



Full length article

## Supervisory orientation, employee goal orientation, and knowledge management among front line hotel employees

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how managers can enhance the knowledge management (KM) among front line hotel employees at the individual level, by affecting the employee goal orientations through supervisory orientations. This study found significant influence of supervisory orientations on employee goal orientation. The positive effect of employee learning goal orientation on KM is also significant. However the effect of performance goal orientation on KM is insignificant. Results also support the indirect positive effect of the supervisory end result, and capability orientations on KM through the mediation of goal orientation. The main contribution of this study is the identification of indirect effect of supervisory orientation on KM through the mediation of employee goal orientation. This study links three separate concepts which are supervisory orientation, employee goal orientation and KM in a single model, for the very first time. Furthermore, the concept of supervisory orientations has not been discussed in the existing hospitality literature.

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### 1. Introduction

Hotel industry mainly provides accommodation and rest facilities to the tourists and travellers (Chen, 2013). According to the office of national statistics, the current annual number of overseas incoming tourists and travellers in the UK is approximately 3,050,000 (Tourism industry- Office for national statistics). There are 2,267,000 employees working in the hospitality sector to serve these customers (JOBS02: Workforce jobs by industry- Office for national statistics). The hospitality sector is facing the problem of high employee turnover (Yang and Wan, 2004), and when an employee leaves the organization the knowledge and talent also go with the employee. In this situation of high employee turnover, if employees do not transfer, and store or document their knowledge in organizational memory, organizations can face the loss of human capital, which can ultimately affect the quality of services provided to the customers (Yang, 2004). In the hotel industry, customer expectations are on an increase, and hotels need to meet these expectations, maintain the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty, and enhancing service quality. To meet these challenges, it

is important for hospitality organizations to transform knowledge of individual employee into the intellectual asset of the company, which can be done by effective knowledge management (KM) among employees at the individual level (Yang, 2004; Kim and Lee, 2013). KM is defined as a process of creating, acquiring, transferring, documenting/storing, and applying the knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Rowley, 2000). KM can be exercised both at the individual and organizational levels, but both the levels of KM need individual willingness and contribution (Yang and Wan, 2004; Bock and Kim, 2002).

Due to its own specific characteristics, hospitality industry needs specialized research (Ladkin and Weber, 2011). In the hospitality industry, knowledge means “knowledge of company’s customers, products and services, operational procedures, competitors and job associates” (Yang and Wan, 2004). KM is very crucial among front line employees of hotels because they are the front face of the hotels and are in direct contact with customers (Ferry, 2005), to provide them high quality and customized services (Kuo et al., 2012). Hospitality researchers also suggest that KM should initiate from an initial service encounter (Yang, 2004). So this study is an attempt to know how an organization can enhance KM among front line hotel employees, i.e. how to encourage them to acquire knowledge from others, transfer their own knowledge,

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store their knowledge in organizational memory, and apply their knowledge.

Organizations are investing considerable amount of money and time into KM, to facilitate collecting, storage, and dissemination of knowledge. However despite of this investment, it has been estimated that fortune 500 companies lose at least \$31.5 billion annually because of KM failure (Babcock, 2004). Knowledge is considered as power, and an important strategic asset, which provides a competitive advantage to the organization and also to the individual employees in the organization, therefore many employees appear to be reluctant in sharing the knowledge with other colleagues, because they think that, it may hinder their promotion in the organization, if they share their knowledge with other employees in the same organization (Uriarte, 2008; Bock et al., 2005). For organizational growth and competitiveness, however, it is necessary that knowledge should be shared in the organization. Organizations need to transform their knowledge into profitable products and services, they also need to renew the capabilities dynamically, and they can do it by acquiring, organizing, sharing, and applying their knowledge resources (Schiuma, 2012). Effective KM strategically enhances firm innovativeness which leads to better business performance (Ferraresi et al., 2012).

One of the prominent factors which have the potential to influence KM is employee goal orientation (Kim and Lee, 2013), which can be influenced by supervisory orientation (Kohli et al., 1998). Employee goal orientation in any organization can be, learning orientation, and performance orientation i.e. some employees consider learning as achievement and some prefer to show performance (Dweck, 1986). Kim and Lee (2013) argue that employee learning goal orientation is positively related to knowledge sharing behaviour, where performance orientation negatively affects employee knowledge sharing behaviour. Therefore consistent with Kim and Lee (2013), if organization or management encourages and prefers learning orientation over performance orientation, it can lead to better KM among employees. So if an organization wants to promote KM among its employees, it is important to know the factors having the potential to influence employee goal orientation, as it can be influenced by the different situations in the organization (Button et al., 1996).

Kohli et al. (1998) explain how the supervisory orientations can influence employee goal orientation. They argue that different types of supervisory orientations (end result, activity, and capability) have different effects on employee goal orientation. So if supervisors want to stimulate and encourage learning or performance goal orientation among employees, they need to adopt supervisory orientation accordingly, and by stimulating desired goal orientation among the employees, they can ultimately enhance KM among employees.

So this study investigates how managers can influence KM by stimulating desired employee goal orientation. In this way this study contributes to the body of knowledge by filling the number of gaps in the existing literature, i.e. supervisory orientation is an important factor having the potential to influence different employee outcomes such as employee goal orientation (Kohli et al., 1998), but there is lack of research on the topic of supervisory orientation, and the majority of research on the topic is limited to the sales management (Kohli et al., 1998; Anderson and Richard, 1987; Challagalla and Shervani, 1996). In the KM research, emphasis of researchers is more on knowledge sharing, which is only one element of KM. This study contributes by discussing KM as a full construct, including, acquiring, transferring, documenting, and applying the knowledge. This study investigates the indirect effect of supervisory orientation on KM among hotel employees, through the mediation of goal orientation, which is not considered in the existing literature. Furthermore in the hospitality literature, employee goal orientation is only investigated with knowledge

sharing, which is only one component of KM. This study investigates the effect of employee goal orientation on the whole construct of KM including acquiring, transferring, storing/documenting, and applying the knowledge. Furthermore it also links these three concepts in a single model using structure equation modelling (SEM), followed by the objectives of analysing,

1). The direct effect of supervisory orientation on employee goal orientation.

2). The direct effect of employee goal orientation on KM.

3). The indirect effect of supervisory orientation on KM, through employee goal orientation.

