

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Adina Letiția NEGRUȘA

*Faculty of Business, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
adina.negrusa@ubbcluj.ro*

Maria CRISTICĂ

*Faculty of Business, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
maria.cristica@stud.ubbcluj.ro*

Abstract

The dynamic and competitive hospitality sector's success hinges on effective leadership. The hospitality industry's complexity necessitates motivated, efficient employees for customer satisfaction. Effective leadership optimizes performance, influences organizational goals and inspires team members, resulting in enhanced employee satisfaction and service quality. Thus, understanding prevailing leadership styles among successful hotel managers is crucial. Overall, this study reveals the distinct leadership styles exhibited by Romanian hotel managers, while also shedding light on potential gender-based differences in their approach. The study provides valuable insights into lesser-explored leadership cluster which includes servant, paradoxical and empowering styles. The servant leadership style emerges as a result of a descriptive research, having an impact on management within the realm of Romanian hoteliers. Furthermore, the distinct inclinations of female respondent toward the servant and paradoxical leadership styles stand out as a notable conclusion, enlightening the nuanced role of gender in shaping leadership preferences.

Keywords: leadership style, servant, paradoxical, empowering, gender, bias hospitality

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry, which was valued at \$3,952.87 billion in 2021 and increased to \$4,548.42 billion in 2022, became essential for the global economy, (Hospitality Global Market Report 2022, 2021). It also generates an impressive amount of job opportunities. In the fiercely competitive hospitality business, employee's motivation and efficiency have become key issues to ensuring customer satisfaction. So, leadership helps to optimize performance and achieve organizational objectives (Dahie, Mohamed, & Mohamed, 2017). Leadership is essential in the hospitality sector because it sets the tone for the entire organization and has an impact on all aspects of the business. Effective leaders are able to inspire and motivate their team members, which leads to increased employee satisfaction and better service for guests (Erkutlu, 2008). They also have the ability to make important decisions that can impact the success of the business, such as identifying new revenue streams, cutting costs, and creating a positive image for the organization.

Several prominent companies, such as Marriott, The Ritz Carlton Hotels, Starbucks, integrated efficient leadership principles, emphasized empowerment and relationship-driven approach (Behar, 2007). As a broad topic and with multiple influences upon the organizations' context, leadership has been largely studied. Important aspects were leadership influence upon organizations achievements and employee performance. Another aspect was the exploration of gender roles in leadership styles, especially how societal norms and expectations shape leadership behaviours.

Some findings (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) revealed that women in leadership roles often lean towards a democratic or participatory style, fostering an environment where subordinates contribute to decision-making. This tendency might align with the stereotype of women being more collaborative, cooperative and attentive to maintaining interpersonal connections. This leadership approach is characterized by decentralized control structure and decision-making guided by intuition, empathy and rationality. In contrast, men tend to adopt an authoritarian or directive approach to leadership. This style implies making decisions with minimal input from

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

subordinates and may reflect the stereotype of men being more competitive, assertive and task-oriented. Can be added a strong sense of control and a more analytical approach to problem-solving.

In the case of the new clusters of leadership several studies try to examine the topic in relation with hospitality sector. In the case of hospitality sector, especially hotel sector, there are very few studies relevant for this topic, and none in the case of Romanian hotel market.

To obtain an improved understanding of the leadership styles in the case of hospitality industry and gender-based influence upon leadership styles, the present study aims to answer the following research questions: What dominant leadership styles are exhibited by hotel managers in Romania and does gender influence their leadership style in this sector?

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ROMANIA'S HOTEL SECTOR EVOLUTION

Overall, the hotel industry in Romania was blooming by the second half of the 1970s when tourism flourished for foreign and internal markets due to political decisions and reasonable price levels (Pop, Cosma, Negrusa, Ionescu, & Marinescu, 2007). The significant growth was between 1970 and 1980, when within a decade, the number of accommodation units grew by 33.8%. From 1990 ahead, over the subsequent five years, the number of hotels and accommodation capacity experienced a decline. This was attributed to necessary renovations and reclaims of certain buildings by former owners. A significant legal reform occurred in 1993 and 1998, when a new classification system was implemented, boosting the diversity of Romanian lodgings and raising the grading system to five stars. Also, during this interval had been launched first National Tourism Strategy. Thus, the Romanian hotel business has evolved through a process of legislative changes, economic challenges and adaptation to client tastes (Pop, Cosma, Negrusa, Ionescu, & Marinescu, 2007). An important trend in hotel investments took place between 2002 and 2005, during which time the number of hotels increased by 22.9 % as a result of privatization process, new construction and renovations in certain existing units. If in 1990 there were 830 hotel units in Romania, in 2010 reached 1233 units (see figure no.1).

However, the worldwide economic downturn of 2008 resulted in a notable decrease, as 1,4 million arrivals (16%) were lost between 2009 and 2010. This determined a decline in hotel industry investments, mainly observed in terms of accommodation capacity. A little rebound occurred in 2011, indicating potential resiliency, in spite of this setback. Romania was able to establish itself as a travel destination by using successful economic policies and marketing initiatives, as evidenced by the fact that inbound tourism outpaced departing departures.

Despite these changes in tourist numbers, the accommodation industry saw an overall growth in the number of units and accommodation capacity, however a large share was still categorized as low-comfort businesses (see figure no.2).

