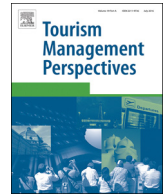




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Research paper

## Propensity to trust and knowledge sharing behavior: An evaluation of importance-performance analysis among Nigerian restaurant employees

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### ABSTRACT

Drawing from knowledge management theory, this study examines the relationships between employee's propensity to trust, organic organizational structure, knowledge sharing behavior, and service innovation in a multivariate nexus in restaurants. Data from 180 restaurants with a total of 453 employees were used to test the research hypotheses via partial least square structural equation modelling. As expected, the results of the empirical analysis revealed that propensity to trust is positively related to knowledge sharing behavior, organic organizational structure and service innovation; and knowledge sharing behavior is positively related to organic organizational structure and service innovation. Further, this study established that both knowledge sharing behavior and organic organizational structure serially mediates the positive effect of propensity to trust on service innovation. The result of importance-performance analysis highlights propensity to trust as the highest important predictor of service innovation while knowledge sharing is the best performance factor for service innovation in restaurants.

### 1. Introduction

Service sector is a multi-billion dollar industry globally. In Nigeria, hotels and restaurants represent the most economically active services in the sector (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Specifically, restaurant services are the third-largest contributor to the Nigerian service economy behind beverages and accommodation. Quick service restaurants being the major outlet for organized fast food industry are estimated at N250 billion with constant annual growth of 10% (Association of Fast Food Confectioners of Nigeria, 2016). Despite its promising outlook and growth rate, not so many of the Nigerian quick service restaurants are thriving, majority are struggling to survive (Harcourt & Ateke, 2018). Obviously, infrastructural deficiencies, unfavorable industry regulation and changing dynamics of the Nigerian quick service restaurants business environment have contributed to the challenges facing restaurant managers in the country. With the stifling business environment, consumer preferences, increasing levels of competition and the evolving consumer lifestyle, business owners must adapt, innovate and evolve to meet the demands of the realities of today's quick service restaurants business (CIUCI, 2017).

In today's increasingly growing knowledge economy, service

organizations such as quick service restaurants need to encourage their employees to be innovative in service delivery in order to remain competitive and relevant. Continuous promotion of competence and intelligence of employees is vital in creating a strong knowledge-base and proprietary needed for developing a market niche. In fact, huge investments have been made by several organizations into intra-organizational knowledge coordination that has been termed knowledge management systems so as to take full advantage of the collective knowledge of employees (Cabrera, Collins, & Salgado, 2006). While many restaurant management accepts innovation as an essential tool for attaining strategic competitive edge, most have focused mainly on product innovation (that is; culinary innovation) (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2019). However, the highly dynamic and competitive nature of the hospitality industry demands that services organizations innovate in every aspect of the business, including the processes. Without a doubt, service employees must be creative and innovative to ensure that their organizations are able to compete and survive the dynamics of the business environment (Alola, Olugbade, Avci, & Öztüren, 2019).

Employee's propensity to trust which refers to "the willingness to trust others shown by how much trust the person trusting (truster) has

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for the person being trusted (trustee) even before judgments of the integrity and ability of the trustee can be formed” (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Propensity to trust also aid the effective flow of knowledge (knowledge sharing) required for maintaining creative and innovative services, despite the challenges they may face on the job. Research also indicates that in transiting from emerging economies into highly knowledge-based economies, organizations must be flexible to accommodate necessary changes in competencies and structures that will aid the transitioning (Mojibi, Hosseinzadeh, & Khojasteh, 2015). Of such is the implementation of organic organizational structure which aids knowledge sharing among employees.

According to Stalker and Burns (1961), an organic organizational structure is characterized by little direct supervision, decentralized decision-making, few layers of management and little job specialization. Thus, employees may be encouraged to be proactive and innovative when such an organization implements an organic structure. Muinde, Lewa, and Kamau (2016) argued that decentralization and relaxed supervision which is accustomed to organic organizational structure is critical in fostering trust in organizations. In sum, employee-centric programs are integral to the advancement of service innovation in organizations, and restaurants must also adopt this approach to attain sustainable growth and market share.

Considering the importance of service innovation to organizations and the deleterious impact of non-trusting employees, it is paramount that research focusing on understanding employee's propensity to trust and its consequences on service innovation be done. For instance, trust in organizations has been proven to positively impact employees (Ilkhanizadeh & Karatepe, 2018). Invariably, lack of trust represents worrying scenarios that will add to the challenges already associated with working in the hospitality sector (Afsar, Shahjehan, & Shah, 2018).

Thus, the need to investigate and develop the mechanism through which employee trust is given. In doing so, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

**Research question 1:** How do employee's individual characteristics of propensity to trust impact the organizational outcome of service innovation (i.e. does an individual's willingness to trust matters in attaining innovative service delivery?).

**Research question 2:** Through which mechanism does propensity to trust influence service innovation (i.e. does the presence of other firm-specific factors such as the organic structure of the organization and/or knowledge sharing influence the way in which propensity to trust influence service innovation?).

### 1.1. Purpose

Following the reasoning above, our study proposes a conceptual model that investigates knowledge sharing behavior and organic organizational structure as mediators of the influence of employee's propensity to trust on service innovation. Specifically, this study examines: (a) the impact of propensity to trust on knowledge sharing behavior, organic organizational structure and service innovation; (b) the effect of knowledge sharing on organic organizational structure and service innovation; (c) the mediating role of knowledge sharing and the serial mediation of knowledge sharing and organicness on the association of propensity to trust and service innovation; and (d) the importance-performance analysis of the exogenous variables on service innovation.

