The Role of Transformational Leader on Knowledge Sharing Practices: A Study about International Hotel Chains

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Abstract

Especially during the last decade, Knowledge Sharing (KS) have become one of the most debated research topics within the growing amount of research on Knowledge Management (KM). As in all other business, KS practices are very important for hotels at providing proper service performance and gaining competitive advantage through unique knowledge. However, the number of studies conducted related to KS in the tourism and hospitality enterprises are still limited. To fully understand how KS practices can be perform successfully, KS processes and the effects of leaders on KS practices need to be explore in depth. Thus, this study primarily focuses on KS practices at international hotel chains (IHC) in which KS practices are more important compared to other hotels due to their geographically dispersed structure. Moreover, this study aims to determine the effects of transformational leaders on KS practices. Above all, this study consist important findings which are identifying KS process at IHC and emphasizing the importance of TL for the success of KS. For the purpose of the study, two hundred and twenty seven junior administrative and mid-level managers of 29 IHC operating in Turkey were chosen as the sample of this study. And, the required data were collected by questionnaire. Data analysis determined that KS practices are highly performed in IHC and TL have some important-positive effects on KS practices.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, Transformational leader, International hotel chain

1. Introduction

In existing literature, the intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, complexity and simultaneous production and consumption features of tourism product is emphasized (Baggio, 2006), and the success of the hotel business is dependent on the cooperation of travel agencies, tour operators, suppliers (Kahle, 2005). These facts make knowledge and KM very important in tourism industry. On the other hand, the intensive use of technology and the interaction between customers and employees during service encounter leads to the transformation of the tourism industry towards a knowledge-based industry (Hallin and Marnburg, 2007). Thus, Buhalis (1998) states that knowledge and information are vital points of tourism.

As an important superstructure group in the tourism industry, hotels are also the places that utilize various types of knowledge. Bouncken (2002) classifies these types of knowledge in four categories: task-specific knowledge, task-related knowledge, transactive memory and guest-related knowledge. Hotel enterprises have to effectively manage these four types of knowledge in order to obtain projected benefits from KM. The American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC) describes KM as a systematic approach that enables creation of knowledge and information and transfers them to the right person at the right time to add value to the organization's mission (Leavitt, 2003). Additionally other studies (Wiig, 1997; Bhatt, 2001; Bergeron, 2003; İbrahim ve Reid, 2009; Alavi and Leidner, 2001 and etc.) posit that KM encompasses the following processes: knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, knowledge storage & documentation and knowledge utilization. As a part of KM, knowledge acquisition refers to obtaining necessary and important information/knowledge from the inside and outside of the organization (Isa bet al., 2008; Shi, 2010; Sun, 2010; Al-Busaidi, 2011; Bratianu, 2011). Structured interviews, think aloud analyses, network analyses, questionnaires, surveys, observations and simulations (Dalkir, 2005), books, software, academic journals, research reports, video conferences (Bratianu, 2011) and interactions with customers, suppliers, competitors, partners (Fink and Ploder, 2011) are the most used techniques in obtaining required knowledge. Knowledge creation involves creating new and useful knowledge from obtained information/knowledge through consecutive sequences of socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The newly-generated knowledge should be shared among employees, sub-groups and across the organization. This fact makes the knowledge

sharing process increasingly important in KM. Finally, knowledge utilization entails the integration of knowledge into business processes (Tiwana, 2003), creating added value from them (Fink and Ploder, 2011), combining them with the existing products & services and the implement of new projects (Kasvi, Vartiainen and Hailikari, 2003) and use in product/service development (Salo, 2009; Al-Busaidi, 2011) where the knowledge storage & documentation refer to codification and storing of useful knowledge in written and electronic warehouses.

Hotel enterprises required to successfully implement these mentioned KM processes also need to consider the critical success factors of the KM process, such as willingness to initiate KM, upper management support, infrastructure sufficiency, effective organizational learning, creating a shared culture, usage of information technologies, accessing implicit knowledge, process control, high productivity, coordination and effective leadership (Hassan and Al-Hakim, 2011; Tabrizi, Ebrahimi and Delpisheh, 2011; Djordjevic-Boljanovic, Masic and Dobrijevic, 2013; Saini, 2013) . These factors are also critical factors for KS in organizations and corollary for hotels. Among these factors effective leadership is relatively more important for the KS which is a sine qua non process of KM (Riege, 2005). Hence, Smith and McKeen (2002), states that the principle role of the leader is to make KS so attractive that employees want to be part of this process. On the other hand, the quickly transforming nature of the tourism industry arising from global competition, ever-changing trends in touristic consumption, and dependency on customer preferences, requires transformational leadership roles more than others in KM practices and the KS process. Soliman (2011) states that organizations that regard KS as a critical competitive tool must facilitate the transfer of knowledge with the initiation of a transformational leader. Thus, this study at first focuses on determining the effects of TL and presents KS process in IHC in detail. For this reason, the following section presents a detailed framework of the KS process, TL behaviors and the impact of TL on KS process with respect to hotel enterprises.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Knowledge Sharing at IHC

KS refers to vis a vis transfer and dissemination of knowledge from an employee, group and organization (Lee, 2001) and the mutual exchange of implicit and explicit knowledge (Lee et al., 2010). In a broader perspective, KS also encompasses whole activities of reciprocal acquisition, assimilation and/or transmission of related knowledge about products and services among organizations, customers, partners and employees (Chen and Barnes, 2006). A strategically planned KS process promotes useful knowledge across a company, increases the degree of effectiveness and intensity of the business process (Lee, Lee and Kang, 2005), and contribute to individual learning important for new practices (Singh, 2011). Thus, KS is essential for companies (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). However, companies must reveal motivation and encouragement systems devoting KS, design open organization structures supporting KS (Cook and Cook, 2004; Riege, 2005), organize physical places such as talking rooms, water cooler/tea machines and cafeterias enabling informal communication among employees; and organize panels providing face to face dialogue (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Creating a knowledge-based culture, exhibiting leadership roles which promote KS, ensuring trust among employees, designing networks for KS, encouraging formal and informal communication and changing organization to learning organizations are the other most critical aspects of supporting KS in companies (Dalkir, 2005; Green, 2008; Pasher and Ronen, 2011).

