3 New Explicit to Tacit Knowledge (Internalisation)

Internalisation converts explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. Through internalisation, explicit knowledge created is shared throughout an organisation and converted into tacit knowledge by individuals. In this mode of conversion, knowledge flows from the firm to the individual (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2004; Shih, Chang, & Lin, 2010). Knowledge Internalisation is the process of absorbing explicit knowledge and converting it into individually-held tacit knowledge (Kale & Singh, 1999).

This conversion or manifestation of explicit knowledge can be done by actually applying that knowledge, thereby absorbing and embodying it and converting it into tacit knowledge. Once this explicit knowledge is internalized into individuals' tacit knowledge bases. Internalisation is achieved through changing explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through a process in which abstract ideas change into concrete ones and they are finally absorbed as an integral value. Internalisation produces operational knowledge assets, e.g. knowledge about project management, production processes, and new product usage. These assets consist of the tacit knowledge that is routinized and embedded in the actions and operations of the organisation. Organisational routines for carrying out the day-to-day business of the organisation provide an example of operational knowledge assets. In addition to this, existing practices may be improved or replaced. A characteristic of operational knowledge assets is that they are practical (Nonaka *et al.*, 2000).

2.4 Market Offering

According to Kotler and Kevin (2008), market offering is the product/service that a firm designs to deliver value to the customers/client and the value can be either be to fulfil their needs or satisfy their wants. Basically, market offering according to Kotler (2003) can be differentiated along five dimensions which includes; Product (form, features, performance quality, conformance, quality, durability, reliability, style , design); service (order ease, deliver ,installation, customer training, customer consulting, maintenance and repair, miscellaneous service); personal, channel, or image (symbols, media, atmosphere, and events).

Kotler and Kevin (2008) proposed six categories of new product in developing new market offering which includes; new-to-the-world products, new product lines, additions to existing product lines, improvements and revisions of existing products, repositioning and cost reductions. Offering comprise of a product (tangible goods customer can buy and own) or service (intangible) and it also consist the price/amount customers/clients pays to receive the offering's benefit.

2.5 Knowledge Internalisation and Market Offering among IT and Professional firms in Nigeria's Context

Ibidunni, A. S., Moses, C. L., Adegbuyi, O. A., Oladosun, M., & Olokundun, M. (2018). Empirical evidence of organizational knowledge from a typological perspective and its linkages with performance. *International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development*, Volume 10, Issue 4, pp 45-60.

Ibidunni, A. S., Ibidunni, O. M., Oke, A. O., Ayeni, A. W., Olokundun, M. A. (2018). Examining the relationship between tacit knowledge of individuals and customer satisfaction. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 24 (1), pp. 1-20.

Nonaka (1994) in his work on the dynamic theory of organisational knowledge creation opined that internalisation is more of what we learn which can also be referred to as “learning by doing”. Jordan (2012) in his work effect of organisational knowledge creation on firm performance asserted that an individual can absorb tacit knowledge through demonstrations and other means in the internalisation process. Ibidunni, Moses, Adegbuyi, Oladosun and Olokundun (2018) in their work on organizational knowledge from a typological perspective and its linkages with performance showed that part of the internalisation practices are efforts taken to comprehend and accept best practices from other areas and projects within the firm. Ibidunni *et al.*, (2018) also argued that Internalisation practices which includes “learning-by-doing” activities such as on-the-job training captures explicit knowledge and turn it to useful for that would be understood by others working in the processes. Jordan (2012) emphasized that in process improvement, internalisation practices enables the conversion of explicit to tacit knowledge which gives understanding to team members as to the best way to accomplish work. The internalisation practices (which includes control charts and error-proofing procedures)

allow individuals to re-experience what others have gone through which then help to creates tacit knowledge in the individuals. Worlu, Evioghnesi, Ajagbe & Okoye (2015) asserted that offering which includes; new-to-the-world products, new product lines, additions to existing product lines, improvements and revisions of existing products, repositioning and cost reductions. Firms must be able to put all these six categories into action will give them competitive edge over their competitor.

