

The Concept and the Measurement of Strategic Leadership: The case of Greek Hotel Employees with the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis

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Abstract: Over the past two decades, scholars and practitioners are interested in the term of Strategic Leadership. Strategic Leadership is a leader's ability to anticipate, envision, being flexible, and enable others to make strategic changes as required. There are several researches connecting strategic leadership with various variables of the Human Resource Management (HRM), such as: work stress, (Baysak and Yener, 2015), work commitment (Chiang & Wang, 2012) and role conflict (Palomino & Frezatti, 2016). Hence, it is very important to develop a reliable measurement tool which will explore the nature of strategic leadership and map its dimensions. Barbara Davies & Brent Davies (2004) have already developed a model which consists of both the organizational abilities and the individual characteristics of strategic leaders. The main purpose of the current paper is to study the application of Davies & Davies model (2004) in the hospitality industry. More thoroughly, the empirical data used on this paper has derived by a research consisted of 372 participants who work on Greek Hotel Companies. The method used to analyze the connections between the items of the strategic leadership was factor analysis. The findings support that Davies & Davies model (2004) can be used as a measurement tool in the hospitality industry. Thus, the current paper aims to contribute to the comprehension of the nature of strategic leadership on the hospitality and tourism industry, and trigger future empirical research in the field.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, Greek, Hotel Companies, Hospitality Industry, Factor analysis

1. Introduction

In today's complex environment, organizations emphasize on organizational change, as well as on flexible and autonomous work environment (Belias et al., 2020; Belias et al., 2020b). Unfortunately, this environment has caused continuously changes on job conditions (Belias et al., 2022b), work anxiety and stress, ambiguity and role conflict (Tang & Chang, 2010; Koutiva et al., 2020). A solution to these problems that were risen by the changing working environment can be given by human resource management (Belias and Trihas, 2022d; Belias and Trihas, 2022e; Belias and Trihas, 2022f). More thoroughly, human resource management's functions may have as a result that an organization would have a successful response to the current antagonistic environment as well as to the changes that are associated with a) the needs and expectations of the clients, b) the technology and c) the concept of labor relations (Itika, 2011). In addition, an organization should have an effective leadership so as it would be able to stand against the technological and globalization challenges that are caused to the business environment (Redmond, 2012).

Having in mind that in such turbulent environment organizations need to change, this means that there is a need to provide further evidence on how organizations can cope with the changes occurring on this environment. One of the variables that may determine the fate of a change program is strategic leadership and how it may have an effect on Human Resource Management during a change. The essence of strategic leadership is not only to be able to empower the personnel to make changes but also to have the necessary envision and maintain flexibility during the course of a change (Jaleha & Cachuki, 2018). Furthermore, there is evidence that strategic leadership is connected with a number of Human Resource Management attributes, such as work commitment (Dlamini et al, 2017; Chiang & Wang, 2012), role conflict (Palomino & Frezatti, 2016), work stress (Peiro & Rodriquez, 2008; Baysak and Yener, 2015) and overall achieving high performance (Gahan et al., 2021).

A sector which is characterized by frequent changes is the tourist sector. There is a number of researches which indicate that strategic leadership is connected with the ability of human resources to implement with success a

change management program (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Belias et al., 2017; Belias and Trihas., 2022a; Belias and Trihas, 2022b; Belias et al., 2022). Overall, the tourist sector is a service which relies on the performance of the employees, especially on hotels (Rossidis et al., 2021; Rossidis et al., 2021b; Rossidis et al., 2019; Rossidis et al., 2019b; Badr El-Deen, R., & Ali, 2021; Belias and Trihas., 2022c; Ntalakos et al., 2022a). Nonetheless, there is a number of publications (Agyapong & Boamah, 2019; Alseiari et al., 2019; Ntalakos et al., 2022b; Ntalakos et al., 2022c) that have focused on the lack of a research tool for measuring strategic leadership in the hotel sector. This brings the need to develop a reliable measurement tool which will explore the nature of strategic leadership and map its dimensions. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to develop a proposal for an instrument of research for measuring strategic leadership on hotels. The research will rely on the findings retrieve from a pilot test which occurred among employees on Greek hotels.