By achieving these objectives this study provides a framework to the hotel managers on how they can encourage their front line employees to practice KM by influencing the employee goal orientation accordingly, to gain organizational benefits. As front line employees are in direct contact with the customers (Ferry, 2005), they receive information directly. Supervisors can motivate them to convert it in organizational knowledge i.e. by documenting, or storing it somewhere in organizational memory, i.e. using information and communication technologies (ICTs) or manual databases. In this way organizational knowledge as a whole can be increased which leads to many positive business imperatives, like innovative services (Kim and Lee, 2013), and business performance (Ferraresi et al., 2012).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Knowledge management

The concept of KM is rooted in the resource based view (Donate and de Pablo, 2015; Penrose, 1959; Barney, 1991) and the knowledge based view of the organization (Kogut and Zander, 1992; Grant, 1996). According to the resource based view, the main source of competitiveness for any organization is its strategic resources (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993), and the knowledge based view considers knowledge as the main strategic resource, and asset of the organization. Firms can exploit the knowledge resources through proper KM, in order to create value (Zack et al., 2009). KM can be described as “the process of knowledge acquisition, organizing knowledge, knowledge leverage, knowledge sharing, and organization memory” (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Rowley, 2000). Knowledge creation/acquisition is explorative in nature as it aims at creating new knowledge, and knowledge sharing, storage/documenting, and application are exploitative in nature as they aim to exploit and leverage the knowledge resources (Grant, 1996; March, 1991).

Knowledge acquisition means acquiring new knowledge, or replacing the existing implicit or explicit knowledge of the organization (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). When organization creates or acquires new knowledge, there are chances of forgetting the acquired knowledge, and the knowledge may lose (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). So it is important that acquired knowledge should be properly stored in the organizational memory either as manual documents, electronic databases, or it can be codified into the procedures and stored in an expert system. Knowledge storage refers to the structuring and organizing the knowledge resources, to develop the organizational memory (Alavi and Tiwana, 2003; Zack, 1999). Sharing and disseminating the knowledge by the organizational members are referred as knowledge transfer. It refers to the task information availability, and to share the information and knowledge to collaborate with the members in order to solve the problems or generating new ideas (Cummings, 2004). In this way employees in the organizations share their knowledge, skill, and experience with the other members in the organizations (Lin, 2007). Finally the knowledge application involves the inte-

gration, utilization and application of the knowledge resources, in order to provide an effective and easier solution for complex problems (Grant, 1996; Zack et al., 2009). In this way it enhances the capabilities of the employees in the organization by developing the mechanisms such as norms, procedures, and decision making (Grant, 1996).

Existing literature acknowledges the important role of KM in the success of the organization, by discussing the number of important and positive outcomes like higher employee participation, improved communication, efficient problem solving, better team performance, and improved financial performance (Alavi and Leidner, 2001), financial performance and competitiveness (Andreeva and Kianto, 2012), firm performance (Palacios Marqués and Jose Garrigós Simón, 2006; Ferraresi et al., 2012), innovation capability (Saenz et al., 2012) etc. so it is important to consider the factors that can enhance KM in the organizations.

The numbers of organizational and personal antecedents of KM are identified, for example, Kim and Lee (2013) find goal orientation as a predictor of knowledge sharing among employees of five star hotels, which leads to service innovative behaviour. Hashim and Tan (2015) argue that affective commitment has the potential to influence intention of knowledge sharing. Sigala and Chalkiti (2015) have the view that social media interaction can enhance the level of KM among tourism professionals. Matzler and Mueller (2011) identify personality traits and commitment as the predictor of KM. According to Yang (2010) attitude to sharing, attitude to learning, organizational support, and leadership roles have the potential of influencing KM among the employees of tourist hotels. Singh (2008) also argues that leadership roles are important in enhancing the KM in the organization. KM is widely considered by the researchers during the past decade but there are very few studies with the focus on the hospitality sector. None of these studies consider supervisory orientation as the predictor of KM. This study investigates the impact of supervisory orientation on KM among hotel employees, through employee goal orientation.

## 2.2. Employee goal orientation

The initial work on goal orientation is done by the educational psychologist (Dweck, 1975; Eison, 1979). Two different dispositional goal orientations exist in individuals, i.e. some prefer learning orientation which refers to mastery as achievement, and some pursue performance orientation which refers to showing the performance as achievement (Dweck, 1986). Employees with learning orientation tend to be involved in challenging tasks, because of the eagerness to improve them, and they often compare their performance with their own past performance (Button et al., 1996). Individuals with learning orientation emphasis on the development of a new set of skills, and seek mastery (Kim and Lee, 2013). On the other hand, individuals with performance orientation prefer to avoid challenging tasks (Button et al., 1996). Performance oriented individuals tend to outperform other in performance, demonstrate their capabilities in the shape of performance, strive to achieve success by achieving goals, and they do not want to involve in challenging situations, where they feel that they do not have the competence (Kim and Lee, 2013). In contrast, learning oriented individuals view their capabilities as malleable (Dweck, 1986). That is the reason that learning oriented individuals strive for improvement in task performance, but performance oriented individuals consider their ability as a fixed entity (Dweck, 1986), and unlike learning oriented individuals, their focus is on proving the level of their competencies by showing performance (Kim and Lee, 2013).

Button et al. (1996) argue that learning and performance goal orientations are not contradictory to each other. Individuals may strive enhance their capabilities and skills, and at the same time they may strive to outperform others (Kim and Lee, 2013), which

means that goal orientation of individuals can be both learning and performance simultaneously. The origin of goal orientation is educational psychology literature, but researchers have also applied this concept in organizational studies, and discussion on goal orientation can be found in organizational literature as well (Brown, 2001; Kim and Lee, 2013; Kohli et al., 1998). Goal orientation plays a crucial role in number of organizational decisions as it is considered while making important human resource decisions including, recruitment (Rynes and Gerhart, 1990), selection (Roberson and Alsua, 2002), performance appraisal (VandeWalle and Cummings, 1997) and training (Brown, 2001). Literature also provides evidences that employee goal orientation has behavioural outcomes such as feedback seeking behaviour (Vandewalle and Cummings, 1997), self-regulatory behaviour (VandeWalle et al., 1999), knowledge sharing behaviour (Matzler and Mueller, 2011; Swift et al., 2010). Kim and Lee (2013) also investigate goal orientation predicting knowledge sharing behaviour of hospitality employees. Furthermore goal orientation can also affect certain performance levels, such sales performance (Kohli et al., 1998; VandeWalle et al., 1999), task performance (Steele et al., 2000), training performance (Brett and VandeWalle, 1999). However, little research is available on the factors affecting employee goal orientation, especially in the hospitality sector. Kohli et al. (1998) argue that supervisors can influence employee learning and performance goal orientation through the supervisory orientations, i.e. end result supervisory orientation positively affects both learning and performance orientation, activity orientation of supervisors negatively affects learning goal orientation, and positively affects performance goal orientation, where capability orientation of supervisors is positively associated with both learning and performance orientation of employees (Kohli et al., 1998). This study considers goal orientation as a facilitator in the relationship of supervisory orientation and KM among hospitality employees.