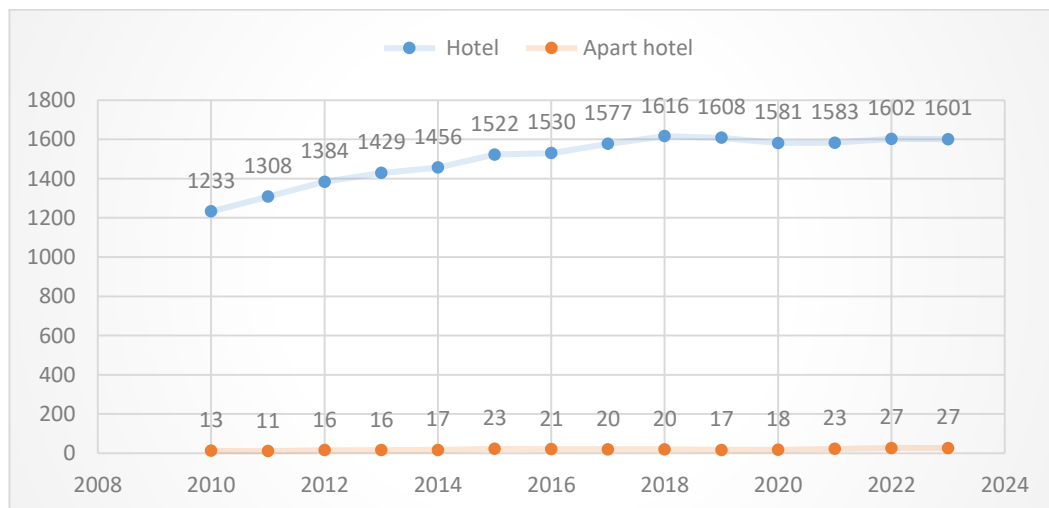


FIGURE 1 – The Romanian hotel unit's evolution 2010-2023

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

The hotel industry's profile in 2013 revealed a preponderance of small hotels, with a shift toward mid-market alternatives. Since then, the supply of rooms in Romania's hotel industry has shifted from budget/economy to mid-market, with a growing number of three-star hotels displacing the beds in two-star hotels. The business has seen an increase in the number of four and five-star hotels catering to wealthy travellers (Rus & Negrusa, 2014).

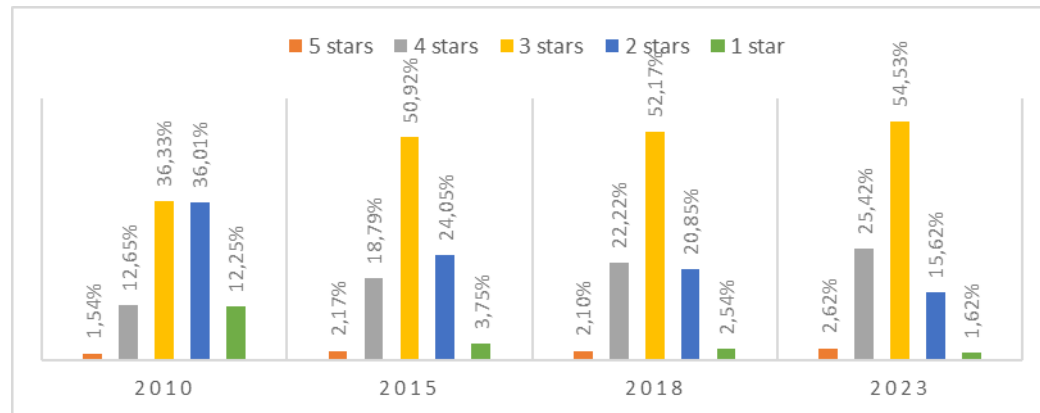


FIGURE 2 – The Romanian hotels structure by comfort (stars classification)

Therefore, in 2018 the prevalence of 4-star hotels surpassed that of 2-star accommodations, and following a consistent rise in guest numbers for six consecutive years, hotel revenues in Romania exceeded 1.18 billion euros, which represented an increase of 10% from the year before and 18% from 2016.

Even though total market revenue fell by 44% in 2021 to 12.7 million euros, the first half of 2022 produced a notable income of 11 million euros, which was 17% higher than in 2019. Remarkably, the Romanian hotel market stands out from other Central and Eastern European countries as it is less reliant on international tourism. Roughly 86 percent of accommodated tourists were domestic, highlighting a distinctive feature of the market.

Within the COVID-19 pandemic, investors capitalized on opportunities, particularly focusing on small projects requiring refurbishment. This increased investor interest resulted in a slightly higher share of the hotel sector in total investment volumes in 2022 and 2023. The number of international brand hotels grows year after year, but their share of total accommodation units is very small. In 2023, only 6.5% of local hotels are affiliated with an international hotel brand, which is a very small percentage compared to other countries in the region. International hotel chains showed a heightened interest in expanding their investments, primarily focusing on urban areas, including Bucharest, Constanta, Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca, and Oradea. Approximately 80% of the total number of rooms affiliated with international hotel chains are concentrated in these key cities.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted in order to conceptualize the leadership styles, reveal their essential variables and thus to respond to the study's questions. Given the numerous leadership philosophies covered in the literature, a systematic analysis has been developed. A fairly well-known collection of leadership styles considering the leaders' ability to inspire and lead follower toward accomplishing organizational goals includes: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. These three approaches are significant because substantial research has been done about how effective women and men as leaders use these leadership styles.