Limited studies related to KM in tourism shows that KS practices are mostly observed in hotel chains where an overall service quality standard has to be delivered (Hallin and Marnburg, 2007). By taking this fact into consideration, IHC can be seen as the main repositories of knowledge as long as they create new and useful knowledge from individual knowledge, which is generally derived from an individual or group interactions (Magnini, 2008) and staff-customer relations on the basis of service product (Kahle, 2002). This created knowledge refers to lessons learned in a hotel and is also vital for IHC since it can be used to offer modified service operations, service extensions, and entirely new service lines in other hotels (Bouncken, 2002). This process also emphasizes the importance of KS at IHC. Although KS process at IHC involves similar steps as those described in SECI (Socialization- Externalization- Combination- Internalization) model which has conceptualized by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), IHC have distinctive KS process that entail different features. First, the KS process at IHC starts with a socialization process which is a part of SECI model.

Socialization mainly embodies organizational sympathized knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and includes mutually transferring implicit knowledge from an individual, group, organization(s) to others (Holsapple and Joshi, 1999). However, there are some barriers to this socialization process, difficulties

expressing implicit knowledge (Bratianu, 2011), deficient or imperfect transfer of knowledge (Dalkir, 2005) and the resignation of an employee who has implicit knowledge (Judge, 2011). The socialization process is followed by the externalization process, which refers to the expression of implicit knowledge or mental models by dialogues as a collective reflection (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The employees acquire quotable explicit knowledge at the end of the externalization process (Bratianu, 2010) where the linguistic performance plays a critical role for the success of this process (Zornoza and Navarro, 2009). The externalization process must be considered as a learning phase and should be promoted by metaphors, descriptions, stories, models, diagrams and prototypes (Ale, Chiotti ve Galli, 2008). Obviously, a well-planned and organized socialization-externalization process can substantially enhance KS at IHC. However, the KS process should be evaluated in two main phases at IHC wherein the first phase is company-wide KS and the second phase is IHC-wide KS. A basic KS process starting from the Front-Office department and Housekeeping Department at IHC can be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

As seen in Figure 1, employees at the front office department and housekeeping department initially share their individual implicit knowledge with their co-workers and other employees simultaneously. This phase mainly refers transforming implicit knowledge to explicit where the employees mostly use dialogues, descriptions and metaphors. These horizontal interactions between co-workers and other employees are followed by vertical KS wherein the employees share relevant knowledge with their chiefs or managers. Those related knowledge can flow both directly and indirectly under specified conditions. Written documents, verbal articulation, e-mail, intranet or internet are the most preferred ways of KS of this stage. Eventually, department managers deliver chosen knowledge considered as necessary to hotel management via daily, weekly and monthly reports or sometimes verbally. At the end of this whole KS process, individual implicit knowledge transform into an organizational explicit knowledge shared across the organization. By these means, organizational knowledge becomes ready to be shared with the IHC management centre and also among other chains. Therefore, the IHCs-wide KS starts, and operational or strategic knowledge flows mutually among chains and IHCs management centres. And, to increase KS's efficiency hotel managers should enable team culture based cooperation, organizational support and cohesiveness throughout the organization (Monica Hu, Horng and Sun, 2009) while they also simultaneously consider critical success factors about KM. Besides, proper information and communication technologies (ICT) should be settled to speed up the KS process. Hence, Braun and Hollick (2006) states that advanced ICT has strong impacts on improving capacity, flexibility and connectivity of KS practices.
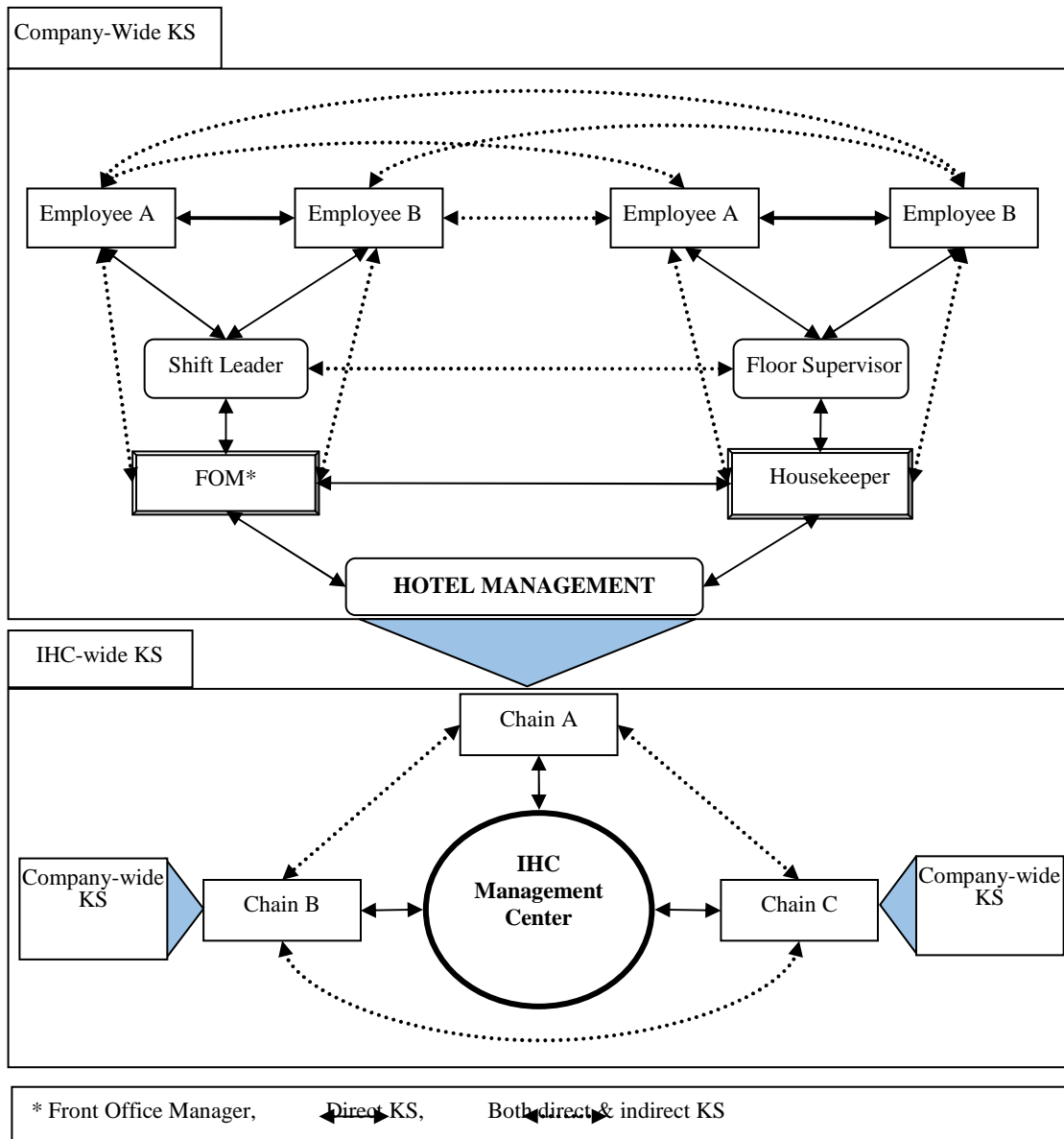
Figure 1: Knowledge Sharing System at IHC

