

A Case Study of the Relationship between Knowledge Management Strategies and Enablers with Desirability of Knowledge Management Performance

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ABSTRACT

Building on the questionnaires of knowledge management strategy, knowledge management enabler with knowledge management performance, the present quasi-experimental study aimed to investigate the relationship between knowledge management strategies and enablers with desirability of knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company. From a total of 1197 participants, 290 participants were randomly selected. After a quantitative analysis of reliability and validity of the questionnaire, it was administered and the results were analyzed using multiple regression test. The findings showed that: Knowledge management strategies and enablers predict a significant desirability for knowledge management strategy separately. Knowledge management enablers and strategies predict knowledge management strategy desirability together. There was not a significant difference between the selection of knowledge management strategies. There was a significant difference between the selection of knowledge management enablers. Organizational culture was recognized as a framework for knowledge management enabler. Knowledge management performance was reported to be desirable.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge management, knowledge management strategies, knowledge management enablers, knowledge management performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is an intellectual asset along with a key property for taking the full advantage of competitions. When shared, knowledge is the only source which can maximize. During the last decade knowledge management has been promoted from a topic to an increasingly shared task between organizations. To improve the organizational performance and successful competition in global market, organizations need effective knowledge management. Knowledge management is an interfiled concept emphasizing on knowledge which makes it different from other management strategies. However, the effects, results and consequences of knowledge management have not been well defined yet. Meanwhile, its factors including knowledge management strategies and enabling and its effects on organization performance in utilizing the effectiveness of knowledge management has captured many organizational experts' attention.

Knowledge management researchers and experts believe that in knowledge millennium, organizations are not able to continue their existence unless they choose an appropriate strategy for controlling and managing their intellectual asset. Managers of the organizations need to use these strategies to take the advantage of knowledge in their organizations. Knowledge management strategy means a high ranking plan that describes and runs the processes (technical and organizational) needed for controlling the mass of knowledge and makes effective movement of knowledge possible.

Research shows that organizations should adjust their knowledge strategies in accordance with the characteristics of their work. Knowledge management strategies are widely divergent and their diversity shows their suitability. In other words, it means that different situations need different strategies. The other reason for the variety of knowledge management strategies is due to their emphasis on different aspects of knowledge. Some strategies emphasize on knowledge and others pay attention to their commercial processes or net results. Wiig (1997) investigated different organizations and came upon the fact that organizations use different knowledge management strategies coordinated with their culture, priorities and capabilities. He found out that organizations use one of the following six strategies:

1. Knowledge strategy as a business strategy
2. Intellectual asset management strategy
3. Personal knowledge asset management strategy
4. Knowledge creation strategy
5. Knowledge transferring strategy
6. Customer directed knowledge strategy.

Choei & Lee (2002) emphasize those two types of central knowledge management strategies are systematic and human situations. To follow these strategies, organizations use special programs and activities to

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improve their structures or sometimes use awards to motivate their employees, groups or even business sectors and units to use new programs and goals.

The second factor which is considered in the present study and plays an effective role in knowledge management performance of organizations is the knowledge management enabler factor. Knowledge management enablers illustrate organization infrastructures for improving the results of knowledge management activities like planning and participating in knowledge scores in people. In actual fact, knowledge management enablers are stimulators which can make these activities easy (Chan & Chau, 2005). Research shows that organization culture, information technology and organization structure are three powerful knowledge management enablers in an organization. Better knowledge management enablers (organization culture information technology and organization structure) lead the organization to have better knowledge management (acquiring knowledge, protecting knowledge converting knowledge and using knowledge).

In our new globalized world, societies and organizations are looking for getting stable competitive advantages. To do so, organizations which know their customer needs and adopt themselves which their needs are more successful. As a result, an organization which can recognize upcoming actions and gets ready for it can be more successful in the long-term. To achieve this goal, knowledge is known as the main competitive advantage and it is assumed that its utilization creates competitive advantages.