Among all the transformational leadership style has the most significant impact (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Bass (1985) transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to transcend their self-interest by changing their mindset, goals, priorities and values and encouraging them to excel beyond their original expectations (Gui, Luo, Zhang, & Deng, 2020). Rather of relying on logical calculation, transformational leaders encourage emotional attachment and loyalty among their followers. The main characteristics of a transformational leader are charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

consideration (Bass B. , 1990) (Judge & Bono, 2000). This type of leadership is crucial in luxury hotels since they require a constant and compliant workforce (Sürücü, Maşlakçı, & Şeşen, 2020).

Unlike transformational, transactional leadership is grounded in a systematic approach to managing change and driving follower motivation. This leadership style leverages a rewards-based methodology to elevate employee performance (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Bass (1985) considered that transactional leaders engage in a reciprocal relationship with the followers, rendering them interdependent. Specifically, this relationship hinges on mutual contributions and understanding between both parties, which are then acknowledged and reciprocated rewards. In achieving optimal organizational efficiency, a transactional leader holds a key role and so this leadership style finds broader application compared to the transformational leadership style (Liu, Liu, & Zeng, 2011). However, it's important to mention that transactional leadership might fall short in yielding desired outcomes in some organizations, especially when there is a lack of clarity regarding the specific criteria on which leader is rewarding employees (Erkutlu, 2008).

In the realm of classical leadership approaches, laissez-faire leadership denotes to a style marked by an absence of active guidance, impeding decision-making, overlooking prevailing issues, evading participation and shunning interaction with team members (Al-Daibat, 2017). The laissez-faire leaders deliberately refrain (see Table 1.) from assuming responsibilities or making decisions, stepping in only when unavoidable challenges arise among employees. Some studies consider laissez-faire as a non-leadership or passive leadership style.

In the context of hospitality, organizations often exhibit a distinct hierarchical nature, with a propensity for adhering to conventional management methodologies. Thus, many hotels adhere to the traditional model of centralized decision-making, which aligns with rigid pyramidal organizational structures (Øgaard, Marnburg, & Larsen, 2008). However, due to a more dynamic context in the service sector, many unforeseen situations may arise and if the front-line personnel are not given decision-making authority, they may struggle to fix the situations swiftly and to deliver high-quality customer service. On the other hand, the economic and competition context forced companies to redefine processes, flattened organizational structure and push down the decision control. Thus, empowerment and engagement of employees were the key solutions. Along to this tendency new leadership styles emerged related to the Social Exchange Theory (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burin, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019).

TABLE 1 – The main traits of leadership styles

<u>Transformational</u>	<u>Transactional</u>	<u>Laissez-faire</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Inspiring followers to change and excel beyond their expectations ⑩ Adaptable workforce ⑩ Loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Motivating followers ⑩ Use a reward-based approach ⑩ Rooted in a process of change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Absence of effective leadership ⑩ Hindering decision-making ⑩ Avoiding engagements with group members

Source: authors' synthesis based on literature

Recent research in the realm of hospitality leadership styles concluding with the demarcation of the following new concepts: servant (Liden R. C., Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014) empowering (Zhang & Bartol, 2010) and paradoxical leadership styles (Zhang Y. , Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). The main traits of the modern approaches in leadership style are presented in Table 2.

A servant leader is a person who addresses the needs, self-concept, beliefs and values of their followers by setting an example of high moral standards, integrity, kindness, and commitment. Servant leaders believe in the ethical use of power and foster participatory behaviours that increase job effectiveness (Liden R. , et al., 2015). A servant leader positively affects the employees' behaviour because it satisfies some of their psychological needs. A study done by Brownell (2010) has pinpointed the servant leadership as "the next step in leadership evolution" for the hospitality world.

The empowering leadership style entails managers providing their staff with more authority and autonomy in decision-making. Empowering leaders demonstrates their confidence in employees' competencies and

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

abilities, providing employees with more opportunities and responsibilities in their positions. Such leaders typically establish participatory objectives, encourage self-governance and promote the self-development of the workforce by, for example, assigning authority and enabling employees to take on a leadership role or regulate themselves (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019). When granted power, autonomy and authority by their managers, employees experience a sense of trust and empowerment. Thus, in turn, leads to notable boost in their motivation levels when performing work-related tasks, resulting in heightened engagement and active involvement in their activities.

Paradox theory sheds light on how managers comprehend and handle conflicting demands within the organizations. Paradoxical leader behaviour addresses new and seemingly contradictory demands that managers currently must confront. They do not excessively control the details, but rather permit employees full control over specific work tasks. While holding the overall control, these leaders provide their subordinates with enough autonomy. Paradoxical leaders therefore permit others to partake in the leadership role in certain aspects of daily assignments (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019). Paradoxical leadership solves conflicts. Managers who adopt the paradoxical leadership approach maintain decision-making authority while allowing autonomy (Zhang Y. , Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). Company policies impose a requirement on employees to adhere to standardized corporate conduct, even as they are consistently urged to tailor their services to the specific needs of each client. This dual expectation can potentially result in confusion, disappointment and decrease motivation among employees. Therefore, considering the distinctive attributes and inherent unpredictability of service interactions, employing paradoxical leadership emerges as a potentially effective approach to managing personal within the hospitality industry (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019).

