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Master in Human Resources Management

**Leadership and HPWS in the Greek Hospitality
Industry during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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Abstract

The present study investigates the role of leadership and Human Resource Management (HRM) Practices on employees in the Greek hotel industry. In doing so, “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)” was applied based on a convenient sample of 278 customer-contact hotel employees across thirteen 4- and 5-star Greek hotel organizations. The research demonstrates the relationship between HRM practices, leadership, employees’ attitudes and working environments. In summary, the study reveals firstly the important role of leadership towards the service climate and the levels of employees’ trust, which in turn, influence positively their work engagement. As a consequence, employees respond by exhibiting extra role customer behavior and increased productivity. Furthermore, the findings clarify the mechanism behind High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), a process which is known as the “black-box”, a valuable knowledge for professionals practicing Human Recourse Management.

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1. Introduction

One important topic in Human Resource Management (HRM), is the impact of its policies and practices on firm performance (Jones & Wright, 1992). Researches have been focusing over the past 30 years on finding the appropriate HRM practices that will lead to the creation of a system with the higher organizational performance (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010) known as high-performance work system (HPWS) (Appelbaum, Bailey, & Kalleberg, 2000).

“Leadership is the driving force in societal and organizational change” (Martin, 1999, p.41). Over the last 40 years, the idea of leadership has been drawing increased attention by both practitioners and theorists, a phenomenon which may occur because of its significant effect on organizational performance and success (Smith, Carson & Alexander 1984; Fiedler, 1996; Hennessey, 1998; Yousef, 1998). Across the literature there are many definitions regarding leadership, hence most of them are focusing on influence and goal achievement, or even followers, while according to Scandura and Dorfman (2004) the only common declaration is that leaders have always existed.

Nowadays, there is an increased interest in examining and promoting the tourism sector. One of the reasons is that government understood the importance of it, in order to develop socially and economically, by generating more working positions (Baum & Szivas, 2008). Hotels are definitely an important element of the tourism sector, as they offer hospitality services to tourists, but they have to deal with a complicated and rapidly changing environment. According to Salanova, Agut and Peiró (2005) any service organization should be prepared to confirm its present and future economic success, following the suitable strategies. The fact is that globalization has created a competition among service organizations and based on Schneider and Bowen (2010), the organizations have to put an extra effort into pleasing their customers, in order to win their competitors. Also, it is essential for the hotels to guarantee that their employees have real positive feelings when serving customers (King & Garey, 1997). In doing so, hotels should provide employees with the appropriate benefits (economic or nor) and a healthy working environment.

Taking into consideration the Greek hospitality industry, further research is needed for two main reasons. The first one is the importance of Greek tourism industry, since it has

been characterized as “one of the main contributors to the growth of the Greek economy” according to PricewaterhouseCoopers (2020). The second reason concerns the dearth of relevant studies, along with their inability to generalize the findings, due to the different economic and employment situations across the world (Farndale & Paauwe, 2018).

Furthermore, Greece provides an interesting context for additional reasons. Indeed, since the beginning of economic crisis in 2010, Greek economy has been dealing with very difficult situations. Also, new labor legislations have been created, challenging the success of HPWS implementation (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Consequently, it would be interesting to investigate if HPWS can be described as “best practice” for the Greek hotel industry. Further research would be advantageous, due to the limitations of generalizing the findings and the importance of the tourism sector in the advanced economies.

Moreover, this year, global tourism and hospitality industry, had to deal with the spread of COVID-19 and the travel restrictions. According to Guevara (2020), who is the President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council, “50 million jobs globally are at risk” due to the pandemic. Furthermore, hotels are facing the reduced tourism, travel restrictions and the low economic activity (Hoisington, 2020), while because of their nature they are the main receiver of the pandemic and its consequences (Gallen, 2020). Due to the importance of the sustainability of the hotels, researchers have already tried to examine the framework and have provided studies with anti-pandemic strategies (Hao, Xiao & Chon, 2020; Jiang & Wen, 2020).