2.2 Transformational Leadership Concept at IHC

As one of the most debated concepts in the context of leadership behaviors, transformational leadership has become especially important with the new economy that forces to companies to survive in an intense and globally competitive environment, it has been researched by the numerous studies since the 1980s (Feinberg, Ostroff and Burke, 2005). The concept of transformational leadership was first identified and coined in literature related to Burn's political leadership studies (Jandaghi, Matin and Farjami, 2009). Later it became popular with the various studies of researchers such as Bass (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Tichy and Devanna (1990), Yukl (1989), Bass and Avolio, (1994), Bass and Riggio (2006). Bass (1985) identifies a TL as one who motivates their followers to higher performance and improves followers' leadership capacity with vision, self-confidence and inspirational motivation. Within this scope, a TL is a person who stimulates interest among employees to view their current work from new perspectives; generates awareness of the mission/vision of the team and organization; develops followers' ability and potential; and motivates them to look beyond their own interests toward those which will benefit the group (Bas and Avolio, 1994; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Bennis and Nanus (1985) states that TL generally emerge when the organization faces new and complex problems that cannot be solved without leaders and require radical changes. Tichy and Devanna (1990) emphasize a TL's importance for organizational change and transformation, and identify a TL as one who determines the necessity of change,

creates a new vision for the employees and organization, enables the commitment of employees to organization and finally transforms the organization to be more innovative, as a whole.

Bass and Avolio's "Full Range of Leadership" approach is a milestone in understanding the TL concept. This approach states that some specific behaviors characterized by a TL substantially improve the efficiency of the leader (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Those behaviors firstly described by Bass (1985) were also accepted as a basis for explaining TL behaviors in detail. Bass (1985) classified those behaviors as "charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration". Later Bass (1995) redefined "charisma" as "idealized influence" in his studies. Within this scope, idealized influence refers to providing an appropriate model to followers by gaining admiration, respect and trust of his followers (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Inspirational motivation includes enhancing team spirit, enabling enthusiasm and optimism throughout the organization, inspiring followers to shared goals and vision, and enabling commitment of followers to that goals/vision (Bass and Avolio, 1994). The third specific behavior of TL is intellectual stimulation mainly expressed encouraging or stimulating some abilities (discerning and solving problem and etc.), mentality, vision and confidence of followers (Bass, 1985), while individual consideration behaviors basically consist of coaching, mentoring and dealing with followers individually to meet their requests and needs (Dubinsky, Yammarino and Yolson, 1995). Although this classification of Bass (1985) is used in numerous studies as MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire) scale and accepted as a basis for TL studies, there are other classifications regarding TL behaviors. LBDQ XII (Stogdill, 1963), TLB (Podsakoff et al., 1990), TLQ-LGV (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2001) and STL (Edwards et al., 2010) classifications could be considered the most preferred scales. Also researchers can prefer different scales based on their research topic and aim.