TABLE 2 – The main traits of the modern leadership styles

<u>Servant</u>	<u>Empowering</u>	<u>Paradoxical</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Addressing the needs, values and beliefs of the followers ⑩ Using the power ethically ⑩ Participatory behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Providing staff with more authority and autonomy ⑩ Confidence in the employee’s skills ⑩ Promoting self-development of the workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Allowing the employees to take part in the leadership role for certain tasks ⑩ Providing autonomy ⑩ Solving conflicts

Source: authors’ synthesis-based literature

Research findings (Huertas-Valdivia, Gallego-Burín, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019) supports using empowering and paradoxical leadership styles to cultivate psychological empowerment among hotel staff. Also, highlighted that psychological empowerment precedes job engagement. Paradoxical leadership style fosters trust and empowerment, but certain ambiguous behaviours associated with it can lead to mistrust among employees instead of enhancing engagement.

As culture shapes individuals' values and attitudes, exerting influence on their perceptions and intricately intertwined into the leadership processes within organizations, numerous studies underscore the correlation between national cultural values, characteristics, and leadership philosophies (Chon & Zoltan, 2019) (Hofstede, 2001)(Moodian, 2008) (Segundo, 2023).

Therefore, the Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions provides a framework for analysing various leadership philosophies that are more suitable for exerting the proper influence to ensure goal achievement. Accordingly, in the case of cultures characterized by high power distance, leaders striving to incorporate transformational leadership qualities, such as seeking input from subordinates, may be perceived as weak or ineffective managers. The prevailing culture favours top-down, hierarchical communication, maintaining a considerable distance between leaders and subordinates. This stands in contrast to the collaborative nature of transformational leadership, wherein leaders treat each follower as an individual, offering coaching, mentoring, and growth opportunities to develop them into future leaders (Romero, 2004) (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

On the other hand, in the case of cultures that emphasize "masculine" behaviours—such as assertiveness, materialism, and a lack of concern for others, task-oriented leadership is preferred. Contrary, in societies with highly feminine index, leadership style is focused on people. As it was mentioned before, servant leaders prioritize the needs of their followers, engaging in nurturing, defending, listening and learning about their followers' aspirations. Therefore, a culture with a high level of collectivism would ideally thrive under the servant leadership model (Yukl, 2013).

In terms of Hofstede's dimensions, Romania shares similar values with other Balkan countries - marked by a high index of collectivism, femininity, a large power-distance, short-term orientation and high uncertainty avoidance (Negrusa, Toader, & Vidican-Manci, 2015) (Vrânceanu & Iorgulescu, 2016)

Considering these findings, the hospitality sector specificity, cultural values and leadership styles traits, the initial hypothesis for this investigation have been formulated as follows:

H1: Servant leadership is prevalent among Romanian hotel managers

4. GENDER ROLE AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

The debate on gender-based leadership styles is a common issue across various theories. A significant aspect of this discussion involves the impact of some biological differences between genders (Cahill, 2006) suggesting that these disparities lead to distinct reactions to the same stimuli, resulting in entirely different leadership approaches. Women tend to display a greater inclination towards risk aversion (Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999) and exhibit heightened emotional responses, particularly in negative situations, potentially leading to greater impulsivity than men (Cunningham & Roberts, 2012). However, other studies by Hoffman et al. (2010) and Rizzolatti (2005) found that women are particularly good at interpreting emotions and facial expressions. So, this ability enables women to take greater risks in interpersonal interactions, adapting readily to people's needs and persuading them to adopt their perspective.

Furthermore, Statham (1987) and Druskat (1994) exposed that women were more inclined to employ styles that involved task completion and interpersonal skills when interacting with subordinates. In contrast, men exhibited a propensity for "hands-off" approach, maintaining a distance from subordinates while wielding their authority. Moreover, Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) revealed that women leaders tend to manifest a greater degree of moral value in the context of transformational leadership. Rosener (1995) and Bass et al. (1996) suggested that females tend to exhibit more transformational traits compared to males. Also, women emphasize responsibility and care, whereas men underscore rights and justice. Remarkably, women might lean towards a more transformational style, potentially due to their comparatively lower inclination towards self-serving authoritarianism, a trait more commonly associated with male leadership styles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Helgesen (1990) concurred with this view, observing that women leaders are inclined to structure flatter organizations and place greater emphasis than men on frequent communication and information sharing through inclusive networks. The presence of female leaders in top management positions has been found to enhance a company's competitiveness by utilizing their unique leadership style, characterized by their ability to identify key challenges, effectively handle uncertainty, willingly share power and effectively inspire others (Chen, Chen, Kot, Zhu, & Wu, 2021).

From a cultural perspective, women face substantial stereotypes (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001) (Eagly, Johannessen Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). First of all, traits that are typically associated with men—such as assertiveness, calmness, strength, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and task orientation—are culturally linked to leadership. Second, it is expected of women to exhibit traits like empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, and people-orientation. Therefore, gender role theory holds that people are assigned particular traits and expected to follow specific behaviours based on their gender, as determined by social norms (Chen, Chen, Kot, Zhu, & Wu, 2021).