Based on the preceding discussion, Greece provides an excellent case for further investigation, especially throughout that period. In summary, the present research investigates the impact of HRM practices and the role of leadership on employees in 4- and 5- star hotels in Greece, during the pandemic. In the beginning, the paper presents the theoretical framework along with the relevant hypotheses. Then, it describes the data and the methodology of the research. After that, it displays the results of the analyses and the conclusions, with a discussion upon the findings. In the final part of the dissertation, the practical implications are presented followed by the major limitations of the study.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Leadership

In the field of the behavioral sciences, leadership, as a social influenced process, is considered to be the most widely researched. Across the literature there are various definitions regarding the phenomenon of leadership, while researchers tend to describe it according to their individual viewpoints. Leadership has been defined as the ability of influencing a team in order to achieve a vision or a number of goals (Yulk, 2009), or generally as a complicated procedure with a lot of aspects which is focused on influencing other people (Northouse, 2015). There is no single definition, which can cover all types of situations.

Based on the analysis of the Lewin, Lippitt and White's experiments (1939), researchers studied and grouped leadership styles in two basic scopes. The first one, follows a task/production orientation, while the second one an employee/relations orientation (Bellou, 2011). The above dimensions have been termed as "transactional leadership" and "transforming leadership" (Burns, 1978), while both concepts are mutually exclusive styles. The "transactional leadership" is focused on pointing out mistakes and then taking over in order to solve the problem. Hence, there is an even more passive situation, when the leader avoids even to explain the frame of the goal (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003). On the other hand, "transformational leadership" is mostly focused on promoting followers' self-development and their need for achievement, while it can effectively adapt to changing environments. According to Bass and Avolio (1990, p.22), a transformational leader should have "idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation".

Over the years, there has been an unending controversy about the distinctions between leadership and management, which Burns (1978) first detected in characteristics and behaviors. According to Kotter (2000), managing is about dealing with complexity, whereas leadership is coping with change. With this in mind, it is obvious that a person can be a leader without being a manager, and a person can be a manager without leading (Yulk, 2009). Despite this, evidence provides that it is possible to train managers so as to follow a transformational leadership style (Barling, Weber & Kelloway, 1996). Leaders

can be characterized as symbols who represent the guidelines of the organization, so they are supposed to feel first the engagement to the goals, in order to urge the followers (employees) mimic their behavior (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013).

Regarding hotels, it has been observed that managers are supposed to be engaged in trusting relationship with the employees, because that guarantees the extra mile on behalf of the subordinates (Garg & Dhar, 2016). In their research Sy, Côté and Saavedra (2005), proved that leaders' mood can affect members' one, while teams whose leader experienced positive feelings could cooperate better and more effortlessly, than the teams with a leader in a negative mood. Noteworthy is also what Goleman (1998) stated about "emotional intelligence" (EI) and its capability of distinguishing a great leader and maximizing followers' performance. Specifically, the five skills that consist EI are: self-awareness; self-regulation; motivation; empathy, and social skill. People are born with certain levels of EI, although they can be improved through practice and multi-source performance feedback.

2.2 Leadership, trust and service climate

"Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998, p.395). Moreover, it has been noticed the fact that when there are trustworthy relationships in the organization, employees tend to go above and beyond their tasks so as to get the wanted results (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Fairness can be the one characteristic which can maximize trust, while it is considered as a very important element in the work relationships. Indeed, employees feel safer and more confident that they will be given the deserved, based on their efforts (Organ, 1990).

Leadership and trust have a strong connection, which in the wanted circumstances can generate great results in the organizations. In the model that Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) suggested, when employees have trust in their leaders, they are more willing to be part of risky situations in order to follow instructions and to achieve the organizations' goals. It is believed that the values agreement between a leader and a follower is essential for the existence of trust, because otherwise there will be conflict and difficulties in the

work (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1994). In cases of mutual trust employees are able to work together more effectively. In addition, trust can be associated with the way leadership takes fair decisions or not (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Moreover, when Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) studied the relationship between leader and member, they found out that employees have more trust in the organization, when they feel important. Another key to remember is that the central and the most important task of a leader is to communicate the vision, through the employees, and in that way, is easier to cultivate a trustworthy environment for them (Martin, 1999). In other words, when there are clear instructions, transparency and justice, employees bring better results. Furthermore, Liden, Wayne and Sparrowe (2000), argued that “the degree of emotional support, the decision-making responsibility and the task challenge granted to the member” can be probably the most essential characteristics that affect the relationships between the leader and the employee (p.409). Based on the preceding discussion, the first hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Leadership influences positively employees’ trust.