### 1.2. Significance and contribution of the study

Our theoretical perspective and findings significantly contribute to extant literature in a number of ways. First, in closely examining the relationship between knowledge sharing behavior and a particular employees' individual characteristic (that is, propensity to trust), we heed the calls for further examination into the part played by employees' individual distinctions in knowledge sharing (Matzler, Renzl,

Mooradian, von Krogh, & Mueller, 2011). Propensity to trust is highly desired in an organization as its presence aids knowledge flow and result in performance. However, hospitality literature with specific focus on employee's propensity to trust is scarce. Though some empirical studies have investigated the impact of trust (Karatepe, Ozturk, & Kim, 2019; Ozturk & Karatepe, 2019), the mechanism for trusting has been neglected. Our study tests knowledge sharing behavior, organicness, and service innovation as a consequence of propensity to trust. Second, by showing the relevance of an organic organizational structure in the nexus between knowledge sharing and service innovation, we suggest that knowledge sharing behavior in an organization can result in greater service innovation through the organicness of its structure.

Lastly, our findings outline implications about the importance of employee's propensity to trust which facilitates knowledge sharing behavior, aids the flexibility of organizational structure and help employees deliver innovative services. Based on these advantages, management must recognize such employees early and channel their individual resources to the greater gain of the organization. Therefore, our findings provide recommendations on how management can be positioned in order to maximize employee's propensity to trust.

## 2. Theory, concept and hypotheses development

### 2.1. General background

While trust in organizational research has been proven to be inevitable in guaranteeing success, recent studies have highlighted that individual dispositional traits impact the trust process greatly (Alarcon et al., 2018). Since propensity to trust is the proclivity to readily accept vulnerability when relating to others (Natarajan, 2008), it can be dubbed as an individual employee's dispositional trait that alters their trust level in the organization. Muinde et al. (2016) highlight that propensity to trust aids flexibility in organizations as it decentralizes the power structure and encourages supervisors to be more relaxed and productive. Thus, propensity to trust supports organic organizational structure because of its flexible nature (Alarcon et al., 2018; Muinde et al., 2016).

On the other hand, propensity to trust has the potential of influencing the flow of knowledge in organizations. As established in extant literature, tacit knowledge which represents the core of an organization's competitive advantage is stored in human resources of the organization (Harmon, Scotti, & Kessler, 2018; Kianto, Shujahat, Hussain, Nawaz, & Ali, 2019). Thus, to enhance the sharing abilities of employees, a level of trust must be established which requires the trustor to possess the required level of propensity to trust in order to make the sharing possible.

Organic organizational structure which centers on the flexibility of organizations in managing processes to achieve optimal performance is also essential for both knowledge sharing and innovation in organizations. As posited by Muinde et al. (2016), flexibility in organizations structure fosters rapport across levels of management and aids information flow. Similarly, Sheng, Hartmann, Chen, and Chen (2015) highlighted the importance of synergistic mechanisms in the organization in driving for competitiveness and innovativeness. Sheng et al. (2015) argued that the style of organization structure impacts greatly employees' involvement as well as the perceived innovativeness of the organizations.

Innovation relies heavily on the idea realization, idea generation and collaborative learning practices of organizations' stakeholders (Chung, Seaton, Cooke, & Ding, 2016). To effectively execute these practices, it is required that individuals become vulnerable; either by showing “ignorance” (explicitly or tacitly) or by suffering the lack of appreciation from others (when their concepts are not taken seriously or refused) (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). Lee, Sardeshmukh, and Hallak (2015) asserted that restaurants as part of the hospitality industry must

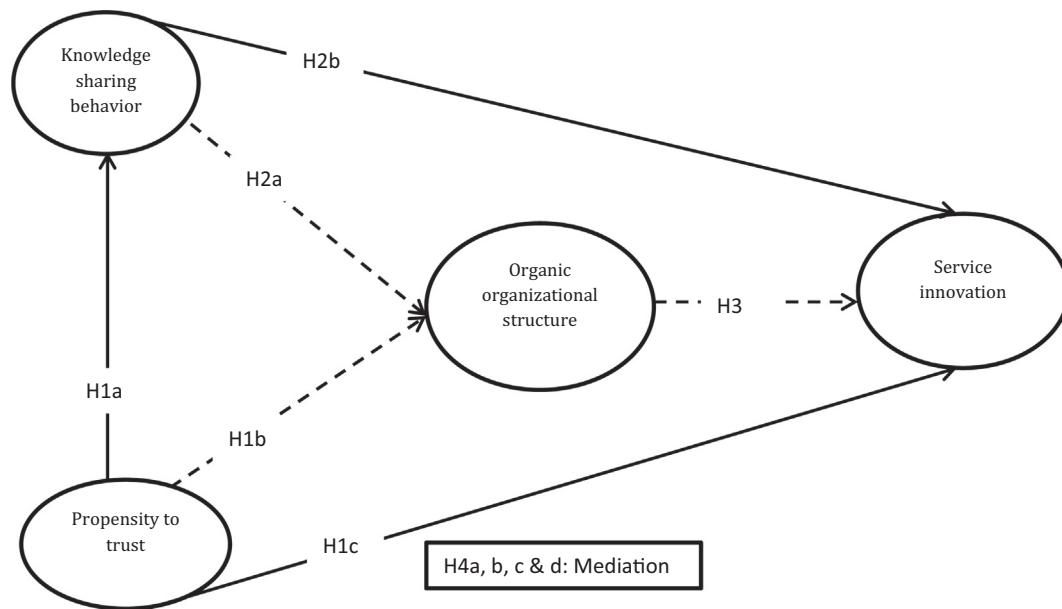


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

be innovative in their processes and services in order to maintain their market share in a very competitive market space. However, evidence from extant literature suggests that service innovation depends on factors such as propensity to trust, and knowledge sharing behavior (Hussain, Konar, & Ali, 2016). Essentially, the creative process that is required in attaining service innovation performance requires synergistic combination of human capacity and organizational competence.