2. Literature review

2.1 Definition of Strategic leadership

During the past decades, leadership has been described by a plethora of terms. Some of them are the following: a) an effort to influence people through communication to achieve the goal; b) a force which influences other people to take action or to make positive changes in their lives; c) an action that plays an important role in the motivation and coordination of an organization in order to achieve its goals; d) an ability to improve the self-confidence and the support of the followers in order to achieve a goal (Alam, Haerani, Amar & Sudirman, 2015). To sum up, leadership is connected with the capability of a person to influence individuals in order to succeed in visualizing organization's visions and goals (Redmond, 2012)

Strategic leadership is described as the compilation of visionary leadership style and managerial leadership style. In other words, strategic leadership is defined as the ability of an individual to positively affect his/her followers to make everyday decisions which enhance not only viability of the organization in long terms but also maintenance of its financial stability in short terms. A key element of this definition is the balance between the importance of the organization's direction, and its financial stability (Redmond, 2012). In a more recent publication Samimi, et al. (2021) have provided an updated definition which is that strategic leadership in contemporary management is the ability to cope with the uncertainty and constant changes. Mahdi & Nassar (2021) agree with Samini et al. (2021) on the fact that the Covid-19 crisis has given emphasis on the ability of leadership to ensure the organization's financial and functional sustainability during the harsh times of a major crisis such as the Covid-19 crisis.

Furthermore, strategic leadership is described as a set of exclusive abilities that a leader need to have in order to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and empower his/her employees to be creative and innovative so as to achieve high performance. Also, strategic leadership is considered to provide purpose to organizations (Fernandes et al, 2022). In addition, strategic leadership is referred to an individual capability to create and maintain adaptable skills as well as to distinguish environmental opportunities. Finally, according to Abu Mostafa et al. (2021), strategic leadership is related to the ability of the leader to communicate the values and the vision of the organization to the employees as well as to decide the best for the organization using minimal organizational controls.

As a result, strategic leadership can create through the appropriate purpose and direction, the opportunities which will lead the internal and external stakeholders to achieve high performance (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

Strategic leadership consisted by the following key factors (Jaradat & Mashhour, 2017):

1. Vision (it should be applied in a medium-term plan),
2. Social architecture (it includes elements that define the organization. For example: organization's origins, the basic principles of operation, the nature of its work, management styles, authority distribution and decision-making capabilities, impact and status),
3. The promotion of trust among the employees,
4. The promotion of innovation, creativity and social development.

Furthermore, there are six aspects in which strategic leadership can be referred; these are the following (Jaradat & Mashhour, 2017):

1. The development of Human capital. It refers to the abilities, knowledge, skills, qualifications, expertise that the employees of an organization possess. If a company wants to gain competitive advantages, it should invest to its Human capital.

2. Setting a strategic direction. In other words, strategic leadership can be used in the implementation of strategic actions, missions, and long-term visions (5 to 10 years). It is very important for a leader to take into account the advantages of an organization, when he/she plans a strategy. These advantages can play a significant role in the implementation of an important change.
3. Maintaining and improving high performance. Strategic leaders should decide about the ways which can improve, maintain and enforce the performance of the organization.
4. Developing an effective organizational culture. Organizational culture is defined as a plethora of different ideologies, symbols and values within an organization, which have a strong effect on leadership due to the facts that the factors of organizational culture can regulate as well as they can control behavior. In addition, organizational culture should promote initiation and risk-taking. Finally, organizational culture should use reward systems in order for an organization to ensure the creation of the proper abilities so as to achieve its strategic goals.
5. Ethical behavior requirements. One of the responsibilities of the strategic leaders is to ensure that all members would ethically behave within an organization. Thus, organizational culture should promote ethics, which will guide the employees to act accordingly inside and outside of the organization.
6. Existence of a strategic control system. There are two control systems in an organization: financial and strategic control. Sometimes these two systems are operating in an opposite way. As a result, strategic leadership tries to balance between these controls.

To sum up, effective strategic leadership is considered to be a significant element for the success of an organization that operates in the continuously dynamic and complex environment of the 21st century. Due to the fact that there are environmental uncertainty and lack of resources, strategic leadership must deal with the reality of environmental turmoil and the ongoing need for appropriate organizational change in order to achieve performance goals. Several empirical studies have shown that strategic leadership actions have a significant effect on the performance of an organization (Jaleha & Machuki, 2018).

2.2 Instruments for measuring strategic leadership

According to Davies' (2004) research, there is one question which needs to be resolved: What constitutes the difference between the "good leadership" and the "strategic leadership"? Hence, many researchers have focused on concepts such as effective leadership or which leadership style fits best for any given situation; on the contrary there has been no excessive research on issues about strategic organizational leadership. For this reason, Davies et al. (2004) have argued in favour of a research framework about strategic leadership.