Due to the fact that, TL behaviors are important for industrial and innovative companies, those behaviors are also important for hotel enterprises. Hinkin and Tracey (1994) state that the increasing importance of cost reduction in ever-changing competition conditions, new trends in service quality or performance and labor-intensive characteristics of hotel enterprises make TL essential for hotels. TL enable motivation, commitment and sustainable improvement at hotels by identifying vision and mission, embracing common goals of employees, creating high performance teams, encouraging employee creativeness, and promoting innovation (Tracey and Hinkin, 1994). Within this scope, especially in the last 20 years, TL are seen as important persons for organizational effectiveness and success at hotels (Brownell, 2010). Therefore, the number of studies increases day by day. However, the number of those studies is still limited. In these limited studies, TL behaviors have been researched with emotional intelligence (Scott-Halsell, Schumate and Blum, 2008), extroversion, openness and honesty (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2012) dimensions. Moreover, effects of TLs on job stress, burnout syndrome (Gill, Flaschner and Shachar, 2006), empowerment (Gill et al., 2010), branding behavior (Uen et al., 2012), organizational effectiveness, (Erkutlu, 2008), creativeness, and employee performance (Brown and Arendt, 2011; Cheung and Wong, 2011) has been researched within the context of hotels.

In their study, Scott-Halsell, Schumate and Blum (2008) conclude that there is a strong correlation between emotional intelligence and TL, thus hoteliers should focus on improving emotional intelligence as a part of orientation programs. Zopiatis and Constanti (2012) state that TL behaviors highly correlated with extroversion, openness and honesty. As a result honest and hardworking people can exhibit TL behaviors more easily. Gill, Flaschner and Shachar (2006) also conclude that TL behaviors have a diminishing effect on work stress and burnout syndrome at hotels where the workload is relatively higher. Further, Gill and his colleagues (2010) found in their study conducted in Lower Mainland and Pencab hotel that there is a linear correlation between TL behaviors and employee empowerment; the more they perceive exhibited TL behaviors, the more willing they become to empowerment. However, exhibited TL behaviors have direct and indirect positive effects on creating organizational brand and branding behaviors at Taiwanese hotels (Uen, et al., 2012). Brown and Arendt (2011) conclude that TL behaviors have significant/positive effects on employee attitudes, security perception, participation and precision aspects. The authors also state that, managers as TL exhibit inspirational motivation and idealized influence behaviours much more than the individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation behaviours. Cheung and Wong (2011) indicate that TL affect employee creativity positively at hotels by taking employees' socio-emotional needs into consideration. Finally, Erkutlu (2008) concludes in his study conducted on 722 boutique hotel employees concludes that TL behaviors encourage organizational commitment and employee satisfaction, and as a result employees work more efficiently. The author also emphasizes that hotel managers should effectively use TL behaviors during employee recruitment, selection, education, training and empowerment. In sum, transformational leaders and transformational leadership behaviors are very important for the success of hotels because those behaviors positively affect critical factors of success such as organizational commitment, organizational effectiveness, employee satisfaction, creativity and empowerment..

2.3 Effects of TL Behaviors on KS practices at IHC

As discussed before, IHC are mainly geographically dispersed hotel enterprises operating under an international brand. Because each chain of this brand must provide a standard service, both operational and strategic knowledge adopted from customers and employees have to be transferred throughout all chains. This is because IHC can only provide the best service quality and gain competitive advantage by utilizing and managing this knowledge (Hallin Marnburg, 2007). Thus, KS is very important for the success of IHC. At this point, hoteliers should establish a knowledge-focused and intensive organization culture, encourage KS with different types of leadership, settle mutual trust, build up networks that support KS practices, enhance formal and informal knowledge sharing, and change existing organization to learning organizations (Dalkir, 2005; Green, 2008; Pasher and Ronen, 2011).

Leaders can play critical role in Ks practices by exhibiting some specific behaviors that characterize TL behaviors. For instance, TLs could enhance a shared vision and provide requisite motivation, systems, structures and willingness to initiate KS (Bryant, 2003; Shi, 2010). Furthermore, they can provide an appropriate model to employees by exhibiting a willingness to share knowledge, continuous learning and seeking new ideas or knowledge (Wong, 2005). Those leaders can create an organizational climate enabling and facilitating KS (Bryant, 2003; Salo, 2009). TL can act as a knowledge creator by supplying know-how to their followers during KS practices (Lee et. al., 2010). They can play a holistic role in KS by enabling a well-supported collaboration among employees (Mabey, Kulich, Cioldi, 2012). They also can improve knowledge transfer and utilization by sharing all knowledge, enhancing pre-established roles, responsibilities and rewarding systems, boosting employee expertise, fostering adaptation to strategic goals and supporting quality commination among employees (Green and Aitken, 2006). Thus, TL can be essential facilitators and determiners of KS practices (Chen and Barnes, 2006), and they considerably encourage the KS process (OPM, 2005). In sum, transformational leaders can contribute to KS practices by articulating a shared vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering adaptation to group goals, inspiring employees, supporting innovative ideas, building up necessary systems or structures and culture, and actively participating KS process at IHC. Accordingly, we assume that transformational leaders can positively affect knowledge sharing practices at IHC, posit our main hypothesis:

H₁: *There is a significant correlation between KS practices and TL behaviors at IHC.*

H₂: *TL behaviors positively affect Ks practices at IHC*.

3. Methodology

Aim: This study focuses on KS practices and the effects of TL on KS at IHC, and was carried out with a positivist approach as a result of using a questionnaire and aiming to confirm an empirical proposition.

