

Evaluating a Strategy Leadership Scale in the Greek Hotel Industry

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Abstract Over the past 20 years, Strategic Leadership has attracted both academics and practitioners. Strategic Leadership is defined as the managerial ability of a leader to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and enable others to make strategic changes as required. This study aims to evaluate a strategy leadership scale in the Greek hotel industry. For this evaluation responses from 372 hotel employees were used, working in hotels located in most parts of Greece. The major statistical methodology used is Exploratory Factor Analysis. The results indicated that both the scale under evaluation is acceptable and that Greek hotels follow strategic leadership processes.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Hotel Industry, Scale Evaluation, Greece

INTRODUCTION

The modern competitive market environment has been characterized as a complex one. As a result, organizations have focused on studying several organizational factors such as leadership styles, organizational culture, flexible and autonomous working conditions/environments, job stress, and role conflict (Tang & Change, 2010). More specifically, Human Resource Management (HRM) has started developing mechanisms in order to be prepared for the continuously changing working environment. In particular, HRM should be able to adjust to changes regarding the customers' needs, the technology development, and the philosophy of personnel relationships/communications (Itika, 2011). For this reason, a successful effective strategic leadership plan should be implemented (Redmond, 2012).

Taking into consideration that in an ever-changing market environment organizations/companies have to change, this means that organizations must take actions that will help them to survive in these dynamic and competitive environments. Strategic leadership may be considered to be

a factor that may drive organizations through the difficult paths of a changing environment. Strategic leadership is defined by Davies (2004) the actions that “encompass direction-setting, broad aggregated agendas, a perspective to view future and a template against which to evaluate current activities” (p. 30). However, the focus of strategic leadership is not only directed to human resources in making changes but it is also directed to the appropriate envision and the development of the appropriate flexible skills during the changing process (Jaleha & Cachuki, 2018). To this end, academics have examined the influence of strategic leadership on a plethora of organizational factors such as job stress and job commitment, role conflict, and organizational performance (Dlamini et al., 2017; Chiang & Wang, 2012).

Strategic leaders are expected to have created two major types of abilities: a) organizational abilities, and b) personal characteristics. Organizational abilities are related to the capabilities of a strategic leader to be able to manage an organization efficiently. More specifically, organizational abilities include the strategic orientation, the translation of strategy into action, the alignment of people and

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organizations, the determination of effective intervention points, and the development of strategic capabilities (Davies & Davies, 2004). Personal characteristics are related to the leader's personal capabilities that he/she should develop in order to be an effective strategic leader. More thoroughly, personal characteristics include restlessness with the present, absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and leadership wisdom. In other words, strategic leaders should possess a "creation tension" that would help them to imagine the organization's vision, should absorb new information, should inspire a continuous sense of purpose and motivation, and should be able to take the right actions at the right time.

One of the most vulnerable sectors to the changes is the hospitality sector. According to recent research, strategic leadership is related to the successful implementation of changing management plan (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Belias et al., 2017). The hospitality industry depends to a large extent on the employees' performance (Rossidis et al., 2021; Badr El-Deen & Ali, 2021). However, recent research indicated the need of creating a research tool for measuring the factor of strategic leadership in the hotel industry (Ntalakos et al., 2022b; Ntalakos et al., 2022c). To fill this gap in the relevant literature, this paper aims to propose and evaluate a research instrument that reflects strategic leadership in the hotel industry. To this end, the empirical testing of the proposed scale makes use of Greek hotels, considering that Greece is a leading country in tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Strategic Leadership

Over the past 50 years, academics and practitioners have defined the concept of leadership according to their points of view. As a result, a plethora of different aspects of leadership are proposed to the academia. However, some common characteristics exist in every definition, such as the following: leadership is defined as the ability to influence the subordinates to make the best of themselves so as to achieve a common organizational goal; besides, leadership is the ability to articulate visions, embody values and create a culture to think out of the box in order to adjust to a changing process (Alam et al., 2015; Redmond, 2012; Schein, 1992).

Ireland and Hitt (1999) were two of the first researchers that examined the term Strategic leadership. According to these authors strategic leadership is described as the ability to focus and communicating a vision, build a productive organizational culture, and influence subordinates to make decisions that increase long-term viability while maintaining short-term stability (Redmond, 2012).