## 2.3. Supervisory orientations

The origin of supervisory orientation is rooted in sales control system literature (Anderson and Oliver 1987; Challagalla and Shervani, 1996; Kohli et al., 1998; Jaworski, 1988). Supervisory orientation can be end result, activity, or capability orientation, reflecting the concentration of supervisor's behaviour. End result oriented supervisors focus on the achievement of end results, activity oriented supervisors tend to make sure that each routine activity is being performed, and capability oriented supervisors pay more attention to enhance the capabilities of employees (Kohli et al., 1998). These supervisory orientations are not mutually exclusive, which means that supervisors can have more than one of these orientations simultaneously. Furthermore supervisors can also adjust the supervisory orientation according to the employee and situations (Kohli et al., 1998).

**End result orientation** – End result orientation is rooted into the output control system literature (Anderson and Richard, 1987). End result orientated supervisors mainly emphasis on the achievement of end results, and provide their feedback in accordance with end result achieved by subordinates. The focus of their goal setting and monitoring is also directed towards the end result. They are not concerned with the information like, why results are achieved or why not achieved, or how results are achieved (Kohli et al., 1998). They are not concerned with the methods of goals achievement; they allow their subordinates to adopt whatever strategy and style they are comfortable with, to achieve the end result (Oliver and Erin, 1994).

**Activity orientation** – Concept of activity orientation is originated from behavioural control systems in the sales literature. Activity oriented supervisors are more concerned with the routine activities of employees, they are not just concerned of the end

result but they are more interested in the ways and methods to achieve the goals, like how much time an employee has invested on a single customer (Kohli et al., 1998). They specify the activities to be followed by the employees and maintain a close monitoring in order to make sure that employees are following and performing the specified activities, and provide their feedback on the basis of those activities (Merchant, 1985).

**Capability orientation** – Supervisors with capability orientation focus on enhancing the skills and capabilities of employees; their priority is skills development of employees that enhances quality of employee outputs, such as presentations, and customer dealing. They are more like a coach for employees. They guide the employees on the way that they can perform their tasks more effectively. They monitor the progress and provide feedback on the basis of employee capability (Kohli et al., 1998). Based on the best of the authors' knowledge, there is lack of research on the topic of supervisory orientation, and the majority of research on the topic is limited to the sales management (Kohli et al., 1998; Anderson and Richard, 1987; Challagalla and Shervani, 1996). Different supervisory orientations can have different effect on employee, i.e. supervisory orientation can effect employee goal orientation, and it also has an indirect effect on employee performance (Kohli et al., 1998). This study investigates the indirect effect of supervisory orientations, on KM among front line hotel employees, through employee goal orientation.

### 3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

#### 3.1. Supervisory orientation and employee goal orientation

**Supervisory end result orientation and employee goal orientation**- End result oriented supervisors usually adopt a laissez faire approach. Employees are free to adapt the methods for achieving the goals, and they are responsible for achieving the end results, and such supervisors provide the clear goals to be achieved (Kohli et al., 1998). As end result oriented supervisors are only concerned with the end result, they do not provide the guidance on how to achieve the results. According to the goal and control theory, provision of unambiguous and clear goals increase the focus and attention of the employees towards the task, stimulates the search for relevant information, and task strategies that can help in the goal achievement (Klein 1989; Locke and Latham 1990). In this way end result orientation might create tension which can be positive as it encourages looking for information and strategies to achieve goals, and thereby enhance the learning orientation (Kohli et al., 1998). End result oriented supervisors do not provide information that is directly relevant to learning. Therefore it can push the employee to investigate the reasons for bad or good performance. Literature also provides evidences that individualistic feedback and goals can lead to employee learning goal orientation (Ames, 1984; Harackiewicz et al., 1987). Therefore it is logical to argue that end result orientation of supervisors can positively affect learning orientation of front line hotel employees. Therefore

*H1a: Supervisory end result orientation directly and positively affects employee learning orientation*

On the other hand, employees with performance goal orientation consider performance as the mean of getting extrinsic rewards. Performance oriented employees are anxious about being judge able as good performer and tend to reflect the performance by demonstrating their abilities (Ames and Archer, 1988). End result oriented supervisors evaluate performance on the basis of end result achievements, which is likely to encourage an extrinsic orientation among employees (Weitz et al., 1986). With an end result oriented supervisor, employees consider achievement of the end result as the test of their competence, which may lead to perfor-

mance goal orientation (Kohli et al., 1998). According to Weitz et al. (1986) strong emphasis on the end result, increases the extrinsic orientation of employee. Therefore it can be assumed that the emphasising of a supervisor on the achievement of the end result can increase the performance orientation of front line hotel employees. Thus,

*H1b: Supervisory end result orientation directly and positively affects employee performance orientation*

**Supervisory activity orientation and employee goal orientation**- Activity oriented supervisors pay attention to routine activities and strongly monitor activities of the subordinates and their feedback is also based on performance of activities (Kohli et al., 1998). Literature suggests that, for such routine activities subordinates do not prefer strong monitoring and supervision (Schriesheim and Angelo, 1981). House and Dessler (1974) suggest that in case of unambiguous and clear activities, employees may perceive supervision as unnecessarily close control and redundant. Kohli et al. (1998) argue that such strong monitoring of day to day activities might hinder the autonomy of employee, which can negatively affect employee willingness to learn. Therefore

*H2a: Supervisory activity orientation directly and negatively affects employee learning orientation.*

Activity oriented supervisors monitor and communicate with the subordinates very frequently. Frequent communication and monitoring increase the sensitivity of subordinates evaluated by supervisors, and increase their concern about being judged as a competent and good performer (Lawler and Rhode, 1976). This type of supervision motivates employees to do well by following the criteria set by the supervisors, because they want to be perceived as a high performer by their supervisor, which can increase their focus towards performance (Kohli et al., 1998). Therefore,

*H2b: Supervisory activity orientation directly and positively affects employee performance orientation.*