According to the recognition of interaction between enablers and knowledge management enablers and their relationship with knowledge management performance, organization managers are expected to be able to lead their organizations toward effectiveness and revenues based on knowledge. Due to strategic significance of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company in Iran which has turned into one of the most important refinery companies of the region, it is of prime significance to assign a principle and criterion for valuing knowledge as an important and key capital, direct it through adopting strategies, improve infrastructures via paving attention and use knowledge management enablers.

With regard to the mixture of the aforementioned factors in different organizations to develop the effectiveness of the organizations, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between knowledge management strategies and enablers with knowledge management performance desirability in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Rezaian et al. (2013) carried out a research study to investigate relationship between structural organization (formality and concentration) and knowledge management (creation, knowledge application and distribution) in Khuzestan national youths organization. The research study was of correlation type from nature and goals point of view and data gathering tool was questionnaire. Statistical population of the research includes all employees of this organization. 140 questionnaires from all distributed questionnaires were returned. SPSS 16 was used to analyze data. In inference statistics part, Pearson correlation coefficient, partial correlation and path analysis of structural equations has been used. The results of the research showed that there is significant negative relationship between knowledge distribution and structure's component, but no relationship was verified between other cases.

Beigzadeh & Daudmani (2011) investigated the effect of organizational factors on knowledge management performance. The aim of their study was to investigate the effect of organization factors like organization culture, organization structure, education, human resources, information and communication, information technology and transparency of documents on knowledge management performance and knowledge management factors, knowledge storage, knowledge utilization and knowledge transformation and sharing in the department of education in Malekan that is a small town in Iran.

The participants of the present study were employees of the Department of Education in Malekan. In accordance to the sample population, 204 participants were selected. The results revealed that organization culture, education and information technology as a variable have a positive and significant effect on knowledge performance management. Meanwhile, other variables like human resources have significant and positive impact on only knowledge management. Although other variables have a positive correlation with knowledge management performance and its factors, their effect is not statistically significant.

Choi & Lee (2002) made an attempt to justify knowledge management strategies. They offered a model to show the relationship between knowledge management strategies and its creation processes. The model is adopted from 58 samples of Korean companies and shows that strategies change based on different knowledge production processes. The results show that for an effective management of knowledge, human resources are probably more accepted regarding the composition process. Lee & Choi (2003) investigated knowledge management enablers, processes and organization performance and offered a model that connects knowledge management factors to each

other. This model includes 7 enablers including: cooperation enabler, reliability, learning, concentration, officialization, T skills and supporting and emphasized on knowledge production processes like socialization, internalization, composition and externalization.

To establish reliability between knowledge production and performance, organization creativity was added to the model. The questionnaires of the study were collected from 58 companies and were analyzed. The results confirmed the effect of reliability on knowledge production. Supporting knowledge technology is effective only on knowledge composition and is considered vital as the foundation of organization creativity for performance development. HYu, Kim & Kim (2004) carried out a research study on the relationship between knowledge management stimulators and performances. The questionnaires of the study were posted to managers of knowledge management teams of 220 Korean companies along with a summary of the investigation description and an envelope. 74 completed questionnaires were sent back to the researchers. In this study the researchers adopted instant indicators of knowledge management performance that included knowledge quality and users' knowledge satisfaction. The results supported the hypothesis stating that each knowledge management performance factor is dependent on a series of different stimulators. Iksan& Roland (2004) presented a study that revealed the relationship between organization factor and public sector performance. The researchers studied 204 respondents from Ministry of Economic Development (MED) in Malaysia. The five main enablers were defined as organization culture, organization structure, technology, human resources and political guidance.

The researchers used bivariate analysis and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to test the hypothesis and found out some opportunities for more investigations of enablers which can affect knowledge management on the whole. One of the enablers that needs more investigation of the authors is the impact of organization structure on knowledge transfer.

Keskin (2005) carried out an empirical research study to investigate the relationship between knowledge management strategies and knowledge management performance. In his investigation, knowledge management strategies were classified into two categories called explicitly directed knowledge management strategy and implicitly directed knowledge management strategy.