Population and sampling: Junior administrative and mid-level managers of foreign capital-invested hotel chains in Turkey were chosen as the population for this study. One hundred forty two hotel enterprises were operating as a chain of international hotel brand throughout Turkey in 2012; most of them were 5 star hotels also called large scale hotels (Resort Dergisi, 2012). Junior administrative and mid-level managers (participants) of those hotel enterprises were designated as the target population. We assume at least one middle manager and at least one or more junior administrative manager exist at the main departments (front office, food & beverage, housekeeping, sales & marketing, human resources, accounting, technical service, security and guest/public relation) in a large scale hotel. Two hundred sixty participants working as junior administrative or mid-level manager at IHC contributed the survey. Thus, the sample of this study consists of 260 participants. Finally, 33 questionnaire forms were excluded since they were filled incorrectly or incompletely and data gathered from 227 questionnaires were used at data analyses.

Data collection method and survey questions: We preferred using a questionnaire to collect needed data; for this reason we used a questionnaire form consisting of three sections. The first section constitutively contained some close-ended questions such as demographic variables related to participants (gender, age, marital status, education status, working department, position, year of work at the hotel and year of experience at tourism sector) and hotel chain (how old it is, star rating, room capacity, number of employees). The second section of questionnaire consisted of 7 items that expressed the main steps of the KS process. The statements were adapted from Shi's (2010) PhD thesis in which Organizational Renewal Capability Inventory was used to measure KM practices. Moreover, 23 items measuring 6 important TL behaviors (identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations,

individual support and intellectual stimulation) were asked in the last section of the questionnaire. The items of this section were adapted from a study conducted by Podsakoff and his colleagues (1990). The items in second and third sections were asked with 5 Likert point scale in order to determine the realization/exhibition degree.

Data analysis methods: Reliability analyses, descriptive analyses, regression analyses and discriminant analyses were used in this study. The validity of data set (scale) was measured with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in the context of reliability analyses. Percentage and frequency measurements were preferred in order to determine demographic variables, and standard deviation and mean analyses were used to assign the participation degree on KS and TL behaviors items. Correlation analysis was used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between KS and TL behaviors, then regression analyses were performed to assign strength/aspect of relationship in the context of regression analyses. Finally, discriminant analyses were performed to ascertain whether KS practices and TL behaviors vary according to participants' demographic characteristics. At this stage, Manny Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H tests were used since the data set have non-normal distribution.

4. Findings

Reliability analyses were performed first. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.801 for all 5 Likert scale items and 0.753 for TL behaviors. Acknowledging that Cronbach's Alpha coefficient must be at least 0.70 for social studies, the data set was deemed reliable and suitable for analysis. Then, some demographic characteristics of participants were determined using frequency and percentage analyses. According to the results, 68.7% of 227 participants were male (n: 156), whereas the percentage of female respondents was 31.3%. A great majority of respondents were within the 25-34 age group (n: 141, 61.2 %). Respondents who were older than 34 and younger than 44 years of age constitute the other major age group. 53.7 % of respondents were married whilst 46.3% of respondents were single (n: 105). 204 respondents of 89.9% had at least an associate degree or undergraduate degree. Fourteen respondents graduated from high school and 8 respondents had a graduate degree. A large proportion of respondents worked at food & beverage department (n: 51, 22.5%) and front office department (n: 47, 20.7%). Human resources, housekeeping and sales & marketing departments sequentially follow the front office department in working area size. 58.1% of respondents were department managers and 30.4% of them were chief. Ninety three respondents (41%.0) had worked for 1-3 years at the same hotel, and 29.1% of them 4-7 years. Finally, 82.0% of respondents had at least five years' experience in the tourism industry.

Descriptive statistics about hotel chains obtained in the survey stated that 58.2 % of the hotel chains began operating in Turkey less than 5 years ago, and 12 of 29 hotel chain had less than 100 employees while a great majority of them (n: 22, 75.9) were 5 star hotels. Thus, we can assume that IHC operating in Turkey are relatively new and generally large-scale wherein knowledge and KS become important due to their complex organizational structure.

In the second phase of descriptive analyses, the degree of exhibition of TL behaviors and the degree of implementation of KS practices were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in accordance with respondent answers. The TL behaviors exhibition degree of senior managers at IHC is shown in Table 1. According to results, it can be assumed that senior managers at IHC often exhibit TL behaviors, and behaviors that identify & articulate a vision were the highest exhibited behaviours in the study ($\overline{x}$: 4.22). These types of behaviors are followed by intellectual stimulation ($\overline{x}$: 4.14) and providing an appropriate model ($\overline{x}$: 4.14) for followers. The least reported response was that senior managers as transformational leaders provide individual support to followers ($\overline{x}$: 3.87).

Table 1: Descriptive results of TL behaviours scale

Factors	Items	$\bar{x}$ of Factor	$\bar{x}$ of Item	s.s
High Performance Expectation	Shows us that he/she expects a lot from us.		3.91	0.729
	Insists on only the best performance.	3.87	4.04	0.752
	Will not settle for the second best.		3.67	1.065
Provide An Appropriate Model	Leads by "doing," rather than simply by "telling".		4.21	0.540
	Provides a good model for me to follow.	4.14	4.11	0.584
	Leads by example.		4.11	0.585
Identifying & Articulating A Vision	Paints an interesting future for our group.		4.04	0.547
	Has a clear understanding of where we are going.		4.29	0.666
	Inspires others with his/her plans for the future.	4,22	4.35	0.586
	Is able to get other committed to his/her dream.		4.25	0.583
	Is always seeking new opportunities for the organization.		4.19	0.659
Fostering Acceptance Of Group Goals	Fosters collaboration among work groups.		4.04	0.781
	Encourages employees to be "team players".		4.32	0.614
	Develops a team attitude and spirit among employees.	4.19	4.23	0.654
	Gets the group to work together for the same goal.		4.18	0.584
Individual Support	Acts without considering my feelings. (R)		1.87	0.562
	Shows respect for my personal feelings.		4.37	0.568
	Behaves in a manner that is thoughtful of my personal feelings.	3.17	4.09	0.705
	Treats me without considering my personal feelings. (R)		2.36	1.056
Intellectual Stimulation	Stimulates me to rethink the way I do things.		4.03	0.746
	Ask questions that prompt me to think.		4.22	0.620
	Challenges me to think about old problems in new ways.	4.14	4.07	0.579
	Has ideas that have challenged me to re-examine some of basic assumptions of my work.		4.22	0.552