As a result of this, Davies and Davies (2004) have suggested a research framework which is portrayed in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Davies and Davies' strategic leadership framework

Source: Davies and Davies (2004)

As it is understood from the above given figure (Figure 1), the research framework suggest that strategic leadership is determined by two key variables. The first one is organizational ability which refers to the fact that strategic leaders “have the organizational ability to: 1. be strategically orientated; 2. translate strategy into action; 3. align people and organizations; 4. determine effective strategic intervention points; 5. develop strategic competencies”. The second variable is the individual characteristics of the leadership which are the following: “6. a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present; 7. absorptive capacity; 8. adaptive capacity; 9. Wisdom”. Based on these factors, the model has been used on different sectors such as in education (Williams & Johnson, 2013; Davies & Davies, 2006) and in tourism (Belias et al., 2022c; Lazarakis, 2020; Belias et al, 2017) with acceptable Cronbach reliability.

Nonetheless, Davies and Davies (2004) research framework has been used mostly on education. Despite of its high level of reliability, still it has not been widely used nor examined (Kumkale, 2022). For this reason, this publication aims on evaluating the research model and re-introducing it on the academia with a focus on employees on Greek hotels.

3. The methodology

3.1 The participants

The research has focused on the population of the employees of four and five star hotels in Greece. For this reason the researchers distributed the questionnaire through Google forms to a sample of 470 five and four star hotels from all over Greece in April 2022. The hotels’ data was found from the Hellenic Hotel Chamber. The hotels were chosen due to their size which allows them to rely on effective management and to apply best-practices in relation with their human resource management.

So, 593 questionnaires were sent to the employees. From the total of 593 questionnaires, 57 refused to answer, 115 did not answer at all (no response) and 49 did not answer correctly or they answered with missing values (more than the 50% of the total questions). The outcome was that 372 hotel employees answered the questionnaires. The locations of the hotels where participants worked, varied, with most hotels situated in Dodecanese (23.7%), Cyclades (16.7%), the Ionian Sea (13.4%), Chalcidice (12.4%), Thessaly and the Sporades Islands (7.5%), and Crete (6.5%).

The study included 372 adult participants, and there were no missing values (valid sample N = 372). Almost all participants were of Greek nationality (97.8%, N = 364); 2.2% were of Albanian nationality (N = 8). The marginal majority were males (51.1%). Ages varied, with 10.8% below 30 years, 28.5% between 31 and 40 years, 34.9% between 41 and 50 years, and with 25.8% aged over 50 years old. The educational level of the participants also varied, where 21.5% had completed secondary education, 25.8% had gone to professional college, 17.2% had attended technological college, 16.1% had received a Bachelor’s degree, 17.7% had received a Master’s degree, and six participants had received a PhD degree (1.6%). The majority of participants were married (59.1%). Half the sample were permanently employed (50%), while the remaining 50% were employed seasonally. A large proportion of the sample had work experience of over 20 years (43.5%). Participants’ years of employment in the specific hotel varied between 1 to 2 years (15.1%), 3 to 5 years (20.4%), 6 to 10 years (24.2%), 10 to 20 years (20.4%), and over 20 years (19.9%) of working at the particular hotel. The large proportion of the sample had been employed in the hotel industry in general for more than 5 years (overall 86%). Approximately one in two participants were employed at either 4 star hotels (51.1%) or 5 star hotels (48.9%). Table 1 presents the demographic and work characteristics of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic and work characteristics of the sample

		Frequency	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
Work experience (in years)	0-5	32	8.6
	6-10	60	16.1
	11-15	52	14.0
	16-20	66	17.7
	>20	162	43.5
Type of employment	Permanent position	186	50.0
	Seasonal position	186	50.0
Years of employment in specific hotel unit	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	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	Secondary education	80	21.5
	Professional college (IEK)	96	25.8
	Technological college (ATEI)	64	17.2
	Bachelor's (AEI)	60	16.1
	Master's	66	17.7
	PhD	6	1.6
Do you work in a 5 or 4 star hotel?	5 stars	182	48.9
	4 stars	190	51.1

3.2 The instrument of research

As it has been written in previous part of this publication, the research will rely on Davies & Davies model. For the purpose of this research, the authors have used a 5-point Likert scale, taking values from Rare (1) to Usually (5). The instrument of research consists of 10 questions used to measure the extent to which employees have organizational and personal strategic leadership skills. These questions are presented in Appendix.