The key factors that strategic leaders should focus on are the following (Hitt et al., 2010; Jaradat & Mashhour, 2017):

- *Developing and Communicating a Clear Vision:* Strategic leaders have to enhance and communicate a united clear vision to all the personnel. This vision would be achieved via the formation of specific strategies that would increase the growth of the organization. If there is no vision provided, then the chaos will be created in the organization, and is unlikely to survive.
- *Building Dynamic Core Competencies:* One of the major goals of an organization is to be able to maintain a competitive advantage. Strategic leaders should develop capabilities (e.g. function skills) that the organization would continue to develop its competitive image to the market or update and replace the existing one with a new competitive and antagonistic image.
- *Focusing on Human Capital:* Strategic leaders should focus on attracting and retaining the best employees that they can hire. In addition, strategic leaders should continue developing the capabilities and competencies of their personnel through training programs.
- *Investing in New Technologies:* Strategic leaders should be up-to-date regarding new technologies as the new technological achievements are more likely to help the organization operate in a more efficient and productive way.
- *Committing to Valuable Strategies:* Strategic leaders should focus on developing strategies that focus on new global market opportunities to reduce cost-productivity.
- *Creating and Maintaining an Effective Organizational Culture:* Strategic leaders need to build and maintain a healthy organizational culture that would promote the values of the organization such as teamwork, respecting human capital, skill/abilities developing via training and learning, innovation, and adaptability to changing conditions.
- *Developing and Implementing Balanced Controls:* Strategic leaders should establish control systems that are promoting flexible and innovative employees behavior via specific financial actions and practices. As a result, the organization can be helped to maintain its competitive advantage.
- *Engaging in Ethical Practices:* Strategic leaders should play a crucial role when an organization's ethical practices are established. Some of the ethical elements that strategic leaders should provoke are the following: trust, integrity, and honesty. These ethical practices should be implemented by both managers and employees. For this reason, they should be clearly understood and observed by the organization's members.

In addition, Strategic leadership is more recently defined as the capability to adjust to constant and continuous changes

(Samini et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has made stronger the need to establish an organization's financial and functional sustainability via strategic leadership (Mahdi & Nassar, 2021). On the same point of view, strategic leadership is combined with the ability to create adjustable and adaptive skills when environmental opportunities appear (Fernandes et al., 2022). The connection between strategic leadership and communication skills/decision-making abilities/creation of purpose and direction has also been examined in recent publications (Abu Mostafa et al., 2021; Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

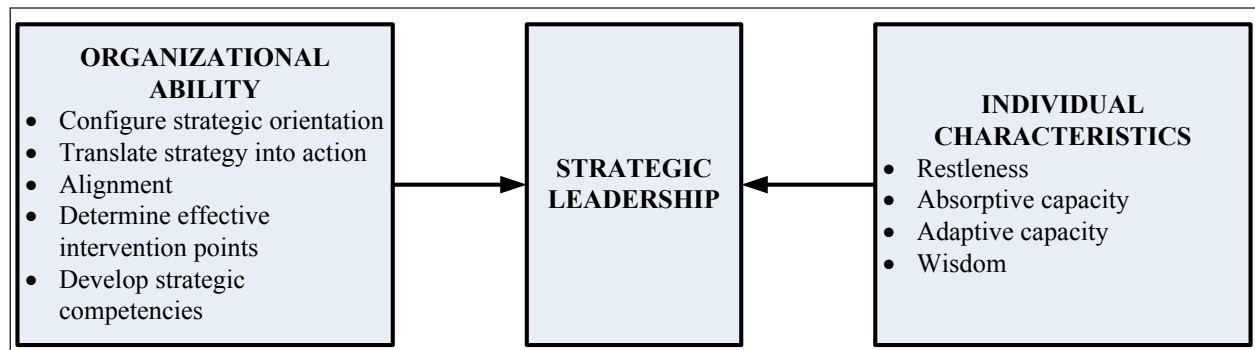
Eventually, Jaradat and Mashhour (2017) enhance the characteristics of strategic leadership with the following terms: medium-term strategic vision, social organizational structure, trust and honesty, innovation and creativity, setting strategic directions, utilization of effective performance, and promotion of risk-taking.

To summarize, effective strategic leadership is the ability to operate under uncertain conditions. Strategic leaders should view the uncertain and hostile environment as an opportunity to discover new innovative methods in order for an organization to be able to survive in the constantly

dynamic and complex environment of the 21st century. If not, strategic leaders would possibly manage in ways that will produce failure, perhaps for the whole organization (Hamel, 2007). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2017) suggest that strategic leaders should need to adapt their characteristics to meet innovation's changing requirements (Belias & Trihas, 2023).

Instruments for Measuring Strategic Leadership

Many strategic leadership scales that have been used in empirical studies applied to various sectors of different countries. However, Davies (2004) argues that academia needs to resolve the difference between “good leadership” and the “strategic leadership”. According to many researchers, this issue could be resolved via the concepts of effective leadership or leadership styles that fit best any given situation. Further, Davies et al. (2004) supported the need for empirical research that may be based on strategic organizational leadership. Thus, Davies and Davies (2004) have suggested a theoretical research model which is illustrated in Fig. 1.