To have an empirical analysis of the hypothesis, 600 medium and small (SMES) companies were chosen as the subject of the study. The results of the study showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between explicit and implicit strategies and knowledge management performance. Park (2006) carried out an empirical study that directed the relationship between knowledge management enablers (infrastructure abilities), management process ability, knowledge management process ability and knowledge management performance. In Park's model knowledge management enablers were divided into three taxonomies of organization culture, technology and organization structure.

Knowledge management ability process is classified into four groups: acquiring knowledge, converting knowledge, practicing knowledge and knowledge management satisfaction. To investigate the model, Park collected the data from a list of Korean knowledge management experts which was updated via KOTRA. (Commercial Investment Promotion Agency).

The results of the study included: 1. It was the technology of a considerable definite explanatory variable, knowledge conversion and protection 2. It was the organization culture of a considerable definite explanatory variable of knowledge management performance and knowledge utilization 3. It was the structure of a considerable definite explanatory variable of knowledge management performance, knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion and knowledge protection. 4. Knowledge acquisition, knowledge utilization and knowledge protection were considerable definite explanatory variables of knowledge management performance. Theriou, Maditions & Theriou G. (2005) investigated enabling factors of knowledge management and company performance of big and medium companies in Greece. The study investigated the index success factors or enablers that identified the knowledge management efficiency affecting the company performance. The study talked them over and investigated the impact of knowledge management efficiency. The suggested investigation model was randomly selected and tested from 280 big and medium institutions across Greece. Only 109 institutions out of 280 answered the questionnaire correctly.

The results of the study helps the organizations for their understanding of intense impact that different enablers have on successful knowledge management efficiency and how knowledge management efficiency affects company performance.

Taleghani & Talebian (2013) investigated the relationship between knowledge management and organizational culture in Mazandaran Province National bank branches. Their research was a descriptive research and correlation was utilized to analyze data. Statistical population of the research was executive, middle and superior managers (presidents, deputies and internal units' managers) of west Mazandaran national bank branches and 150 people were chosen as sample through accidental-categorical sampling method. Data gathering tool was two standard

questionnaires. Data obtained were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariable regression analysis. The results of their study showed that: there exists positive and significant relationship between knowledge management and organizational culture, there exists positive and significant relationship between socialization and organizational culture, there exists positive and significant relationship between externalization and organizational culture and there exists positive and significant relationship between combination and organizational culture.

3. Purpose of the Study

- 1) To investigate the relationship between knowledge management strategies and desirability knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company.
- 2) To investigate the relationship between knowledge management enablers and of knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company.
- 3) To investigate the simultaneous relationship of strategies and knowledge management enablers with desirability of knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research Method: since the present study is an investigation of the relationship between knowledge management strategies and enablers with desirability of knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company the present study is considered a descriptive correlational research.

Because the study was conducted in an organizational environment without the presence and interference of the researcher, none of the variables were under control.

Subjects of the study: the subjects of the study were all employees of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company whose total number was about 1197 in 2011.

Data collection procedure:

Relative classified random sampling based on employment status was used in the present study. That about 80 percent of the employees were official workers of the government and the others were working based on short-term contracts was considered in the study.

Subjects of the study: the subjects of the study were 290 (based on Morgan table).

Frequency of the subjects based on their job experience:

- Frequency of employees with 1-5 years of experience was 82 people. (28/3)
- Frequency of employees with 6-10 years of job experience was 117. (40/3)
- Frequency of employees with 1-5 years of job experience was 44. (15.2)
- Frequency of employees with 16-20 years of experience was 21. (7.2)
- Frequency of employees with 21-25 years of experience was 17. (5.9)
- Frequency of employees with more than 26 years of experience was 9. (3.1)

Frequency of the participants based on their education:

- Frequency of the subjects with B.S. was 90. (31.03)
- Frequency of the subjects with B.A. or B.Sc. was 200 (68.96)

Frequency of subjects based on their employment status.