**Supervisory capability orientation and employee goal orientation**- Supervisors with capability orientation tend to be the coach and their focus is on developing the capabilities of subordinates. They stress on the subordinate's learning about why they fail to achieve goals (Kohli et al., 1998). When supervisors emphasize on subordinate's skills and abilities, by doing this they motivate the subordinates to learn the better methods to perform the tasks (Weitz et al., 1986). Furthermore according to cognitive evaluation theory, enhancing the competence level of subordinates by coaching can positively affect intrinsic motivation and task interest among subordinates (Deci and Ryan 1985; Tyagi, 1985). Where task interest, and intrinsic motivation can lead to learning goal orientation among employees (Kohli et al., 1998). It means that supervisory capability orientation can have a positive impact on learning orientation among front line hotel employees. Therefore

*H3a: Supervisory capability orientation directly and positively affects employee learning orientation.*

When supervisors provide guidance to subordinates to enhance their skills and abilities, it requires effort and time to evaluate the capabilities of subordinates, and it makes supervisors aware of the strength and weaknesses of their subordinates. In this way supervisors are in a better position to provide tips, knowledge and helpful suggestion to the subordinates. This kind of interaction motivates the subordinates to perform well by following the criteria set by the supervisors, and increases the sensitivity of the subordinate towards the supervisory appraisal (Lawler and Rhode 1976), which can lead to performance orientation (Kohli et al., 1998). So it is logical to argue that supervisory capability orientation can enhance the performance orientation among front line hotel employees. Therefore

*H3b: Supervisory capability orientation directly and positively affects employee performance orientation.*

### 3.2. Employee goal orientations and knowledge management

It is established in literature that employee goal orientation can affect knowledge acquisition and knowledge transfer, i.e. learning orientation positively affects knowledge acquisition and transfer, where performance orientation affects negatively (Matzler and Mueller, 2011; Kim and Lee, 2013). Learning oriented employees are concerned about the development of skills and knowledge, not only for them but also for others in the organization, by acquiring the knowledge, and donating their knowledge to others (Matzler and Mueller, 2011). These findings are also empirically validated by Kim and Lee (2013). When employees have high level of abilities, skills, and knowledge self-efficacy, they tend to enhance the efficiency and productivity by acquiring, and transferring the knowledge to other colleagues (Bock et al., 2005; Kankanhalli et al., 2005). Even though there is risk of losing knowledge power (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Kankanhalli et al., 2005). It may also motivate them to convert their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge by documenting and storing the acquired knowledge somewhere in the organizational memory. Furthermore in order to prove their learned skills and abilities they may also need to apply the learned knowledge. Based on these logical beliefs it can be assumed that learning goal orientation can positively affect the whole construct of KM, among the front line employees of the hotels. Therefore

*H4a: Employee learning orientation directly and positively affects KM*

Kim and Lee (2013) found a negative effect of performance goal orientation on knowledge acquiring and transferring behaviour of hotel employees. Performance oriented individuals tends to outperform other in performance, demonstrate their capabilities in the shape of performance, strive to achieve success by achieving goals, and they don't want to involve in challenging situations, where they feel that they don't have the competence (Kim and Lee, 2013). As they don't want to try and learn new things, and tend to outperform others by performing the tasks in which they are experts, in this way they don't want to share, document/store, or apply the new knowledge in the organization. They might think that it hinders their promotion chances in the organization if they transfer their knowledge to other employees in the same organization (Uriarte, 2008; Bock et al., 2005). On the bases of these arguments it can be argued that performance orientation negatively affects KM among front line hotel employees. Therefore

*H4b: Employee performance orientation directly and negatively affects KM.*

### 3.3. Supervisory orientation, employee goal orientation, and knowledge management

Kohli et al. (1998) argue that supervisors can influence employee learning and performance goal orientation by supervisory orientations, i.e. end result supervisory orientation positively affects both learning and performance orientation, activity orientation of supervisors negatively affects learning goal orientation, and positively affects performance goal orientation, where capability orientation of supervisors is positively associated with both learning and performance orientation of employees. Research also revealed the positive association of learning goal orientation and negative association of performance goal orientation with knowledge acquiring, and transferring (Kim and Lee, 2013). It is also discussed in the previous section of this study that it is rational to assume that goal orientations can influence whole construct of KM, including acquiring, transferring, documenting/storing, and applying the

knowledge. Sales literature provides the evidences that supervisory orientations can affect the sales performance of employee, through employee goal orientation (Kohli et al., 1998). This study assumes the indirect effect of supervisory orientation on KM through goal orientation, which means there is mediating role of goal orientation. However no theoretical support is found in the existing literature to assume the direct effect of supervisory orientation on KM. It means that if supervisors can influence employee goal orientations, by adopting the supervisory style accordingly, they can indirectly affect KM among employees. So it can be hypothesized that supervisory end result and capability orientations can indirectly and positively affect KM among front line hotel employees and activity orientation is expected to have negative indirect effect on KM among front line hotel employees, through the mediation of employee goal orientation. Therefore

*H5: Supervisory end result orientation significantly, indirectly, and positively affects KM, through the mediation of employee goal orientation.*

*H6: Supervisory activity orientation significantly, indirectly, and negatively affects KM through the mediation of employee goal orientation.*

*H7: Supervisory capability orientation significantly, indirectly, and positively affects KM through the mediation of employee goal orientation.*

## 4. Methodology

This is a survey based, causal, exploratory cum explanatory study which examines and explores the linkages between three different concepts of literature, i.e. supervisory orientations, employee goal orientations, and KM among front line employees of hotels. This is a cross sectional study, following the deductive approach of investigation, using quantitative techniques for data analysis.

### 4.1. Sample and data collection

Structured questionnaire is used to collect primary data from the front line employees of four and five (4/5) star hotels in Bournemouth and London, UK. Front line employees are important because they are the face of the hotel and create the link between the customers and the hotel (Ferry, 2005), and their job is to provide customized and high quality services to the clients of the hotel (Kuo et al., 2012). Front line employees execute very challenging and crucial tasks (Hai-yan and Baum, 2006), so their competence and expertise of delivering services play a crucial role in the success of this industry (Lee, 2014).

