

Measuring Organizational Performance Of Casket Industries In Pampanga, Philippines: A Basis For Sustainable Competitiveness Program

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Abstract: This study aimed to assess the level of knowledge management, degree of customer knowledge management, and degree of innovative quality among casket manufacturing businesses in Pampanga, Philippines, and examine their influence on organizational performance. A mixed-method research design was employed, combining quantitative data from a survey questionnaire and qualitative data from interviews with business owners. Descriptive and regression analyses were conducted to analyze the data. A sample of 49 casket business owners participated in a quantitative survey; ten (10) were selected to answer the semi-structured interview questions. The findings revealed that business owners in the casket industry moderately perceived their level of knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality. The regression analysis showed that none of these factors significantly influenced organizational performance, as perceived by the business owners. The qualitative analysis provided insights into the sources of information, knowledge-sharing practices, customer relationship management strategies, and innovative initiatives employed by business owners. The findings serve as a basis for developing a sustainable competitiveness program for casket businesses, emphasizing key areas of improvement in achieving competitive advantage. Further research is recommended to explore additional factors that may impact organizational performance in this industry.

Keywords: Organizational Performance, Knowledge Management, Customer Knowledge Management, Innovative Quality, Casket Industry, Sustainable Competitiveness, Pampanga, Philippines

1. Introduction

Organizational performance is a measure of competitiveness (Behl, 2022) achieved through an efficient and productive level that guarantees the organization's continued prominence in the market. Each company is committed to improving its methods consistently [1]. Son et al. (2020) said that organizational performance is crucial to the company's competitiveness and sustainability in today's highly competitive marketplace. Since it directly affects the success of businesses, more and more academics are studying the topic (Zhang et al., 2019; Anwar & Adbullah, 2021) [2] [3]. Scholars and professionals alike have long viewed raising an organization's performance as the best way to adapt to a dynamic and competitive business climate (Oliva et al., 2019; AlTaweel & Al-Hawary, 2021) [4] [5]. As a result, researchers have put in a lot of time and effort to figure out how to boost business efficiency (Son et al., 2020) [6]

This is consistent with the global forecast on the coffin market, which opined that from 2019 to 2030, there is an estimated growth of 5.4% as there is an observed rising demand for death care and services. Such growth is also attributed to the rising trend in customized coffins ranging from wood, metal, and plastic; and the growing awareness of such products and services [7]. Consequently, several considerations should be considered while evaluating an organization's effectiveness.

Conversely, previous literature should have included the assessment of management dimensions in the manufacturing industries in the Philippines, particularly in Pampanga. This became the primary focus of the present study. Another gap is to examine whether knowledge management (KM), customer knowledge management (CKM), and innovation quality sustainably improve firm performance in the

manufacturing industry. However, this study considers knowledge management (KM) instead of knowledge-oriented leadership (KOL). It was also underlined that the casket industry in Pampanga, which is significantly one of the manufacturing industries in the Philippines, may yield different outcomes as to its level along the three management dimensions than the service sector. For these reasons, the researcher was inspired to conduct the study and discover the results in the casket industry in Pampanga (Alrowwad et al., 2020) [8]. In addition, the company must strive for innovative quality in administrative and technological innovation for customer satisfaction (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study of Castagna et al. (2020) implies conducting further research on quantifying customer knowledge management to enhance productivity, which considers innovation, product advantage, product market performance, and customer relationships (Castagna et al., 2020) [9]. The next gap is to think about organizational structure, which includes knowledge management, customer knowledge management, innovative quality, and a sustainable competitive advantage (Banmairuoy et al., 2022) [10].

In the Philippines, the death care business practices knowledge management, leading them to device options other than cremation. Caskets were then innovated to make them more eco-friendly (Borres, 2019) [11]. Convincingly, the study is appropriate at present since business owners are constantly monitoring and evaluating organizational performance. Thus, this study focuses on assessing the level of knowledge management, the degree of customer knowledge, and the degree of innovative quality of selected casket manufacturing industries in Pampanga and examines their influence on organizational performance as a basis for developing a sustainable competitiveness program for casket businesses, which serves as the research gap of this study

since the assessment of knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality are not included in previous studies and may have a significant influence on organizational performance. Moreover, the present study looks into the financial performance of the companies through financial ratios from their financial statements as the parameter for organizational performance.

2. Review of Related Studies

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management has been prominent in the discussions in the review of related studies. According to Fampo (2020), an organization's knowledge is a strategic asset that can create new avenues for growth and innovation. Solutions to challenges, increased efficiency in operations, and continued global competitiveness are all possible because of knowledge management. With the help of KM, businesses may foster an environment where workers are comfortable sharing and drawing on one another's expertise and experience. A knowledge network is established as workers improve at imparting and accepting information to further their education [12].

Furthermore, the critical requirement for companies to undertake knowledge management is dictated by the inevitable necessity to adapt to changing external elements and conditions. In response to rapid technological changes, shorter product life cycles, and more intelligent consumers, organizations have been using knowledge to improve their ability to innovate, which is thought to depend on the first. On the other hand, Lam et al. (2021) claim that knowledge management is a fundamental driver of competitive advantage in today's business environment [13]. This is also supported by the claim of Aymen et al. (2019) when they discovered the influence of knowledge management of small and medium enterprises to achieve a competitive advantage [14].

Some scholars, including Doval (2020), argue that creating new knowledge entails transforming from tacit to explicit knowledge [15]. The knowledge that can be stated verbally, disseminated in writing, and archived in databases is part of the explicit dimension. The individual's knowledge, beliefs, and emotions constitute the tacit one. For instance, these may concern situationally relevant technical knowledge and abilities (Solberg et al., 2020) [16].

Whether from within the organization or external market constraints, novel ideas and pressing demands are familiar sources of new information (Chesbrough, 2019) [17]. As Snihur and Zott (2020) argue, businesses can learn from the outside world by bringing in former employees from rival companies or joining industrial networks that put them in touch with the cutting-edge expertise of other businesses [18]. Accordingly, the notion of the knowledge economy has arisen due to the maturation of knowledge management over time. In today's social and business worlds, this phrase refers to the growing amount of information needed to do social and business activities well (Afonasova et al., 2019; Sahut et al., 2021) [19] [20].

Knowledge management (KM) may help a business in several ways, as Alexandru et al. (2020) outlined. These

include the improved speed with which decisions are made, a distinct advantage in the marketplace, and fresh ideas [21]. It was emphasized that KM aids in increasing an organization's efficiency by shortening decision-making times and improving quality (Rahimnia & Movali, 2021) [22]. Similar to how KM technologies allow more time to be spent on knowledge development and dissemination, they also reduce the time spent on knowledge gathering. KM also helps businesses get a competitive edge by using their knowledge assets innovatively (Dahiya et al., 2022) [23]. Information is continually being gathered, analyzed, and shared within businesses to aid decision-making (Shabir & Gardezi, 2020) [24]. As a result of incorporating these learnings and making swifter decisions, businesses can outmaneuver rivals and deliver higher-quality services despite intense competition. Ding, Liu, and Liang (2018) also found that implementing IT-enabled capabilities positively influences organizational knowledge creation, sharing, and utilization [25]. By effectively utilizing IT capabilities, organizations can enhance their knowledge management practices, foster a culture of knowledge sharing, and develop dynamic capabilities to adapt and innovate in today's knowledge-intensive landscape. Another benefit of KM is that it encourages creativity within the company. Knowledge resource management and analysis yield specialized information that may be used to improve product and service development. As a result, businesses and their clients can make better, more well-informed decisions (Tiwari, 2022) [26].

Asiaei and Bontis's (2020) research was noteworthy since it investigated how knowledge management strategies affect business results. Within the four lenses of the balanced scorecard, they developed a comprehensive method for gauging the impact of knowledge-management strategies on business output (BSC) [27]. The results of this study show that KM practices have a significant and positive effect on how well organizations do overall. Hu, Liu, and Wu (2020) investigate the impact of knowledge sharing on team creativity, considering the social network perspective [28]. The researchers reveal that knowledge-sharing networks within teams positively affect the company's creativity, suggesting that when team members actively exchange knowledge and ideas, it stimulates the generation of novel and innovative solutions that impact positive business performance.

Further, Martins et al. (2019) research included several publications demonstrating KM's positive effect on business outcomes [29]. The research by Suša Vugec (2019) on businesses in Slovenia and Croatia demonstrates that knowledge creation, accumulation, organization, and application can improve business performance [30]. The results demonstrated statistically significant beneficial relationships between IT, organizational knowledge, and business outcomes. At the same time, Tajpour et al. (2022) looked at the effect of specific KM dimensions on the performance of 537 businesses in Isfahan [31]. The study results showed that not all knowledge resources are linked in the same way to the effectiveness of an organization.

Knowledge management has, therefore, served as a growth driver for businesses selling coffins and death care services. Organizations can get an edge in the market by innovating

their processes and raising the quality of their products. The availability of knowledge greatly facilitates an organization's ability to create improvement and innovation initiatives. Through knowledge management, a company may solve problems, boost productivity, and keep up with the rest of the competition worldwide.

On the contrary, the study of Zhao et al. (2021) claims that knowledge acquisition does not directly affect performance, and knowledge dissemination does not positively affect performance. Accordingly, there is a need to re-examine the relationship between knowledge management and organizational performance. Knowledge management capabilities (i.e., knowledge acquisition, knowledge conversion, and knowledge application) are rooted in a firm's operation [32].

In addition, the need for knowledge management is the realization that an organization must manage its knowledge. The business survives on this in today's dynamic and competitive marketplace. Survival concerns are not limited to profit firms, as nonprofit public agencies have all realized the value of knowledge. Durst and Zieba (2019) pointed out that organizations will operate optimally with adequate care in managing knowledge [33]. This will result in ineffective and inefficient creation and delivery of products and services. This can lead to customer dissatisfaction, which may influence the organization's failure. Furthermore, globalization today has also provided the need for knowledge management as organizations search for practical tools and methods for acquiring and sharing knowledge over many structural and cultural barriers (Sokoh & Okolie, 2021) [34].

Most significantly, KM should be studied as a process consisting of the following steps: acquisition, storage, distribution, and use of knowledge for better understanding and analysis (Wahjudewanti et al., 2021), aside from recognizing KM as an essential part of improving the performance of organizations, especially in light of the recent economic crisis that has hit several businesses and sectors [35]. Most of the studies were in the context of foreign settings, but only a few have studied KM in the Philippines. Thus, the researcher becomes interested in considering knowledge management as one of the factors being examined in the present study and assessing different actions about the four (4) steps of KM to see if it affects organizational performance among enterprises in the Pampanga casket industry.

