

## **Knowledge Sharing Culture and Transient Competitive Advantage in Textile Manufacturing Firms in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The textile industry has the potential to propel the country towards middle-income status by providing gainful employment to young people. However, the textile industry in Kenya has lost competitive advantage as seen by reduced exports to the east African market and beyond. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of knowledge sharing culture on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing firms in Kenya. This study used positivism research philosophy and quantitative correlational research design. A population of 280 top level managers from 56 textile firms in Kenya was considered where 165 were randomly selected to be the study respondents. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection and the gathered data was analyzed using linear regression analysis. The study findings demonstrate that knowledge sharing culture had a statistically significant and positive influence on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing firms in Kenya ( $\beta = 0.555$ ,  $t = 10.407$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concludes that textile manufacturers with entrenched knowledge sharing culture are likely to attain transient competitive advantage. The study recommends to the management of the textile manufacturing companies to invest in knowledge sharing tools including databases, collaboration platforms, and training programmes to help staff communicate information and skills. This can help to promote innovation, improve product quality, and increase operational efficiency.

**Key Words:** *Knowledge sharing culture, Textile manufacturing firms, Transient competitive advantage.*

## **Introduction**

Every firm's desire is to have a transient competitive advantage (TCA) that distinguishes it from its competitors and thus providing it with the ability to meet its customers' needs better in the short and medium term (Usman & Fadhilah, 2020). According to Wening and Moertono (2023), transient competitive advantage encompasses the short- and medium-term strategic edge that a company attains over its rivals by delivering superior value to clients. This value may be achieved through several means, such as having knowledge sharing capabilities, giving cheaper pricing or providing extra advantages and services that justify comparable or even higher prices (Sentika & Arissaputra, 2022). Knowledge sharing culture is one of the dynamic capabilities that organizations can apply to attain TCA. Knowledge sharing culture refers to having a comfortable environment in which teammates can share knowledge openly. It is therefore the development of methods, tools, techniques and organizational values that promote the flow of knowledge between individuals and teams (Arsawan *et al.*, 2022).

Knowledge sharing culture is critical to both the creation and application of organizational knowledge (Kartiraharjo & Isfianadewi, 2021). In Malaysia, Mahdi, Nassar, and Almsafir (2019) knowledge sharing culture is vital and knowledge must be generated, stored, shared and applied in order for the organization to attain sustainable competitive advantage. In the African context, Shodiya (2018) established that knowledge sharing culture significantly influenced the competitive advantage of consumer goods companies in Nigeria. In Ethiopian medium- and large-scale manufacturing enterprises, knowledge sharing culture and its various components enhance performance and competitive advantage of the firms (Erena, Kalko, & Debele *et al.*, 2023). The knowledge sharing culture, including for both tacit and explicit forms, has the potential to provide a competitive edge when effectively employed for its intended objectives (Haile & Tüzüner, 2022).

The study context was the textile manufacturing industry in Kenya. The textile and apparel sector has been identified as a catalyst for industrialization in Kenya's Vision 2030, as outlined by the government (World Bank Group, 2022). In 2021, the industry accounted for 7% of the nation's total export revenue. However, the development of the sector is constrained by various challenges including the absence of policy consistency and institutional alignment, and deficiency in the amount of value addition within the industry, which has led to reduction in its contribution to GDP from 1.4 percent in 2015 to 0.6 per cent as of 2020 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2020). Besides, Mwendwa, Atambo, Iravo, and Atikiya (2020) notes that knowledge sharing remains relatively new and underutilized concepts in Kenya's textile manufacturing industry. There is built in systemic inefficiencies in the textile manufacturers due to lack of or use of obsolete technologies in the production lines and proper knowledge sharing platforms as their main focus is on production, not process innovation. Based on the mentioned practice, empirical and contextual gaps that exist, this study sought to determine the influence of knowledge sharing on the transient competitive advantage in textile manufacturing firms in Kenya.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The Kenya's textile manufacturing industry has also been adversely affected where there is a very low level of value addition and disconnect between the production and the value chain segments (World Bank Group, 2022). According to Shibia and Igesa (2021), textile manufacturing contribution to GDP has gradually declined from 1.4 percent in 2015 to 0.6 per cent as of 2020 (KNBS, 2020). Besides, textile manufacturers in Kenya are lagging behind their regional competitors in terms of productivity, market reach and exports. In Uganda, textile