## 2.2. Conceptual model

Building on the tenets of knowledge management theory which posit that knowledge is the most strategic and significant resource of organizations and distinctions in knowledge capabilities of different organizations are the foremost determinant of superior performance and sustainable competitive advantage (Harmon et al., 2018); we developed a conceptual model as shown in Fig. 1. Clearly, the connection between employee's propensity to trust and knowledge sharing behavior, organic organizational structure, and service innovation are developed using Winter's (2003) knowledge management theory. Other direct and indirect paths such as knowledge sharing behavior to organicness and organicness to service innovation and the mediated models were also motivated by the theory (Hu, Horng, & Sun, 2009).

## 2.3. Hypotheses development

Knowledge management theory (KMT) developed from the knowledge-based view of the firm posits that an organization's superior and sustainable performance is hinged on the knowledge capabilities of its human capital (see Spender, 1996; Winter, 2003). It was instrumental in the development of our hypotheses. For instance, an employee who possesses priceless information or tacit knowledge considers him/herself valuable to the organization and following the tenets of knowledge management theory, such employee must possess a high propensity to trust in order to share such information without the threat of becoming irrelevant.

Generally, to effectively inspire knowledge sharing among employees is probably knowledge management's most puzzling endeavor (Lin, Che, & Ting, 2012). This is because employees have a tendency to view knowledge as a means of control and power (Chennamaneni, Teng, & Raja, 2012) as well as a way of becoming more relevant and being unlikely to be substituted (Chennamaneni et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the fear of their knowledge being judged as inaccurate, unimportant or irrelevant, as well as the fear of criticism from others, may make employees not share their knowledge (Hislop, Bosua, & Helms, 2018). Some of the other facilitators and deterrents of knowledge sharing behavior that have been reported in extant literature are: the knowledge's properties (Matić, Cabrilo, Grubić-Nešić, & Milić, 2017; Szilva, Caganova, Bawa, Pechanova, & Hornakova, 2017) managerial actions and management style (Krylova, Vera, & Crossan, 2016), micro and macro-level environmental factors (Szilva et al., 2017), individual characteristics such as an individual's propensity to trust (Matzler et al., 2011; Mueller, 2015) and organizational structure (Islam, Jasimuddin, & Hasan, 2015). Hence, the influence employees' propensity to trust on their knowledge sharing behavior is highlighted.

We, therefore, posit that an employee's propensity to trust others within the restaurant settings will positively influence their willingness to share beneficiary information with others, influence their organization's structure and impact the organization's overall service innovation performance. Thus we developed the first set of hypotheses as:

**Hypothesis 1.** Employee's propensity to trust will positively affect their knowledge sharing behavior (a), the organicness of the organization's structure (b), and the overall service innovation performance (c).

A review of literature also confirms that in organizations with knowledge sharing culture, the structure is rarely mechanistic (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018). Al Saifi, Dillon, and McQueen (2016) claim that intra-organizational knowledge sharing behaviors foster decentralized decision-making and reduced formalization, as this kind of structure makes the flow of information easier as well as create fewer boundaries between business units. De Angelis (2013) called for a shift from the dominant culture of 'knowledge is power' to a culture of 'knowledge sharing is power'. He claims that this will undo the mechanistic organization culture of organizations, allowing for inclusiveness in decision making and an organic structure. Schutte and Barkhuizen (2015) argued that knowledge sharing within an organization links different units together and this leads to a formidable network arrangement that produces a flexible organizational structure built around learning, which replaces old hierarchical and mechanistic structures (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2018). Knowledge sharing behaviors challenges and pushes the boundaries of mechanistic organizational structure, making new demands for fluid, boundary-less, interactive and flexible structures not based on hierarchies but knowledge (Ramezan, 2011).

Furthermore, Halim, Ahmad, Ramayah, and Hanifah (2014) as well as Kianto, Sáenz, and Aramburu (2017), have argued that an organization's innovative competence and performance is enhanced by the knowledge embedded in its human capital. Nieves and Diaz-Meneses (2018) also found that knowledge sharing among hotel employees promotes and facilitates high service innovation performance. In essence, due to the relationships and constant contact of employees with customers especially in restaurant settings, employees tend to possess a great deal of valuable knowledge about the customer. If such knowledge is shared, it can foster the development of innovative product/service and processes that will ensure better satisfaction, commitment, engagement and loyalty of the customers (Pasamar, Diaz-Fernandez, & Rosa-Navarro, 2019). As such, innovations of processes and products that will enhance a firm's competitive edge require the motivation, ability and creative ideas of human capital to share knowledge (Škerlavaj, Connelly, Cerne, & Dysvik, 2018; Yang, van Rijn, & Sanders, 2018). Studies carried out by Hidayat and Lee (2018) as well as Kim and Shim (2018) have reported that knowledge sharing behaviors of restaurant employees significantly contribute to the innovativeness of their organization.

Therefore, we posit that in the restaurant industry, knowledge sharing behavior of employees will contribute to the innovativeness of the restaurants as well as the organicness of organizational structures in restaurants. Thus, the next set of hypotheses is developed as:

**Hypothesis 2.** Knowledge sharing behavior of restaurant's employees will positively affect the organization's organicness (a), and the overall service innovation performance (b).