Customer Knowledge Management

Customer knowledge management (CKM) also served as a key in organizational performance and sustainability in the industry. CKM is "the method of collecting, exchanging, obtaining, and using all sorts of customer information to produce advantages for both customers and the organization" (Chaithanapat & Rakthin, 2021) [36]. Customer knowledge is regarded as fundamental to the company's knowledge management strategy. It is a part of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) that focuses on the customer's experience. A thorough understanding of client information and data is crucial because it improves the possibility that a company's products and services will be a good fit for those customers (Migdadi, 2021) [37]. Arora et al. (2021) further stressed the importance of Customer Knowledge

Management (CKM) in establishing novel channels for information exchange between businesses and their clients. This competitive edge could be game-changing for businesses and their clients [38]. By recognizing this, funeral homes in Sta. Teresa, Philippines, has developed Information Systems deemed critical in its organizational performance (Bondad et al., 2021) [39]. Its IT infrastructure includes the Production Monitoring System (PMS) in charge of the production line. They also have integrated Biometric Time and Attendance System (BTAS) that determines the attendance and efficiency of their employees attending to the needs of their customers.

Knowledge discovery, classification, and normalization are the three components of CKM, as defined by Misuraca et al. (2020). In essence, these three actions center on a never-ending cycle of meeting the information requirements of both customers and businesses. A more excellent grasp of consumer preferences is necessary in addition to the necessity for customers to comprehend product or service offers. The information-seeking actions of both parties are crucial here. Similar to this is the E-CKM model which consists of four phases: identifying product features and benefits, classifying customers' needs, segmenting the market to convert tacit consumer awareness into a knowledge base, and extracting customers' need patterns. Misuraca et al. (2020) say CKM comes from conversations between customers and employees, while E-CKM comes from online surveys and data mining [40]. Meanwhile, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019) contend that overseeing customer knowledge is only possible with upper management's support [41]. Knowledge leadership favorably affects CKM, as found by Magno and Cassia (2019), who also discovered correlations between knowledge leadership, CKM, projects, and business performance (Chaithanapat et al., 2022) [42].

Customers' beliefs, experiences, and impressions are where "customer knowledge" lies (Ietto et al., 2021; Chaithanapat et al., 2022) [43]. Varadarajan (2020) argues that a company's consumers are a valuable source of information [44]. By engaging in CKM, businesses can learn about their customers' issues, wants, and requirements, which in turn may shed light on the motivations of those customers. According to Rogers and Peppers (2022), a company's capacity to gather, exchange, and harness customer knowledge to the mutual advantage of both the company and its customers highly depends on the quality of the relationships it maintains with its consumers [45]. Furthermore, Huo et al. (2021) clarify that a firm can learn customer-side information and share and develop that knowledge through interaction with customers. Thus, CKM involves the creation of novel systems allowing enterprises and their clients to exchange information and expertise (Huo et al., 2021) [46].

According to research by Lee and Yoo (2019), companies with in-depth customer knowledge have a significant competitive advantage [47]. For a company, knowing its customers is beneficial in several ways: it helps it better understand the markets as a whole, it allows it to better respond to its customer's needs as they evolve, and it helps it foster lasting relationships with its clientele (Cavaliere et al., 2021; Roggeveen et al., 2021; Malik & Ahsan, 2019) [48] [49] [50]. Dezi (2019) found that businesses that use

customer knowledge management (CKM) practices are more likely to develop new ideas, get more money for R&D, and find new market opportunities [51].

On the one hand, the goal of implementing CKM is to influence firm performance favorably (Castagna et al., 2020) [52]. CKM is the next level of knowledge management, which emphasizes treating customers like partners (Migdadi, 2021) [37]. Ultimately, the success of a business depends on its customers, who are now widely acknowledged as the most important stakeholders. CKM is a crucial strategic asset for businesses to reach performance benchmarks and boost innovation (Muukkonen, 2020) [53]. There are three parts to customer knowledge management: knowledge for customers, knowledge about customers, and knowledge from customers. Chaithanapat and Rakthin (2021) say that CKM suits businesses because it helps them reach their goals, gives them an edge over their competitors, and lets them get a more significant piece of the market [36].

Given that today's knowledge and information acquisition will become tomorrow's foundational knowledge, developing knowledge, and benefiting it can be a substantial competitive advantage (Jha & Sahoo, 2021; Masenya, 2022) [54]. Similarly, one significant component of CKM is that it encourages information exchange between customers and businesses. The exchange of information in this way fosters original thought. Companies must adopt an internal system of innovation and sharing to compete in today's market and achieve optimal performance (Chatterjee et al., 2021) [55]. Businesses can only obtain a competitive advantage through constant innovation and carefully managing their accumulated knowledge (Azeem et al., 2021) [56]. Therefore, contemporary businesses have begun implementing CKM concepts to involve consumers in the firm's operations and the organization's policies to use customers' insights and expertise. The importance of CKM to a company's bottom line and its capacity for innovation has grown in recent years.

According to Al Karim et al. (2023), a company's knowledge management strategy should aim to give it an edge over its rivals, while customer relationship management should prioritize maintaining positive connections with the company's existing clientele [57]. Therefore, CKM is the continuous cycle of gathering, sharing, and applying information and knowledge about customers within a business. By elevating the customer to the status of a legitimate and regular stakeholder in the company, CKM helps mitigate problems with product adoption. Companies can get a sustained competitive advantage by learning about their clients through face-to-face interactions. Firm success may depend on the use of CKM.

The current study logically regards CKM as a contributing factor to organizational performance. The casket industry may have believed they could boost their profit during the crisis by improving organizational performance. Nonetheless, it is critical to understand the extent of CKM in the Pampanga casket industry.

Innovative Quality

On the other hand, gaining an edge over the competition requires a commitment to innovation (Woźniak et al., 2019)

[58]. To increase operational reliability, the most crucial component for small and medium-sized businesses is the implementation of innovative solutions (Hewitt & Van, 2020) [59]. Chen et al. (2019) divide innovations into radical and incremental categories; to innovate radically means introducing a solution radically different from the norm and ultimately dominating its market [60]. Incremental innovation, on the other hand, entails tweaking and improving upon established procedures. Innovation is vital for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) to stay competitive and improve performance (Khan et al., 2021) [61].

Additionally, innovation is critical to a company's success (Valdez-Juárez et al., 2021), and the extent to which it can innovate has a significant impact on the quality of its output and its efficiency in running its business (Chen & Chen, 2021) [62] [63]. Even though a company's financial performance is not directly affected by its ability to innovate, it is indirectly affected by its operational performance (Sohl et al., 2020), allowing businesses to enhance their overall performance [64]. Especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), innovation is a critical factor in maintaining competitiveness and enhancing the company's performance (Kumar et al., 2021) [65]. The adoption of innovation as a tactic to boost company output is supported by research (Bărbulescu et al., 2021). Customers seek unique items that cater to their preferences (Barbu et al., 2021) [66] [67]. Innovation is critical in the interaction between knowledge capital and competitive excellence. It looks at how learning moderation affects the relationship between knowledge capital and innovation and knowledge capital and competitive excellence. The research also looks into the influence of innovation on competitiveness and business performance. The analysis is based on a literature survey on the role of innovation, intellectual capital, competitive advantage, and corporate performance.

Accordingly, Han and Bai (2020) assert high-quality human resources (workers and managers), strong motivation and creativity, a greater level of effectiveness and productivity in the manufacturing operation, the ability to produce high-quality goods, effective management structures, a greater level of entrepreneurship, a comprehensive futuristic vision, and technological competence are the core competencies that every company requires to compete in the global marketplace (Chen & Chen, 2021) [68]. The competition in today's market is fierce, and technical advancements are happening at a breakneck pace. Keeping up with the competition requires constant innovation in the company's products (Leiblein et al., 2022; Danso et al., 2019) [69] [70]. Innovation has a long history and many meanings, depending on how competitive the market is and how different companies try to get ahead (Xiong et al., 2021) [71].

Based on the findings of Farida and Satiawan's (2022) research, a company's innovative activities to realize organizational goals are inextricably intertwined with its operational performance, defined as a resource activity that influences the company in realizing its achievements and performance (Peltola, 2022) [72] [73]. As well as KM and CKM, the innovative quality of a company's products and services is being evaluated. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy (2021), businesses nowadays are

forced to adopt a more creative and flexible approach to meeting client needs, which necessitates a more comprehensive view of quality (Holbeche, 2019; Zasa et al., 2020; Saravanan et al., 2022) [74] [75] [76] [77]. Firms need to constantly engage in the innovation process by upgrading to more advanced technology to fulfill the demands of the competitive business market, which in turn leads to management excellence (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020; Azeem et al., 2021; Pundziene et al., 2022) [78] [79] [80]. Organizations can differentiate themselves in the marketplace through innovative technology by releasing many products to meet consumers' needs. This, in turn, increases customer retention and satisfaction (YuSheng & Ibrahim, 2019; Rashid et al., 2020) [81] [82]. Successful firms that effectively orchestrate their resources and integrate them with new technology achieve higher levels of product innovation quality (Deligianni et al., 2019) [83]. Conversely, process innovation raises output by lowering production costs and boosting quality performance (Centobelli et al., 2019; Prasanna et al., 2019; Horváth & Szabó, 2019) [84] [85] [86]. As such, the success of these innovation endeavors depends not only on the creative abilities of the firm's employees but also on the innovations the company has developed and can put to use, such as technological, product, and business strategy innovations (Sanchez-Henriquez, & Pavez, 2021) [87]. The ability to think outside the box is a crucial trait shared by successful businesses. With new ideas, businesses would succeed (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) [88]. This is because of the ever-evolving nature of the business world and consumers' wants, requirements, and expectations.

Chaithanapat et al. (2022) cite that quality is related to uniformity, limited mistake tolerance, and systematic processes, whereas innovation is attributed to inventiveness and thinking outside the box. Innovation quality, as defined by Zheng et al. (2020) [36], is the degree to which recently introduced goods and services live up to the hopes and dreams of consumers. The quality of innovation can be judged on three tiers: at the product or service level, at the process level, and at the company level. At the level of the product or service itself, the quality of the innovation is determined by several metrics, including but not limited to quantity, efficiency, characteristics, trustworthiness, reliability, costs, value to customers, the degree of innovation, complexity, and many more. At the process level, innovation quality reflects how actively a company pursues process innovation across all metrics that contribute to the effectiveness of process improvements and how successfully this quality has been achieved. However, judging the quality of innovations at the business level could be trickier because of the increased complexity, the desire to synthesize soft concerns, and the complexity of recognizing the catalysts. Hence, the concept of "innovative quality" by Zheng et al. (2020) and Ganguly et al. (2019) are adopted in this study: "Innovation quality" is the sum of an organization's innovative performance across all levels [89].

Sustainable Competitiveness

Relatedly, sustainable competitiveness is achieved when organizations value customer satisfaction more than the costs associated with achieving it (Hidayat, 2021) [90]. Further, Doval (2020) believes that a company's performance is its degree of competitiveness, achieved by a level of effectiveness and efficiency that ensures its strong presence

on the market, considering the varied and complicated interplay of various elements [15]. In addition, Shad et al. (2019) described that stakeholders employ efficiency, effectiveness, or social referents to evaluate a company's potential to help them achieve their goals [91]. Nevertheless, Barbosa et al. (2020) noted that business owners should consider some identified areas [92]. These areas have been categorized into three sub-domains of company outcomes constituting organizational performance. Such as 1) financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.); 2) product market performance (sales and market share); and 3) shareholder return (total shareholder return and economic value-added).