contributed 2 per cent to the country's GDP while in Tanzania, it contributed 3.6% to GDP (Njogu, 2021). This has resulted to current struggles of the industry to stay afloat in the fierce competition for a share of the local and regional market. Though the textile industry in Kenya has struggled for competitiveness, the workable policies that the government and other key stakeholders have formulated and implemented have not enhanced the competitiveness of the textile sector (World Bank Group, 2022).

The textile industry needs to establish means of attain TCA and extant literature indicates that knowledge sharing can influence an organization's TCAs. For instance, Gholami, Asli, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Noruzy (2013) determined that embracing a knowledge sharing culture is the source of sustainable competitive advantage. In Kenya, Kosgei *et al.* (2018) established that knowledge sharing culture ensures bank competitiveness in today's dynamic market place. Moreover, Mwendwa, Atambo, Iravo, and Atikiya (2020) observed that Kenyan textile firms can focus on internal capabilities such as knowledge sharing to enable them gain and sustain a competitive advantage and be able to deal with challenges that emanate from the operating environment. However, empirical evidence on the link between knowledge sharing culture and transient competitive advantage in the textile industry in Kenya is lacking. This study focused on filling this research gap by investigating the influence of knowledge sharing culture on the transient competitive advantage of the textile manufacturing industry in Kenya.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of knowledge sharing on the transient competitive advantage in textile manufacturing firms in Kenya.

### **Theoretical Review**

Dynamic capabilities theory was the anchor for this study and it centers on how organizations purposefully adapt their resource base over a period for value creation through integration, building and reconfiguration to address rapidly changing environment (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). According to Fabrizio *et al.* (2022), dynamic capabilities refer to the capacity of an organization to purposefully create, extend, or modify its available resource base. Dynamic capabilities are defined in terms of organization's strategic routines, such as knowledge sharing culture, by which they use to achieve new resources configurations as market emerge, collide, split, evolve, and die. As depicted by Fabrizio *et al.* (2022), the firm integrates its capabilities, strategy and valuable resources such as open communication, collaboration platforms and values and norms to develop dynamic capabilities which it can deploy to have a transient competitive advantage. Thus, Tallman (2015) posits that firms may gain a sustainable competitive advantage by investing in the development of these competencies that extend beyond traditional strategic resources. Besides, knowledge-based dynamic capabilities enable firms to expand beyond their traditional horizons, bringing new forms of value to their consumers and enabling the firm to be competitive in the market.

### **Literature Review**

Amaya *et al.* (2022) examined how internal knowledge resources and their qualities contribute to competitive advantages in a knowledge-intensive organization in the pharmaceutical sector in an emerging market of Malaysia. The study findings determined that enabling open communication amongst employees from across departments enables the firm to develop, share and retain knowledge for a competitive advantage. A comparable study by Musheke *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of open communication in a knowledge sharing culture on organizational performance via the lens of systems theory. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between knowledge sharing culture of open communication and organizational success. These studies, however, were undertaken outside the textile industry thus leaving contextual gaps.