Prior studies have investigated the influence that organizational structures have on innovation. A few of these studies focused on particular features such as centralization or formalization (Cabello-Medina, López-Cabrera, & Valle-Cabrera, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), whereas other studies employed scales in measuring the extent of organicity in organizational structure (Bellini, de Faria Pereira, De, & Becker, 2016; Mallén, Chiva, Alegre, & Guinot, 2016). Many of these studies reported that organizational structures have an influence on innovation (Janka, Heinicke, & Guenther, 2019), although its influence really differs based on the kind of structure. Stalker and Burns' (1961) classic study indicated that organizations with organic structures are more likely to be innovative compared to those with mechanistic structures. A number of studies have reiterated this claim. An instance is a study conducted by Cooper (2006) on commercial firms where he discovered that organic structures facilitate innovation better than hierarchical structures. This is because organizations with organic structures create interactive relationships and empower employees, thus enabling innovative and creative processes and service delivery. This report is reinforced by the findings from Tsai and Hsu's (2019) study which states that coherence through organic interactions fosters knowledge exchange, flow application and innovation. Therefore, we posit that the organic structures of restaurants will contribute to the innovativeness in service delivery. Thus, the next hypothesis is developed as.

**Hypothesis 3.** Organization's organicness will positively impact the employee's service innovation performance.

Interpersonal trust among co-workers is a very necessary attribute that has been understood to have a strong impact on knowledge sharing within an organization (AlShamsi & Ajmal, 2018). Casimir, Lee, and Loon (2012) and Cyril Eze et al., (2013) all reported that interpersonal trust positively influences knowledge sharing within an organization. There is a need for trust to exist among co-workers for them to share and respond openly to knowledge (Luciano, Bartels, D'Innocenzo, Maynard, & Mathieu, 2018). Knowledge sharing ability among members of an organization has been reported to substantially contribute to the improvement of organizational innovative performance ((DeVaughn & Leary, 2018). Although previous studies on knowledge

sharing have recognized interpersonal trust as important or explaining the extent to which individuals share their knowledge (Lau, Lam, & Wen, 2014; Mueller, 2015), very little has focused on the propensity to trust.

The propensity to trust dimension is important because it significantly influences knowledge sharing behavior very early in the relationship between the trusting parties. Since the workforce in restaurants is largely younger and regarded as temporary in nature (Crawford, Hubbard, O'Neill, & Guarino, 2010), they are always changing and there is barely enough time to determine the trustee's trustworthiness. In this case, the trustor's propensity to trust will substantially influence the knowledge sharing behavior than other antecedents of trust. On the other hand, knowledge sharing enables employees of an organization to increase their value, improve on their competencies and skills, as well as sustain their competitive advantage (Monica Hu, Ou, Chiou, & Lin, 2012). In the hospitality industry, (Hu, Shieh, Huang, and Chiu's (2009) empirical examination of Taiwanese hotels revealed that the connection between employees' knowledge sharing behaviors and service innovation is strong and significant. Likewise, based on a study carried out on a sample of employees drawn from six Korean service firms, Park (2002) demonstrated that knowledge sharing is significantly and positively related to service innovation. Abukhait, Bani-Melhem, and Zeffane (2019) concluded that the main purpose of knowledge sharing is to sustain a mechanism for continuous innovation. Thus, the next hypothesis is developed as:

**Hypothesis 4a.** Knowledge sharing behavior mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance.

French (2010) stated that wherever there are higher trust levels, it is more likely that employees would share knowledge. Within an organization, trust plays the role of a predictor of knowledge transfer or knowledge sharing (Antonova, Csepregi, & Marchev Jr, 2011; Holste & Fields, 2010). Most of the literature in knowledge management examining the relationship between organizational structure and knowledge sharing have conflicting findings and have focused on the coordination (centralized or decentralized) dimension of organizational structure (Barley, Treem, & Kuhn, 2018; Lee, Min, & Lee, 2016). In addition, these studies have been in the direction of how organizational structure facilitates knowledge sharing and not vice versa. In the midst of the inconclusive results as regards the relationship between knowledge management and organizational structure (Janka et al., 2019; Tsai, 2002), considering a different dimension of organizational structure (mechanism or organicness) and a different direction of relationship could offer more convincing and relevant results. Our study attempt to establish that knowledge sharing could foster the organic rather than the mechanistic organizational structure.

Organizations that cultivate knowledge based on collaboration among co-workers, practical experience and other knowledge sharing behaviors would foster organizational characteristics such as the existence of interdisciplinary workgroups, flexible boundaries between departments, and role integration around specialties and processes rather than departments (Daud, Zainol, & Mansor, 2014; Zaidi & Othman, 2014). These characteristics match Mintzberg's description of an 'ad-hocentric' organic organizational structure (Dekoulou & Trivellas, 2017). Thus, the next hypothesis is developed as:

**Hypothesis 4b.** Knowledge sharing behavior mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and organicness of organizational structure.

Trong Tuan (2012) argued that when a trust climate is encouraged in an organization, formal coordination and planning are deemphasized which in turn promotes organic structure in the organization. Organic structures are flexibility-oriented and have been recognized to foster innovativeness (Brettel, Chomik, & Flatten, 2015), creative and entrepreneurial workplace (Dada & Watson, 2013), and is required when changes in technology, products or services are necessary (Tajeddini, Altinay, & Ratten, 2017). Organic organizational structures are also



characterized by low formalization, low centralization and high professionalism which are needed for an organization to respond quickly to changes and advancement in its environment (Kessler, Nixon, & Nord, 2017). In organizations with organic structures, innovation decisions are made quicker and more often because the organizations have a 'clan' system (Quinn & Hall, 1983); that defines success in relations to sensitivity to customers and concern for members of the organization, as well as puts premium on consensus, participation, and teamwork (Moonen, 2017). The characteristics of an organic organizational structure also facilitate the initiation and implementation of innovations (Azar & Ciabuschi, 2017). Thus, the next set of hypotheses is developed as:

**Hypothesis 4c.** Organic organizational structure mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and Service innovation performance.