Population of the study consists of front line employees of 4/5 star hotels in the UK. According to the office of national statistics, there are 2,267,000 employees working in the hospitality sector. As the exact number of employees working in 4/5 star hotels is not available, so this study uses this number to estimate the sample size. According to this number, the minimum requirement of sample size is 384 employees at the 95% confidence level, using the formula  $SS = Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p) / C^2$ , where SS is the sample size, Z is the Z Value (for example, 1.96 corresponding to 95% confidence level), p = % of population picking a choice, C = confidence interval (expressed as a decimal) (Asgar and Usman, 2013). This study focuses on employees of 4/5 star hotels only, which is the part of the hospitality sector. Thus, the minimum sample size requirement should be less than 384 respondents as this study does not cover the whole hospitality industry. Furthermore this study only includes the employees who have worked with the same current boss for more than one year.

There are more female respondents than males and they contribute 64.5% (214 out of 330). Most of the respondents are young people with age between 21 to 30-year-old and they represent 68.8% (227 out of 330). Work experiences of the respondent ranges from 1 to 20 years, where majority of respondents (251) have 1–5 year work experience. Most of the respondents holds a high school diploma which is 68.2% (225 out of 330), and all the respondents are either front line staff (264), or front line managers (66). All the respondents have worked with their current boss for more than 1 year. 221 respondents are working in four star hotels and 109 are working in five star hotels.

Before launching the data collection process, a pilot study was conducted, and the questionnaire was discussed with academic and industrial experts, a few questions were eliminated after the feedback of the pilot study, and changes in the formatting were made. On the basis of feedback from industrial and academic experts, quality of items was improved, i.e. wording issues.

For the purpose of data collection, 77 hotels were contacted to participate out of which only 38 hotels gave the consent to participate in the survey. List of hotels is available on the official website of AA ([www.Theaa.com](http://www.Theaa.com)). AA is the agency that inspects and rates the hotels in the UK as one to five stars. Database of contact details of 4/5 star hotels was made from the official website of each individual hotel. 880 questionnaires were distributed in 38 hotels by multiple personal visits to each hotel in different timings, because of different staff in morning and night shifts. Questionnaires were given to the available staff, and the shift managers to pass them to other members. Participants were requested to drop the questionnaire at the reception after completing it. Questionnaires were collected from each hotel by multiple personal visits, and finally, 367 questionnaires were received in return, out of which 330 were usable.

#### 4.2. Measures

Questionnaire is the combination of adopted, self developed and modified items. There are total 34 items in the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire measures KM by 12 items. The second section consists of 9 items measuring supervisory orientations, i.e. 3 items for each end result, activity, and capability orientations. The third section of questionnaire measures employee goal orientation by 6 items, i.e. 3 for each learning and performance orientation. Finally the last section is for demographic information. The demographic section consists of questions about age, gender, work experience, education, managerial level, year of working with current boss, and hotel category.

KM is measured by 12 items; adopting 6 items from the study of Van and Hendrix (2004), 2 items are adapted and modified from study of Hansen (2002) and 4 items are developed by the authors. These items are measured by using the seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always.

Supervisory orientations are measured by modifying the 9 items of Jaworski and Shanker (1993), where 3 items are for measuring end result orientation, 3 items are for activity orientation, and 3 items are measuring capability orientation. Employee goal orientations are measured by using the 6 items of Sujjan et al. (1994) after required modification, where, 3 items are for each learning and performance orientation. Supervisory orientations and employee goal orientations are measured by using the seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

#### 4.3. Data analysis

Firstly, the reliabilities are measured by the reliability test. Furthermore the mean values and standard deviation of factors is also presented. Then path analysis is conducted to test the conceptual

model and hypotheses. Convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs are also evaluated by factor analysis. Diagnostic indices from path analysis are used to evaluate the model fit on the bases of factor loadings, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). For GFI, AGFI, CFI, and NFI, the values should be greater than 0.9 to signify the good model fit, and for RMSEA the model is considered as a good fit if the value is less than 0.09 (Garg and Dhar, 2014).

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Reliability and validity analysis

Convergent validity is established if the factor loadings are more than 0.7, average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5, and the composite reliability (CR) exceeds 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 1 presents the value of AVE, CR, and factor loading. All the values meet the requirements of convergent validity. AVE of every construct is more than 0.8; CR of every construct is more than 0.9. Factor loadings also meet the criteria i.e. for KM loadings range from 0.91 to 0.94, for end result orientation loadings are from 0.92 to 0.93, for activity orientation it ranges from 0.92 to 0.95, and the minimum loading for any item in the construct of capability orientation is 0.95. All the loading in the constructs of learning and performance orientation are greater than 0.8. Furthermore CR of each construct is greater than the AVE of the construct. These findings indicate the adequate level of convergent validity. Reliability is measured by the Cronbach's alpha which indicates a high reliability for all the constructs. Table 1 shows that for all the factors, the Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.90, which indicates a high reliability. George (2003) suggests that the Cronbach alpha more than 0.7 is acceptable, and more than 0.9 is excellent.

If the AVE of the construct is greater than the squared correlation among constructs, it's mean that there is discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 2 shows the squared correlation coefficients and the AVE in bold at the diagonals. For each construct, the value of AVE is greater than the squared correlation among constructs. It means that discriminant validity is established. Furthermore, Table 2 also presents the mean values and the standard deviations of the factors (Fig. 1).

### 5.2. Evaluation of model fit

To evaluate the model fitness with the data, confirmatory factor analysis is conducted to measure factor loading, and other indices including GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA. The results indicate a good model fit, as all the factor loadings meet the requirements of model fitness as shown in Fig. 2. All the factor loading values are acceptable as factor loading is considered good if it is more than 0.65 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hairs et al., 1998). Other indices also reflect a good model fit as GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.047, NFI = 0.97, and CFI = 0.98, meet the requirements of good model fit, because in case of GFI, AGFI, TLI, CFI, and NFI, the values should be greater than 0.9 to signify a good model fit, and in case of RMSEA the model is considered as a good fit if the value is less than 0.09 (Garg and Dhar, 2014) (Table 3).