The authors translated the key statements of this questionnaire from English to Greece, so as to develop its Greek version. More thoroughly, in order to use the above research tool, the authors asked the permission from the creator of it (Davies and Davies, 2004). Davies and Davies (2004) authorized the authors to use their tool for research purposes; so the authors followed all the seven steps that are methodologically required in order to apply the usage of a questionnaire which is created for a different language than the one that it will be used. According to Vallerand (in Banville Desrosiers & Genet-Volet, 2000) there are 7 steps that are required during the translation process in order for a translated questionnaire tool to be valid, accurate, reliable and similar meaning to the authentic questionnaire. These 7 steps are the following: a) preparation of preliminary versions, b) evaluation of preliminary versions and preparation of an experimental version, c) pretest of an experimental version, d) evaluation of the content and concurrent validity, e) reliability analysis, f) evaluation of the construct validity, and g) establishing norms. Each step is performed successively using a specific technique. After a step is finished, an assessment committee reviewed, evaluate and approved the results.

Finally, apart from the key items of the instrument of research, there were questions regarding the background of the participants including demographic and professional questions.

In conclusion, there are two hypotheses which would be investigated in the current research:

- RQ1. Davies & Davies Strategic Leadership Model can be applied in the hotel industry.
- RQ2. Which characteristics of the Strategic Leadership have higher influence on hotel companies' employees?

3.3 The statistical methods used

The aim of this research is to investigate the reliability of Davies & Davies (2004) instrument of research which measures strategic leadership on organizations. Hence, the statistics used aim mostly on measuring the internal consistency and the modifications that have to take place on the questionnaire. Internal consistency is measured with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Regarding the method used to study the relationship between the factors, exploratory factor analysis between the 10 items of the questionnaire is used, in order to test their factor structure. The study employed principal component analysis, and aimed to minimize data loss, by using primarily unrotated factor analytic models, or in some instances, Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Additionally, measures of sampling adequacy (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and sphericity (Bartlett's chi-square) were utilized in order to examine how well the data fit the factor analyses. Cronbach reliability tests for all scales are reported in the next section.

4. Results

4.1 Factor Analysis

In the factor analytic model (Strategic leadership), data were adequate for use [KMO = .86, Bartlett's $\chi^2(45) = 1443.07$, $p < .0001$], and the initial model extracted two factors, that explained 55.74% of the variance.

Varimax rotation results were reported in this instance. Both Varimax and Oblimin rotation models provided the same solution, with item 6 "I challenge my long-standing assumptions and encourage others to challenge theirs as well" being removed from analysis, because it was the only item with a high loading into the second factor. In a model without rotation, item 6 would also have to be excluded; in addition a second item would also have to be excluded due to multicollinearity (item 2 "I can be aware of every condition of the body, without being affected by the daily functional details") (Table 4).

In other worlds Item 6 had very low loading scores on all types of rotation (no rotation -.218, Varimax rotation -.106 and Oblimin rotation -.167). So, the current sample showed that the long – standing assumptions is one characteristic that hotel employees do not take into consideration as far as their Strategic Leadership's skills are concerned. Besides, the mean value of Item 6 (2.48) indicates that the participants rarely challenge their long-standing assumptions in comparison with the other items where the mean value is between 3.8 - 4.38 (which shows that the participants practise these skills in a more regularly). These results come to an agreement with the fact that the majority of the sample works for a lot of years in the hospitality industry, and more specifically in the same hotel company, so they probably feel safe and comfortable in their working environment without having long-term assumptions about their working future in the hotel industry.

Table 4: Factor solution for "Strategic leadership"

Factor	Items	Loadings
Strategic leadership	Item 1	.691
	Item 2	.555
	Item 3	.769
	Item 4	.731
	Item 5	.746
	Item 7	.776
	Item 8	.651
	Item 9	.630
	Item 10	.756

4.2 Reliability, Mean scores and Normality of the extracted factors

The research has taken place in a sample of 372 employees on five star hotels in Greece. Table 5 indicates the basic descriptive characteristics of the instrument of research.

Table 5: Reliability of scales and subscales, mean scores and normality of dimensions of the study

	Cronbach reliability	N of items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
					Value	df	P
Strategic leadership	.788	10	3.99	.595	.102	372	.000

More precisely, Table 5 presents the Cronbach reliability results for the scales, as well as the mean scores and normality results for the dimensions of the study. Results showed that data had acceptable Cronbach reliability ($\alpha=.788$). In addition, strategic leadership has a mean of 3.99. This means that the leadership on Greek hotels is regarded as having a strategic orientation. Hence, it has a long-term determination which means that this organization can turn strategic planning in action.