**Hypothesis 4d.** Knowledge sharing behavior of restaurant employees and organic organizational structure of restaurant serially mediate the relationship between propensity to trust and Service innovation performance.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Data collection and measurements

We employed an exclusively quantitative method for this study because the current study examines already existing theoretical phenomena as evident in the literature reviewed. Data was solicited from employees of 254 quick service restaurants in Lagos, Nigeria. The target restaurants were listed on TripAdvisor and have ratings of 3 stars or more. This selection approach was utilized since it typifies a standard restaurant with high customer recognition and service standards. All selected restaurants serve both African and international cuisines. Judgmental sampling technique was used for the selection of the city and the above-mentioned restaurants. To ascertain that there was no problem of non-response bias, we compared the response from early and late respondents. Since the result showed no significant difference exists between the groups, according to Armstrong and Overton (1977) non-response bias doesn't seem to be a problem.

Prior to the actual face-to-face survey administration with the employees in the selected organizations, the managers of the restaurants were contacted for consent and permission. The purpose and procedure of the study were communicated and a total of 3 employees from the organizations were randomly selected for the actual survey. Out of the 254 managers contacted, only 180 managers consented and approved that the survey be conducted, thus a total of 540 questionnaires were distributed. The actual respondents were 471 employees, returning a data set of 87.2%. However, after data screening for missing data, only 453 samples were valid for further analysis which represents an 83.9% response rate. Table 1 shows the detailed demographic characteristics of the respondents. The instrument for measuring the study's construct was adapted from existing literature. This approach has been widely used in scholarship literature (see: Abubakar, Ilkan, Meshall Al-Tal, & Eluwole, 2017; Elci, Abubakar, Ilkan, Kolawole, & Lasisi, 2017). The survey items for propensity to trust was adopted from Mayer and Davis (1999), knowledge sharing from Lee (2016), service innovation performance from Hu, Horng, and Sun (2009) and organicness of structure from Cruz and Camps (2003). The survey is attached as Appendix A.

#### 3.2. Treatment of common method variance

As rightly noted by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), the use of questionnaires for investigating relationships among concepts is adequate and appropriate, however, questionnaires are susceptible to a number of issues. In addressing common method

**Table 1**  
Demographic characteristics (n = 453).

Items	%
Gender	
Male	28.9
Female	71.1
Age	
18–25	10.8
26–35	42.2
36–45	29.1
46–55	15.5
56 and older	2.4
Marital status	
Single	13.7
Married	72.6
Widowed	5.5
Divorced	7.3
Separated	0.9
Tenure	
< 3 years	51.9
3–5 years	31.6
6–8 years	7.3
9–12 years	4.2
> 12 years	5.1
Education	
Senior secondary	14.3
Technical college	30.8
University	28.8
Postgraduate	26.1

variance, we adopted both procedural and statistical remedies suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Liang, Saraf, Hu, and Xue (2007). For procedural remedies, we ensured that all required permissions were taken and participants were properly informed about the purpose and process of the study. This we did to reduced respondent's response bias. Further, we used different scales to anchor independent and dependent variables and also did not arrange the constructs in the questionnaire in order of the investigated relationships. In addition, all scale items were adapted from validated previous studies. Statistically, we conducted Harman single-factor test. Results showed a 5-factor solution explaining 70.58% of the variance, with 40% of the variance explained by the first factor. Hence, common method variance does not appear to be a concern for this study.

### 4. Results

To achieve the objective of this research, data gathered from the surveyed respondents were analyzed using Partial Least Square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach. Recently, tourism and hospitality scholars are increasingly adopting the use of PLS-SEM approach has been found to be appropriate for a number of reasons (Ali, Kim, Li, & Cobanoglu, 2018; Ali, Rasoolimanesh, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Ryu, 2018). Importantly, PLS-SEM provides a robust estimation of models with both normally and non-normally distributed data (Watson, Taheri, Glasgow, & O'Gorman, 2018).

The skewness and kurtosis values for our study data range from  $-2$  to  $+2$  which are within the acceptable cut-off value of  $-3$  and  $+3$  thus confirming the normality of our study data. As recommended by Kline (2011), PLS-SEM is appropriate for estimating models with lots of indicators. Our study model included 37 indicators, 453 samples and 5000 sub-samples (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015).

#### 4.1. Assessment of measurement model

Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, we test our hypothesized relationships. Firstly, to assess the measurement model, we test for convergent validity of the measure with outer loadings, composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted

**Table 2**  
Reliability and validity of constructs.

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Propensity to trust	PTT1	0.870	0.777	0.961
	PTT2	0.824		
	PTT3	0.906		
	PTT4	0.884		
	PTT5	0.891		
	PTT6	0.917		
	PTT7	0.876		
Knowledge sharing	KS1	0.792	0.722	0.912
	KS2	0.888		
	KS3	0.862		
	KS4	0.853		
	KS5	-		
Organicness	ORG1	0.836	0.696	0.932
	ORG2	0.828		
	ORG3	0.799		
	ORG4	0.865		
	ORG5	0.847		
	ORG6	0.827		
Service innovation performance	SIB1	0.881	0.797	0.979
	SIB2	0.920		
	SIB3	0.919		
	SIB4	0.903		
	SIB5	0.927		
	SIB6	0.921		
	SIB7	0.886		
	SIB8	0.911		
	SIB9	0.885		
	SIB10	-		
	SIB11	0.823		
	SIB12	0.864		
	SIB13	0.870		
	SIB14	-		