3. Methodology

Descriptive (survey) research design with a mixed method (sequential explanatory approach) was adopted for gathering data from cross-section of staff in the selected IT and Professional firms. For the research instrument, a structured questionnaire was adopted for collecting information from the employees of the selected firms. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: (i) items on demographic variables and (ii) items based on the objectives of the study. This study was also specifically, descriptive and managers of three hierarchical levels (strategic, tactical and operational) in the four selected IT firms and four selected Professional firms were selected as subjects of study. The target population of this study comprised IT firms that were listed on JarusHub Nigeria (2017), Nigeria Search Engine (2011) and Nigerian Yellow Pages (2011) which are the business directories that are commonly used in Nigeria. The multi stage sampling technique was adopted which comprised purposive, stratified and; convenience (*availability*) sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was adopted for the study which aimed at establishing the relationship between knowledge internalisation and market offering. A Likert-type scale containing five variations, ranging from 'strongly agree' to strongly disagreed' was applied. The collected information received quantitative treatment and was analysed statistically. A variance-based model and regression were used to analyze the data with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) *version 22* and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), PLS3.

Table 2: Items in the questionnaire and their sources

Latent construct	Number of items	Source
Internalisation ... Here, the new explicit knowledge formed is spread within an organisation and later transformed into tacit knowledge by individuals	5	
Market Offering ... This is the product/service that a firm designs to deliver value to the customers/client and the value can be either be to fulfil their needs or satisfy their wants.	3	Kotler and Kevin (2008)

4. Results and Interpretations

This study was statistically tested using SMART_ Partial Least Square (PLS) structural modelling to (i) identify whether or not there is a relationship, and (ii) examine the degree of the relationship, between the independent (that is, internalization of knowledge) and dependent variables (market offering); and finally, (iii) to analyse the significant effect of the variables under study. The correlation analysis is represented by the inner weight and it reflects the degree of linear relationship between two variables as presented in Figures 1 and 2 respectively. Extant literature has shown that the larger the values, the stronger the relationship. Hence, the range of values to explain the degree of association and statistical correlation coefficient between two (2) variables is determined using the decision rule presented below:

Decision Rule:

- A correlation coefficient (inner weight) of 0.6 to 0.9 is regarded as a high correlation. This implies that there is a very strong and positive relationship between the variables examined. This also connotes that for every positive increase in one variable, there will also be a positive increase of a fixed proportion in the other.
- A correlation coefficient (inner weight) of 0.3 to 0.6 is regarded as a moderate correlation. This implies that there is a moderate and positive relationship between the two variables
- An inner weight of 0.1 to 0.3 is regarded as a weak correlation. This also implies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, but it's a weak one.
- A correlation coefficient of -1 means that for every positive increase in one variable, there is a negative decrease of a fixed proportion in the other. For example, the amount of gas in a tank decreases in (almost) perfect correlation with speed.

Hence, to establish the degree of relationship, SMART PLS was adopted. SMART PLS is only concerned with measurement model assessment with reflective formative constructs and show model fit indices. The reason for using SMART PLS is to have robust findings and the results are consistent at large. Partial Least Square also facilitate different indicators of goodness-of-fit.

Bentler and Wu (2002) and Kaplan (2008) argued that different indicators of goodness-of-fit are usually adopted in various research concepts. Further, the higher the number of the indices of indicators, the acceptable of a good fit such as Normed Fit Index (NFI) \Rightarrow .90; and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) acceptable value \Leftarrow .08. Other

informative indices that measure the close association between the model and the data include Chi-Square, Goodness of fit (GFI); etc. The analyses of this hypotheses were presented below:

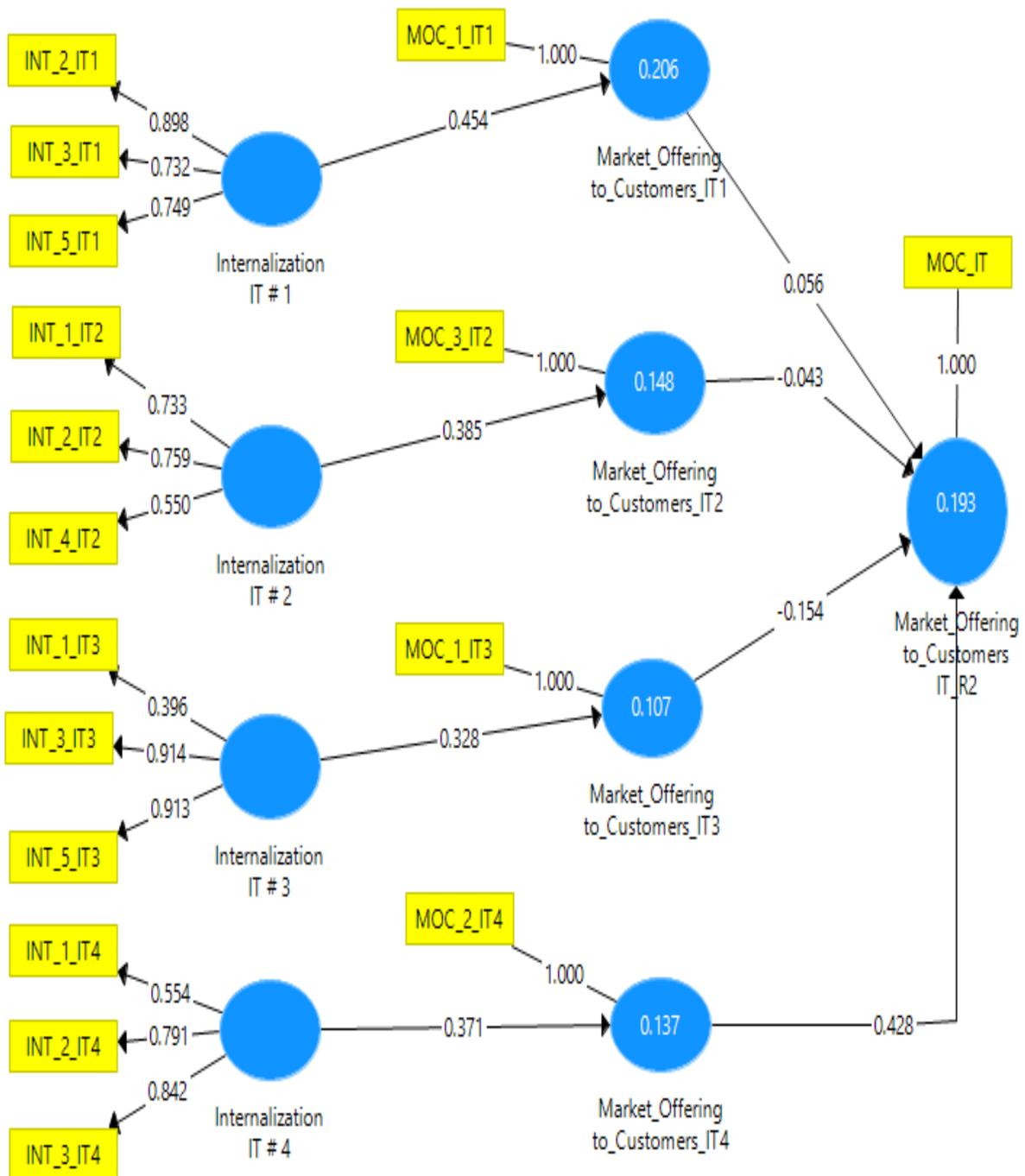


Figure 1: Structural Models and Path Analysis for Internalization of Knowledge and Market Offering to Customers in Selected IT Firms

Table 3: Result of the R-Square, Model Fit, Composite Reliability and AVE for the Model