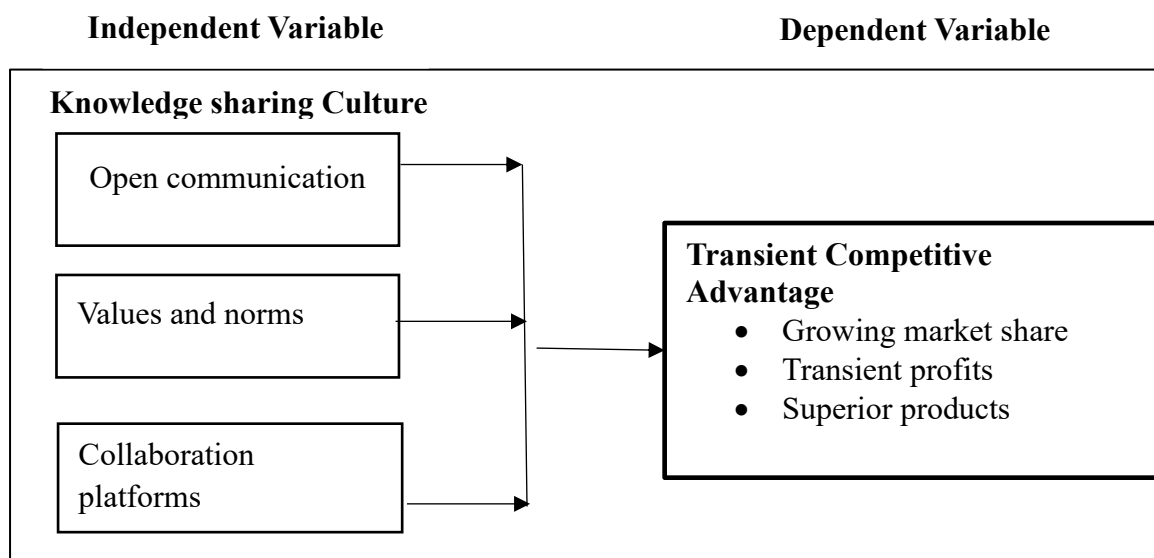
Ma (2022) investigated the impact of communication tactics, namely information flow, open communication, and information feedback, on organizational commitment. Data was collected from a sample of 276 English language instructors in China and data analysis was performed

via SmartPLS software, employing the Structured Equation Modelling. The findings of the research indicate that open communication and trust has a considerable influence on organizational commitment. Another study in Malaysia by Abdul-Jalal *et al.* (2013) used a population of 270 knowledge workers from knowledge-based organizations who provided their opinions of information sharing values and norms that influence organizational competitive advantage. The findings of the research revealed that information sharing competence and trust are critical for knowledge sharing success, implying that they play a vital role in the design of knowledge-driven HRM practices. These studies were conducted in Asia and their findings may not be generalizable to the health sector in Kenya.

A study by Asurakkody and Kim (2020) examined the variations in the relationship between knowledge sharing values and performance. The data collection process included the gathering of information from a sample of 279 university professors in Pakistan, including both public and private sector institutions. The findings of the study provided evidence for the mediating function of knowledge sharing values in the relationship between corporate organizational culture and performance. To assess the role played by collaboration platforms in knowledge sharing and competitiveness of the firm, Abker *et al.* (2019) conducted a study with the purpose of investigating the relationship between knowledge sharing culture and competitive advantage constructs (quality and cost) in the Sudanese industrial sector. According to the findings of the research, there is a favorable association between knowledge sharing aspects of having various collaborative platforms and competitive advantage in Sudanese industrial enterprises. These two studies were undertaken in the education and manufacturing sectors and not in the health sector.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided the study is provided in Figure 1 which illustrates the relationship between knowledge sharing culture and transient competitive advantage.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework

Knowledge sharing culture is the collection of values, expectations, and practices that guide and inform the exchange of expertise and information within the organization (Usman & Fadhilah, 2020). Knowledge sharing culture in this study was indicated by open communication, values and norms and collaboration platforms. Open communication is having unrestricted exchange of thoughts and ideas among employees in the organization (Nwabueze & Mileski, 2018). Knowledge sharing entails active collaboration and necessitates the implementation of norms and values such as commitment to openness and transparency, trust and truthfulness (Torres, Ferraz, & Santos-Rodrigues, 2018). A collaboration platform refers to a system or software tools that facilitate the achievement of team objectives or the resolution of business challenges by enabling document management, knowledge sharing and task coordination (Nwabueze & Mileski, 2018). The dependent variable in this study was transient competitive advantage which was measured using growth in market share, transient profits and superiority of products. Based on this conceptual framework, the following null hypothesis was tested:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Knowledge sharing culture has no significant influence on the transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing firms in Kenya.