**Table 3**  
Discriminant validity.

	KS	ORG	PTT	SIB
<b>Fornell and Larcker's (1981) Criteria</b>				
1. Knowledge sharing	0.849			
2. Organicness	0.755	0.834		
3. Propensity to trust	0.494	0.471	0.882	
4. Service innovation performance	0.651	0.598	0.703	0.893
<b>Heterotrait-monotrait ratio</b>				
1. Knowledge sharing	-			
2. Organicness	0.846	-		
3. Propensity to trust	0.542	0.503	-	
4. Service innovation performance	0.704	0.631	0.728	-

(AVE). As reported in Table 2, except for 1 item of knowledge sharing construct and two items of service innovation performance construct, all values exceeded the required thresholds 0.7 for outer loadings, 0.7 for CR and 0.5 for AVE (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017) (see Fig. 1). To validate the discriminant validity of study's construct, we employed both the traditional Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion which demand that the square root of AVE should be greater than the inter-construct correlation and the newly recommended heterotrait - monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) approach (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015) (see Table 3). For both approaches, our scale met the required obligations. Thus, indicating discriminant validity of our scales.

4.2. Assessment of structural model

To assess the structural model of our study, we followed the suggestion of Hair et al. (2013) and perform a bootstrap procedure using 5000 subsamples. Additionally, we reported the effect size (f2) for the relationships in our structural model based on the recommendation of

**Table 4**  
Estimation of structural paths (direct effects and specific indirect effects).

Hypotheses	Beta	T values	Decision	f <sup>2</sup>
H1a: PTT - > KSB	0.494	12.834**	Supported	0.323
H1b: PTT - > ORG	0.128	3.120**	Supported	0.030
H1c: PTT - > SIB	0.488	11.352**	Supported	0.464
H2a: KSB - > ORG	0.692	18.795**	Supported	0.868
H2b: KSB - > SIB	0.307	5.258**	Supported	0.101
H3: ORG - > SIB	0.136	2.323**	Supported	0.021

Hypotheses	Beta	T values	Decision
H4a: PTT - > KSB - > SIB	0.152	4.721**	Supported
H4b: PTT - > KSB - > ORG	0.342	11.144**	Supported
H4c: PTT - > ORG - > SIB	0.017	1.561	Not supported
H4d: PTT - > KSB - > ORG - > SIB	0.047	2.360**	Supported

Hair et al. (2013). At first, we estimated the structural paths in our model. All predictor variables had a significant positive effect on service innovation performance. Thus, H1a, H1b, H1c, H2a, H2b, and H3 were supported (see Table 4 and Fig. 2). Moreover, all predictor variables explained 62.7% of the variance in employee's service innovation performance. The R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.627 is greater than the required 0.26 as recommended by Cohen (1988) for a significant model.

Further, based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines for substantive effect size, H1a, H1c, and H2a showed large effects, while H1b, H2b, and H3 showed small effects (see Table 4). As shown in Table 4, except for the specific indirect effect of propensity to trust on service innovation performance via the mediating role of organicness of the organization (H4c), all the other specific indirect effects were significant. Specifically, knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance (H4a), and it also mediates the relationship between propensity to trust and organicness (H4b). Finally, both knowledge sharing and organicness serially mediate the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance (H4d).

Additionally, we perform importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) to help uncover the potential area of improvement in employee's service innovation performance based on the recommendation of (Hock, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2010). Hock et al. (2010) also inferred that IPMA aids the ability of researchers in providing an insightful contribution to practice by identifying the areas of low and high performance and it also deepens the PLS-SEM analysis (Okumus, Ali, Bilgihan, & Ozturk, 2018). According to Streukens, Leroi-Werelds, and Willems (2017), IPMA analysis in PLS-SEM possesses some significant benefits over regular IPMA which normally depends on multiple regression analysis. Primarily, to determine the score of importance, PLS-SEM is an essential analytical instrument since it is able to integrally assess a multifarious grid of relationships that connects different drivers to a specific construct. Secondly, PLS-SEM also has the capability to incorporate latent constructs in the IPMA analysis. Table 5 and Fig. 3 presents the IPMA results for the dependent value of "service innovation performance". As evidenced in the IPMA result, in order to predict employee's service innovation performance, the propensity to trust has the highest importance (3.905), followed by knowledge sharing (3.009) and Organicness (2.938). Contrarily, in terms of performance, knowledge sharing is the highest predictor of service innovation performance (50.221), followed by Organicness (48.450) and propensity to trust (48.415). This result inferred that while propensity to trust is the most important predictor of employee's service innovation performance, knowledge sharing among the employee should be accorded the highest priority.