On the other hand, there are many studies which found that there are no major differences between male and female leadership (Bass B. , 1990) (Dobbins & Platz, 1986) (Hollander, 1985) (Thompson, 2000). According to Carless (1998), female managers received higher ratings in transformational behaviours, although subordinates didn't perceive this distinction. While men emphasized goal setting more, women prioritized interaction facilitation, yet according to Thompson (2000) study, were no significant differences in other aspects of leadership. Thus, both genders exhibited a diverse range of leadership functions leading to a balanced blend of leadership traits aimed at achieving organizational objectives. Others considered that there are more similarities than disparities. Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) revealed that women tend to align their leadership

behaviours more closely with the styles exhibited by their male counterparts, especially in environments dominated by men. In a more recent study, Eagly et al. (2001) suggested similarities in the leadership behaviours of women and men occupying the same organizational roles. In conclusion, the gender-related differences in leadership styles continue to be a subject of ongoing debate within the existing literature.

Considering these outcomes, it is noteworthy that Romania stood out in 2021 when compared to other EU nations, with an impressive 35.1% of women holding senior and middle management positions (The World Bank, 2023). This exceeded a study that looked at 41 European and Central Asian countries and found a median value of 32.7 percent. The range of percentages varied from a low of 20.2% (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to a high of 46.2% (Latvia).

Although the pandemic has negatively influenced the slow progress trend initiated in 2011 to reduce gender inequalities in the Romanian labour market, still has one of the lowest genders pay gaps in the EU. According to the most recent data available from Eurostat, the highest proportion of women working in the hospitality industry was found in the hotel sector - around 70% of total employees. In addition, the majority of women hold top management positions in this sector (Deloitte Romania., 2021). This is due to gender equality policies implemented by major hotel groups, recommending that 40% of management positions be filled by women. However, the situation in Romania and other countries is entirely different in the other segments of the hospitality industry.

By triangulating the findings, the following hypothesis have been articulated to investigate gender leadership styles. It employs the empowering, paradoxical, and servant leadership styles as lenses within the context of the second cluster of leadership styles:

H11: There are no gender-based differences in empowering leadership

H12: There are no gender-based differences in paradoxical leadership

H13: There are no gender-based differences in servant leadership

5. RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

To establish the prevailing leadership style among Romanian hotel managers and answer to the study questions, a descriptive approach was employed. This method used structured interviews featuring closed-ended questions as the research tool of choice. The conceptual framework guiding this study is rooted in Litwin and Stringer's theory and questionnaire, especially the Judgement Index (Judgement Index). However, adaptations were made to align the theory with the spectrum of leadership styles under examination.

Starting from this questionnaire, a comprehensive set of 24 statements was meticulously crafted. These were strategically designed to map onto the distinct spectrum of 6 leadership styles: transformational, transactional, laissez faire, empowering, paradoxical, servant. Additionally, the survey incorporated 3 questions related to demographic information aimed to collect information about the respondents' gender, age and their respective hotels of employment. Throughout the period 4th of April to 31st of May 2023 a series of interviews were organized in a digital format.

The population for the study is hotel managers in Romania, with a focus on both male and female managers. The data was collected in a cross-sectional time horizon, as the answers were collected once from each manager and there was no expectation of an immediate change in the answer or perspective of the respondents. The chosen sampling strategy for this study followed a non-probability approach. This decision was influenced by practical considerations regarding accessibility. To address data collection needs, a systematic method was adopted to identify and engage potential participants. In the first stage, a manageable pool of potential 76 hotels was established, with outstanding results in terms of market share and revenue. In the second phase, the process entailed a meticulous review of each hotel's website to gather contact information. Following outreach, a total of 28 general and hotel managers expressed their willingness to participate in this study and engage in in-depth interviews.

Out of all the recorded responses, 46.4% were contributed by men, while the remaining 53.6% were provided by women. A significant proportion of managers (46.4%) fall within the age range of 26 to 40 years, followed by respondents aged between 41 to 60 years old (46.5%), and an additional 7.1% representing the age group of 18 to 25 years old.

6. FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE STUDY

Finding the prevalent leadership style among the sample of managers was the main goal of the initial stage of the investigation. According to the data collected, servant leadership style was found to be the most widespread style within the second cluster. The participants' responses were meticulously organized to facilitate a structured and methodical examination. Each question was classified based on its alignment with specific leadership style. Each leadership style was assigned an average score, computed by aggregating the scores attributed to questions using the Likert scale from 1 (not indicating my leadership style) to 5 (completely representative of my style). As each individual possesses a blend of the three leadership style components in order to establish the prevailing style, we opted for the binary preference relationship method. Through this method, the average scores are pairwise compared for each individual, awarding a score of 1 for the higher score and 0.5 for equal scores. As a result, the three leadership styles receive a score based on the number of times they outperformed the others. The process led to comprehensive matrix showing the weighted scores across all leadership styles.

The statistical analysis presented in Table 3 strongly revealed a prevalence toward servant leadership style. The analysis methodically employed a paired t-test to compare the means of each pair of the three leadership styles. Through this rigorous process, two distinct alternative hypotheses were tested and supported. Accordingly, first hypothesis asserting that the mean of Servant score (M1) surpasses that the mean of Empowering score (M2), has been robustly supported by the corresponding p-value and critical value. Similarly, the second hypothesis, which posits that the mean of Servant score (M1) is greater than the mean of Paradoxical score (M3), has also been reinforced by consistent p-values and critical value. Consequently, the analysis suggests that individuals exhibit more aligned with servant leadership values in contrast to both empowering and paradoxical. Thus, H1 is confirmed, underscores the prevalence of Servant leadership tendencies within the studied population.