### 5.3. Path analysis and hypotheses testing

Structural equation modelling is used for the path analysis to test the hypotheses. Direct and indirect effects of exogenous variables on endogenous variables are examined. The summary of path analysis using structural equation modelling is presented in Fig. 2, and Table 4. Firstly, the direct effects of supervisory orientation (i.e. end result, activity, and capability orientation) on employee

**Table 1**  
Convergent validity and reliabilities.

Factors	Items	Factorloadings	Eigenvalue	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
KM	KA1	0.93	10.47	0.88	0.99	0.97
	KA2	0.94				
	KA3	0.94				
	KA4	0.93				
	KA5	0.94				
	KA6	0.93				
	KD7	0.92				
	KD8	0.92				
	KD9	0.93				
	KAP10	0.93				
	KAP11	0.92				
	KAP12	0.91				
Supervisory orientations						
End result orientation	SO1	0.93	2.77	0.89	0.98	0.95
	SO2	0.97				
	SO3	0.92				
Activity orientation	AO1	0.92	2.60	0.81	0.98	0.92
	AO2	0.95				
	AO3	0.92				
Capability orientation	CO1	0.95	2.78	0.90	0.99	0.96
	CO2	0.97				
	CO3	0.95				
Employee goal orientation						
Learning orientation	LO1	0.96	2.82	0.93	0.99	0.96
	LO2	0.97				
	LO3	0.94				
Performance orientation	PO1	0.87	2.59	0.80	0.98	0.92
	PO2	0.97				
	PO3	0.83				

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics and discriminant validity evaluation.

	Mean	SD	ERO	AO	CO	EPO	ELO	KM
ERO	4.31	1.508	<b>0.89</b>					
AO	4.09	1.419	-0.011	<b>0.81</b>				
CO	4.44	1.731	0.749***	-0.00	<b>0.90</b>			
EPO	3.54	1.193	-0.018*	0.147***	-0.046**	<b>0.80</b>		
ELO	4.52	1.623	0.707	0.001	0.763***	-0.044***	<b>0.93</b>	
KM	4.60	1.666	0.680***	0.005	0.675***	0.033**	0.785***	<b>0.88</b>

SD = Standard deviation, ERO = End result orientation, AO = Activity orientation, CO = Capability orientation, ELO = Employee Learning orientation, EPO = Employee performance orientation.  
KM = Knowledge management, \*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05.

**Table 3**  
Model fit statistics.

Model fit indices	Chi-square	DF	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
	223.56	130	0.719	0.93	0.91	0.97	0.98	0.98	0.047

**Table 4**  
Path analysis.

Path	Direct effect (β)	t-value	P	Indirect effect (β)	t-value	P	Hypothesis	Result
ELO <-- ERO	0.34	4.47	0.000***				H1a	Accepted
EPO <-- ERO	0.18	1.22	0.226				H1b	Rejected
ELO <-- AO	0.10	3.28	0.001**				H2a	Rejected
EPO <-- AO	0.35	6.38	0.000***				H2b	Accepted
ELO <-- CO	0.55	7.28	0.000***				H3a	Accepted
EPO <-- CO	-0.34	2.28	0.024*				H3b	Rejected
KM <-- ELO	0.99	22.14	0.000***				H4a	Accepted
KM <-- EPO	0.04	0.966	0.237				H4b	Rejected
KM <-- ERO				0.34	2.46	0.025*	H5	Accepted
KM <-- AO				0.10	3.06	0.001**	H6	Rejected
KM <-- CO				0.53	3.89	0.001**	H7	Accepted

ERO = End result orientation, AO = Activity orientation, CO = Capability orientation, ELO = Employee learning orientation, EPO = Employee performance orientation, KM = Knowledge management.  
\*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05.

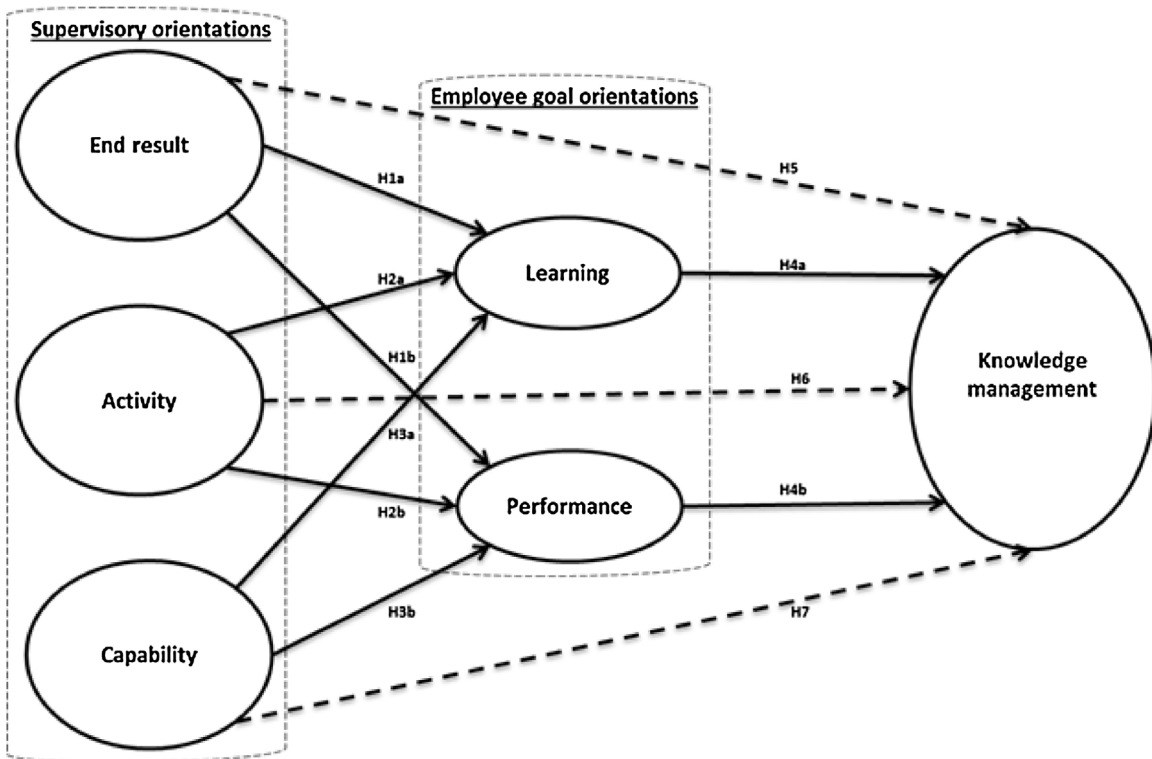


Fig. 1. The conceptual model (dotted line: Indirect effect, Solid line: Direct effect).