- Frequency of subjects with short-term contracts was 58 (20.00)
- Frequency of subjects who were governmental official employees was 232 (80.00)

Research Methods:

1. Knowledge management strategy scale. The knowledge management strategies scale proposed by (Choei, 2002) was used in the present study. The scale is based on eight five item Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). They were divided to two types of strategies including systematic and human alignment.
2. Knowledge management enabler scale: Lee & Choei's (2003) scale was used to measure the knowledge management enablers. The scale included 27 five item Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5) which were themselves divided into three types including: information technology enabler, organization structure and organization culture.

3. Knowledge management performance scale: Choei's (2002) knowledge management performance scale was used to measure the knowledge management performance. The scale included a 5 five item Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5) which is measured on the basis of one-dimensional advantage.

To measure the reliability of the scales of knowledge management strategies knowledge management enablers and knowledge management performance via an analysis the correlation between questions of the scale and total score of the scales was calculated.

Correlation coefficient of the questions with the total score and total scale of the knowledge management strategies:

Systematic alignment strategy has the correlation coefficient of 0.77-0.91 with 0.0001 of significance.

Human alignment strategy has the correlation coefficient 0.58-0.83 with 0.0001 of significance.

Different knowledge management strategies have a total correlation coefficient of 0.56-0.89 with the significance of 0.0001.

Correlation coefficient of the questions with the total scale of knowledge management enablers:

Information technology enabler has the correlation coefficient of 0.56-0.89 with significance level of 0.0001.

Organization structure enabler has the correlation coefficient of 0.53-0.60 with significance level of 0.003-0.0001.

Organization culture enabler has the correlation coefficient of 0.62-0.91 with significance level of 0.0001.

Different knowledge management enablers totally have a correlation coefficient of 0.75-0.85 with significance level of 0.0001.

The correlation coefficient of questions with total score of knowledge management performance scale:

Knowledge management performance has correlation coefficient of 0.71-0.88 with significance level of 0.0001.

Knowledge management performance was calculated via Cronbach's alpha to measure the reliability, knowledge management strategy scales and knowledge management enablers.

Cronbach's alpha for each scale and total scales of knowledge management strategy:

- Systemic alignment strategy has Cronbach's alpha of 0.96.
- Human alignment strategy has Cronbach's alpha of 0.95.
- Different knowledge management strategies totally Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

Cronbach's alpha of each scale and total scale of knowledge management enablers.

- Information technology enabler has Cronbach's alpha of 0.96.
- Organization structure enabler has Cronbach's alpha of 0.77.
- Organization culture enabler has Cronbach's alpha of 0.69.
- Different knowledge management enablers totally have Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

Cronbach's alpha of total knowledge management performance scale:

- Knowledge management performance has Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

5. Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data of the study.

6. Finding of the Study

Question 1: Do knowledge management strategies predict significance of desirable knowledge management performance in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company?

Table (1) shows the correlation between variables of different knowledge management strategies (Systematic alignment and human alignment). The results show that systematic alignment strategy has positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability ($P < 0.0001$, $r = 0.75$).

In addition, human alignment strategy has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability. ($P < 0.0001$, $r = 0.68$).

Table (1), correlation of different knowledge management strategies and knowledge management performance

variable	Systemic alignment	Human alignment
knowledge management performance	Correlative coefficient	0.75
	significant	0.0001
	No	290

According to table (2) different knowledge management strategies predict 0.57 of knowledge management performance desirability. The results show that systematic alignment strategy with 59% of regression has the highest predictability and human alignment strategy with 19% of regression has the lowest significant and positive predictability of knowledge management performance desirability.

Table (2) prediction of knowledge management performance desirability based on different knowledge management strategies.

Predicting variables	Criterion variables	F	R	R ²	β	t	sig
Systematic alignment	Knowledge management performance desirability	189	0.76	.57	0.59	8.34	0.0001
Human alignment		.94			0.19		

Question 2: Do knowledge management enablers predict significant knowledge management performance desirability in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company?