TABLE 3 - Compared means t-test results: sample weighted scores

Means Report					
VAR	Mean	95% LCL	95% UCL		
Servant score (1)	1,1964	0,9308	1,4620		
Empowering score (2)	0,8571	0,5593	1,1550		
Paradox score (3)	0,8929	0,5836	1,2022		
Mean Difference (1-2)	0,3393	-0,0507	0,7292		
Mean Difference (1-3)	0,3036	-0,0948	0,7019		
Mean Difference (2-3)	0,0357	-0,3838	0,4553		
H1: $\mu_1 - \mu_2 > 0$ / Greater than (upper-tailed)					
<i>t Critical Value (5%)</i>	1,6736	<i>p-value</i>	0,0434	<i>H1 (5%)</i>	Accepted
H2: $\mu_1 - \mu_3 > 0$ / Greater than (upper-tailed)					
<i>t Critical Value (5%)</i>	1,6736	<i>p-value</i>	0,0462	<i>H2 (5%)</i>	Accepted
H3: $\mu_2 - \mu_3 > 0$ / Greater than (upper-tailed)					
<i>t Critical Value (5%)</i>	1,6736	<i>p-value</i>	0,4326	<i>H3 (5%)</i>	Rejected

Source: authors' calculations

In the second phase, gender-specific data analysis shows that women respondents, who represent 53.6% of the sample, primarily employ the Servant and Paradoxical leadership styles. In order to rigorously assess the influence of gender on the various leadership styles, a comprehensive statistical analysis has been conducted for all three examined leadership styles.

The ANOVA results for Empowering leadership style revealed no significant gender differences in their prevalence, thus H11 is confirmed for the sample. In the investigation of the Paradoxical leadership style (refer to Table 4 and 5), the ANOVA analysis revealed a significant distinction between genders ($F = 5.5031$, $p = 0.0269$). Subsequent post-hoc tests, including Tukey-Kramer, Fisher LSD, and Dunnett's, emphasize the meaningful in the prevalence of the Paradoxical leadership style between the Feminine and Masculine groups.

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

These findings do not confirm H12 hypothesis, revealing a significant divergence in the adoption or manifestation of the Paradoxical leadership style among the two gender groups.

TABLE 4 - Descriptive statistics for Paradoxical leadership

Descriptive Statistics Paradoxical style							
Groups	Sample size	Sum	Variance	Std Dev	Mean	95% Confidence Interval*	
Feminine	15	67.0000	0.1327	0.3643	4.4667	4.2649	4.6684
Masculine	13	53.5000	0.1835	0.4284	4.1154	3.8565	4.3742
Total	28		0.1822	0.4269	4.3036		

Source: authors' calculations

TABLE 5 - Tukey-Kramer, Fisher LSD and Dunnett tests for the Paradoxical style

Tukey-Kramer				
Groups	Difference	Test Statistic	p-value	Significant
Feminine vs Masculine	0.3513	3.3176	0.0269	Yes
Fisher LSD				
Group vs. Group (Contrast)	Difference	Test Statistic	p-value	Significant
Feminine vs Masculine	0.3513	2.3459	0.0263	No
Dunnett's test (Control Group = Feminine)				
Group vs. Group (Contrast)	Difference	Test Statistic	p-value	Significant
Masculine vs Feminine	-0.3513	2.3459	0.0269	***

Source: authors' calculations

Similarly, concerning the Servant leadership style (see Tables 6. and 7.), the ANOVA outcomes displayed a significant difference between genders ($F = 6.7174$, $p = 0.0155$). The post-hoc examinations that followed, found a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of servant leadership style between the feminine and masculine groups. This reverses H13 hypothesis, sustaining that the two gender groups significantly differ from each other in terms of their adoption or manifestation of the Servant leadership style.

TABLE 6 - Descriptive statistics for Servant leadership

Descriptive Statistics Servant style							
Groups	Sample size	Sum	Variance	Std Dev	Mean	95% Confidence Interval*	
Feminine	15	69.7500	0.1589	0.3987	4.6500	4.4292	4.8708
Masculine	13	52.5000	0.6546	0.8091	4.0385	3.5495	4.5274
Total	28		0.4698	0.6854	4.3661		

Source: authors' calculations

TABLE 7 - Tukey-Kramer, Fisher LSD and Dunnett tests for the Servant style

Tukey-Kramer				
Groups	Difference	Test Statistic	p-value	Significant
Feminine vs Masculine	0.6115	3.6654	0.0155	Yes
Fisher LSD				
Group vs. Group (Contrast)	Difference	Test Statistic	p-value	Significant
Feminine vs Masculine	0.6115	2.5918	0.0150	Yes
Dunnett's test (Control Group = Feminine)				

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

<i>Group vs. Group (Contrast)</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Test Statistic</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Significant</i>
Masculine vs Feminine	-0.6115	2.5918	0.0155	***

Source: authors' calculations

The effect sizes for both ANOVA analyses, according to the Omega squared values (0.16 and 0.20) show a moderate to large effect, indicating that gender explains a substantial amount of the variance of leadership styles, paradoxical and servant.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with the study's objectives, a compelling conclusion can be drawn from the comprehensive comparisons of leadership styles within the second cluster. Among Romanian hotel managers that demonstrating commendable business results in market performance and revenue, the Servant leadership style emerges as the predominant choice. In light of this observation, it becomes apparent that the distinctive attribute of the service industry, and hospitality too, which is prioritizing services over results, influence leaders to prioritize people and relational dynamics with them over task-oriented outcomes.