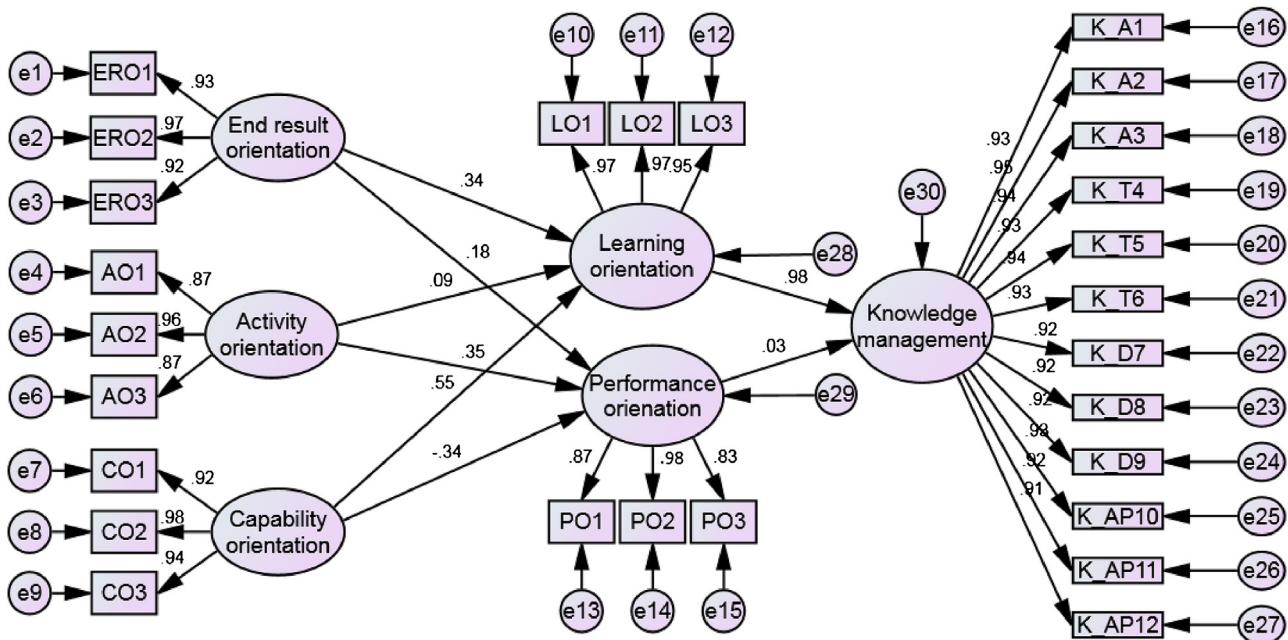


Fig. 2. Path analysis.

goal orientations are examined, and then direct effects of employee goal orientation (i.e. learning and performance orientation) on KM are investigated. Finally, the indirect effects of supervisory orientations on KM are examined. According to results shown in Table 4, supervisory end result orientation has a significant direct and positive effect on employee learning orientation ( $\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$ ), but the direct effect of supervisory end result orientation on performance orientation is not significant ( $\beta = 0.18, p > 0.05$ ). Supervisory activity orientation has almost no effect on employee learning

orientation ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.001$ ), but a significant direct positive effect on performance orientation ( $\beta = 0.35, p < 0.001$ ). Supervisory capability orientation positively affects employee learning orientation ( $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$ ), but it has a significant negative effect on employee performance orientation ( $\beta = -0.34, p < 0.05$ ). These findings support H1a, H2b, and H3a, but the results are not supporting H1b, H2a, and H3b. The results further reveal that employee learning orientation has a significant direct positive effect on KM ( $\beta = 0.99, p < 0.001$ ), but the effect of performance orientation on



KM is not significant ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). On the bases of these findings H4a is supported by the results, but H4b is rejected. After analysing the direct effects, indirect effects are investigated, the significance level of indirect effects is calculated through bootstrapping, and the results suggest that there is a significant indirect positive effect of supervisory end result orientation on KM ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results fail to support the indirect negative effect of activity orientation on KM ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and the indirect positive effect of supervisory capability orientation on KM is also significant ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings lead to the acceptance of H5 and H7, but reject H6.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

This study examines the influence of two distinct types of goal orientations (learning orientation and performance orientation) on KM among the front line hotel employees. Supervisory orientations including end result, activity, and capability orientation are discussed as predictors of employee goal orientation. The main contribution of this study is the establishment of indirect effect of supervisory orientation, on KM, through the mediation of employee goal orientation which is not done in previous research. Furthermore this study is the first one to discuss supervisory orientation in the hospitality industry.

The first objective of this study is to analyse the direct effect of supervisory orientation on employee goal orientation. In the investigation of the association between supervisory orientations and employee goal orientations, this study is partially consistent with Kohli et al. (1998). As this study finds a positive effect of end result orientation on learning orientation, but the results suggest that the effect of end result orientation on performance orientation is not significant. Activity orientation does not have a negative effect on learning orientation, this finding is not consistent with Kohli et al. (1998), and it positively effects performance orientation. The results validate the arguments of Kohli et al. (1998) that supervisory capability orientation positively affects employee learning orientation, but deny the positive effect of supervisory capability orientation on employee performance goal orientation, as according to the results of this study supervisory capability orientation negatively affects employee performance orientation, which indicates that employee might think that a capability oriented supervisor assigns more value to learning as achievement as compare to outperforming others. Kohli et al. (1998) also discuss the moderating role of employee work experience in their study, which can justify these differences in the finding of this study. According to Kohli et al. (1998) the positive effect of end result orientation, and capability orientation on employee performance orientation is stronger in case of experienced employees. Negative effect of activity orientation on employee learning orientation is stronger in case of more experienced employees (Kohli et al., 1998). In this study majority of respondents i.e. 76% are in the initial phases of their career, having less than 5 years of experience, and 68% of them are less than 30 years of age. So this study acknowledges the moderating role of work experience, which causes these differences in the findings. It can also argue that the reason for these contradictions is the different nature of the hospitality sector, as the study of Kohli et al. (1998) emphasizes on sales force of two companies operating in industrial market, but hospitality industry has its own specific characteristics and needs specialized research (Ladkin and Weber, 2011).

The second objective of this study is to analyse the direct effect of employee goal orientation on KM. Kim and Lee (2013) examine the association between goal orientation and knowledge sharing behaviours, and find a positive effect of learning orientation, and a negative effect of performance orientation on knowledge sharing

behaviour of hospitality employee. However this study is different with Kim and Lee (2013) in the sense that, they discuss only the knowledge sharing behaviour, and this study considers the whole construct of KM, including acquiring, transferring, documenting, and applying the knowledge. This study is partially consistent with Kim and Lee (2013), that employee learning orientation positively affects KM among hospitality employees, but this study does not find a negative effect of performance orientation on KM.