Table (3) shows the correlation between variables of different knowledge management enablers (information technology, organization structure and organization culture) with knowledge management performance desirability. The results revealed that information technology has positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.66). Moreover, organization structure has a positive and meaningful relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.48). Organization culture has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.81).

Table (3): Correlation of different knowledge management enablers with knowledge management performance.

variable	Information technology	Organization structure	Organization culture
knowledge management performance	correlation 0.66	0.48	0.81
	sig 0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
	N 290		

As it is shown in table (4), different enablers of knowledge management predict 66% of knowledge management performance desirability variance. The results show that organization culture enabler with 75% of regression has the highest positive and significant predictability and organization structure enabler with -10% of regression has the lowest negative and significant predictability of knowledge management performance desirability.

Table (4): prediction of knowledge management performance desirability based different knowledge management enablers.

Predicting variables	Criterion variables	F	R	R ²	β	t	sig		
Information technology	Knowledge management performance desirability	189.90	0.82	.66	0.17	3.28	0.001		
Organization structure		p<0.0001			-0.10			2.24	0.02
Organization culture					0.75			12.77	0.0001

Question 3: Do knowledge management strategies and enablers predict significant knowledge management performance desirability in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company?

Table (5) shows the correlation between variables of different knowledge management strategies (systematic alignment and human alignment) and different knowledge management enablers (information technology, organization structure, and organization culture) with knowledge management performance desirability.

The results show that systematic alignment strategy has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.75) and human alignment strategy has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.68). Information technology has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability (P<0.0001, r = 0.67). Further, organization structure has a positive and significant relationship with

knowledge management performance desirability ($P < 0.0001$, $r = 0.48$). Organization culture also has a positive and significant relationship with knowledge management performance desirability ($P < 0.0001$, $r = 0.81$).

Table (5) correlation of different knowledge management enablers with knowledge management performance.

variable	Systematic alignment	Human alignment	Information technology	Organization structure	Organization culture	
Knowledge management performance	correlation	0.75	0.68	0.67	0.48	0.81
	sig	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
	N	290				

Table (6) shows that different knowledge management strategies and knowledge management enablers predict 68% of the knowledge management performance desirability variance.

The results show that organization culture enabler with 59% regression has the highest significant and positive predictability and information technology enabler with 10% regression has the lowest positive and significant predictability of knowledge management performance desirability.

Table (6) prediction of knowledge management performance desirability based on different knowledge management strategies and knowledge management enablers.

Predicting variables	Criterion variables	F	R	R ²	β	t	sig
Systematic alignment	Knowledge management performance desirability	122.36 $p < 0.0001$	0.83	68	0.19	2.62	0.009
Human alignment					0.06	0.97	0.33
Information technology					0.10	1.99	0.04
Organization structure					-0.11	2.55	0.01
Organization culture					0.59	8.61	0.0001

8. RESULTS

An investigation of the role of knowledge management strategies in predicting knowledge management performance desirability:

There is a correlation between variables of different knowledge management strategies (systematic alignment and human alignment) and knowledge management performance desirability.

Systematic alignment strategy has got the highest predictability and human alignment strategy has the lowest positive and significant predictability of knowledge management performance desirability.

The findings of this study lent support to Sing & Zollo (1998) and Keskin's (2005) findings. So it can be concluded that the company will be more successful in comparison with other companies and will play a significant role in the market if knowledge, skill and problem solving methods are well-designed in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company, knowledge taught in form of official documents and instructions, experts' participation in knowledge production is improved, several meeting are held between different members of the company and make the result of the studies and meetings a documented.

In addition to the positive role of systematic alignment strategy in successful performance of knowledge management, a successful human alignment like improving knowledge via person to person guidance and receiving scientific consults from experts can also be a vital help to this end.