At a cursory glance, this approach may seem divergent from the conventional emphasis on rigid organizational objectives, potentially raising concerns about its impact on the efficiency and overall success of a hotel business. However, upon a closer examination, as Bass & Riggio (2006) articulated, the underpinning principle of servant leadership lies in the leader's unwavering dedication to serving individuals. This commitment transcends the confines of business hotels' goals.

In contrast to transformational leadership, where the central pursuit revolves around achieving organizational alignment and performance, the philosophy of servant leadership takes root in the belief that sustainable organizational success emanates from fostering the growth, development and holistic well-being of individuals constituting the organization. This nuanced approach challenges the traditional paradigm and underscores how a thriving business hotel can indeed find its long-term prosperity through prioritizing and fostering the human element within its operational framework.

Furthermore, by providing crucial insights into the impact of gender on leadership choice, this study contributes to the knowledge of leadership styles in the hospitality sector. The results of this study emphasize the role of gender on leadership styles, which converge with some of the literature findings (Eagly & Johnson, 1990) (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001) (Chon & Zoltan, 2019) (Helgesen, 1990). Moreover, it is highlighted that gender has an important impact in the prevalence of the Paradoxical and Servant leadership styles, which has important consequences for organizational management.

According to the feminine perspective, the act of serving is inherently linked to qualities often associated with femininity, as well as compassion, caring and a focus on needs. Within this framework, a natural inclination towards servant leadership among women hotel managers is widely accepted. Thus, the study's results sustained with evidences this conclusion and the prevalence of key values for the feminine leadership style which include active listening, empathetic understanding, facilitating healing and fostering the individual development of others. This alignment with servant leadership principles not only underscores the compatibility between this style and feminine attributes, but also highlights how these values can shape a distinct and impactful leadership approach.

In conclusion, this exploration not only articulates the distinct tapestry of leadership styles illustrating Romanian hotel management, but also draws attention to the intriguing interplay of gender in shaping these stylistic predispositions. It is important to emphasize that this study is the first to explore this complex subject in the context of the Romanian hotel industry. The groundbreaking nature of this research provides new insights and contributes to the growing body of knowledge on leadership, gender, and their intersection within the specific business environment of Romania.

Furthermore, in terms of gender differences in leadership, previous research has primarily focused on the classical leadership cluster: transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire styles. The significance of this study lies in its provision of critical empirical insights into the second cluster of leadership styles.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of the study, such as the sample size and potential biases in data collection. Future research could explore these leadership styles in more diverse samples and consider additional factors that may influence leadership style preferences.

REFERENCES

- Al-Daibat, B. (2017). Impact of Leadership Styles in Organizational Commitment. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, 5(5), 25-37.
- Bass, B. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, vol.18 No.3., 19-31.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. 2nd ed. . New Jersey:: Routledge.
- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. . *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2) , 181-217. doi:10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00016-8.
- Bass, B., Avolio, B., & Atwater, L. (1996). The transformational and transactional leadership of men and women. . *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 45, 5-34.
- Behar, H. (2007). *It's not about the coffee: leadership principles from a life at Starbucks*, . London: Penguin.
- Brownell, J. (2010). Leadership in the Service of Hospitality . *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 51(3), 363-378.
- Byrnes, J., Miller, D. C., & Schafer, W. D. (1999). Gender Differences in Risk Taking; A Meta Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 125, N° 3, p. 367-383.
- Cahill, L. (2006). Why Sex Matters for Neuroscience. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 7(6), , p. 477-484.
- Carless, S. (1998). Gender differences in transformational leadership: an examination of superior leader and subordinate perspectives. *Sex Roles*, 39(11/12) , 887-902.
- Chen, M., Chen, S., Kot, H., Zhu, D., & Wu, Z. (2021). Does gender diversity matter to hotel financial performance? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 97, 102987.
- Chon, K. K.-S., & Zoltan, J. (2019). Role of servant leadership in contemporary hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31(8), 3371-3394.
- Cunningham, J., & Roberts, P. (2012). *Inside Her Pretty Little Head; A New Theory of Motivation and Why It Matters for Marketing*. London: Marshall Cavendish Business.
- Dahie, A. M., Mohamed, A. A., & Mohamed, R. A. (2017). Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment: Case Study from University of Somalia. *International Journal of Engineering Science and Computing*, 7(9), 14838-14843 .
- Deloitte Romania,. (2021). *Careers with equal opportunities: women in leadership roles*.
- Dobbins, G., & Platz, S. (1986). Sex differences in leadership. How real are they?. *Academy of Management Review*, 11(1) , 118-127.
- Druskat, V. (1994). Gender and leadership style: transformational and transactional leadership in the Roman Catholic Church. . *Leadership Quarterly*, 5, 99-119.
- Eagly, A. H., Johannesen Schmidt, M. C., & van Engen, M. (2003). Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men. . *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, , p. 569-591.
- Eagly, A., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. . *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4) , 781-797.
- Eagly, A., & Johnson, B. T. (1990). Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(2), 233-256.