Service climate defines the perceptions of the employees for “the practices, procedures, and behaviors that get rewarded, supported, and expected with regard to customer service and customer service quality” (Schneider, White & Paul, 1998, p.151). Service climate is based on the ability of behaving appropriately in multiple situations regardless of costumers’ variability (Hui, Chiu, Yu, Cheng, & Tse 2007). Moreover, a service climate provides the most appropriate service quality to the costumers, in order to offer them positive experiences (Schneider et al., 1998). Service climate has been characterized by Salanova et al. (2005) as a “collective and shared phenomenon” (p. 1217), whose main goal is customer service with the right practices. Service is the most important task that hotels should optimize, while the quality of it has an important effect on costumers’ behavior, so as to revisit the hotel or suggest it to others (Chen, 2013).

According to the study of Hui et al. (2007) there is correlation between service climate and efficient leadership behavior. Furthermore, it has been proved that the nature of leader’s character is associated with the development of service climate among the employees (Salvaggio et al., 2007), a phenomenon which is familiar and applicable to transformational leadership (Kopperud, Martinsen & Humborstad, 2013). Adding to that,

Salvaggio et al. (2007) argued that hiring managers who can demonstrate service quality orientation, can provide better service climate to the organization. As a result, the second hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 2. Leadership influences positively service climate.

2.3 Trust, service climate and work engagement

In recent years, the need of understanding the meaning of the term “work engagement” has attracted a substantial number of studies. Indeed, there are plenty of definitions that can describe it, while work engagement can be generally portrayed as “a relatively enduring state of mind referring to the simultaneous investment of personal energies in the experience or performance of work” (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011, p.95). Another definition of work engagement is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” given by Schaufeli et al. (2002, p.74). The achievement of engaging employees belongs to the top-five most essential goals, which management has to challenge (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015). Significantly, work engagement has been proved to be linked with plenty of work-related effects, such as extra-role behavior, performance and job-related attitude (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015) and positively related to business-unit performance (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Moreover, it has been argued that engaged employees can perform better (Bakker, 2011) and “feel more often positive emotions, have better health, have the ability to mobilize resources and crossover their feeling of engagement” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, pp. 215-217). Furthermore, the study of Gierveld and Bakker (2005) on secretaries, proved that the ones who were engaged to the organization performed better in both in-role and extra-role tasks, a phenomenon which can be found also in Bakker, Gierveld Van Rijswijk’s research (2006), which was based on school principals.

Concerning trust, it is widely accepted that it is relying on the mutual understanding and discretion between two persons, with the purpose of developing a safe and respectful relationship. Moreover, it has been noticed that trust in a form of job autonomy can encourage work engagement (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Also, employees who work in an

environment in which they have their supervisor's help, in order to solve job related problems, can eventually be more engaged to their work (Costigan, Iiter & Berman, 1998). Based on that reasoning and theory, the third hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3. Trust is positively related to work engagement.

According to a research, there is a relationship in which service climate and customer perceptions of service quality are mutual causal (Schneider et al., 1998). Also, Salanova et al. (2005) noticed that work engagement can increase the levels of service quality as perceived by customers, and that the provision of resources to the organization can raise the engagement between employees and employers, a fact which augments service climate. In the matter of the situation that odors in hotels, in the same study, they demonstrated that work engagement has an important impact in service quality and by extension in service climate. Furthermore, evidence have shown also that service quality is associated with devoted costumers and the maintenance of them, and as a result both of them bring economic benefits to the organization (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Storbacka, Strandvik & Gronroos, 1994). All these considered, the fourth hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4. Service climate is positively related to work engagement.

2.4 Work engagement, productivity and extra-role customer service

Transformational leadership is capable of motivating followers to go far and beyond (Bass & Bass, 2008) and is considered to be positively related to work engagement (Kopperud et al., 2013). Based on the survey of Harter et al. (2002), employees' productivity can be positively associated with work engagement levels, while it is known that engagement can increase employees' motivation so as to develop their skills and improve their job performance (Kahn, 1990; Rich, Lepine & Crawford, 2010). Moreover, it has been demonstrated, that due to affective commitment, employees perform better and have the appropriate attitudes, two credentials that can be characterized as essential for an organization (Harrison, Newman & Roth, 2006). Furthermore, there is a situation

in which engagement is able to support, or even improve, employers' competitive advantage (Christian et al., 2011). As Li, Sanders and Frenkel (2012) pointed out, it has been noticed a positive influence between work engagement and job performance in several industries (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007; Bakker & Leiter, 2012) including hospitality (Salanova et al., 2005). Summarizing, the fifth hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 5. Work engagement is positively associated with employees' productivity.