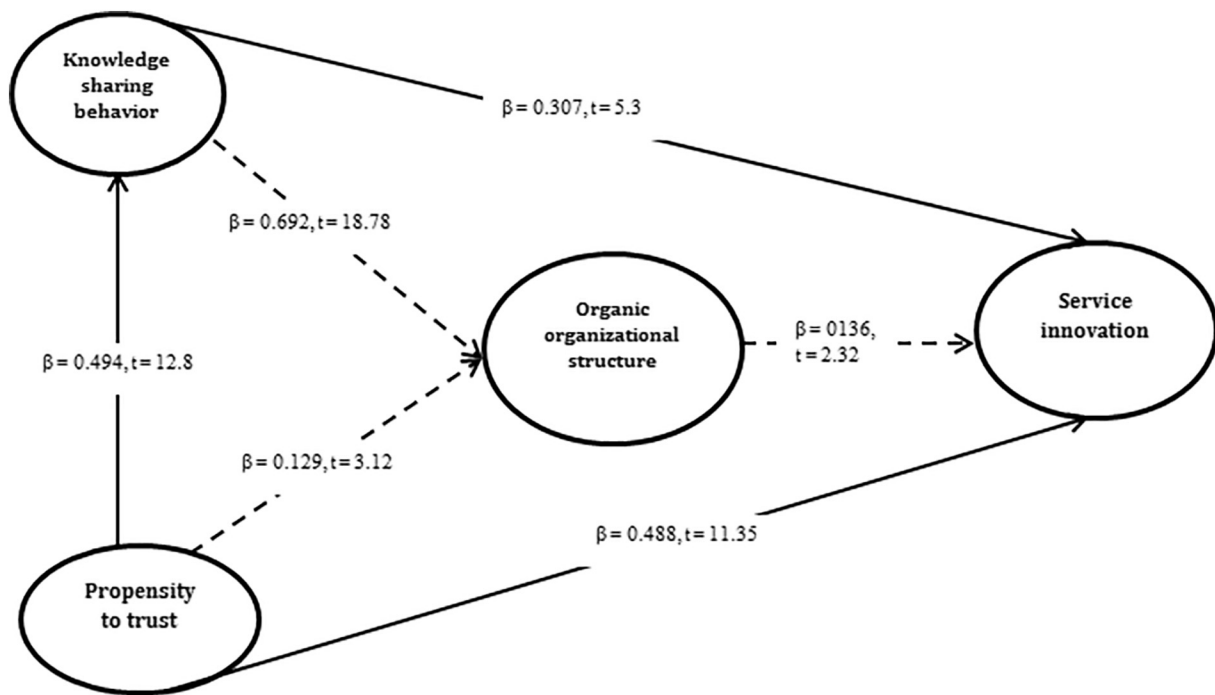


Fig. 2. Conceptual model with results.

Table 5  
IPMA result.

Latent variables	Service innovation performance	
	Total effects (Importance)	Index value (Performance)
Knowledge sharing	3.009	50.221
Organicness	2.938	48.450
Propensity to trust	3.905	48.415

5. Discussion

The current study investigated the mediating role of knowledge sharing behavior and organic organizational structure in the

relationship between restaurants' employee propensity to trust and service innovation. Our proposed conceptual model was validated with the result of empirical analysis conducted with data gathered from Nigerian restaurant employees. With most of the hypothesized relationship supported except for the mediating effect of organic structure on the relationship of propensity to trust and service innovation behavior, our study's result is in concordant with the tenets of knowledge management theory and limited available evidence in extant literature.

With the exception of few scholars like [Watson et al. \(2018\)](#), employee-focused empirical studies within the restaurant sector of the hospitality industry have been scarce. Even though it is clear that the restaurant sector is an important contributor to the overall significance of the hospitality industry and employees are the cornerstone that upholds the success of every service organization. To this end, the present study has been designed to develop and empirically examine a KMT based conceptual model that investigates the effect of Nigerian

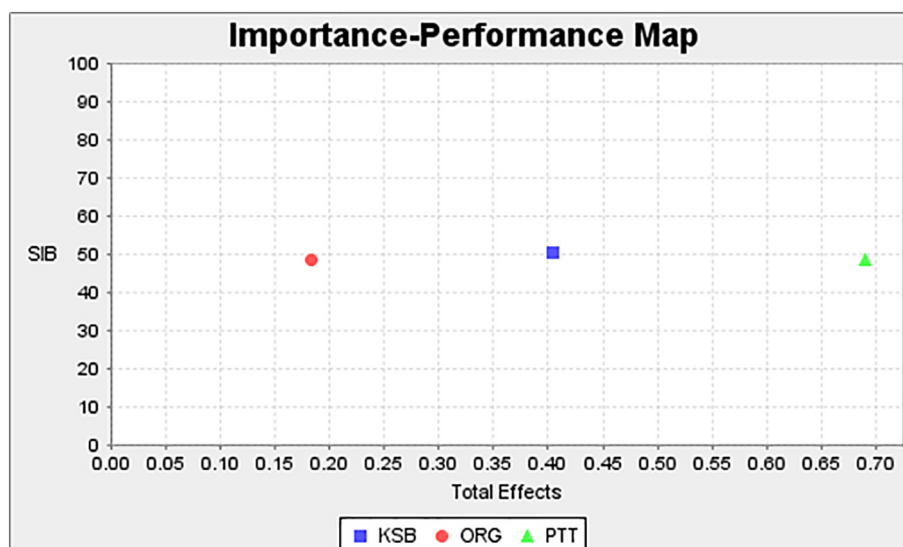


Fig. 3. IPMA.

restaurants' employees' propensity to trust, knowledge sharing behavior and their organization's organic structure on the service innovation performance of the employees within the study context. Our proposed model also test the mediating effect of knowledge sharing and organicness of structure on the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance individually and collectively in a serial mediation hypothesis. Results showed that propensity to trust ( $\beta = 0.488$ ), knowledge sharing ( $\beta = 0.307$ ), and organization's structure organicness ( $\beta = 0.136$ ) are all significant predictors of employee's service innovation performance in restaurants. This suggests that restaurant employees will be committed to devising innovative ways of delivering service in their organization if they have the propensity to trust their organization, co-workers and leader, and if their organization encourages the flow of information which ensures knowledge sharing within an organization with an organic structure. This finding is consistent with several previous studies (e.g., Chen & Cheng, 2012; Hu, Shieh, et al., 2009; Kim & Lee, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2012).