A company can do several things to establish sustainable competitiveness. To maintain competitiveness in the marketplace, businesses must have some fundamental capabilities. These competencies refer to a variety of skills that help businesses excel in areas like productivity, quality, innovation, and customer service, all of which, in turn, help them create more value for their customers and differentiate themselves from competitors. A company's core strengths set it apart from the competition and reveal something about its character. Organizational processes, such as gathering and developing various resources and skills, often give rise to core competencies. A company's core competencies are the areas in which it excels relative to its rivals and where it provides customers with a distinct advantage as time goes on. To gain competitiveness in the market and make more money than average, an organization needs to be good at creating value. In this way, Lantto (2022) emphasized that the strengths and weaknesses of the company's finances are laid bare for all to see in the financial statements [93]. Business performance could be assessed by analyzing financial ratios and results. Financial managers and investors perform financial ratio analysis to represent positive or negative trends in a company's performance by comparing the company's financial structure, conditions, and performances to industry norms. Also, they say that ratio analysis can be a valuable tool for tracking and improving performance. Sari (2019) identifies the current ratio (CR), the debt-to-asset ratio (DAR), the debt-to-equity ratio (DER), the return on assets (ROA), the return on equity (ROE), the gross profit margin (GPM), the operational profit margin (PM), and the net profit margin (NPM) as some of these financial ratios.

Conversely, as Farida and Setiawan (2022) noted, a company's competitiveness results from its strategic decisions to capture market possibilities (Friesenbichler & Reinstaller, 2022). Business or competitive strategies are often designed at the division level, focusing on bolstering the division's products' competitive standing within their designated market (Sanchez-Henriquez & Pavez, 2021) [87]. Profit maximization in manufacturing and retailing could be at the heart of the department's business strategy (Agustia, 2020) [94]. For an organization to reach its goals, its business strategies should coordinate the work of many different departments (Abdelbadie & Salama, 2019) [95].

A firm's competitive advantage was conceived using the business model proposed in prior studies. High availability, longevity, and flexibility are indicators of competitive advantage (Correia et al., 2020) [96]. These factors in the

ever-evolving business environment have a significant impact on companies. The ability of a company to maintain a competitive advantage is critical to its performance in a competitive environment (Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Almulhim, 2020) [88]. Consequently, businesses are constantly in intense competition as they seek to meet the ever-increasing expectations of their clientele. Companies need help to adapt to reduced commercial activity. Suppose businesses cannot adjust and adapt their corporate operations to the shifting external environment. Businesses rely increasingly on their knowledge to add customer value (Fampo, 2020) [12].

An organization's competitiveness develops from the value it provides to its customers. One of these three generic methods may provide competitiveness for the organization if it can find a way to differentiate itself from it. One way to comprehend a firm's competitive advantage is to examine how it engages in product and service creation, promotion, distribution, and maintenance (Farhikhteh et al., 2020). Therefore, a competitive advantage is achieved when a business strives to achieve a position to beat competitors [97]

Corporate strategy literature (Hidayat, 2021) identifies the durability of a product's fundamental traits and the excellence of unraveling capabilities over rivals as two of the most important aspects of a sustainable competitive advantage [90]. The benefits of continual competitiveness can be developed by focusing on imitability (how easy it is to copy), durability (how long it can deter competition), and flexibility of matching capital resources that the company owns. A corporation needs to keep performing well and even do better if it wants to keep its competitiveness and its stakeholders' perception of it. Therefore, knowledge-based and competitiveness are related to company success (Hidayat, 2021). Based on this link, Ahmed et al. (2020) say that more innovative management of knowledge and knowledge capital will lead to better business results [98].

If a business does not have a distinct advantage over its rivals, its profits will be no higher than the average for investments in its industry (Khan et al., 2021) [61]. For sustained competitiveness, a firm needs to focus on more than just internal factors like the quality of its products and services (Henauld et al., 2021) [99]. So, this research aims to help the people who make caskets in Pampanga create long-lasting competitiveness that will help their businesses improve overall.

On the other hand, Asuah-Duodu (2019) argues that an organization's structure provides the basis for coordinating employees' efforts [100]. According to the study conducted by Horváth and Szabó (2019), an organization's structure significantly affects its productivity [101]. Because of this, the study's authors advise that businesses work hard to establish a clear organizational structure to accomplish their goals. Alternatively, businesses should focus on increasing their efficiency to obtain competitiveness over the competition. Each business's success depends on its management team's capability to assess its operations and implement changes based on that analysis. Further, the idea of performance management in the organization is defined by Hamid and Shah (2023) as the juxtaposition of a company's aims and objectives with its overall performance in three key areas: its leverage, market sentiment, and

shareholder value [102].

Technically, Doval (2020) highlighted the competitiveness of an organization. Thus its financial performance is primarily determined by its technical and technological propensity, equipment quality, know-how, staff qualification, and productivity level, both now and in the future (capital accumulation, investment, productive capital management). The infrastructure and organizational culture, strategy, management's abilities, employees' dedication, and stakeholders' involvement are all essential external elements that affect an organization's effectiveness. Knowledge management has unquestionably contributed to the accomplishments in performance (Doval, 2020). Kabeyi (2019) connotes that for an organization to succeed, its leaders must develop and implement plans to help it reach its stated goals and objectives [103].

To this end, Saura (2021) stressed the importance of developing and using separate performance indicators for each functional area of a company [104]. As a result, the Key Performance Indicators are not harmonized and may even be at odds with one another. Since business information may be discussed, communicated, and transferred across participants, the authors argue that knowledge management significantly relates to aligning internal and external resources. The process of knowledge sharing was correspondingly reiterated by pointing out that the domain of knowledge gained through inter-organizational relationships can be used as a competitive advantage. Supply Chain Management (SCM) is also essential, according to Doan (2020), because it involves bringing together the company's most critical internal departments, such as purchasing, production, and sales [105].

Fekete (2021) made a similar point, noting that businesses evaluate themselves across a spectrum of key performance indicators to gauge success [106]. Key performance indicators (KPIs) can be broken down into two categories: those that show overall company performance and those that show the efficiency of specific departments or divisions within the company. For a key performance indicator (KPI) to be effective, it must include only information easily understood by all parties involved. To use performance metrics effectively, business owners need to know the organization's goals and who is responsible for reaching them.

However, Farida and Setiawan (2022) suggested that a company's competitiveness results from its strategic decisions to exploit niches in the market [72]. When a company has multiple divisions, each one is responsible for developing its business strategy, also known as a competitive strategy, which focuses on increasing sales and market share for the division's products and services within its niche of the market (Sanchez-Henriquez & Pavez, 2021) [87]. Making more money from producing and selling goods and services could be the heart of the division's business strategy (Agustia et al., 2020). Abdelbadie & Salama (2019) emphasize that business strategies should coordinate the work of different departments to reach organizational goals [95].

Even more, the generic strategy put forth in earlier studies was used to develop the idea of a company's competitive

advantage. Imitability, durability, and ease of matching are indicators of competitive advantage (Correia, 2020) [96]. A company's success in a cutthroat market hinge on its ability to maintain a competitive advantage (Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Almulhim, 2020) [107]. Competitive advantage develops from the value or benefits a company can provide to its customers. The company may gain an edge in the market if it can develop a strategy superior to the other three options. One way to comprehend a firm's competitive advantage is to examine how it engages in product and service creation, promotion, distribution, and maintenance (Farhikhteh et al., 2020). So, a competitive advantage is when a company is actively trying to beat its competitors [97].

An effective business plan can boost productivity by standardizing and streamlining a company's operations (Cerezo-Narváez et al., 2019) [108]. Organizations that adopt a prospector approach put more weight on product development and competitiveness (Yuan et al., 2020). The business invests heavily in R&D for future product development. Businesses with a prospective mindset will always aim to be market leaders or significant innovators. The manager's strategy determines the effectiveness of the organization. Examining its strategic decisions can predict The company's success with some degree of accuracy. The company has chosen a prospector business strategy to achieve success (Yuan et al., 2020) [109].

Synthesis

As a synthesis, several studies on the importance of knowledge management (Fampo, 2020), customer knowledge management (Castagna et al., 2020), and innovative quality (Alrowwad et al., 2020) have been conducted, but all of that literature has limitations. For one, Fampo (2020) has determined the link among the variables being studied. However, the study needs to determine the significant influence of knowledge management on the other factors of organizational processes, such as its stakeholders and employees. On the other hand, Castagna et al. (2020) have shown such value of customer knowledge management on the organizational performance indicated by employees' performance and outcomes [9]. However, such interrelationship is only limited to banking sectors employing empirical evidence. This is similar to the findings of Alrowwad et al. (2020), which centered on the relationship between innovation and the performance of small-medium enterprises based on empirical analysis [8]. On the other hand, these management dimensions have been identified as ways to improve operations and processes to keep customers happy and stay competitive (Chaithanapat et al., 2022) [36].

On the other hand, the casket industry has undergone significant changes in recent years, with a focus on innovative quality and organizational performance. One area that has seen particular attention is knowledge management, which involves collecting, organizing, and disseminating information. By effectively managing knowledge, casket manufacturers can improve their products, streamline operations, and ultimately enhance their bottom line.

One way that casket manufacturers are implementing knowledge management is through technology. Digital platforms allow for the easy sharing of information between

employees, departments, and even different locations. This improves communication and ensures everyone can access the same information, reducing the risk of errors or miscommunications. Additionally, technology can track data and analyze trends, providing valuable insights into customer preferences and market trends.

In addition to knowledge management, casket manufacturers also focus on innovative quality to differentiate themselves in a competitive market. This involves producing high-quality products and incorporating unique features or designs that appeal to customers. For example, some manufacturers offer personalized caskets that reflect the interests or hobbies of the deceased, while others use eco-friendly materials or incorporate technology such as LED lighting.

The casket industry generally pushes organizational performance and lays the groundwork for future growth, emphasizing knowledge management and innovative quality. Companies may remain on top of trends and satisfy changing client expectations by utilizing technology, teamwork, and creativity. Observing how these tendencies change and what innovations take shape as the sector continues to develop was fascinating.

Several scholarly works discuss the value of knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality as drivers of organizational performance. Moreover, this is approached empirically. However, there is a dearth of literature discussing these essential variables within the casket industries in the Philippine context. Hence, the novelty of this paper is addressing such a gap in the literature and contributing to the body of knowledge about the topic of interest in this study.