According to Morrison's research (1994) there are no clear boundaries between in-role and extra-role behaviors. However, extra-role customer service refers to "discretionary behaviors of contact employees in serving customers that extend beyond formal role requirements" (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997, p.41). The study of Li et al. (2012), points out that employees who have immediate contact with the customers have to act proactively and responsively in order to fulfill the needed requirements. Also, Garg and Dhar (2016) issued that employees who adapt an extra-role behavior are essential to the service industries. Moreover, Chiang and Hsieh (2012), in their study, proved that hotels should motivate and provoke extra-role behaviors and that employees should go above and beyond the call of duty.

As stated by Karatepe (2011) and Saks (2006), employees who feel more engaged have the tendency to develop stronger relationships based on trust with their working environment, and they exceed requirements in dealing with job-related problems. Moreover, the results of Karatepe's research (2013) provide that work engagement has a strong relationship with extra-role customer service. Also, in the view of the evidence from the study of Demerouti, Bakker and Gevers (2015), it emerged as a result that work engagement is related to both aspects of extra-role behavior (employee creativity and contextual performance). Consequently, the sixth hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 6. Work engagement is positively associated with employees' extra-role customer service behavior.

It has been proved that when employees feel secure that they will manage to solve job related problems and have trust in their capabilities, their productivity increases (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Liden et al., 2000). Also, there is evidence suggesting that when the organization is respectful to its employees, they become more engaged to it and provide better job performance results (Walton, 1985). Moreover, it is established that motivation, which encourages employees to adopt an extra-role behavior, can be increased by the existence of two-sided trust, respect and influence (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1993; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne et al., 1997; Luo, Song, Marnburg, & Øgaard, 2014). Based on the preceding discussion, the seventh hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 7. Work engagement mediates the relationship between (a) service climate (b) trust with (c) productivity and (d) extra-role customer service behavior.

2.5 The role of HPWS

The definition of HPWS has been generally demonstrated as “as a specific combination of HR practices, work structures, and processes that maximizes employee knowledge, skill, commitment, and flexibility” (Bohlander & Snell, 2007, p. 690). However, HPWS can be described as a number of HR practices and processes, which under certain circumstances can bring great outcomes to both employees and organization (Boxall, Ang & Bartram, 2010). According to Pfeffer (1998), in a HPWS employees can continuously perform better, through motivation, while they are the most essential element of the organizational environment and its main competitive advantage, as it is hard or even impossible to be copied.

Both high performance work systems and human resources practices have been proved to be two really essential characteristics, which can contribute in the better accomplishment of organization’s goals (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Macky & Boxall, 2007). Moreover, Schuler and Jackson (1987) in their research mentioned that when the HRM practices are based on strategy, it is more likely for the organization to succeed, if it goes with harmoniously with the characteristics of both managers and employees. Furthermore, Ostroff and Bowen (2016), stated that a strong HRM system should have a

set of practices which are “coherent, salient and distinctive, visible and understandable, the result of which builds consensus among employees about practices and allows for shared perceptions of climate to emerge” (p.198).

Regarding hotels, the Chiang and Hsieh (2012) showed that organizations should provide benefits and training programs to the employees, be supportive and honest with them, in order to improve their job performance. Moreover, Tang and Tang, (2012) underlined the importance of hotels to develop HRM practices in order to create the appropriate service climate, because of the importance to succeed a high customer value.

Leadership has been proved to have a strong connection with the success of HPWS practices (Boxall & Purcell, 2003) and that it can form a robust HRM system through the communication with the employees (Young, Bartram, Stanton & Leggat, 2010; Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg & Croon, 2012; Ostroff & Bowen, 2016). Also, results from studies have shown that the implementation of HR practices in an organization can increase the level of trust in the management, employees’ commitment and their job satisfaction (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Macky & Boxall, 2007). Furthermore, there are studies which issue that certain practices of a HPWS have impact in employees’ trust levels, such as “job security” (Cascio, 1993), “information sharing” (Fitz-Enz, 1997), “participation in decision making”, and “training” (Walton, 1985). Based on the above, the last hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

Hypothesis 8. HPWS moderates the relationship between trust and leadership.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure and sample