The third objective is to analyse the indirect effect of supervisory orientation on KM, through the mediation of employee goal orientation, which is not considered in the previous research, as per the authors' best knowledge. The results identify a positive indirect effect of supervisory end result orientation and capability orientation, but there is no negative indirect negative effect of activity orientation on KM. The achievement of third objective makes the main contribution of this study.

### 6.1. Implications for the managers

These findings provide a framework to the managers in the hotel industry, to enhance the KM among front line employees, by affecting their goal orientation through supervisory styles. As identified by the results of this study, learning orientation positively affects KM, and performance goal orientation has no effect. So managers should emphasize on the supervisory styles which motivate employee learning orientation. Among all the three supervisory orientations, the strongest predictor of learning orientation is supervisory capability orientation, and then end result orientation, but activity orientation does not affect learning orientation, in fact activity orientation is the strongest predictor of employee performance orientation among all three supervisory orientations. So it is suggested to the managers that, if they want to promote KM among front line employees, they should adapt the capability orientation for supervision. In this way managers can encourage the employees to acquire, transfer, store, and apply the knowledge for the organizational gain. In the hotel industry knowledge means "knowledge of company's customers, products and services, operational procedures, competitors and job associates" (Yang and Wan, 2004). By enhancing the KM among employees, managers can achieve many positive outcomes like, innovative services behaviour (Kim and Lee, 2013), higher employee participation, improved communication, efficient problem solving, better team performance, and improved financial performance (Alavi and Leidner, 2001), financial performance and competitiveness (Andreeva and Kianto, 2012), firm performance (Palacios Marqués and Jose Garrigós Simón, 2006; Ferraresi et al., 2012), innovation capability (Saenz et al., 2012), and better customer services (Wickramasinghe, 2015). So it is important to discuss the factors leading to enhanced KM in the organization.

### 6.2. Limitations and future research areas

This study also has some limitations and offers suggestions for the future research. This study is limited to the hotel industry, and covers only two cities of UK (London and Bournemouth). Future research should cover other industries and other geographic locations as well in order to enhance the generalizability of the study, as the hospitality sector has different and specific characteristics and needs specialized research (Ladkin and Weber, 2011). This study is a cross sectional study, collects data from different hotels through a structured questionnaire, and applies quantitative techniques for data analysis. To further validate the findings, future research can be conducted by following a longitudinal research design, and applying the proposed model of this study to any number of hotels as a case study. Furthermore the role of employee demographics as moderators and some other mediators like work attitude should

also be investigated as they potentially influence KM (Hashim and Tan, 2015; Matzler and Mueller, 2011). This study uses the KM construct as a whole, to make it easy to follow by the managers in the industry. This research can be made more specific by discussing each element of KM separately as the outcome of supervisory orientation, and employee goal orientation. Another limitation of this study is that it discusses performance orientation as sensitiveness of being judged by supervisors in general. Performance orientation can be further categorized as performance-prove and performance-avoid. Performance-prove is the desire of an employee to prove the competence and gain favourable judgment, and performance-avoid is the desire to avoid negative judgment of supervisors (VandeWalle, 1997). Focus of this study is on learning orientation, because the aim of the study is to explain how to enhance KM, but the future research on goal orientations in this context can cover both performances-prove and performance-avoid dimension.

6.3. Contribution to the knowledge

This study contributes to the body of the knowledge theoretically and empirically as well, the theoretical contribution is the investigation of connection between three separate concepts of literature, i.e. supervisory orientation, employee goal orientation, and KM in a single model, especially the exploration of indirect effects of supervisory orientations on KM, through the mediation of employee goal orientation is the original contribution of this study. Discussion of the association between these three concepts

in the hospitality sector is the empirical contribution, as according to the author's best knowledge these interactions, especially supervisory orientations are not discussed in the existing hospitality literature so far. Although the concept of supervisory orientation lacks research in the general management field as well. The latest available work on supervisory orientations is done by Challagalla and Shervani (1996) and Kohli et al. (1998). So it is hoped that this study stimulates the scholarly attention towards this important management concept. Furthermore the existing hospitality research discusses only knowledge sharing, which is one element of KM, but KM as a construct including other elements like documenting, and applying, need to be investigated. This study fills this gap by considering the full construct of KM.

In conclusion, this study shows that hotel managers can improve the KM among front line employees by influencing employee goal orientation. Empirical evidences provided by this study have important implication for the managers and researchers.

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Appendix Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Answer question 1–12 using following scale		1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes/on request, 4 = often, 5 = regularly, 6 = a lot, 7 = always						
Factors	Items							
KM	When I need certain knowledge I ask my colleagues about it.(1)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I like to be informed of what my colleagues know.(2)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	When one of my colleagues is good at something I ask him/her to teach me how to do it.(3)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	When I have learned something new I tell my colleagues about it.(4)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I share information I have with my colleagues.(5)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I regularly tell my colleagues what I am doing.(6)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	How often you document the knowledge that you created.(7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	How often the knowledge is documented that you share within your team (e.g. reports, manuals, e-mails, fax)?(8)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	How often you convert your knowledge into codified procedures.(9)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	I incorporate the suggestions acquired by the customers and colleagues into product, process, or service.(10)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My knowledge helps me to serve the customer in a better way.(11)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My knowledge helps me in day to day problem solving activities.(12)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Answer question 13–27 using following scale		1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = Moderate, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree						
Supervisory orientations								
End result orientation	My manager tells me about the level of achievement expected on my assigned tasks.(13)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My manager monitors my progress on final achievement of my assigned.(14)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My manager ensures I am aware of the extent to which I attain my final goals.(15)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity orientation	My manager informs me about the job activities I am expected to perform.(16)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My manager monitors my job activities.(17)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	If my manager feels I need to adjust my job activities s/he tells me about it.(18)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Capability orientation	My manager has standards by which my job skills are evaluated.(19)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	My supervisor periodically evaluates the job skills I use to accomplish a task.(20)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	23. My manager provides guidance on ways to improve job skills and abilities.(21)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Employee goal orientation									
Learning orientation	I prefer to work on tasks that force me to learn new things.(22)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	The opportunity to learn new things is important to me.(23)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	When I have difficulty solving a problem I enjoy testing different approaches.(24)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Performance orientation	I feel smart when I do something without making any mistakes.(25)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I feel smart when I can do something better than my colleagues.(26)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I like to work on tasks that I have done well in the past.(27)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

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