Items located in Table 1 indicate that TL mostly show respects for employees' feelings ($\bar{x}$: 4.37), inspire others with his/her plans for the future ($\bar{x}$: 4.35) and encourage employees to be "team players" ($\bar{x}$: 4.32). When each item is considered in the context of related factors, the most exhibited behaviors are insisting on best performance within the context of high performance expectation, leading by "doing" within providing an appropriate model, inspiring employees about future within the scope of identifying & articulating a vision, encouraging employees to be "team players" as a part of fostering acceptance of group goals, showing respects for employees' personal feelings within individual support and asking questions that prompt employees to think within the scope of intellectual stimulation.

The implementation degree of KS practices was analyzed in the last phase of descriptive analysis (Table 2). Results showed that IHC operating in Turkey frequently share knowledge within the hotel and throughout the hotel chain ($\bar{x}$: 4.05). Sharing knowledge and information actively is the most applied KS practice ($\bar{x}$: 4.22). Contrary to this fact, distribution of knowledge in informal ways is the least applied practice within the context of KS. This means the hotel staffs mostly use written documents or e-mails/intranet to share knowledge instead of verbal communications.

Table 2: Descriptive results of KS practices

Items	$\bar{x}$ of Factor	$\bar{x}$ of Item	s.s
In our organization information and knowledge are actively shared within the units.		4.22	0.680
Different units of our organization actively share info and knowledge among each other.		4.16	0.620
In our organization employees and managers exchange a lot of information and knowledge.		4.11	0.643
Our organization shares a lot of knowledge and information with strategic partners.	4.05	4.19	0.627
Our organization shares knowledge with competitors.		4.16	0.659
In our organization, previously made solutions and documents are easily available.		4.21	0.623
In our organization, much knowledge is distributed in informal ways.		3.32	1.208

The results in Table 2 also show that hotel management pays strict attention to knowledge documentation and storage ($\bar{x}$: 4.22) in order to actively share existing knowledge. Sharing knowledge with strategic partners ($\bar{x}$: 4.19), competitors ($\bar{x}$: 4.16) and within different departments ($\bar{x}$: 4.16) are other important aspects of KS at IHC.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

TL Behaviours		Knowledge sharing
High Performance Expectation	Pearson Correlation	0.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Provide An Appropriate Model	Pearson Correlation	0.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Identifying & Articulating A Vision	Pearson Correlation	0.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Fostering Acceptance Of Group Goals	Pearson Correlation	0.406**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Individual Support	Pearson Correlation	-0.231**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Intellectual Stimulation	Pearson Correlation	0.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Transformational leadership behaviours	Pearson Correlation	**0.637****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.000**
**: Correlation is significant at 0.01 level		

During the next phase of data analysis, we tested for a significant relationship between KS and TL behaviors using correlation analysis. The results in Table 3 show that there is a strong and positive correlation (r: 0.637, p: 0.000) between KS and TL behaviors. Thus, our first hypothesis positing that *"There is a correlation between KS and TL behaviours" is valid*. The results in Table 3 also show that there are correlations among KS and TL behavior factors. For instance high performance expectation behaviors (r: 0.491, p: 0.000) of leaders are the most correlated factor with KS practices. Although this positive correlation is valid for intellectual stimulation (r: 0.490, p: 0.000), providing an appropriate model (r: 0.419, p: 0.000), fostering acceptance of group goals (r: 0.406, p: 0.000), and identifying & articulating a vision (r: 0.327, p: 0.000); individual support behaviors (r: -0.231, p: 0.000) of leaders were negatively correlated with KS practices. Thus, correlation between individual support behaviors and KS is relatively weak compared to other TL factors.

The next phase of data analysis include testing the effects of TL behaviours on KS practices with regression analysis based on observed correlations between KS and TL behaviors (See Table 4). TL behaviors are the independent variable since existing literature on the topic suggests that those behaviors could have important effects on KS practices. The results of the univariate regression analysis seen in Table 4 refers that the regression model is significant (F: 153.426, R: 0.637, p<0.05). Based on this fact, the regression model used in this study is "*Knowledge sharing = 0.482 + 0.867 x TL behaviours*". Thus it can be assumed that each one (1) unit increase in TL behaviors triggers 0.867 increments in KS practices. Those behaviors illustrate 40 % total variance regarding KS practices. In other words, *results validate the second hypothesis of the study which suggests that TL behaviors positively affect KS practices*.

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Table 4: Effects of TL behaviours on KS practices (Univariate Regression Analysis)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.482	0.289	----	1.670	0.096
Transformational Leadership Behaviors	0.867	0.070	0.637	12.387	0.000
R=0.637 R²=0.405	Adjusted R²=0.403		F= 153.426	p= 0.000*	

In response to our findings TL behaviors positively affect KS practices; we tested which factors have a positive effect on KS practices and the influencing degree of each factor regarding TL behavior with multivariate regression analysis. The results shown in Table 5 suggest that the regression model is significant (F: 26.038, R: 0.644, p<0.05). Additionally apart from individual support, each factor of TL behaviors positively affect TL practices.