The data for the research was collected across thirteen hotel organizations (convenient sample process), located in several cities of Greece, in Autumn 2020. This year, the hotel industry had to deal with unexampled difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, since the Greek government suspended the operation of all tourist accommodation for months. As a result, hotels ceased their business activities. At the time speaking, there are plenty hotels which underfunction and some others that have not manage to open again yet, due to economic problems. In the first stages of the study the research team approach the HR managers of the hotels in order to secure their cooperation and to get informed about the practices that are being used nowadays in the Greek Tourism Industry. Moreover, there were two types of questionnaires, a handwritten and an electronic one, both of which has the information about the anonymity and the voluntary nature of participation in the survey. The electronic questionnaire was used by eleven hotels, while the handwritten only by two, due to the situations that occur because of the pandemic. The participating hotels are ranked as 4- and 5- star hotels.

The control group of the study was 278 hotel employees. Regarding the demographics, 40.6% of the sample were male and 59.4% were female, while the average age of the employees was 33.42 years ($SD=8.783$). According to the educational level, 43.5% held a Bachelor's Degree and 20.1% were postgraduates. Furthermore, 26.3% of the employees had other qualifications, while the 10.1% were high school graduates. Moreover, the majority of the group were working under a fulltime contract (93.9%), while the answers about if they were seasonal or temporary employees were evenly distributed (52.2% and 47.8%, respectively). Regarding job positions, 28.1% were working in the front office; 24.1 as food and beverage service staff; 12.6% in the management department; 10.8% in the food production; 8.3% in the administrative department; 6.5% in housekeeping; 3.6% were employees with general duties (not specified job position); 3.2% in engineering/maintenance department; 2.5% in the facilities management department; and finally, the 0.4% were working as beach assistants.

3.2 Measures

For all measures, employees provided responses on a five-point Likert scale (“1 = strongly disagree”, “5 = strongly agree”). Moreover, “Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)” was conducted (“maximum likelihood extraction method”; “promax rotation”; “cutoff value = 0.30”).

3.2.1 “High Performance Work Systems (HPWS)”

HPWS involves a number of HRM practices, based on established scales of previous research, taking into consideration the Greek hotel industry and the interviews with the HR managers. On the whole, 19 items were used composing six sub-scales (i.e., HRM practices). In particular, “training and development” was based on the scale development by Sun, Aryee and Law (2007). “Participation in decision-making” was based on the scale developed by Delery & Doty, 1996). Moreover, “employee autonomy” was based on the scale developed by Barling, Kelloway and Iverson (2003), while “feedback” was based on the research of Datta, Guthrie and Wright (2005). Finally, “information sharing” was based on the scales develop by Guthrie, Flood, Liu and MacCurtain (2009). Cronbach’s alpha for the HPWS was 0.888.

3.2.2 “Leadership”

“Leadership” was assessed by six items, based on the seven-item scale of Global Transformational Leadership (GTL) developed by Carless, Wearing and Mann (2000). Sample items include “How frequently your manager communicates a clear and positive vision of the future?” and “How frequently your manager fosters trust, involvement and cooperation among team members?”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.931.

3.2.3 “Trust”

“Trust” was assessed by three items, based on the twelve-item scale developed in the research of Macky and Boxall (2007). Sample items include “Management can be trusted to make sensible decisions for the firm’s future” and “Management at work seems to do an efficient job”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.897.

3.2.4 “Service Climate”

“Service climate” was assessed by seven items, based on the scale developed by Schneider et al. (1998). Sample items include “How would you rate the job knowledge and skills of employees in your business to deliver superior quality work and service?” and “How would you rate the recognition and rewards employees receive for the delivery of superior work and service?”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.872.

3.2.5 “Work Engagement”

“Work engagement” was measured by three items, using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) sixteen-scale, developed by Demerouti, Mostert and Bakker (2010). Sample items include “There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work” and “During my work, I often feel emotionally drained”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.816.

3.2.6 “Productivity”

“Productivity” was assessed by seven items, using the scale of Latorre, Guest, Ramos and Gracia (2016). Two dimensions were examined, namely “Technical Performance” and “Social Performance”. Sample items include “In the last week you worked, how well were you handling the responsibilities and daily demands of your work?” and “In the last

week you worked getting along with others at work?”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.876.

3.2.7 “Extra-role Customer Service”

“Extra-role customer service” was assessed by four items, based on the scale of Bettencourt and Brown (1997), using the questions about extra-role customer service behaviors and cooperation, and the study of Kim and Brymer (2011). Sample items include “I voluntarily assist customers even if it means going beyond the job requirements” and “Helps other employees who have excessive workloads”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.848.