Although, the value of Cronbach alpha (.788) is very strong, if Item 6 was missing from the above analysis, the value of Cronbach alpha would have been .870 which indicates that the items 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10 are more closely related.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

As far as the first hypothesis is concerned (“RQ1. Davies and Davies Strategic Leadership Model can be applied in the hotel industry”), Cronbach reliability analysis as well as exploratory factor analysis revealed that Davies & Davies (2004) Strategic Leadership Model can be implemented in the hospitality industry. During the past 20 years, Davies and Davies model had been applied in employees who worked in several institutes, such as educational schools (Davies and Davies, 2006) and hospitals (Hunitie, 2018). Hence, the current research suggests that Strategic Leadership Model can be implemented on the hospitality industry, and more specifically in the hotel companies. However, the research revealed that Item 6 “I challenge my long-standing assumptions and encourage others to challenge theirs as well” should be excluded from the initial model, when the model is applied on the hotel industry.

Regarding to the subscales of the strategic leadership, that are most affected when the model is applied in the hotel industry, the high values of factor loadings as well as the mean values revealed that these are the following: Item 3 (factor loading .769, mean value 4.03), Item 4 (factor loading .731, mean value 4.20), Item 5 (factor loading .746, mean value 4.40), Item 7 (factor loading .776, mean value 4.01), Item 10 (factor loading .756, mean value 4.07). In other words, hotel employees score higher regarding the below factors of the strategic leadership: they compare the possible short-term and long-term consequences of the actions they are about to take; they are more willing to accept new approaches and change ideas when new information indicates the need to do so; they are searching for opportunities today, which can create valuable results tomorrow; they can turn strategy into action very easily; and eventually they maintain a strong understanding of the local, regional and national context in which their hotel operates.

5. Discussion/Conclusions

The main purpose of the current paper is to shed some light in the empirical gap of strategic leadership into the tourism industry and to evaluate a proposed research instrument which relied on the work of Davies & Davies (2004). This scale consists of two factors/variables: organizational ability and individual skills.

The purpose for the usage of this measurement tool was to provide a tool that can be used in order to measure the strategic leadership skills of employees who work in the hospitality industry. More specifically, hospitality industry have been seriously “damaged” by the latest crisis on its external environment (financial crisis, pandemic Covid-19 crisis, ecological crisis). So, it very critical for the employees to feel that they have the skills to anticipate, envision and maintain flexibility so as to be prepared for strategic changes when necessary. Thus, the current research aims to discover the dimensions of the strategic leadership which are applied by the personnel of four and five star hotels.

The analysis of the responses shows that the research instrument has an acceptable high Cronbach reliability ($\alpha=.788$) which means that this tool can be accepted in order to measure the strategic leadership of employees who work for the hospitality industry, especially in the Greek hotel industry.

As factor analysis is concerned, the results of the research showed that there are high loadings on every item of the variable strategic leadership. The only exception is item 6 (“I challenge my long-standing assumptions and

encourage others to challenge theirs as well”) which had a high loading in a second factor. For that reason item 6 had to be excluded from the measuring tool of strategic leadership into the hospitality industry.

The aim of this paper was to examine whether Davies & Davies (2004) research framework and instrument can be used so as to measure strategic leadership. The primary research indicated that indeed Greek hotels have a strategic leadership, something which has been mentioned from Lazarakis (2020) and Belias et al. (2017). Nonetheless, it is a research framework which has not been widely used (Williams & Johnson, 2013) but the recent changes on tourism management which requires more strategic decisions in order to cope with the high uncertainty has brought the need to assess whether hotels have a strategic leadership or not. Hence, the examined instrument of research is quite necessary for the effective management of tourist organizations in today’s turbulent environment.

The findings of this research support that Davies & Davies model (2004) can be used as a measurement tool in the hospitality industry with few modifications that have been mentioned by the factor analysis. Thus, the current paper hopes to contribute to the comprehension of the nature of strategic leadership on the hospitality and tourism industry, and trigger future empirical research in the field, which is necessary in order to help the decisions makers to understand how to cope with the crisis and the current changes in the tourist industry.

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Appendix

Measurement of Davies & Davies	Questions
Strategic Leadership	<i>(1) I keep the balance between the organization's long-term perspective, and its short-term business needs.</i>
	<i>(2) I can be aware of every condition of the organization, without being affected by the daily functional details.</i>
	<i>(3) I compare the possible short-term and long-term consequences of the actions I am considering.</i>
	<i>(4) I am able to accept new approaches and change ideas when new information indicates the need to do so.</i>
	<i>(5) I am looking for opportunities today, which can create valuable results tomorrow.</i>
	<i>(6) I challenge my long-standing assumptions and encourage others to challenge theirs as well.</i>
	<i>(7) I can turn strategy into action.</i>
	<i>(8) I can get staff members involved in strategic discussions.</i>
	<i>(9) I understand how the wider political and cultural environment affects my organization.</i>
	<i>(10) I maintain a strong understanding of the local, regional and national context in which my organization operates.</i>