An investigation of knowledge management enablers in predicting knowledge management performance desirability:

There is a correlation between the variables of different knowledge management enablers (organization culture, information technology and organization structure) and knowledge management performance desirability. The variable of organization culture has got the highest positive and significant predictability and the variable of organization structure has got the lowest negative and meaningful predictability of knowledge management performance desirability.

The present study is in line with the studies carried out by Tan Tai soon & Zeinol (2011) and Park (2006). The results of this study are not in line with Brown (2000).

Efficient knowledge management is not only dependent on information and technologies but is dependent on the social environment where people act. Different types of Organization knowledge management culture have got the deepest, most widespread and the most long term effect on social behavior of the majority of members of the organization. On the other hand, knowledge is a social phenomenon whose growth does foster accidentally and is dependent on an appropriate culture and foundation of the existence of a supportive and suitable culture is an important factor in efficient use of knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that if employees of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company show their satisfaction of the participations and cooperation, they tend to accept responsibilities in failures and cooperate in all units of the organization, employees believe other members, goals of the company and each other's abilities, there be a standard awarding system for their knowledge interaction and employees have a relationship on the basis of mutual belief, then the company will act more successfully in comparison with other companies and will play an important role in the market. In addition, the existence of inflexible structures in this company, relationship with the company only on the basis of official routines, lack of freedom in decision makings of the employees and acting only on methods and written rules can have an inappropriate and negative impact on the prosperity of the company, so that the company will improve slower than its counterparts.

An investigation of knowledge management strategies and enablers in predicting knowledge management performance desirability:

There is a correlation between systemic enablers and alignment of different knowledge management strategies, knowledge management (information technology, organization structure and organization culture) and knowledge management performance desirability.

Most of the empirical studies have just investigated the relationship between knowledge management strategies, knowledge management enablers, knowledge management processes and knowledge management performance separately.

The researcher of the present study hasn't found a single study that investigated the interactive relationship between knowledge management strategies and enablers and knowledge management performance desirability.

Hence, it can be concluded that Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company will be more successful only if it uses appropriate strategies and appropriate enablers simultaneously. This means that if the employees of the company acquire knowledge through instructions along with person to person guidance, problem solving methods are obvious, in addition to supporting information technology for public participation a relationship between organization employees is supplied, then the company will have a better performance and will get benefits beside a these factors, freedom of employees in decision making, existence of a systematic awarding system for participation, providing a supportive and helpful environment, a growth in acceptance of responsibility for failures in employees and an increase in the tendency for cooperation in them are among factors which can play a significant role in the success of the company. Overall, we want to maintain knowledge management in organizations and do not just want to consider it as an amusement; it should make a relationship via creating economic value and competition advantage.

Therefore, to have an effective and practical knowledge performance, organizations should first choose their knowledge management strategy in accordance with explicit and implicit knowledge available in organizations to be able to assign main purposes of the organization in knowledge management investment. On the other hand, knowledge management needs foundations called enablers to be successful. Enablers would lay the foundations for the amelioration of the knowledge management efficiency in organizations. Accordingly, it can be concluded that if managers of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company pay special attention to selection and appropriate utilization of strategies and enablers, it can achieve an appropriate knowledge performance. Hence, they will make it possible for the company to be able to act powerfully in domestic and global markets. Studies show that the aforementioned fact is strongly considered in Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company.

Conclusion

If knowledge management intends to remain stable in organizations and not to be considered an amusement, it should be in line with economic value creation and competitive advantages. As a result, organizations should first choose their knowledge management strategy considering hidden and available knowledge to perform knowledge management move efficiently.

Hence, the main purpose of the organization in investments of knowledge management will be assigned on the other hand, in order to be successful, knowledge management needs foundations which are known to be enablers. Enablers make knowledge management strategies more efficient via developing a suitable foundation for this particular case.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery Company will be more successful if its managers pay special attention to the selection of knowledge management strategies and enablers or make it

possible for the company to work in a position with a wider scope in domestic and foreign markets. The present study shows that the afore-mentioned issue is paid attention in this company.

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