Conceptual Framework

The research diagram below shows the relationships between the independent and dependent variables of the study. The independent variables comprise of the following: a) the level of knowledge management in terms of acquisition of knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and use of knowledge; b) the degree of customer knowledge management in terms of knowledge about customers and knowledge from customers; and c) the degree of innovative quality in terms of administrative, process and technology. The dependent variable is the organizational performance of the business through its net profit margin and rate of return. This study developed a sustainable competitiveness program to improve organizational performance.

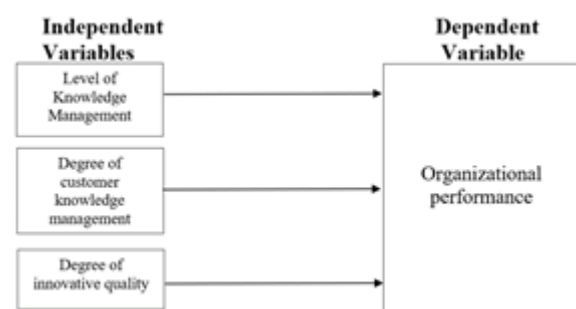


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

Research Problem

This study examined the level of knowledge management, the degree of customer knowledge management, and the degree of innovative quality based on the perspective of business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga. Furthermore, this research discovered if there are influences between the independent variables (e.g., knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality) and the organizational performance among casket industries in Pampanga. As such, the net profit ratio and rate of return were considered a parameter to measure organizational performance. As a result, a sustainable competitiveness program was developed to improve organizational performance.

Specifically, the researcher seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of:
 - 1.1. Acquisition of knowledge;
 - 1.2. Storage of knowledge;
 - 1.3. Distribution of knowledge; and
 - 1.4. Use of knowledge?
2. What is the degree of customer knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of:
 - 2.1. knowledge about customers;
 - 2.2. knowledge from customers;
3. What is the degree of innovative quality does business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of:
 - 3.1. Administrative;
 - 3.2. Process; and,
 - 3.3. Technology?
4. What is the organizational performance of the selected casket businesses in terms of:
 - 4.1 Net profit ratio?
 - 4.2 Rate of return?
5. Does the level of knowledge management exert a significant influence on organizational performance?
6. Does the degree of customer knowledge management exert a significant influence on organizational performance?
7. Does the degree of innovative quality exert a significant influence on organizational performance?
8. What are the experiences and initiatives of the casket business owners in terms of:
 - 8.1 Knowledge management;
 - 8.2. Customer knowledge management; and
 - 8.3 Innovative quality?
9. Based on the findings, what sustainable competitiveness program could be proposed to improve the organizational performance of selected casket industries in Pampanga in terms of:
 - 9.1 Knowledge management;

- 9.2 Customer knowledge management; and,
- 9.3 Innovative quality?

Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: "The level of knowledge management does not significantly exert influence on organizational performance."

Ho: "The degree of customer knowledge management does not significantly exert influence on organizational performance."

Ho: "The degree of innovative quality does not significantly exert influence on organizational performance."

3. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed method research design employing a convergent parallel design, a mixed method in triangulation design. A convergent parallel design involves conducting both quantitative and qualitative research at the same time, weighing the methods equally, analyzing the two components separately, and interpreting the results jointly (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) [110]. This design combines quantitative and qualitative research design to strengthen the researcher's findings and conclusions regarding the perspective of casket business owners on knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality. Additionally, this convergence mixed-method study gathers and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data separately on the same event and then combines the findings through comparison and contrast during interpretation. Because the researcher relied on the quality of the data gathered in developing a sustainable competitiveness program for casket business owners in Pampanga, the researcher of this study validated and confirmed the quantitative results with qualitative findings on perspectives on owners on knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality to improve organizational performance.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study are business owners of casket businesses in Pampanga. The needed sample is proportionally allocated among the selected casket-maker companies. For the quantitative part, the sample population is forty-nine (49) business owners who have the privileged to answer the quantitative survey. This was generated using the G*power software. G*Power analysis to get the sample size and the information required for the study. This number was obtained using the G*power software, a recognized freeware by international journals in generating sample sizes valid for generalization (Kang, 2021; Verma & Verma, 2020) [111] [112]. G*power is a freeware designed to produce a sample size valid for correlation and regression tests (Faul et al., 2009) [113]. It is used in various disciplines, such as social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences (Faul et al., 2007) [114].

Inclusion criteria include the following:

- Must be in the casket business industry for at least five years;
- Must have been operating with a constantly increasing revenue for the past five years;
- Must have been employing knowledge management in its operation; and,
- It must have incorporated innovation in its operation within the past five years.

On the other hand, businesses located outside Pampanga and business owners engaged in other business natures are excluded from the study.

For the qualitative part, ten (10) casket business owners were selected to answer the semi-structured interview questions. For confidentiality purposes, the researcher indicated codes instead of the business owners' names in the study.

Instruments of the Study

Quantitative Instrument. The researcher used a structured survey questionnaire in this study. The researcher adapted from Gonzales et al. (2017) to measure knowledge management levels [115]. On the other hand, Taherparvar et al. (2014) were used as a reference in measuring the degree of customer knowledge [116]. Modification to this instrument was the change in the word "bank" to "company" to fit the locale of this study. In measuring the degree of innovative quality, the researcher has adopted the items of Fampo (2014) and added one (1) item under process ("The organization develops new products and services") and another item under technology ("The organization uses new technology and equipment.") [12]. Such modifications were subjected to expert validation to ensure correctness and validity. The questionnaires were divided into five parts.

The first part comprised the informed consent, statement of confidentiality, and demographic profile such as no. of employees, capitalization, and years of operation. The second part consisted of statements about the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of acquisition of knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and use of knowledge. The third part encompassed statements related to the degree of customer knowledge management concerning knowledge about customers and knowledge from customers. The fourth part included questions about the degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of administrative, process, and technology. The last part included the figures from the business's financial statements needed for organizational performance. The questionnaire used a Likert Scale in which the participants marked the answers based on their perceptions and likelihood. The Likert scale assigned numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 corresponding to the participant's responses.

Reliability.

The pilot test was done on 45 respondents, which had been purposely selected, resulting in a reliability index of 0.823 for 45 items that indicated a high acceptable level of reliability. Furthermore, the pilot test was done on respondents other than the sample population.

Table 1
Results of the Reliability Test

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
.823	.804	45

Reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of the research instrument. Reliability refers to the measurement of internal consistency. After analyzing the data scale, the reliability test is determined using the SPSS tool. On the other hand, validity indicates the accuracy of the method being measured. A higher reliability result signifies that the measurement is valid with expert confirmation.

Validity.

Accordingly, "content validity" refers to how well an evaluation or measuring device taps into some aspects of a particular concept (Clause, 2021) [117]. Most of the time, it is decided by looking at the knowledge of those already familiar with the topic in question. A validation test was conducted by experts from both the academe and corporate fields. The researcher provided guide questions for validation and solicited their valid and knowledgeable opinions on the survey instrument's content. Before it was used in the actual survey, the questionnaire was updated with the changes.

Qualitative Instrument. Interviews were conducted to meet the purpose of this study as such semi-structured interview questionnaire was crafted to capture the life story/narratives of the participants concerning operating a casket business. The researcher has crafted semi-structured guide questions to facilitate the interview sessions. This is composed of three sections exploring concerns about the knowledge management of owners (acquisition of knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and use of knowledge), customer knowledge management (knowledge about customers and knowledge from customers), and innovative quality (administrative, process, and technology). The instrument has undergone expert validation to ensure correctness and validity. The interview items were pretested to three (3) casket business owners who met the criteria for participants in the interview. Personal emotions, sentiments, self-reflections, insights acquired, and impressions of the interview session were recorded in a journal. The notebook assisted the researcher in recalling memories of encounters with participants. In the journal, the researcher also briefly described the interview, including how emotionally charged, informative, uninteresting, or entertaining the meeting was for the researcher. The interview recording was utilized with the approval and cooperation of the participants. The audio-recorded session benefited the researcher in observing the participants' middle managers' struggle to respond to the question/s asked and how the participants got receptive to discussing experiences as business owners.

Data Gathering Procedure

Quantitative Procedures. The researcher sought approval to conduct the study with the forty-nine (49) selected participants. Once approved, the survey proceeded, and the approved letter was attached to the paper. Subsequently, data gathering and collecting proceeded physically, wherein the researcher distributed the survey questionnaire face-to-face. To determine the company's net profit ratio and rate of

return, the researcher asked permission to collect the casket business owners' financial statements for 2020-2022 as complex data for the study. Relevant figures, such as net profit or net income and net sales from the income statement, were extracted to calculate the net profit ratio. This ratio was determined by dividing the net profit by the revenue and multiplying it by 100. Return on Equity (ROE) was used to calculate the rate of return. This calculation involves dividing the net income by the average owner's equity and multiplying it by 100. These ratios were considered to measure organizational performance.

Qualitative Procedures. The researcher sought approval to conduct the study with the ten (10) selected participants. Once approved, the survey would proceed, and the approved letter was attached to the paper. Subsequently, data gathering and collecting proceeded physically, wherein the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview. When the target participants approve the request letter, they sign the consent form, which includes permission to record the interview. Even if the participants declined to record the interview, the researcher considered them. If the participants agreed to the terms of the consent form, the researcher requested that the interview session be scheduled based on the participants' availability. Before the interview, the researcher began with a light talk in which he shared his own stories as a son-in-law of a former casket business owner. When the researcher felt that there was rapport and openness, the semi-structured interview started.

Data Processing and Statistical Treatment

Quantitative Data. In determining the responses to treat quantitative data, the Likert Scale was used. A four-point scale was applied, each point corresponding to the statement to a Likert element. At every point, there is an equivalent scale and interpretation that is shown below:

Scale and interpretation on the level of knowledge management of owners:

Rating Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Very high level	Highly Perceived
3	2.50-3.49	High level	Moderately Perceived
2	1.50-2.49	Low level	Somewhat Perceived
1	1.00-1.49	Very low-level	Less Perceived

Scale and interpretation of the degree of customer knowledge management of owners:

Rating Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Very high degree	Highly Perceived
3	2.50-3.49	High degree	Moderately Perceived
2	1.50-2.49	Low degree	Somewhat Perceived
1	1.00-1.49	Very low degree	Less Perceived

Scale and interpretation of the degree of innovative quality:

Rating Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Very high degree	Highly Performed
3	2.50-3.49	High degree	Moderately Performed
2	1.50-2.49	Low degree	Somewhat Performed
1	1.00-1.49	Very low degree	Less Performed

Statistical Formulas Used

Quantitative Data. The data was tabulated and processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze and interpret the data; the following statistical measures were utilized.

1. Weighted mean was used for questions number 1, 2, and 3. The weighted mean expressed the level of knowledge management, the degree of customer knowledge management, and the degree of innovative quality. For question number 4, the mean expresses the average of all net profit ratios and rate of return for 2020-2022.
2. Regression Analysis. For questions number 5, 6, and 7, a regression analysis was utilized to determine if there is a significant influence between the independent variables, namely the level of knowledge management, the degree of customer knowledge management, and the degree of innovative quality to the dependent variable, organizational performance.