### **Research Methodology**

This study used the positivism research philosophy which was appropriate for the quantitative methodology that was adopted. A quantitative research design was used to test hypothesis statistically, gather quantitative data using questionnaires and determine the causal relationship between study variables. Additionally, the study applied the correlational design to assess the influence of knowledge sharing culture on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing companies in Kenya. The target population for this study consisted of 280 members of top management team of 56 export processing zone (EPZ) textile manufacturing firms in Kenya (Kenya Association of Manufacturers, 2022). This study used stratified random sampling techniques and the Yamane (1967) sample calculation formula to select a sample size of 165. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire which was pretested for reliability and validity prior to the study. The study applied the both the electronic (google forms) and drop-and-pick method to administer the questionnaires. In analyzing the collected data, the study used descriptive statistics (percentages, means and standard deviations) and linear regression analysis. The linear regression model used was;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

Y= Transient competitive advantage.

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$\varepsilon$  = The error term

$X_1$  = Knowledge Sharing Culture

### **Study Results and Discussion**

The research sample consisted of 165 top management employees in textile manufacturing companies in Kenya and out of the sample, 147 responded, resulting in a response rate of 89.1%. The study established that regarding gender, 55.8% of the study participants were male and 34.7% of the participants were between 36 and 44 years. Regarding the level of education, 47.6% of the participants had bachelor's degrees with only 2% indicating that they had doctorate degrees. The findings further demonstrated that 64.8% of the participants in the study were from enterprises that had been operational for a duration of over 20 years. Moreover, majority of the firms (72.8%) had more than 100 employees with only 3.4% having less than 20 employees whereas 49% of the textile manufacturing firms were in the apparel textiles sector. Additionally, 35.4% of the study participants were production managers and a similar percentage (35.4%) had served their respective companies for 11 to 16 years.



### **Descriptive Analysis for Transient Competitive Advantage**

Transient competitive advantage was the dependent variable in this study and was measured using three distinct measures: transient profits, superior products and growing market share. Respondents were requested to rate their level of agreement with the provided statements on transient competitive advantage of their textile manufacturing companies on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 represented strong disagreement while 5 represented strong agreement. The responses were analyzed by the researcher using means (M) and standard deviations (SD). The mean value from 1.00 to 1.80 were interpreted as strongly disagree, 1.81 to 2.60 as disagree, while the range of 2.61 to 3.40 represented neutral. The range of 3.41 to 4.20 represented agree, while the range of 4.21 to 5.00 represented strongly agree. Table 1 presents the findings pertaining to the three sub-variables, namely transient profits, superior products and growing market share.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Transient Competitive Advantage*

<b>Statements on Transient Competitive Advantage</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Transient Profits</b>		
Our profits increased over the last three years 2020-2022	3.97	.619
Our sales revenue has been growing over the last three years 2020 -2022	3.87	.675
This organization has transient high profit margin for the past five years	3.90	.700
Our organization have invested in research and development focusing on consumers' needs in order to sustain profitability	3.99	.682
<b>Superior Products</b>		
Our firm has consistently produced superior quality products that are better than those of our competitors	3.90	.725
Our superior quality products are unique compared to our competitors	3.73	.872
Our competitors find it difficult to emulate our superior quality products	3.78	.757
The company produces innovative products	3.97	.682
<b>Growing Market Share</b>		
Our organization continued to have grown and satisfactory market share over three years 2020 – 2022	3.96	.890
The company has enabled to enhance the loyalty of its customers	4.12	.629
Our company has eaten into the market share of its competitors	3.84	.811
This company has grown into new geographical markets	3.96	.640
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>0.406</b>

The research results in Table 1 indicate that respondents generally agreed to all the statements regarding short-term profits, superior products and growing market share (average mean = 3.92, SD = 0.406).