3.3 Control Variables

Some individual-level variables were controlled, including “gender” (“1 = Male”, “2 = Female”, and “level of education” (“1 = High School Diploma”, “2 = Bachelor’s Degree”, “3 = Master’s Degree”, “4 = other”). However, since the majority of the group were working under a fulltime contract (93.9%), the employment status was not included as a control variable. Also, due to the relatively low number of participating hotels, the star ranking was not included as a control variable, although the sample was collected across thirteen 4- and 5- star hotels. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that all hotels were similar in size, with similar HR practices.

3.4 Common Method Variance

Although the data was collected through different sources, they were obtained by the same method, a 5-point Likert scale. Thus, the Harmon's single-factor test was used to exclude the possibility of Common Method Variance (CMV). A principal component analysis was conducted between all of the variables that were used to measure leadership,

trust, service climate, work engagement, productivity, extra-role customer service and HPWS. One fixed number of factors was chosen to be extracted for all measured variables, which according to the results explained only 22.5% of the variance approximately. Therefore, since this single factor did not explain the majority of the variance in the variables, common method bias is not likely to be an issue in the present analysis.

3.5 Method of analysis

For the needs of the study, “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)” was applied with the “SmartPLS 3.2” (Ringle, Wende, Becker, 2014) software. PLS-SEM is continuously increasing popularity in hospitality research (Úbeda – Garcia et al., 2018a, b). PLS-SEM has the ability to include hierarchical component models, which are comprised by formative and reflective constructs, which was essential element in the research. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1. Specifically, HPWS was treated as a “reflective-formative” high-order component. In doing so, the “repeated indicators approach” was followed with (formative) measurement mode B (Becker, Klein & Wetzels, 2012, p. 361) in combination with the “two-step approach” (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016, pp. 230–233). Figure 2 depicts the final model.