Source: Davies and Davies (2004).

Fig. 1: A Strategic Leadership Framework

The research framework that is presented in Fig. 1 indicates that two factors determine strategic leadership. The first factor is defined as Organizational Ability, and has the following characteristics: it is strategically orientated, it translates strategy into action, it aligns people and organizations, it determines effective strategic intervention points, and it develops strategic competencies. The second factor is defined as Individual Characteristics. Its characteristics are the below: it shows absorptive capacity; it has the adaptive capacity, and it reflects wisdom. Based on these factors, Davies and Davies' (2004) model has been applied in different sectors (for example education) (Davies & Davies, 2004; Davies & Davies, 2006; Williams & Johnson, 2013) and in tourism (Lazarakis, 2020; Belias et al., 2017). However, Kumkale (2022) supports that although these factors showed high reliability in the studies used, still

more research is needed. Thus, this study aims to examine a similar strategic leadership scale, based on Davies and Davies (2004), in the Greek hotel industry.

THE METHODOLOGY

The Participants

The population used in the study refers to employees working in four and five-star hotels operating in Greece. The relevant questionnaire developed was distributed in April 2022, through Google Forms, to a sample of four-star hotels covering most geographical parts of Greece. The hotels employed in the sampling were randomly chosen, according to their size, from the Hellenic Hotel Chamber databank.

This is because we argue that these types of hotels may rely on effective management and may apply human resource management best practices.

From a total of 593 questionnaires sent to employees in hotels, 57 respondents refused to answer, 115 did not answer at all (no response) and 49 did not answer correctly or answered with many missing values (more than 50% of the total questions). Finally, 372 hotel employees answered all questions of the questionnaires sent to them. Accordingly, the return rate is equal to 62.7 percent. The location of the hotels was scattered all over Greece. Most employees were

located in: Dodecanese Islands (23.7%), Cyclades Islands (16.7%), Ionian Sea (13.4%), and Chalcidice (12.4).

Furthermore, Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents. We see that most respondents were Greeks, male, of age between 41 and 50 years old, married, with work experience of more than 20 years, having equally permanent or seasonal positions, with years of employment in the specific hotel unit between six and 10 years, with years of employment in the hotel industry more than 20 years, with more employees having a degree from a professional college, and with more employees working in a 4 stars hotel.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

		Individuals	Percent
Gender	Male	190	51.1
	Female	182	48.9
Age	< 30	40	10.8
	31-40	106	28.5
	41-50	130	34.9
	> 50	96	25.8
Marital status	Single	108	29.0
	Married	220	59.1
	Divorced	44	11.8
Years of work experience	0-5	32	8.6
	6-10	60	16.1
	11-15	52	14.0
	16-20	66	17.7
	>20	162	43.5
Seasonality	Permanent position	186	50.0
	Seasonal position	186	50.0
Years of employment in the specific hotel company	1-2	56	15.1
	3-5	76	20.4
	6-10	90	24.2
	10-20	76	20.4
	>20	74	19.9
Years of employment in the hotel industry (in general)	1-2	12	3.2
	3-5	40	10.8
	6-10	94	25.3
	10-20	98	26.3
	>20	128	34.4
Level of education	High School Graduate	80	21.5
	Professional College Graduate	96	25.8
	Technological College Graduate	64	17.2
	Bachelor Degree	60	16.1
	Master Degree	66	17.7
	PhD Degree	6	1.6
Working in hotel type	5 stars	182	48.9
	4 stars	190	51.1
Nationality	Greek	364	97.8
	Other	8	2.2

Table 2 presents the working post that the respondents were holding. We can see that most respondents were either members of the board or were having other managerial posts.

Table 2: Working Position of Respondents within the Hotel

	Frequency	Percent
Owner - Member of board	86	23.1
Management	84	22.6
Reception	70	18.8
Accounting–Offices	34	9.1
Housekeeping	34	9.1
Kitchen	26	7.0
Restaurant	18	4.8
Bar	10	2.7
General duties (Gardening-andscaping)	6	1.6
Publicrelations	4	1.1
Total	372	100.0

The Instrument Employed

Based on Davies and Davies (2004), for developing the strategic leadership questionnaire in our study, we used a five-level Likert scale, taking values from “Totally disagree” (1) to “Totally agree” (5). The items (10 questions) of the current measurement tool are described on Table 3 on the next section.