Table 5:Effects of TL behaviours on KS practices (Multivariate Regression Analysis)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.395	0.495	----	0.799	0.425
High Performance Expectation	0.167	0.037	0.272	4.534	0.000*
Provide An Appropriate Model	0.183	0.058	0.190	3.173	0.002*
Identifying & Articulating A Vision	0.178	0.065	0.154	2.749	0.006*
Fostering Acceptance Of Group Goals	0.175	0.053	0.193	3.301	0.001*
Individual Support	0.027	0.075	0.020	.354	0.723
Intellectual Stimulation	0.164	0.069	0.160	2.388	0.018*
R=0.644 R²=0.415	Adjusted R²=0.403		F= 26.038	p= 0.000*	

According to the results in Table 5, the regression model is "***Knowledge sharing = 0.395 + 0.183 x providing an appropriate model + 0.178 x identifying a vision + 0.175 x fostering acceptance of group goals + 0.167 x expecting high performance + 0.164 x intellectual stimulation***". And, each one (1) unit increase in providing an appropriate model of TL triggers 0.183 increments in KS practices. Furthermore, identifying & articulating a vision behaviors trigger 0.178 and fostering acceptance of group goals behaviors trigger 0.175 increments in KS practices. Additionally, high performance expectation behaviours of TLs trigger 0.167 increments in KS practices and intellectual stimulation behaviors trigger 0.164 increments in KS practices implementing at IHC. In short, factors of TL behaviors affect KS practices significantly.

During the last phase of data analyses we performed discriminant analyses to observe whether respondent perceptions about KS practices and TL behaviors vary according to their demographic characteristics. We first analyzed discrimination between KS practices and respondents demographic characteristics. Results in Table 6 indicate that perceptions of respondents regarding KS practices at IHC vary according to their age group, education level and experience in tourism (p<0.05). Post-hoc tests reveal that respondents aged 35-44 age group perceive KS practices significantly less than other employees. Also, perceptions of respondents who have less than 5 years of experience in tourism sector vary from respondents who have 11-15 or more than 20 years' experience in tourism. Newcomers to the tourism sectors perceive KS practices significantly higher than other groups. Finally respondents who graduated from associate or undergraduate schools perceive KS practices significantly higher than primary school graduates and high school graduates.

Table 6: Results of Discriminant Analyses about KS practices

	Respondent's							
	Gender	Age Group	Marital Status	Educational Status	Position	Working Department	Working period at current IHC	Experience in tourism
KS practices	0.490	**0.000***	0.449	**0.001***	0.336	0.421	0.623	**0.006***

Within the scope of discriminant analyses, we tested whether perception of respondents about TL behaviors

differ depending on their demographic characteristics. Results in Table 7 indicate that TL behavior perceptions of respondents significantly vary according to their educational status and tourism sector experience in general (p<0.05). According to post-hoc test results, respondents who graduated from high school perceive TL behaviours significantly less than respondents who graduated from undergraduate and graduate school. Alternately respondents with less than 5 years' experience in tourism sector perceive KS practices significantly higher than other respondents who have 5-10 years and 11-15 years' experience in tourism, while perceptions of respondents who have 16-20 years and more than 20 years' experience in tourism are similar to each other.

Table 7: Results of Discriminant Analyses about TL behaviours

	Respondent's							
	Gender	*Age Group*	*Marital Status*	*Educational Status*	*Position*	*Working Department*	*Working period at current IHC*	*Experience in tourism*
TL behaviours (total)	0.44	0.051	0.482	**0.001***	0.481	0.194	0.302	**0.014***
High Performance Expectation	0.46	**0.008***	0.540	**0.012***	0.870	0.600	0.085	**0.000***
Provide An Appropriate Model	0.31	0.714	0.197	0.089	0.216	0.304	0.337	0.970
Identifying & Articulating A Vision	0.79	0.113	0.272	**0.019***	0.349	0.642	0.441	0.055
Fostering Acceptance Of Group Goals	0.71	0.352	**0.034***	**0.014***	0.448	0.318	0.208	0.422
Individual Support	0.24	0.883	0.106	0.680	0.268	0.135	0.490	0.349
Intellectual Stimulation	0.33	0.181	0.967	0.063	0.141	**0.045***	0.137	0.331

The results in Table 7 also indicate that respondent perceptions differ regarding TL behaviors sub-factors as well. For instance, perceptions of respondents are similar for providing an appropriate model and individual support sub-factors. However, perceptions about high performance expectations differ according to their age group, education, and experience in tourism (p<0.05). Respondents aged 35 to 44 perceive high performance expectation behaviours of senior managers significantly less than other respondents. On the other hand, respondents who graduated from high school perceive high performance expectation behaviors significantly less than respondents who graduated from undergraduate and graduate schools. Respondents with less than 5 years' experience in tourism sector perceive high performance expectations significantly higher than other respondents who are 5-10 years and 11-15 years experienced in tourism.

According to results in Table 7, respondents' perceptions about identifying & articulating behaviors are significantly different depending their educational background. Due to this fact, respondents who graduated from associate or undergraduate schools perceive   significantly higher than respondents who graduated from high schools. Yet another difference in perceptions was observed in the fostering acceptance of group goals sub-factor. Married respondents perceive related behaviours higher than single respondents, while respondents who have associate or undergraduate degree perceive those behaviours significantly higher than respondents that are graduated from high schools or have graduate degree. Finally, there is a difference in respondents' perceptions at intellectual stimulation depending on their work. Respondents who work in housekeeping have significantly different perceptions about intellectual stimulation behaviours of senior managers when compared to other respondents who work at administrative units. Their perceptions are higher than administrative unit workers.