R Square (Internalization of Knowledge)			Model Fit Summary	
Matrix	R Square	R Square Adj	Summary Index	
Market Offering to Customers_IT1	0.206	0.198	SRMR	0.199
Market Offering to Customers_IT2	0.148	0.140	d_ ULS	6.077
Market Offering to Customers_IT3	0.107	0.098	d_ G1	2.532
Market Offering to Customers_IT4	0.137	0.129	d_ G2	2.026
Market Offering to Customers_IT	0.193	0.159	Chi-Square	789.147
			NFI	0.926
Composite Reliability			Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Table 4: Path Coefficients Hypothetical Decision

Variable	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	T-Statistics	P-Values	Decision
Internalization _IT Firm 1	0.454	0.486	0.114	1.971	0.000	Significant
Internalization _IT Firm 2	0.385	0.446	0.034	6.728	0.000	Significant
Internalization _IT Firm 3	0.328	0.334	0.167	2.305	0.022	Significant
Internalization _IT Firm 4	0.371	0.396	0.150	2.477	0.014	Significant
Dependent Variable: Market Offering to Customers						

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Interpretation:

Table 3 and 4 shows the structural model of internalization of knowledge and market offerings to customers in the four selected IT firms. Based on the statistical result, all the four selected IT firms recorded a significant and moderate relationship between internalization of knowledge and market offerings to customers. Hence, the positive association between internalization of knowledge and market offerings to customers in the four selected IT firms is an indication that as each of the organisations practice encourage their workers to engage in embodying activity to improve workers' competencies (experience, skill, and attitude) and to keep up with changes within the organization or from an outside environment, market offerings to customers is also increasing especially among the IT firms. Importantly, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 19.3%. This also implies that the tested measures of internalization of knowledge jointly explain 19.3% of the variance in market offerings to customers.