Having got permission from Davies and Davies (2004), to follow parts of their research protocol, we translated the questionnaire statements from English to Greek, following the usual steps proposed by Vallerand and Halliwell (1983), for developing its Greek version. Finally, apart from the structural statements, formulating the items of the instrument of research, there were questions concerning

the demographic and professional characteristics of the sample.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this research was to evaluate a Greek version of the Davies and Davies (2004) instrument of research which measures strategic leadership in Greek hotels. The researchers examined the validity and the internal consistency of the measurement tool based on the statistical methods of Exploratory Factor Analysis and Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient. If the value of Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is higher than 0.70, then all the items of the scale are accepted (Nunnally, 1978). The validity and the adequacy of the tool was examined via Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistical measurement as well as the Total Variance Explained (TVE) measurement. If the percentage of TVE is higher than 50 percent and all the loadings of all items are greater than 0.40, then all items are accepted (Hair et al., 2010).

RESULTS

Table 3 presents the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis. These results are acceptable since the KMO value is greater than 0.50 and Bartlett’s test significance is 0.000 indicating sample consistency. Further, it is seen that two factors have been produced with the sum of their TVE being more than 50 percent. The first factor, which we call it “Strategic Leadership”, consists of all items except item 6. Item 6 is assigned to factor 2. All loadings are acceptable since they are greater than 0.40, indicating construct validity. The Cronbach’s alpha for factor 1 is equal to 0.788 indicating acceptable construct internal consistency. Finally, considering that the mean of the Factor 1 item is 3.99, it may support that the Greek hotels follow strategic leadership activities.

Table 3: Results Indicated by the Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items		Factor 1 Loadings	Factor 2 Loadings
Item 1	I keep the balance between the organization’s long-term perspective, and its short-term business needs.	0.691	
Item 2	I am aware of every condition of the organization, without being affected by the daily functional details.	0.555	
Item 3	I compare the possible short-term and long-term consequences of the actions I am considering.	0.769	
Item 4	I am able to accept new approaches and change ideas when new information indicates the need to do so.	0.731	
Item 5	I am looking for opportunities today, which can create valuable results tomorrow.	0.746	
Item 6	I challenge my long-standing assumptions and encourage others to challenge theirs as well.	-	0.739

Items		Factor 1 Loadings	Factor 2 Loadings
Item 7	I can turn strategy into action.	0.776	
Item 8	I can get staff members involved in strategic discussions.	0.651	
Item 9	I understand how the wider political and cultural environment affects my organization.	0.630	
Item 10	I maintain a strong understanding of the local, regional and national context in which my organization operates.	0.756	
Total Variance Explained (TVE) - percent		55.74%	44.37%
Factor's mean and standard deviation		3.99 (0.595)	-
Cronbach's Alpha		0.788	-
KMO value		0.860	
Bartlett's test significance (p)		0.000	

CONCLUSION

The current paper aims to fulfill the empirical gap of strategic leadership in the tourism and hospital industry. For this reason, the research instrument that was used was based on the work of Davies and Davies (2004). Utilizing data from employees working in hotels distributed in all parts of Greece, exploratory factor analysis was the major statistical method used.

The findings of the study confirm that the Greek version of Davies and Davies' (2004) questionnaire, referring to strategic leadership, is reliable and as such can be used in research focusing on the Greek hospitality industry. In particular, using the values of the standardized loadings, the analysis showed that strategic leadership puts more emphasis on activities referring to the comparison of possible short-term and long-term consequences, on the acceptance of new approaches and change ideas, on the current opportunities that can forecast future outputs, on the turning of strategy into action, and on the understanding the context where the organization operates, compared to the balance between long-term and short-term business needs, to the functioning of organizational conditions, to the involving of staff in the strategic discussions, and to the wider political and cultural environment that may affect the organization.

This paper has revealed several academic gaps that exist regarding strategic leadership. According to recent research, strategic leadership is connected with several organizational factors, such as organizational change (Palomino & Frezatti, 2016; Peiro & Rodriguez, 2008; Baysak & Yener, 2015; Gahan et al., 2021; Belias et al., 2022a; Belias et al., 2022b; Belias et al., 2022; Belias et al., 2022; Ntalakos et al. 2022a; Agyapong & Boamah, 2019; Alseiri et al., 2019). It is necessary for HRM to be aware in advance of the factors that can lead to a successful implementation of an organizational changing plan. This could save time and money for the organization (low cost profit). Hence, strategic leadership could lead to a successful organizational change that can

lead afterwards to a successful organizational performance.

Eventually, the current paper aims to investigate the nature of the variable of strategic leadership in the hospitality and tourism industry. Although Davies and Davies' (2004) strategic leadership measurement tool has been used in other sections (such as educational management), there is a limited number of researchers who investigate the role of strategic leadership in the hospitality industry. The authors hope that this research would trigger future empirical research in this field as strategic leadership could be the key organizational factor that can make the practitioners cope with the constant and continuous crises and changes that commonly occur in the tourism industry.

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