5. Conclusion

This empirical study which was conducted at IHC operating in Turkey contributes important findings to related literature and hoteliers. First, it is notes that IHC operating in Turkey are very familiar to KM and KS contrary to the limited studies in this field. Therefore, results indicate that existing and/or created knowledge is effectively shared within IHC and also among IHC. On the other hand, it is notable that those hotels do not effectively use informal communication for KS. This means that hotel management does not commit to the socialization processes of KS. We can assume that employees working at those hotels share explicit knowledge more than implicit knowledge. Also, a limitation on sharing implicit knowledge can cause unexpected and unsuccessful KM practices since organizations cannot create new knowledge to gain competitive advantage without implicit knowledge (Dalkir, 2005). In order to emphasize implicit knowledge, Davenport and Prusak (2000) state that top management should settle some physical places such as talking rooms, tea/coffee pots, and cafeterias or organize open sessions and panels which enable face to face communication and implicit knowledge sharing.

The study found a significant correlation between KS practices and TL behaviours, and reported that TL

behaviours positively affect KS practices at IHC. This is the most important finding of this study. Although, previous studies (Bouncken, 2002; Yang ve Wan, 2004; Anonymous, 2005; Magnini, 2008; Yang, 2010, Rudez, 2010) determined that different leadership styles positively affect KM projects, no study particularly focused on the effects of TL behaviours on KS practices. However, some specific behaviours of leaders stated in those studies support current findings of this study. For instance Yang and Wan (2004) observed that hotel employees often gossip at breaks, and that managers could provide & increase knowledge sharing by their attitudes and behaviours toward knowledge transfer. In another study conducted on Taiwanese hotels, researchers determined that leaders could enhance knowledge sharing among employees with different motivation tactics (Anonymus, 2005). Furthermore Yang (2010) and Rudez (2010) state that leaders could support KS process by enhancing organizational commitment, ensuring mutual trust among employees, playing an active role in KS, supporting creative ideas and innovative initiatives and promoting open communication channels. Also, Magnini (2008) implicitly states that TL are necessary at IHC since a learning focused and innovative attitude must be shared throughout the organization.

We can clearly observe that transformational leaders at IHC are essential and contribute to knowledge sharing practices by some specific behaviours which were observed in our study and supported by other studies. Within this context, TL at IHC, intellectually stimulate employees by supporting creative ideas and innovative initiatives; foster acceptance of goals by enabling organizational commitment and mutual trust among employees; articulate a shared vision that focuses on continuous learning and innovation; constitute high performance teams by actively participating at KS process. On the other hand we assigned that individual support behaviours of TL do not have any significant or positive effect on KS practices. This unexpected result may explain TL's position. Since, those leaders are at least senior managers at IHC, they mainly spend their time running the IHC and making strategic decisions. Therefore, they have a limited time to be together with employees.

Exploring the variations in perceptions about KS practices based on that perceptions was another purpose of this study. Researchers observed that KS practices differed related to employees' age, education and tourism experience. Although this result is support by Detlor and his colleagues' study (2006) which states that KS practices can vary regarding to employees' age, contrary to their study we observed that younger employees display better performance when compared to older employees. This result may be explained in two different ways. First, this could be caused by the redundancy of younger employees. Secondly, younger employees could want to have implicit knowledge based on the belief that "Knowledge is power". KS practices also differ based on employees' educational background. This finding show similarity with Bergeron's (2003) study which emphasizes education at KM and concludes that more educated employees could be more effective at KS. Finally, results shows that KS practices differ regarding to employees' experience period in tourism. Because the importance of KM and KS practices are gradually increased at tourism industry during the last decade, newcomers to this industry could be more effective at KS practices rather than experienced employees.

The last important finding of this study is that IHC employees perceive TL behaviors, and perception of employees differently based on their education and experience in the tourism industry. Within this scope senior managers at IHC mostly exhibit identifying & articulating vision behaviours. Because, IHC are separate hotels, the existence of a shared vision towards KS is generally considered as a precondition by IHC centres. We supposed that this fact is the key driver for exhibiting such behaviours. However it is observed that individual support behaviours are the least exhibited TL behaviours at IHCs. This fact may be related to senior managers' positions as previously mentioned. Meanwhile, it is also concluded that employees' perceptions about TL behaviours mainly vary in terms of their educational status. This conclusion is also supported by related literature, since it refers that employees' emotional intelligence (Scott-Halsell, Shumate ve Blum, 2008), creativity (Pieterse et al., 2010; Ng and Feldman, 2012) and organizational commitment (Erkutlu, 2008) levels are increase with an increase in level of education. We suppose that employees could perceive TL behaviours more and more as a result of increments at emotional intelligence, creativity and organizational commitment. Thus, it is an expected conclusion hoteliers must put emphasis on the success of IHC.

Although the study has revealed significant conclusions, there are several limitations in the context of methodology and content, as well as other studies conducted in social sciences. For instance, questionnaire was the only instrument to collect data in this study, but a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods should have been carried out for multidimensional analysis to contribute to this field. Also, researchers should conduct detailed studies which are particularly focused on KS to explore how knowledge can be shared effectively. In conjunction with those studies results, researchers can also address some specific issues such as improvement of KS, innovation at KS techniques. On the other hand, in order to understand the TL's effects on KS practices better, researchers should focus on sub-behaviours such as taking only identifying & articulating vision

behaviours of TL into consideration. Concurrently, researchers should connect this subject with several variables such as innovation capability, transformation degree to learning organizations, increments at intellectual capital to determine its' tangible contributions. Furthermore, effects of different types of leadership (servant leadership, strategic leadership, visionary leadership and etc.) on KS practices should be searched at IHC.

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