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

- Erkutlu, H. (2008). The impact of transformational leadership on organizational and leadership effectiveness: The Turkish case. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(7), 708-726.
- Gardiner, M., & Tiggeman, M. (1999). Gender differences in leadership style, job stress, and mental health in male and female dominated industries. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72, 301-315.
- Gui, C., Luo, A., Zhang, P., & Deng, A. (2020). A meta-analysis of transformational leadership in hospitality research. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(6), 2137-2154.
- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The female advantage: women's ways of leadership*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hoffman, H., Kessler, H., Eppel, T., Rukavina, S., & Traue, H. C. (2010). Expression Intensity, Gender, and Facial Emotion Recognition: Women Recognize Only Subtle Facial Emotions Better than Men. *Acta Psychologica*, Vol. 135, N° 3, p. 278-283, doi 10.1016/j.actpsy.2010.07.012.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Sage.
- Hollander, E. (1985). Leadership and power. In (eds) In G. Lindzey, & E. Aronson, *Handbook of social psychology*. 3rd ed. New York: Random House.
- (2021). *Hospitality Global Market Report 2022*.
- Huertas-Valdivia, I., Gallego-Burín, A., & Lloréns-Montes, F. (2019). Effects of different leadership styles on hospitality workers. *Tourism Management*, 71, 402-420.
- Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. (2000). Five-factor model of personality and transformational leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 751-765.
- Judgement Index. (n.d.).
- Kuhnert, K., & Lewis, P. (1987). Transactional and transformational leadership: a constructive/developmental analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(4), 648-657.
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Liao, C., & Meuser, J. D. (2014). Servant leadership and serving culture: Influence on individual and unit performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(5), 1434-1452. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034>.
- Liden, R., Wayne, S., Meuser, J., Hu, J., Wu, J., & Liao, C. (2015). Servant leadership: Validation of a short form of the SL-28. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26, 254-269.
- Liu, J., Liu, X., & Zeng, X. (2011). Does transactional leadership count for team innovativeness? The moderating role of emotional labor and the mediating role of team efficacy. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 24(3), 282-298.
- Lowe, K. B., Kroeck, K. G., & Sivasubramaniam, N. (1996). Effectiveness correlates of transformational and transactional leadership: A meta analytic review of the MLQ literature. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7, 385-425.
- Moodian, M. A. (2008). *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Exploring the cross-cultural dynamics within organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Negrusa, A., Toader, V., & Vidican-Manci, L. (2015). Study of Romanian pilgrimage tourism products – A cultural behavior approach. *Review of International Comparative Management*, 16(5), pp. 574-590.
- Øgaard, T., Marnburg, E., & Larsen, S. (2008). Perceptions of organizational structure in the hospitality industry: Consequences for commitment, job satisfaction and perceived performance. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 661-671.
- Pop, C., Cosma, S., Negrusa, A., Ionescu, C., & Marinescu, N. (2007). *Romania as a Tourists Destination and the Romanian Hotel Industry*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

EXPLORING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

- Rizzolatti, G. (2005). The Mirror Neuron System and its Function in Humans. *Anatomy and Embryology*, Vol. 210, N° 1, , p. 419-421.
- Romero, E. J. (2004). Latin American leadership: El patrón & el líder moderno. *Cross cultural management: An International Journal*, 11(3), p. 25-37.
- Rosener, J. (1995). Ways women lead. . *Harvard Business Review*, 68, , 119-125.
- Rus, V., & Negrusa, A. (2014). Rus, Rozalia Veronica, and Online hotel booking systems in Romania . *Procedia Economics and Finance* 15, 1235-1242.
- Segundo, M. G. (2023). Leadership and Culture: What Difference Does it Make? *Regent Research Roundtables Proceedings*, pp. 104-119.
- Statham, A. (1987). The gender model revisited: differences in the management styles of men and women. . *Sex Roles*, 16 , 409-429.
- Sürücü, L., Maşlakçı, A., & Şeşen, H. (2020). The role of positive psychological capital in the effect of leadership styles on organizational commitment: A study of hospitality services. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 1-16.
- The World Bank. (2023, April 25). Gender Data Profile. Retrieved from The World Bank Group: <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/countries/romania/>
- Thompson, M. (2000). Gender, leadership orientation and effectiveness: testing the theoretical models of Bolman and Deal and Quinn. . *Sex Roles*, 42(11/12) , 969-992.
- Vrânceanu, C. A., & Iorgulescu, M.-C. (2016). A Look at Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in Two Service Sectors from Romania. *Amfiteatru Economic*, Vol. 18, Special Issue No. 10 , 875-884.
- World Tourism Organization. (n.d.). Global Report on Women in Tourism. Retrieved January 22, 2023, from <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420384>
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in Organizations*. 8th Edition, . Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River.
- Zhang, X., & Bartol, K. M. (2010). Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: the influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(1), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.48037118>.
- Zhang, Y., Waldman, D. A., Han, Y. L., & Li, X. B. (2015). Paradoxical leader behaviors in people management: Antecedents and consequences. . *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(2) , 538–566. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2012.0995>.