Qualitative Data. In analyzing the data collected, the following were the steps followed by the researcher, which were based on the procedure developed by Amedeo Giorgi in the 1970s for analyzing the processes, meanings, and structures of phenomena (Wertz, 2011) [118]:

1. Open Reading (Transcriptions). The researcher started on a clean slate and absorbed, read, and recalled the narrations of the experiences of the participants as they were, with no judgment, no selectivity, and with openness.
2. Meaning Units/Coding (Codes). Data from the interviews were broken down into discrete units of meaning that can be useful in answering the research questions and considered relevant for analyzing answers. These were then labeled as codes for concept generation, and data were constantly compared, differentiated, or combined to develop a sensible and fruitful analysis.
3. Psychological Reflection (Similar Concepts). The meaning units/codes were reviewed and checked for their interrelatedness, and these were linked to the research questions at hand. The researcher answered these questions regarding the meaning unit and explained what the meaning units revealed about the individual phenomenon to generalize patterns.
4. Structural understanding and description (Emerging Themes). This step integrated all insights from the analysis produced from the reflections on the meaning units. The fourth and final step presented the themes in an organized, meaningful description of the phenomena.

3.1 Results and Discussion

Quantitative Phase

I. Level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga

Acquisition of Knowledge. Doval (2020) explained that creating new knowledge entails transforming from tacit to explicit knowledge. The knowledge that can be stated verbally, disseminated in writing, and archived in databases is part of the explicit dimension. The individual's knowledge,

beliefs, and emotions constitute the tacit one. For instance, these may concern situationally relevant technical knowledge and abilities (Solberg et al., 2020) [16]. Whether from within the organization or external market constraints, novel ideas and pressing demands are familiar sources of new information (Chesbrough, 2019) [17].

Table 2 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Acquisition of Knowledge. This implies that most of the business owners acknowledge a moderate perception towards the methods of acquisition the knowledge related to the casket business, such as training, implementation of trial-and-error, development of learning culture, and gaining patents on the principal basis of consumer knowledge.

Overall, statements under the variable, Acquisition of Knowledge obtained a weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Perceived. The results imply that business owners involved in this study moderately perceive most of the mentioned methods of acquisition of knowledge related to the casket business industry. The acquired knowledge regarding the ways of business reflects on how well they maintain the competitiveness of their business. In line with this, Snihur and Zott (2020) argued that businesses could learn from the outside world by bringing in former employees from rival companies or joining industrial networks that put them in touch with the cutting-edge expertise of other businesses [18].

Table 2

Level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Acquisition of Knowledge

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
Training of individuals	3.45	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Encouraging the trial-and-error process	3.57	Very High Level	Highly Perceived
Development of a culture aimed at learning new and additional information	3.47	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Hiring and partnerships with other firms	2.84	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Hiring new employees representing new knowledge	3.20	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Acquisition of patents of the primary basis of consumer knowledge	3.45	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Overall	3.33	High Level	Moderately Perceived

Storage of Knowledge. Some scholars, including Doval (2020), argue that creating new knowledge entails transforming from tacit to explicit knowledge. The

knowledge that can be stated verbally, disseminated in writing, and archived in databases is part of the explicit dimension. The individual's knowledge, beliefs, and emotions constitute the tacit one. For instance, these may concern situationally relevant technical knowledge and abilities (Solberg et al., 2020) [16].

Table 3 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Storage of Knowledge. Only the statement 'identification and registration of primary sources of knowledge best practices' (WM = 3.51) obtained a verbal interpretation of Highly Perceived. This implies that most of the business owners acknowledge a moderate level of perception towards various approaches to storing the knowledge related to the casket business, such as identification of primary sources of information, registration of learned information, incorporation of learned information into the procedures, and established ways in the organization, as well as the development of organizational culture.

Overall, statements under the variable, Storage of Knowledge, obtained a weighted mean of 3.39 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Perceived. The results imply that business owners in this study substantially acknowledge most of the mentioned approaches to storing knowledge related to the casket business industry. Information is continually being gathered, analyzed, and shared within businesses to aid decision-making (Shabir & Gardezi, 2020) [24]. As a result of incorporating these learnings and making swifter decisions, businesses can outmaneuver rivals and deliver higher-quality services despite intense competition. Knowledge resource management and analysis yield specialized information that may be used to improve product and service development. As a result, businesses and their clients can make better, more well-informed decisions (Tiwari, 2022) [26].

Table 3

Level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Storage of Knowledge.

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
Identification and registration of primary sources of knowledge and best practices	3.51	Very High Level	Highly Perceived
Registration of learned lessons on knowledge management	3.49	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Incorporation of knowledge acquired in procedures and rules of the organization	3.43	High Level	Moderately Perceived

Retention of individuals (tacit knowledge repository)	3.43	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Development of an organizational culture that represents the values and beliefs of the company	3.33	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Use of IT as a tool for knowledge retention and training of organizational memory	3.16	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Overall	3.39	High Level	Moderately Perceived

Distribution of Knowledge. Shared information aids the decision-making process within the organization (Shabir & Gardezi, 2020). This explicit knowledge can be stated verbally or disseminated in writing (Solberg et al., 2020).

Table 4 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Distribution of Knowledge. Only the statement 'use IT as a tool for the distribution of organizational knowledge' (WM = 3.53) obtained a verbal interpretation of Highly Perceived. The results imply that most of the business owners acknowledge a moderate perception towards various ways of distributing knowledge related to the casket business, such as disclosure of important information to employees with the purpose of knowledge basis retention, development of communities of practice, and usage of IT as an instrument in distributing such knowledge.

Overall, statements under the variable, Distribution of Knowledge, obtained a weighted mean of 3.34 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Perceived. This finding aligns with the previous study, which reveals that knowledge-sharing networks within teams positively affect the company's creativity. It suggests that team members actively exchange knowledge and ideas and stimulate the generation of novel and innovative solutions that impact positive business performance. (Hu, Liu, and Wu, 2020) [28]. With the help of KM, businesses may foster an environment where workers are comfortable sharing and drawing on one another's expertise and experience. A knowledge network is established as workers improve at imparting and accepting information to further their education.

Table 4

Level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Distribution of Knowledge.

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
Disclosure to employees of the retained knowledge basis	3.31	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Development of work in groups	3.12	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Development of communities of practice - exchange of specialized knowledge	3.41	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Use IT as a tool for the distribution of organizational knowledge	3.53	Very High Level	Highly Perceived
Overall	3.34	High Level	Moderately Perceived

Use of Knowledge. Knowledge management (KM) may help a business in several ways, as Alexandru et al. (2020) outlined [21]. These include the improved speed with which decisions are made, a distinct advantage in the marketplace, and fresh ideas. It was emphasized that KM aids in increasing an organization's efficiency by shortening decision-making times and improving quality (Rahimnia & Movali, 2021) [22]. Similar to how KM technologies allow more time to be spent on knowledge development and dissemination, they also reduce the time spent on knowledge gathering. KM also helps businesses get a competitive edge by using their knowledge assets innovatively (Dahiya et al., 2022) [23]. Information is continually being gathered, analyzed, and shared within businesses to aid decision-making (Shabir & Gardezi, 2020) [24].

Table 5 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Distribution of Knowledge. The results imply that most of the business owners acknowledge a moderate perception towards various usage and application of acquired knowledge related to the casket business, such as building problem-solving teams, changes in the organization's routine and procedures, and implementation of procedures and instructions that includes appropriate practices and learned lessons.

Overall, statements under the variable, Use of Knowledge, obtained a weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Perceived. As a result of incorporating these learnings and making swifter decisions, businesses can outmaneuver rivals and deliver higher-quality services despite intense competition. Another benefit of KM is that it encourages creativity within the company. Knowledge resource management and analysis yield specialized information that may be used to improve product and service development. As a result, businesses and their clients can make better, more well-informed decisions (Tiwari, 2022) [26].

Table 5

Level of knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of the Use of Knowledge

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Creation of problem-solving teams	3.37	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Development of activities for improving products and processes	3.04	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Changes in routines and procedures of the organization	3.41	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Use of procedures and instructions that incorporate best practices and learned lessons	3.49	High Level	Moderately Perceived
Overall	3.33	High Level	Moderately Perceived

II. Degree of customer knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga

Knowledge about Customers. According to research by Lee and Yoo (2019), companies with in-depth customer knowledge have a significant competitive advantage [47]. For a company, knowing its customers is beneficial in several ways: it helps it better understand the markets as a whole, it allows it to better respond to its customer's needs as they evolve, and it helps it foster lasting relationships with its clientele (Cavaliere et al., 2021; Roggeveen et al., 2021; Malik & Ahsan, 2019) [48].

Table 6 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the degree of customer knowledge management among the business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Knowledge about Customers. The results imply that most business owners acknowledge a moderate perception of knowledge about their customers, including their background, customer referral, requirements and prerequisites, demands and requests, problems, and credit and validity.

Overall, statements under the variable Knowledge about Customers obtained a weighted mean of 3.46 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Perceived. Huo et al. (2021) clarify that a firm can learn customer-side information and share and develop that knowledge through customer interaction. Thus, CKM involves the creation of novel systems allowing enterprises and their clients to exchange information and expertise (Huo et al., 2021) [46].

Table 6

Degree of customer knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Knowledge about Customers

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
Our company has been informed about the customer's background	3.47	High Degree	Moderately Perceived
Our company has been informed about the number of customer referrals	3.37	High Degree	Moderately Perceived
Our company has been informed about the customer's requirements and prerequisites	3.51	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Our company has been informed about customers' demands and requests	3.31	High Degree	Moderately Perceived
Our company has been informed about the customer's problems	3.57	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Our company has been informed about the customer's credit and validity	3.55	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Overall	3.46	High Level	Moderately Perceived

Knowledge from Customers. One significant component of CKM is that it encourages information exchange between customers and businesses. The exchange of information in this way fosters original thought. Companies must adopt an internal system of innovation and sharing to compete in today's market and achieve optimal performance (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Businesses can only obtain a competitive advantage through constant innovation and carefully managing their accumulated knowledge (Azeem et al., 2021) [56]. Therefore, contemporary businesses have begun implementing CKM concepts to involve consumers in the firm's operations and the organization's policies to use customers' insights and expertise.

Table 7 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the degree of customer knowledge management among the business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Knowledge from Customers. The results imply that most of the business owners acknowledge a very high degree of perception of knowledge they garner from their customers, which includes customer's evaluation of the current quality of service, evaluation of the competitor's quality of service, information about required

services, as well as the impact of this gathered information from consumers. Overall, statements under the variable Knowledge from Customers obtained a weighted mean of 3.64 and a verbal interpretation of Highly Perceived. This finding aligns with the previous research indicating that possessing a comprehensive understanding of customer information and data is advantageous for businesses, as it increases the likelihood of aligning a company's products and services effectively with the needs of those customers. (Migdadi, 2021). Therefore, CKM is the continuous cycle of gathering, sharing, and applying information and knowledge about customers within a business [37]. By elevating the customer to the status of a legitimate and regular stakeholder in the company, CKM helps mitigate problems with product adoption. Companies can get a sustained competitive advantage by learning about their clients through face-to-face interactions.