Figure1: The proposed model

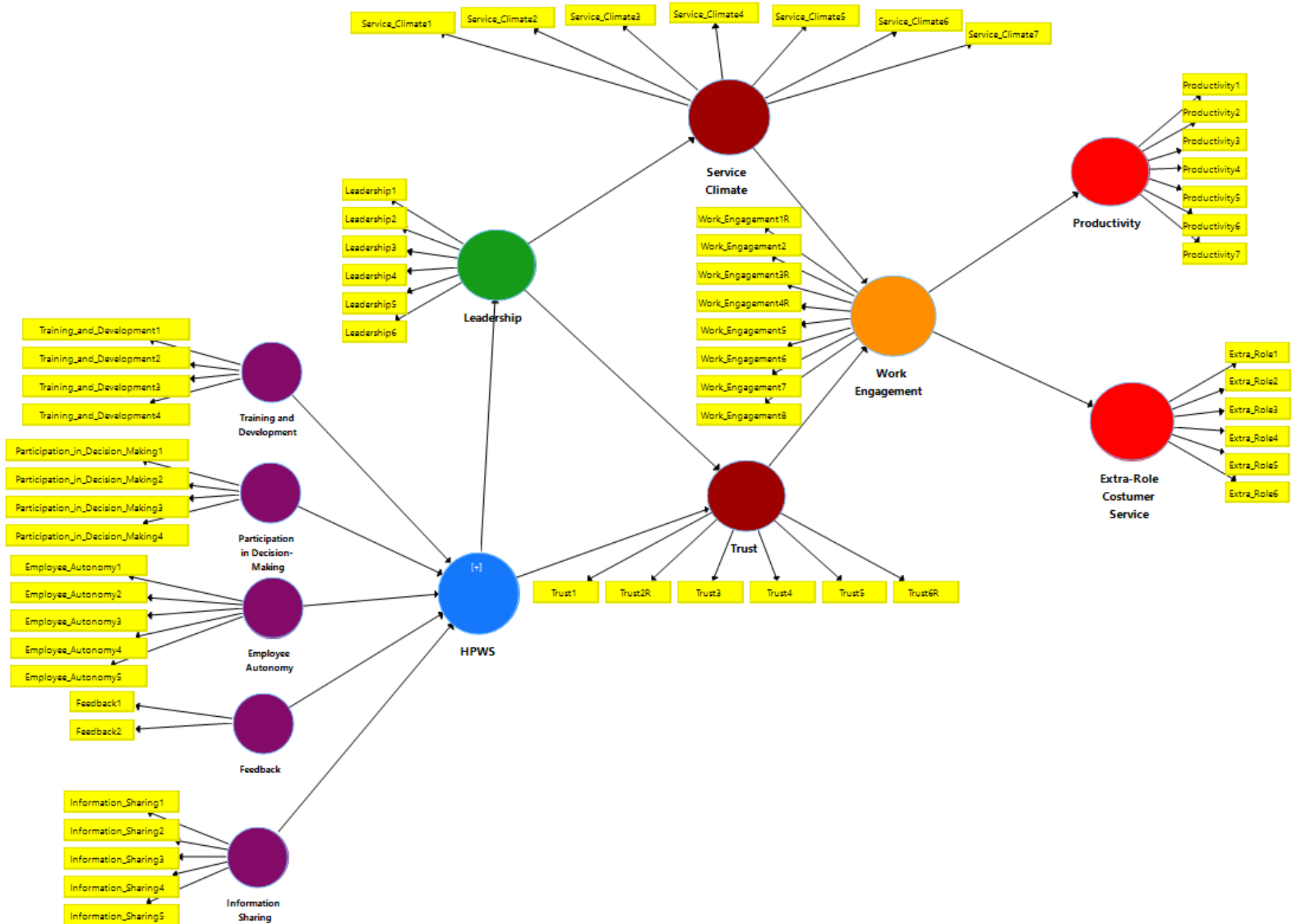
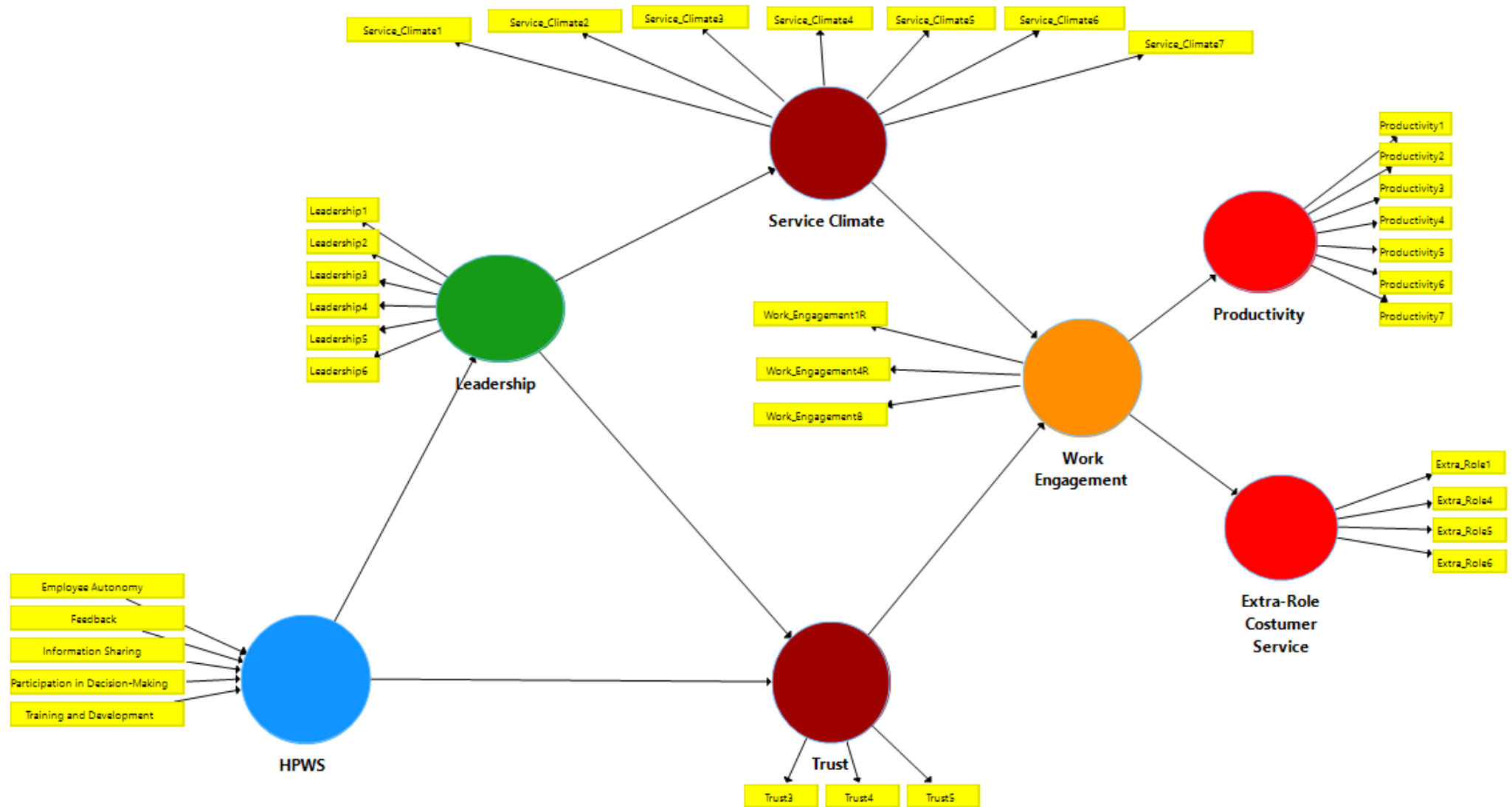