In addition, our results confirmed that propensity to trust is a precursor to employees' knowledge sharing behavior ( $\beta = 0.494$ ) and organizations' organic structure ( $\beta = 0.128$ ). This is in agreement with Curado and Vieira (2019) as well as Manassee (2019) whose studies revealed that knowledge sharing and an organic organizational structure are consequences of employees' propensity to trust. Furthermore, according to our results, knowledge sharing behavior also strongly and directly influence organizations' organic structure ( $\beta = 0.692$ ). This finding is crucial as it highlights the significance of fostering the flow of knowledge in organizations if they are to maintain an organic structure.

Our results did not support the mediating role of organicness of structure in the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance ( $\beta = 0.017$ ); this result could be supporting the findings of authors whose studies have reported that mechanistic organizational structures are vital to innovation (e.g., (Peprah & Ganu, 2018)). Furthermore, other authors have suggested that an ambidextrous organizational structure is vital to innovation (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2016), this could also explain why the mediating role of organicness of structure in the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance was not supported in our findings. However our findings support the mediating role of knowledge sharing behavior in the relationship between propensity to trust and organicness of organizational structure ( $\beta = 0.342$ ), propensity to trust and service innovation performance ( $\beta = 0.152$ ), as well as the serial mediation of knowledge sharing behavior and organicness in the relationship between propensity to trust and service innovation performance ( $\beta = 0.047$ ).

The results of the present study considerably add to the theoretical development of a conceptual model elucidating the inter-relationships among employees' propensity to trust, knowledge sharing behavior, organization's organic structure, and service innovation performance. In the restaurant sector, only a few studies in the literature examine the relationships and this deficiency is particularly grave when viewed in the light of the increasing importance of innovation to the industry. To fill this identified void in the literature, this study thus builds a model that incorporates the aforementioned variables and hypothesized the direct and indirect relationships that are expected to contribute immensely to the industry.

Secondly, our study extends the application of PLS-SEM in the hospitality industry to cases in the Nigerian restaurant sector. In so doing, to the best of authors' knowledge, this study pioneers this application within the study context. Also, by extending the application to PLS-SEM research to Nigeria, our study also validates the relevance of the method in a new context with a new set of norms, values, and beliefs.

## 6. Conclusion

This study is intended to provide empirical evidence of the effect of

employees' propensity to trust on service innovation through knowledge sharing behavior and organic organizational structure of restaurants in Nigeria. Different studies have revealed that restaurants like other organizations in the hospitality industry require employees' service innovativeness to stay ahead of competition (Abecassis-Moedas, Sguera, & Etlie, 2016). To achieve this, owners/managers must understand the importance of intrinsic qualities such as propensity to trust and knowledge sharing behavior in their employees (Hidayat & Lee, 2018). Restaurants will be able to innovate and hold the key to profitability to the degree that they nurture and foster these qualities in their employees. This study has confirmed that an organization's disposition towards the flow of knowledge and its organic structure may be the means by which its employees' propensity to trust results in service innovation. Therefore, to be able to constantly drive service employees towards service innovation performance, restaurant owners among other relevant stakeholders must of necessity enable easy flow of information and knowledge, and create a flexible organic structure among employees who have propensity to trust.

### 6.1. Managerial implication

The managerial implication of this study includes the revelation of the importance of knowledge sharing behavior over propensity to trust based on the findings from IPMA. This finding encourages managers to note that although propensity to trust is the most important predictor of an employee's service innovation performance, knowledge sharing among the employee should be given the utmost priority by managers. Managers should also note that this study highlights the importance of fostering the flow of knowledge in organizations, first by recommending an organic organizational structure through the expansion of borders in allowing for regular contact and interaction among all levels of employees as well as empowering and giving ownership. Secondly, managers are encouraged to recruit staff with a high propensity to trust; as employees with this psychological capital are more likely to stir the course of knowledge sharing within the organization. In the stiff competitive market of Nigerian quick service restaurants, managers and owners must move beyond the traditional reactionary approach to service innovation if they must remain competitive in the market. As this study suggest, taking a proactive approach to service innovation will benefit the evolution of the business in response to the changing dynamics of the consumers. In addition, knowledge sharing behavior among employees should be encouraged and be modeled by managers as it will help to build trust in the organization thereby leading to a greater propensity to trust and service innovation.

## 7. Limitations and recommendations for future study

The results of the present study must be interpreted bearing certain limitations in mind. While we controlled for common method variance and also statistically confirm that common method variance does not seem to be a problem in our study, conducting a similar study with time-lagged design might offer an interesting result. Also, this study was conducted on employees in Lagos state only; future study might increase the generalization of a result by including more states in Nigeria. Future study may also explore how management could explore methods of knowledge sharing, or try to identify the methods being employed (if any) in organizations to evaluate the effectiveness and resulting impact on employees. In addition, an organic organizational structure has been used in this study to predict a desirable organizational outcome (service innovation). However, the flexible nature of an organic structure may also result in negative outcomes. A future investigation of whether the organic structure could predict counter-productive work behavior is recommended. Lastly, the current study employed knowledge management theory as the framework for hypotheses development, a different approach for example; building on the tenets of self-consistency theory may help to uncover interesting



insights regarding how an individual's person-job fit may contribute to organizational objectives.

#### Author's contribution

**Oluwatobi A. Ogunmokun** was involved with the conceptualization of the research and contributed to the primary data collection.

**Kayode K. Eluwole** was involved with the conceptualization of the research and contributed to data analysis, reporting of results and discussion of findings.

**Turgay Avci** acted in a supervisory capacity to ensure smooth transitioning of the idea through to the completion of the research.

**Taiwo T. Lasisi** contributed to the introduction, literature review, and discussion.

**Juliet E. Ikhide** contributed to the literature review and primary data collection.

#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100590>.

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