### **Descriptive Analysis for Knowledge Sharing Culture**

The measurement of knowledge sharing culture included the use of 12 statements, which were categorized into three constructs: open communication, values and norms and collaboration platforms. Participants in the study were requested to indicate their degree of agreement with several statements pertaining to knowledge sharing culture of their textile manufacturing companies. A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 representing strong disagreement, and 5 representing strong agreement, was used. The responses were analyzed using means (M) and standard deviations (SD). A mean value of 1.00 to 1.80 was interpreted as strongly disagree, 1.81 to 2.60 as disagree, 2.61 to 3.40 as neutral, 3.41 to 4.20 as agree, and 4.21 to 5.00 as strongly agree. Table 2 presents the findings for the three constructs of knowledge sharing culture which were open communication, values and norms and collaboration platforms.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for Knowledge Sharing Culture*

<b>Statements on Knowledge Sharing Culture</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Open Communication</b>		
My organization promotes a climate of trust to encourage sharing of knowledge	3.99	.749
Employees in this firm freely convey their ideas and thoughts to each other.	3.93	.728
Management in this firm encourages employees to share their opinions and feedback	3.95	.792
Management in this firm acknowledges feedback and takes action	4.09	.740
<b>Values and Norms</b>		
This organization values openness when sharing information	3.96	.671
Job rotation is used in my organization as a means to promote knowledge sharing	4.07	.699
The organization is transparent in its knowledge sharing	4.00	.749
Knowledge sharing in this organization is based on interpersonal trust	4.04	.701
<b>Collaboration Platforms</b>		
Employees interact through various social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp)	3.99	.789
My organization has invested in technology to promote knowledge sharing	3.86	.791
This company has a centralized repository where employees can share, organize, access, and store information	3.97	.762
Management has created a positive work environment in which employees are encouraged to collaborate	3.88	.815
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.478</b>

The findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate that the average mean for knowledge sharing culture ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.478$ ) indicated that respondents largely agreed to the statements which is an implication that textile manufacturing had effective knowledge sharing cultures.

### **Effect of Knowledge Sharing Culture on Transient Competitive Advantage**

The study investigated the effect of knowledge sharing culture on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing companies in Kenya through a simple linear regression analysis. The findings were used to test the null hypothesis of the research, which was;

$H_0$ : Knowledge sharing culture has no significant influence on transient competitive advantage in textile manufacturing firms in Kenya.

However, prior to fitting the regression model, preliminary tests were conducted to assess the assumptions of regression. The diagnostic tests conducted consisted of test of linearity, multicollinearity, normality tests, and heteroscedasticity test. The results of the tests indicated that all the regression assumptions were satisfied. Therefore, the study fitted the regression model and Table 3 presents the model summary results.

**Table 3**

*Model Summary*

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>
1	.654 <sup>a</sup>	.428	.424	.30808

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Sharing Culture

Based on the findings provided in Table 3, there was a moderate relationship ( $r = 0.654$ ) between knowledge sharing culture and transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing firms in Kenya. The results further indicate that knowledge sharing culture of textile manufacturing firms in Kenya account for 42.8% of the variation in their transient

competitive advantage (r-squared = 0.428).

To assess the significance of the model, the researcher performed the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. The results are summarized in Table 4 which demonstrate that the model was statistically significant ( $F = 108.297$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results of this study suggest that the empirical data collected fits the regression model appropriately.