Table 7

Degree of customer knowledge management among business owners of the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Knowledge from Customers

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
Our company asks customers about current service quality	3.43	High Degree	Moderately Perceived
Our company asks customers about competitors' service quality	3.53	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Our company asks customers about their required services	3.80	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Gaining customers' ideas affects the development of novel and innovative services for our company	3.82	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived
Overall	3.64	Very High Degree	Highly Perceived

III. Degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga

Administrative. The competition in today's market is fierce, and technical advancements are happening at a breakneck pace. Keeping up with the competition requires constant innovation in the company's products (Leiblein et al., 2022; Danso et al., 2019) [73]. Innovation has a long history and many meanings, depending on how competitive the market is and how different companies try to get ahead (Xiong et al., 2021) [71].

Table 8 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Administrative. The results imply that most business owners have moderate performance regarding innovative quality focusing on the administrative aspects, including generating novel ideas and solving their consumers' problems.

Overall, statements under the variable, Administrative obtained a weighted mean of 3.26 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Performed. This finding aligns with the previous study, which reveals that successful businesses possess the vital attribute of engaging in innovative thinking. With novel ideas, businesses would inevitably succeed (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) [88]. Han and Bai (2020) also identified key competencies for global competitiveness, including high-quality human resources, motivation and creativity, enhanced manufacturing effectiveness, high-quality goods production, effective management structures, entrepreneurial mindset, futuristic vision, and technological competence [68].

Table 8

Degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of Administrative.

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
The organization has generated novel ideas	3.22	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization's ability to solve customers' problems	3.30	High Degree	Moderately Performed
Overall	3.26	High Degree	Moderately Performed

Process. Innovation quality reflects how actively a company pursues process innovation across all metrics that contribute to the effectiveness of process improvements and how successfully this quality has been achieved. However, judging the quality of innovations at the business level could be trickier because of the increased complexity, the desire to synthesize soft concerns, and the complexity of recognizing the catalysts.

Table 9 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of process. The results imply that most of the business owners have moderate performance regarding innovative quality focusing on the business processes, which includes the generation of novel ideas and the ability to solve their consumers' problems.

Overall, statements under the variable process obtained a weighted mean of 3.30 and a verbal interpretation of Moderately Performed. Organizations can differentiate themselves in the marketplace through innovative technology by releasing many products to meet consumers' needs. This, in turn, increases customer retention and satisfaction (YuSheng & Ibrahim, 2019; Rashid et al., 2020) [81] [82]. Based on the findings of Farida and Satiawan's (2022) research, a company's innovative activities to realize organizational goals are inextricably intertwined with its operational performance, defined as a resource activity that influences the company in realizing its achievements and performance. As well as KM and CKM, the innovative quality of the company's products and services is being evaluated [72].

Table 9

Degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of process.

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
The organization has a clear and specific process of innovation development	3.35	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The service process approach changes at a great speed in comparison with competitors	3.24	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The nature of the delivery process in the company is always ahead compared with that of competitors	3.35	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization encourages the use of process innovation to understand the information of customers, suppliers, and competitors	3.20	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization continues to import new ways of management and knowledge to keep its flexibility.	3.41	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization launches new products and services	3.33	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization develops new products and services	3.24	High Degree	Moderately Performed
Overall	3.30	High Degree	Moderately Performed

Technology. Firms need to constantly engage in the innovation process by upgrading to more advanced technology to fulfill the demands of the competitive business market, which in turn leads to management excellence (Gil-Gomez et al., 2020; Azeem et al., 2021; Pundziene et al., 2022) [78] [56] [80].

Table 10 shows the weighted mean, description, and equivalent verbal interpretation of each statement that measures the degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of technology. The results imply that most of the business owners have moderate performance regarding innovative quality focusing on the business processes, which includes the generation of novel ideas and the ability to solve their consumers' problems.

Overall, statements under the variable technology obtained a weighted mean of 3.22 and a verbal interpretation of Highly Performed. Regarding technology, it is beneficial for

business owners to prioritize utilizing innovative technology and equipment. This finding aligns with the previous study, which reveals that successful firms that effectively orchestrate their resources and integrate them with new technology achieve higher levels of product innovation quality (Deligianni et al., 2019) [83].

Table 10

Degree of innovative quality business owners perform in the casket industry in Pampanga in terms of technology.

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Verbal Interpretation</i>
There is a rapid change in technology in the organization	3.29	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The changes in technology have provided huge opportunities for the organization	3.18	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The technological breakthroughs in the organization have made a big change in the processing of information	3.14	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization can offer fast service to customers because of technological innovation	3.33	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The company has improved its internal communication efficiency because of innovation	3.27	High Degree	Moderately Performed
The organization uses new technology and equipment	3.08	High Degree	Moderately Performed
Overall	3.22	High Degree	Moderately Performed

IV. Organizational performance of the casket businesses in Pampanga

Tables 11 and 12 present the mean, highest value, and lowest value of hard data on net profit ratio and rate of return from the year 2020 to the year 2022. Relevant figures, such as net profit or net income and net sales from the income statement, were extracted to calculate the net profit ratio. This ratio was determined by dividing the net profit by the revenue and multiplying it by 100. Return on Equity (ROE) was used to calculate the rate of return. This calculation involves dividing the net income by the average owner's equity and

multiplying it by 100. The figures and the hard data from the respondents were collected through their financial statements. These are the parameters that measure the organizational performance of the casket businesses.

Table 11

Net profit ratio of the selected casket businesses

Net Profit Ratio	Mean	Highest Value	Lowest Value
2020	23.25%	49.94%	3.00%
2021	27.97%	47.67%	5.63%
2022	34.38%	56.65%	7.35%
	28.53%	56.65%	3.00%

Table 12

Rate of return of the selected casket businesses

Rate of Return	Mean	Highest Value	Lowest Value
2020	32.87%	83.33%	5.25%
2021	36.02%	80.79%	7.96%
2022	37.46%	88.20%	10.13%
	35.45%	88.20%	5.25%

V. Regression Analysis: Level of Knowledge Management on Organizational Performance

This section explores the result of the regression analysis between the independent variable, level of knowledge management, and the dependent variable, organizational performance. The results showed that the paired variables obtained an F-value of 1.113 and a p-value of 0.390, allowing the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This implies that the knowledge management level does not significantly influence organizational performance.

The findings are supported by the results of the study conducted by Zhao et al. (2021), which claimed that knowledge acquisition does not directly affect performance, and knowledge dissemination does not positively affect performance [32].

Table 13

Regression Analysis of Level of Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance.

Regression Analysis	df	F	p-value	Decision
Level of Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance	20	1.113	0.390	Fails to Reject Null Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Predictors: (Constant), Acquisition of knowledge, Storage of knowledge, Distribution of knowledge, Use of Knowledge

VI. Regression Analysis: Degree of Customer Knowledge on Organizational Performance

This section explores the result of the regression analysis between the independent variable, the degree of customer knowledge, and the dependent variable, the organizational performance. The results showed that the paired variables obtained an F-value of 1.676 and a p-value of 0.123, allowing the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This implies that the degree of customer knowledge does not significantly

exert an influence on organizational performance. In contrast, according to research by Lee and Yoo (2019), companies with in-depth knowledge of their customers have a significant competitive advantage [47]. For a company, knowing its customers is beneficial in several ways: it helps it better understand the markets as a whole, it allows it to better respond to its customer's needs as they evolve, and it helps it foster lasting relationships with its clientele (Cavaliere et al., 2021; Roggeveen et al., 2021; Malik & Ahsan, 2019). Aside from this, Dezi (2019) found that businesses that use customer knowledge management (CKM) practices are more likely to come up with new ideas, get more money for R&D, and find new market opportunities [51].

Table 14

Regression Analysis of Degree of Customer Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance

Regression Analysis	df	F	p-value	Decision
Degree in Customer Knowledge Management and Organizational Performance	10	1.676	0.123	Fails to Reject Null Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Predictors: (Constant), knowledge about customers, knowledge from customers

VII. Regression Analysis: Degree of Innovative Quality on Organizational Performance

This section explores the result of the regression analysis between the independent variable, the degree of innovative quality, and the dependent variable, organizational performance. The results showed that the paired variables obtained an F-value of 1.497 and a p-value of 0.163, allowing the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This implies that the degree of innovative quality does not significantly exert an influence on organizational performance. In contrast, a study conducted by Chen & Chen (2021) explained that the extent to which it can innovate significantly impacts the quality of its output and its efficiency in running its business [63]. Especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), innovation is a critical factor in maintaining competitiveness and enhancing the company's performance (Kumar et al., 2021) [65].

Table 15

Regression Analysis of Degree of Innovative Quality and Organizational Performance

Regression Analysis	df	F	p-value	Decision
Degree of Innovative Quality and Organizational Performance	15	1.497	0.163	Fails to Reject Null Hypothesis

Dependent Variable: Organization Performance

Predictors: (Constant), administrative, process, technology

VIII. Qualitative Phase

In order to conduct a mixed method QUAN QUAL analysis, it is necessary to identify a number of people who share characteristics in the qualitative phase. With respect to the

qualitative phase of the study, the researcher randomly chose ten (10) individuals as key informants, owners of casket businesses situated in Pampanga. The interview questions are constructed based on three main variables as Knowledge Management, Customer Knowledge, and Innovative Quality. Each of these variables is tackled through a single main question, including a follow-up question and a probing question, to ensure that the responses of the key informants supported the research questions adequately. The interview transcripts were analyzed and further interpreted under this section to present the essential details of the interview with respect to the research questions it intends to support.

Knowledge Management

To understand the experiences and initiatives of the business owners in terms of knowledge management, the researcher asked questions that encompass the acquisition of knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and use of knowledge to the ten chosen participants. After a systematic evaluation of the narrations about their experiences and initiatives, seven categories emerged: unlocking knowledge from experts, customers' feedback, owners' fuel, journals & manuals as a reference, access to cloud storage, building skills, working in teams, motivating to circulate knowledge, and optimizing operational processes.