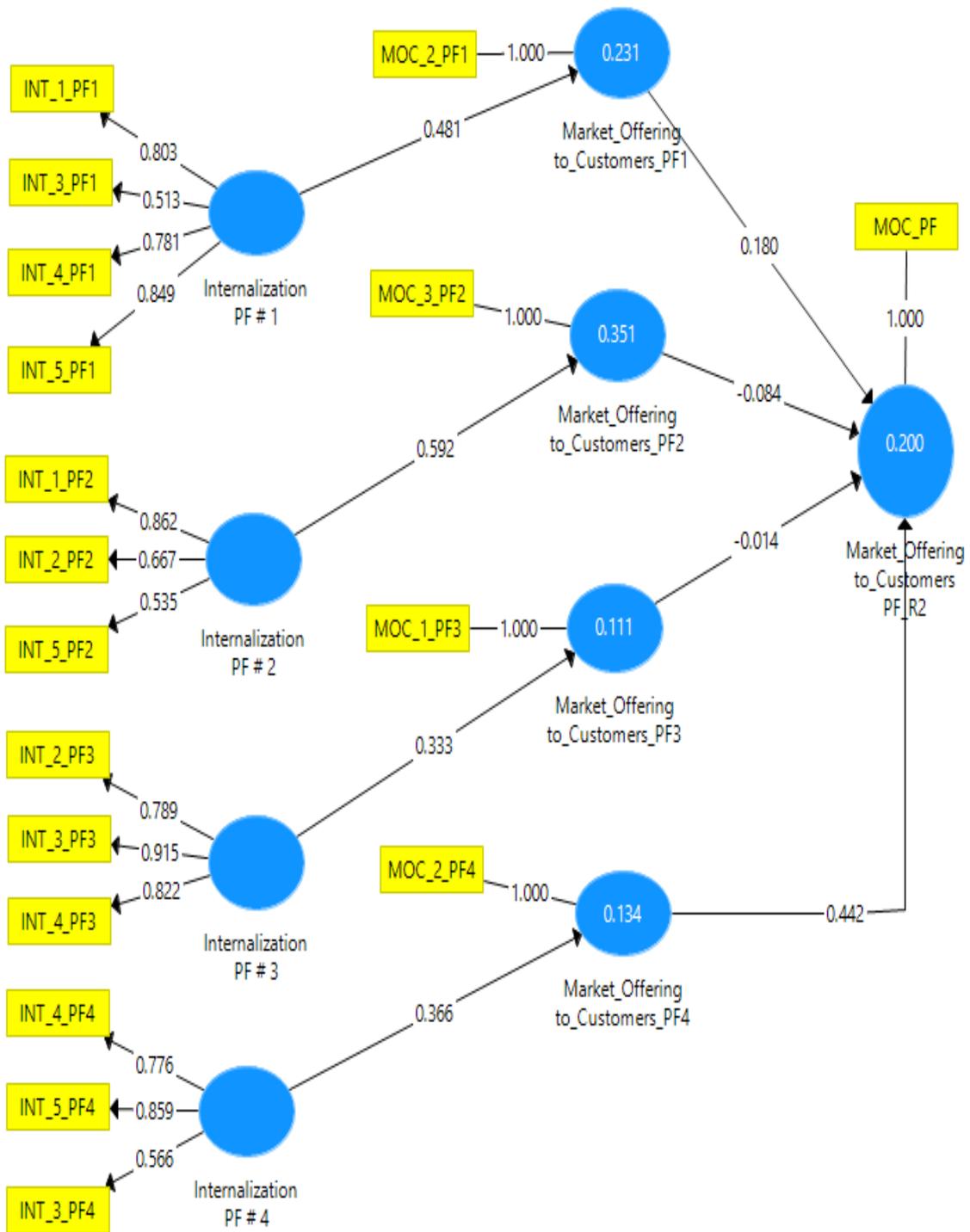


Figure 2: Structural Models and Path Analysis for Internalisation of Knowledge and Market Offering to Customers in Selected Professional Firms

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Table 5: Result of R-Square, Model Fit, Composite Reliability and AVE for the Model

R Square (Internalisation of Knowledge)			Model Fit Summary																																									
Matrix	R Square	R Square Adj	Summary Index																																									
Market Offering to Customers_PF1	0.231	0.223	SRMR	0.154																																								
Market Offering to Customers_PF2	0.351	0.344	d_ ULS	4.040																																								
Market Offering to Customers_PF3	0.111	0.101	d_ G1	1.905																																								
Market Offering to Customers_PF4	0.134	0.125	d_ G2	1.578																																								
Market Offering to Customers_PF	0.200	0.167	Chi-Square	642.448																																								
			NFI	0.952																																								
Composite Reliability			Average Variance Extracted (AVE)																																									
<table border="1"> <caption>Composite Reliability Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Construct</th> <th>Composite Reliability</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.85</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.78</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.90</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.80</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			Construct	Composite Reliability	Internaliza...	0.85	Internaliza...	0.78	Internaliza...	0.90	Internaliza...	0.80	Market_O...	1.00	<table border="1"> <caption>Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Construct</th> <th>AVE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.58</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.65</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.75</td></tr> <tr><td>Internaliza...</td><td>0.58</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Market_O...</td><td>1.00</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Construct	AVE	Internaliza...	0.58	Internaliza...	0.65	Internaliza...	0.75	Internaliza...	0.58	Market_O...	1.00																
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Source: Field Survey (2018)

Table 6: Path Coefficients Hypothetical Decision

Variable	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	T-Statistics	P-Values	Decision
Internalisation _PF Firm 1	0.481	0.517	0.120	3.999	0.000	Significant
Internalisation _PF Firm 2	0.592	0.629	0.123	4.801	0.000	Significant
Internalisation _PF Firm 3	0.333	0.328	0.096	3.462	0.001	Significant
Internalisation _PF Firm 4	0.366	0.366	0.180	2.035	0.042	Significant
Dependent Variable: Market Offering to Customers						

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Interpretation:

Table 5 and 6 shows the structural model of internalisation of knowledge and market offerings to customers in the four selected professional firms. Based on the statistical result, all the four selected professional firms recorded a significant, positive and moderate relationship between internalisation of knowledge and market offerings to customers. Hence, the positive association between internalisation of knowledge and market offerings to customers in the four selected professional firms is an indication that as each of the organisations practice encourage their workers to engage in embodying activity to improve workers' competencies (experience, skill, and attitude) and to keep up with changes within the organisation or from an outside environment, market offerings to customers is also increasing especially among the professional firms. Importantly, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 20%. This also implies that the tested measures of internalisation of knowledge jointly explain 20% of the variance in market offerings to customers.

Regression Analysis for Both the IT and Professional firm

To support the structural model developed for explaining internalisation of knowledge and market offering for IT and Professional firms, the use of regression was also adopted to show the degree of variance. Specifically, regression and analysis of variance were employed to test the hypothesis because all the data are combination of ordinal and nominal data. The tables give detail assessment of internalisation of knowledge on service differentiation among the IT and Professional firms in Nigeria.

Table 7: Model Summary of the Variables

Model Summary ^b									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.385 ^a	.148	.138	.51441	.148	14.527	5	418	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Internalisation									
b. Dependent Variable: Market Offering to Customers									

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Interpretation of Results:

Model summary table 7 present the results that revealed the extent to which the variance in the market offerings to customers is explained by internalisation of knowledge. In this case the R square is .148 if expressed by a percentage will be 14.8%. This connotes that 14.8% of the variance in market offerings to customers can be explained by the variance in internalisation of knowledge. The adjusted R square shows that .138 that is 13.8% variability of the independent variable (internalisation of knowledge) while the standard error of the estimate indicates .51441 which signifies error term. This means that a unit increase in internalisation of knowledge will lead to an increase in market offerings to customers in both the IT and Professional firms.

5. Discussion of findings

The findings indicated that selected IT firms encouraged their staff by adopting "learning by doing or using" where individuals virtually learned the explicit knowledge to enhance their tacit knowledge. This exercise in the selected firms is different from dialoguing since it (internalization) focuses on action rather than thought which is achieved in dialoguing. It was

also observed from the interview that the experiences of experienced workers in the selected firms are transferred to the tacit knowledge of the individual. Additionally, knowledge in its tacit form is actionable by the owner while others are observing. It is argued by Nonaka (1995), that knowledge in its personal form is demonstrated by only its owner. In that regard, Bratianu and Orzea (2010) posit that the advantage of internalised knowledge is that it increases the level of individual understanding and absorptive capacity. Authors such as Clark (2004), Hong (2010), and Sarayreh, Mardawi and Dmour (2012) concur with Nonaka (1995) by regarding internalisation as the exchange of explicit knowledge with tacit knowledge. Clark (2004), in particular, clarifies that internalisation is learning by doing. Likewise, Marley (2012) and Nonaka (1994) emphasise that internalisation is generated by "learning by doing or using". This means that tangible knowledge (information) that is documented as manuscripts, sound, or in video format, enables the internalisation process. Therefore, booklets, a quintessential example of tangible knowledge, are broadly used for internalisation. Sarayreh, Mardawi and Dmour (2012) conclude that internalisation is largely experiential and that it actualises concepts and methods.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Becoming digital on the inside is one of the most difficult areas against which to justify investment and focus, but is absolutely critical. The sampled firms need to focus on developing an organization that is agile and fit for the future, able to change course and continue to thrive amid constant disruption. During discussions, managers of organisation should modify new ideas by combining various information and help organise ideas that can facilitate discussion. The sampled firms, especially the IT firms, must develop mechanisms for explaining, organising and making summary of what happened. The sampled firms should develop models for understanding others' thoughts better by repeating what they said and asking them for clarifications where necessary. Hence, employees should also have opportunities to apply new learning to improve workers competencies (experience, skill, and attitude) and to keep up with changes within the organization or from an outside environment.

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