**Table 4**

*ANOVA for Knowledge Sharing Culture and Transient Competitive Advantage*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	10.279	1	10.279	108.297	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	13.763	145	.095		
Total	24.041	146			

a. Dependent Variable: Transient Competitive Advantage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Sharing Culture

The study used the regression coefficients and t tests to assess the influence of knowledge sharing culture on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing companies in Kenya. The study results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Regression Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	1.709	.214		7.999
	Knowledge Sharing Culture	.555	.053	.654	10.407

a. Dependent Variable: Transient Competitive Advantage

The study findings provided in Table 5 led to the regression model below.

$$\text{Transient Competitive advantage} = 1.709 + 0.654(\text{Knowledge Sharing Culture})$$

The study findings presented in Table 5 and the regression equation, indicate that when there is no knowledge sharing culture, transient competitive advantage would have a rating of 1.709 (constant value = 1.709). The results of the study further revealed that knowledge sharing culture had a significant and positive effect on the transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturing companies in Kenya ( $\beta = 0.555$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings depict that a change in one unit of knowledge sharing culture would lead to a corresponding change of 0.555 in transient competitive advantage. These results suggest that altering a textile company's knowledge sharing culture is likely to result in a similar shift in its transient competitive advantage. Hence, it is anticipated that enhancing knowledge sharing culture would result in an enhancement of transient competitive advantage, and vice versa.

## Discussion of Results

The study findings ascertained that knowledge sharing culture had a statistically significant and positive influence on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturers in Kenya. The findings are in line with the dynamic capabilities theory which posits that organization's strategic routines, such as knowledge sharing culture, can enable the firm to achieve new



resources configurations for creation of transient competitive advantage (Fabrizio *et al.*, 2022). The findings are also in line with findings by Amaya *et al.* (2022) which held that good knowledge sharing policies and practices enable better decision making which enhance organizational systems performance. The findings underscore the critical importance of fostering a culture of open communication, collaboration, and transparency within organizations. This aligns with findings by Musheke *et al.* (2021) which emphasizes the role of knowledge sharing culture in facilitating information flow, enhancing employee productivity, and driving organizational growth.

The study established that the knowledge-sharing culture contributed significantly to TCA among the Kenyan textile manufacturers. This suggests that employees who actively contribute to the organization's knowledge pool and engage in collaborative problem-solving enhance overall organizational effectiveness and adaptability. This is in line with Ma (2022) who found the significance of a knowledge-sharing culture in driving employee engagement, retention, and continuous learning within organizations. Further, as argued by Asurakkody and Kim (2020), a knowledge sharing culture which enables efficiency in completion of tasks by employees in organizations contributes to transient competitive advantage. This is because ideas and innovative approaches of performing tasks are exchanged among employees themselves as well as with management. The knowledge sharing culture has also promoted a culture of trust which encourages employees to share ideas and feedback.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study findings ascertained that knowledge sharing culture had a statistically significant and positive influence on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturers in Kenya. As a result of these findings, the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no significant relationship between knowledge sharing culture and transient competitive advantage in textile manufacturing firms in Kenya, was rejected. The study concludes that textile manufacturers which have adopted open communication, have values and norms which facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration platforms are likely to enjoy transient competitive advantage.

The study findings ascertained that knowledge sharing culture had a statistically significant and positive influence on transient competitive advantage of textile manufacturers in Kenya. The management of the textile manufacturers should thus continue investing in knowledge sharing tools including databases, collaboration platforms, and training programs to help staff communicate information and skills. This can help to promote innovation, improve product quality, and increase operational efficiency. Textile manufacturers should put up strong knowledge management systems to capture, organize, and share key knowledge assets inside the organization on changing trends. This includes documenting the attest trends in fashion and technology to ensure that the companies keep pace with peers globally and have transient competitive advantage.

This study may have a limitation since it only used a questionnaire to gather data. Besides, the study only focused on textile manufacturing firms and hence the findings may not be generalizable to other firms outside textile manufacturing. To address these gaps, the study suggests that future research may be undertaken to investigate the influence of knowledge sharing culture on transient competitive advantage in other sectors. Moreover, future research should explore other data gathering methods such as interviews and focus group discussions.

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