Unlocking Knowledge from Experts. The casket business owners obtained different strategies and channels to equip themselves with knowledge relevant to their line of industry. Most of them established strong personal and professional connections with experts, experienced advisors, and mentors that taught them knowledge on the various processes involved in the casket business industry. To substantiate these findings were the following narrations from the participants:

"When I started this casket manufacturing business, I believed that the most important sources of new knowledge would come from those with experience. Asking these people for valuable insights and best practices in the casket manufacturing industry helped me to acquire new knowledge. In my case, I asked the more knowledgeable business owners about the process and all-important things about the business." -CBO1

"In the initial stages of this casket manufacturing business, I recognized that networking with industry professionals was crucial. Engaging with experts, suppliers, and potential customers allowed me to gain valuable knowledge about market demands, customer preferences, and industry benchmarks." - CBO2

"Collaborating with industry organizations proved to be an important source of knowledge. Active participation in such groups, seminars, and discussions allowed us to tap into collective wisdom, gain access to industry reports, and stay updated with the latest regulatory developments." -CBO4

"In my experience, building strategic partnerships and alliances with suppliers and distributors allowed me to gain valuable insights into the supply chain dynamics, distribution channels, and customer preferences. This

collaborative approach enhanced our knowledge base and created mutually beneficial business opportunities." - CBO8

Customers' Feedback, Owners' Fuel. Recognizing customers' feedback allowed the participants to understand what their customers were looking for, what they appreciated, and what could be improved. This is also a learning opportunity for them. One of the respondents expressed that:

"One of the key sources of new knowledge for our casket manufacturing business is customer feedback. By actively listening to our customers, conducting surveys, and analyzing their preferences, we can gain insights that help us improve our products and meet their evolving needs." - CBO3

Journals & Manuals as Reference. Printed materials such as journals and manuals are valuable references for employees as they contain standardized operating procedures, guidelines, and protocols in casket making. Below are the responses describing this point:

"We prioritize knowledge sharing through regular team meetings and encourage open communication channels. Additionally, we have implemented knowledge stored in the part of my office, where employees can access relevant guidelines and best practices that are written in a book-like record." – CBO1

"I wrote in a small journal all the essential points in the casket manufacturing processes that I acquired from my parents and previous employers. This journal is still present and available to my employees in my office." – CBO5

"My manuals contain crucial protocols that are readily accessible to my employees in the shop, they just visit my office, and they can review our former designs." – CBO7

"To ensure knowledge accessibility, we have implemented a structured documentation process where employees are encouraged to create and update user-friendly manuals, standard operating procedures, and knowledge articles." – CBO8, CBO9

Access to Cloud Storage. All participants' employees have access to files and documents that can enhance productivity and efficiency in the workplace. Some of the employees of one of the participants have used cloud storage to work on a project. The following statements affirmed this information:

"We utilize the google drive collaboration tool that allows employees to store and access information from anywhere, anytime. I also encourage the creation of user-friendly guides and manuals to provide clear instructions and ensure the knowledge is readily available to our team." – CBO3

"Any of my employees can access archives and manufacturing documents through online files. I could still remember that my workers before had utilized the cloud

storage to collaboratively work for the design of a casket."
– CBO10

Build Skills, Work in Teams. The participants employed certain strategies with their employees to promote collaboration of ideas and skills. The narrations revealed that working in teams strengthens the acquisition of knowledge efficiently. These statements supported these findings:

"We have established a mentorship program within our organization where experienced employees can guide and share knowledge with new hires. This ensures the transfer of knowledge efficiently and fosters a collaborative and learning-oriented environment." – CBO6

"I implement job rotation that employees learn new things that makes them collaborate and help each other by sharing their skills with other stations." – CBO8

Motivate to Circulate Knowledge. Participants seemed to encourage their employees for them to share their best practices and expertise in making caskets by recognizing their achievements, appreciating their efforts, and acknowledging their contributions. The responses expressed below are the motivational practices utilized by the participants:

"I recognize and celebrate both successes and failures as opportunities for learning and growth in my business. I consistently encourage my employees to share their best practices and experiences, highlighting the valuable insights of accepting mistakes and errors that can benefit them in the long run." – CBO5

"I have recognized and rewarded my employees for sharing their knowledge. Employees are acknowledged and appreciated for their contributions to the organization's collective knowledge, which further motivates them to share their expertise." – CBO7

"I host regular lunch-and-learn sessions where employees can gather over a meal and discuss specific topics of interest. This informal setting encourages open conversation and knowledge sharing in a relaxed atmosphere." – CBO9

Optimizing Operational Processes. Participants employed evaluation and performance reviews of their operational processes. Moreover, they believed that by evaluating the effectiveness of the operations, the strengths and weaknesses of the operations could be identified and can be utilized as a basis to implement improvements, as what is explained in the following statements:

"We utilize knowledge to drive decision-making and improve operational processes by regularly analyzing all information related to our business operations. This includes quality control, inventory, workflow, and maintenance of our business." – CBO1

"We conduct regular performance reviews and evaluations of our operational processes. By assessing the outcomes and results, we identify strengths and

weaknesses and use that knowledge to implement improvements." – CBO3

Customer Knowledge Management

To gain insight into business owners' customer knowledge management efforts and experiences, the researcher posed a series of questions that covered the knowledge about customers and knowledge from customers to the ten chosen participants. After analyzing the transcripts, three themes emerged: hearing from digital feedback, understanding client demands, and embracing feedback for product perfection.

Hearing from Digital Feedback. Most participants use a variety of online platforms to elicit customer feedback to identify their needs, expectations, and satisfactions. They believed customer feedback could help them make informed decisions and improve their casket products. These insights were apparent in the following responses:

"We actively seek customer input by conducting regular surveys and feedback forms. This allows us to gather valuable insights into their needs, expectations, and satisfaction levels, enabling us to make informed decisions and improve our offerings." – CBO1

"I leverage social media platforms and online communities to encourage customer input. By creating engaging posts, running polls, and hosting discussions, we invite customers to share their thoughts and experiences, helping us understand their needs and preferences better." – CBO3

"We actively encourage customers to provide feedback through various channels, such as email, live chat, and feedback forms. We make it easy for them to share their opinions and ensure their input is valued and considered in our decision-making processes." – CBO4

Understanding Client Demands. Based on the participants' responses, they understand their customers' demands by sustaining open communication with them. Through constant interactions, participants obtain a deeper understanding of their needs, demands, opinions, and sentiments. These responses were further stated in the following statements:

"I conduct one-on-one interviews with my customers to gather in-depth insights. These interactions provide me with a deeper understanding of their motivations, main points, and desires, which we then utilize to enhance our products and retain their loyalty." – CBO3

"I always monitor and analyze reviews and comments from our clients about our current products and services. I see to it that I pay attention to my customers' opinions and sentiments, so I can gain insights, identify improvement areas, and take action accordingly." – CBO7

"I know my customer wants to sustain good communication with them. I constantly asked about their request or even demands regarding what design they wanted and what payment or delivery method they preferred. I consider and address the needs of my customers to sustain customer satisfaction. I am a customer-oriented business owner." – CBO8

"We maintain a strong presence in face-to-face interaction. By interacting face-to-face, we can have meaningful conversations, understand their needs, and gather valuable insights that inform our decision-making processes." – CBO10

Embracing Feedback for Product Perfection. Most participants obtained feedback from their customers to acquire insights concerning their preferences and evaluate the improvement areas of their products and service. To substantiate these findings were the following narrations from the participants:

"Whatever the customers want, I can directly hear and talk to them... Because if they want something to be done, the color they want, that is the style they prefer, they tell me these directly so I can do what their request," – CBO6

"My customers help us identify our areas of improvement and suggest ways how to better improve our product. Their feedback, suggestions, and requests matter because they provide a solid foundation for our decisions..." – CBO9.

Innovative Quality

In order to comprehend the experiences and endeavors of business owners regarding innovative quality, the researcher examined inquiries that involve innovation in administration, process, and technology to the ten chosen participants. Studying the narrations and transcripts of the participants on their experiences and initiatives, four categories emerged: empowered employees, imagination meets innovation, employee involvement in innovation, and leveraging machinery and strengthening the knowledge of technology.

Empowered and Autonomous Employees. Some of the participants' way of fostering collaboration in the workplace was to assign teams to conceptualize and develop innovative solutions to the problems. Empowering and giving autonomy to their employees was seen in the following responses:

"I allocate dedicated time for employees to work on innovative projects. This allowed them to explore new ideas, research, and develop solutions to customer problems. We provide the necessary resources and support to bring these ideas to fruition." – CBO2

"I have a design team that meets regularly to brainstorm ideas, identify customer problems, and collaborate on finding innovative solutions that address those problems effectively." – CBO3

"I allow them to make decisions that can lead to their professional growth and productivity." – CBO4

Imagination Meets Innovation. Some participants differentiated themselves in the market by making unique shapes and introducing novel designs and finishes to the casket industry. They also innovated personalized caskets by allowing the customers to choose the design, material, color, or finish of the casket. These findings were supported by these statements:

"One of the new designs which I introduced to the market was the so-called 'sleeping beauty casket.' A clear glass material was used to see the demised person. Generating new ideas create curiosity in my customers." – CBO4

"We are constantly upgrading our metal caskets, and we designed them differently; for example, one design we have is like the body of a 'Coca-Cola.' This, I think, helps them to see new things." – CBO5

"I have different ideas that integrate into my caskets. One time, I brought a unique and elegant casket, and they saw it for the first time; the customers bought it despite the high price. I also personalize caskets based on the customers' preference of design, material color, or finish." – CBO7

Employee Involvement in Innovation. The participants highlighted that they acknowledge the diverse ideas of their employees. They encouraged them to contribute ideas and participate in innovation initiatives. The participants valued their employees' suggestions for innovation, as shared in the following insights:

"We encourage our employees to come up with unique perspectives and fresh insights to innovate the practices in our casket manufacturing business." – CBO1

"I provide channels for all my employees to share their suggestions and involve them in the decision-making process, ensuring that innovative ideas are integrated and sustained over time." – CBO3

"I regularly train my staff and employees and create a supportive and flexible work environment. I also empower them in decision-making, which can lead to greater motivation, innovation, and productivity." – CBO4

Leveraging Machinery and Strengthening Knowledge of Technology. Two of the participants affirmed that the use of machinery and their knowledge of technology have significantly contributed to the overall productivity and efficiency of their business. As acknowledged in the following statements:

"I invested in advanced machinery and technology. I use them to speed up my process that no one else has. It also enhanced our caskets' quality. As a result, our customers continue to patronize our products." – CBO6

"We utilize technology and digital tools because we want to remain competitive, adapt to changes in this industry, and comprehend the new market trends." – CBO10

Integration of QUAN-QUAL Data

Integrating the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study, the researcher strategically combined the data and findings from both approaches. Using the convergent parallel design, the researcher converted the data between qualitative and quantitative formats, analyzed them separately, and then merged the insights to synthesize the information and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question. The integrated findings were discussed in light of any discrepancies or complementarity between the data

types, ultimately leading to a more robust and insightful research outcome. By integrating the findings through comparison and contrast during interpretation, the research aimed to strengthen the conclusions and develop a sustainable competitiveness program for casket business owners in Pampanga, validated by combining quantitative and qualitative perspectives. With respect to the quantitative and qualitative data sets, the researcher formulated the integration of these data to effectively design a profound integrated theme that includes the key priorities in developing a competitiveness program for business owners in the casket industry.

Table 17
Integration of QUAN-QUAL data for Knowledge Management

QUANTITATIVE Least rated elements	QUALITATIVE Themes Derived from the Interview	INTEGRATED THEME Key Priority Areas
Hiring and partnerships with other firms.	Unlocking Knowledge from Experts	Seek beneficial partnerships with other casket manufacturing companies and experts to strengthen the opportunities for the business and gain knowledge from them.
Use of IT as a tool for knowledge retention and training of organizational memory.	Access to Cloud Storage	Invest in cloud-based e-learning platforms or utilize learning management systems (LMS) to provide online training modules and courses on various aspects of manufacturing casket products.
Development of work in groups.	Build Skills, Work in Teams	Deploy employees to work in teams to allow them to acquire knowledge and skills beneficial to their work performance and the company and share acquired information and skills with their fellow employees.
Development of activities for improving products and processes.	Optimizing Operational Processes	Implement quality management systems, such as ISO 9001 or Six Sigma, to optimize operational processes, identify improvement areas, monitor quality metrics, and implement corrective actions.

Table 18
Integration of QUAN-QUAL data for Customer Knowledge Management

QUANTITATIVE Least rated elements	QUALITATIVE Themes Derived from the Interview	INTEGRATED THEME Key Priority Areas
Our company has been informed about customers' demands and requests.	Understanding Client Demands	Foster ongoing communication and engagement with existing and potential customers offline and online to understand client demands.
Our company asks customers about current service quality.	Embracing Feedback for Product Perfection	Embrace customer feedback to assess the quality of communication, improve problem resolutions, and meet overall customer satisfaction and product perfection.

Table 19
Integration of QUAN-QUAL data for Innovative Quality

QUANTITATIVE Least rated elements	QUALITATIVE Themes Derived from the Interview	INTEGRATED THEME Key Priority Areas
The organization has generated novel ideas.	Imagination Meets Innovation	Consider sustainable, creative, and eco-friendly materials, lightweight options that provide innovative functionalities and enhanced preservation qualities.
The organization encourages the use of innovation to understand the information of customers, suppliers, and competitors.	Employee Involvement in Innovation	Empowering and involving employees to take ownership of the process improvement initiatives and provide them with the autonomy and resources necessary to explore and implement innovative ideas.
The organization uses new technology and equipment.	Leveraging Machinery and Strengthening Knowledge of Technology	Utilize new and upgraded machinery, technology, and equipment for product designs and operations that will suit the needs and goals of the business to ensure its effectiveness.

The findings obtained through triangulation, which involved the integration of the qualitative and quantitative data, have a significant impact on understanding and interpreting the dependent variable, organizational performance, in relation to the independent variables, namely knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality. To provide a solid integration, the researcher proposed a sustainable competitiveness program

for the casket business owners that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities the casket industry in Pampanga presents. It is focused on enhancing the business owner's competitive position within the casket manufacturing industry.

IX. The Proposed Sustainable Competitiveness Program for Business Owners of the Casket Industry

This proposal is anchored on the findings of quantitative analysis and thematic analysis applied to the qualitative data of this study. This intends to provide a profound program designed to sustain the competitiveness of the business despite the perceived tightness of competition within the mentioned business industry.

A. Introduction

The proposed Sustainable Competitiveness Program (SCP) addresses the unique challenges and opportunities the casket industry in Pampanga presents. It is developed and tailored

specifically for the casket business owners and is focused on enhancing its competitive position within the industry. The program will focus on strengthening the business's weak areas, specifically on innovative quality that may impose an unbeneficial impact on its overall image and competitiveness.

B. Objective

The Sustainable Competitiveness Program (SCP) for business owners in the casket industry in Pampanga is created to serve as a comprehensive program guide that enables them to identify and address weak areas within their operations that impact their competitiveness in the industry. By implementing this program, casket business owners cannot only differentiate themselves in the market but also position themselves as leaders in sustainability. This will attract environmentally conscious customers, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and ultimately contribute to the long-term success and profitability of the business.

Table 20
The Sustainable Competitiveness Program for Casket Business Owners

<i>Program Name</i>	<i>Domain and Indicator</i>	<i>Key Priority Areas</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Key Benefits</i>
Strategic Partnerships Program	Knowledge Management:	Seek beneficial partnerships with other casket manufacturing companies and experts to strengthen the opportunities for the business and gain knowledge from them.	Strengthen business opportunities and knowledge exchange through partnerships.	Increased market presence and visibility through partnerships.
	Acquisition of Knowledge		Collaborate with experts to gain insights and best practices in casket manufacturing.	Access to expert knowledge and industry trends.
Online Learning and Development Program	Knowledge Management:	Invest in cloud-based e-learning platforms or utilize learning management systems (LMS) to provide online training modules and courses on various aspects of manufacturing casket products.	Provide comprehensive online training modules and courses on casket manufacturing.	Flexible and accessible training for employees at any time and location.
	Storage of Knowledge		Enhance employee skills and knowledge in various aspects of casket production.	Standardized training programs and improved knowledge retention.
Cross-Functional Team Development Program	Knowledge Management:	Deploy employees to work in teams to allow them to acquire knowledge and skills beneficial to their work performance and the company and share acquired information and skills with their fellow employees.	Enable employees to acquire new knowledge and skills through team collaboration.	Enhanced employee learning and professional development.
	Distribution of Knowledge		Promote knowledge sharing among employees to enhance overall expertise.	Increased cross-functional collaboration and innovation.
Quality Management System Program	Knowledge Management:	Implement quality management systems, such as ISO 9001 or Six Sigma, to optimize operational processes, identify improvement areas, monitor quality metrics, and implement corrective actions.	Optimize operational processes and identify improvement areas.	Improved product quality and consistency.
	Use of Knowledge		Monitor quality metrics and implement corrective actions.	Streamlined operations and reduced waste.
Customer Communication Enhancement Program	Customer Knowledge Management:	Foster ongoing communication and engagement with existing and potential customers offline and online to understand client demands.	Understand customer demands and preferences.	Enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.
	Knowledge about Customers		Strengthen relationships with existing and potential customers.	Increased market insights and improved product offerings.

Customer Feedback and Satisfaction Program	Customer Knowledge Management:	Embrace customer feedback to assess the quality of communication, improve problem resolutions, and meet overall customer satisfaction and product perfection.	Assess the quality of communication and problem resolution.	Prompt identification and resolution of customer issues.
	Knowledge from Customers		Improve overall customer satisfaction and product perfection.	Adaptation to customer preferences and market demands.
Green Materials Sourcing and Development Program	Innovative Quality:	Considers sustainable, creative, and eco-friendly materials, lightweight options, that provide innovative functionalities and enhanced preservation qualities.	Explore innovative and eco-friendly materials for casket production.	Reduced environmental impact and improved sustainability.
	Administrative		Enhance preservation qualities and functionality of caskets.	Differentiation in the market through eco-friendly product offerings.
Employee Empowerment and Innovation Program	Innovative Quality:	Empowering and involving employees to take ownership of the process improvement initiatives and provide them with the autonomy and resources necessary to explore and implement innovative ideas.	Foster ownership and autonomy in process improvement initiatives.	Increased employee engagement and motivation.
	Process		Provide resources and support for innovative ideas from employees.	Continuous process improvement and innovation.
Technology Upgradation Program	Innovative Quality:	Utilize new and upgraded machinery, technology, and equipment for product designs and operations that will suit the needs and goals of the business to ensure its effectiveness.	Evaluate and implement new machinery and technology for casket production.	Improved operational efficiency and productivity.
	Technology		Align technology with business needs and goals.	Enhanced product design capabilities and competitiveness.

4. Conclusion

1. In the assessment of knowledge management, the casket business owners assessed themselves that they moderately perceived the acquisition of knowledge, storage of knowledge, distribution of knowledge, and use of knowledge. This implies that casket business owners should focus on acquiring knowledge through strategies like hiring and partnerships with other firms. Storage of knowledge can be improved by utilizing information technology for retention and training. The distribution of knowledge is enhanced through the development of teamwork and knowledge-sharing networks. To effectively use the knowledge, involve activities that improve products and processes. Implementing knowledge management strategies in these areas is crucial for enhancing performance and innovation within the casket industry.
2. In the assessment of customer knowledge management, the casket business owners assessed that they moderately perceived knowledge about customers but highly perceived knowledge from customers. This implies that casket business owners should focus on understanding customer demands and requests to meet their needs effectively while actively seeking feedback from customers, particularly regarding service quality. These findings also highlight the significance of customer-oriented knowledge management practices, including customer interaction and feedback, in aligning products and services with customer needs.
3. In the assessment of innovative quality, the casket business owners assessed that they moderately performed administrative, process, and technology in innovation. This implies that casket business owners should focus on generating novel ideas in the administrative aspect, developing new products and services in the process aspect, and utilizing new technology and equipment in the technology aspect. These findings highlight the significance of innovative thinking, product differentiation, and resource integration with technology for successful innovation outcomes in the casket industry.
4. The average organizational performance of the selected casket business located in Pampanga in terms of net profit ratio is 28.53%, and the rate of return is 35.45%.
5. The regression analysis results showed that the knowledge management level, customer knowledge, and innovative quality do not significantly exert influence on organizational performance.
6. From the interview of the casket business owners, the researcher developed themes about their experiences and initiatives in terms of knowledge management, customer knowledge management, and innovative quality. Casket business owners manage their knowledge from experts, customers, journals, cloud storage, from employees through their teamwork, motivation, and their process. Regarding managing customer knowledge, hearing feedback and understanding their demands for product improvement was imperative. For innovative quality, empowering

and involving their employees in innovation is important for business owners. To continue to practice innovation, participants consistently generate novel ideas and utilize modern machinery and technology.

7. The proposed Sustainable Competitiveness Program (SCP) for business owners in the casket industry serves as a comprehensive program guide that enables them to differentiate themselves in the market and position themselves as leaders in sustainability.

5. Recommendations

1. Based on the findings of the study, business owners in the casket industry should be able to keep themselves open to various information from reliable sources and innovations to uncover invaluable opportunities for the growth and competitiveness of their companies.
2. Casket business owners may also consider hiring competent individuals skilled and capable of imparting meaningful suggestions and new ideas related to further business improvements.
3. Casket business owners should be able to embrace all types of criticisms, suggestions, and feedback from their customers and use these as the basis for their development and innovations.
4. Casket business owners may offer their customers a wide range of eco-friendly caskets made from environmentally sustainable materials to impact the environment significantly.
5. The Sustainable Competitiveness Program (SCP) may be used as a comprehensive program basis for business owners who intend to strengthen their competitiveness and performance in the industry.
6. Future researchers may further explore the current study and uncover additional results. They may also conduct comparative studies by examining companies from different industries or provinces. Future researchers may also consider other dependent variables to explore further the impact of independent variables involved, such as knowledge management, customer knowledge, and innovative quality. It would also be valuable to consider other business owners and manufacturing firms from different localities to capture broader perspectives and experiences.

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