Figure 2: The “Two-Step Approach” model



3.6 Assessment of the measurement model

Based on the above, the conceptual model (figure 1) contains both reflective and formative indicators. As for the reflective ones, validity and reliability was assessed by Hair's et al. (2016, p. 95) guidelines, which include "individual indicator reliability", "composite reliability (CR)", and "Average Variance Extracted (AVE)". According to Table 1, all factor loadings were above 0.5 threshold, while the AVE and CR scored were above the threshold of 0.50 and 0.70, respectively.

As regards discriminant validity, two criteria which are available in SmartPLS were followed (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014), namely the "Fornell-Lacker", and the "Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio" ($HTMT < 0.85$). While all of the HTMT values were below 0.85, discriminant validity was achieved. Finally, regarding formative indicator (HPWS), a different approach should be followed as opposed to reflective ones. First, the recommendations of Petter, Straub and Rai (2007) were followed. Next, all "formative factors" were examined for "multicollinearity" by taking into account the "Variance Inflation Factors" (VIF) (see Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009). All of the VIF loadings were below the upper threshold of 3.33. Hence, based on this methodology, it is evident that construct reliability was achieved.

4. Results

In analyzing the structural model (Figure 2), the bootstrapping procedure was applied (2000 randomly drawn samples). Table 1 and figure 3 shows the path coefficient along with their significance levels.

Analytically table 1 shows that leadership influences positively both trust ($\beta = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$) and service climate ($\beta = 0.578$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. Likewise, trust ($\beta = 0.300$, $p < 0.001$) was significantly positively related to work engagement, while service climate was not ($\beta = 0.156$, $p > 0.001$). Hence, these findings provide that Hypothesis 3 is supported, although Hypothesis 4 is not. Moreover, work engagement is positively associated with both productivity ($\beta = 0.430$, $p < 0.001$) and extra-role customer behavior ($\beta = 0.311$, $p < 0.001$), therefore Hypotheses 5 and 6 are supported.

Furthermore, Hypothesis 7 proposed that work engagement mediates the relationship between (a) service climate (b) trust with (c) productivity and (d) extra-role customer service behavior. Based on the process that is followed regarding mediation, the “indirect effects” between the “independent” (i.e., trust and service climate) and the “dependent” (i.e., work engagement) variables should be statistically significant (Zhao, Lynch & Chen, 2010, p. 204). These indirect relationships were calculated based on the “product-of-coefficient ($\alpha\beta$)” approach (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West Sheets & Sheets, 2002), via the bootstrap analysis (2.000 samples) option in SmartPLS. According to the Table 2, the indirect effects between trust and productivity ($\alpha\beta = 0.129$, $p < 0.001$) and with extra-role customer behavior ($\alpha\beta = 0.093$, $p < 0.001$) through work engagement were statically significant, thus Hypotheses 7a and 7b are supported. However, the indirect effects between service climate and productivity ($\alpha\beta = 0.067$, $p > 0.001$) and with extra-role customer behavior ($\alpha\beta = 0.049$, $p > 0.001$) through work engagement were not statically significant. Hence, Hypotheses 7c and 7d are not supported.

Finally, with regard to Hypothesis 8, the analysis revealed that HPWS did not moderate the relationship between leadership and trust. Specifically, based on the process that is followed regarding moderation Hypothesis 8 is not supported ($\alpha\beta = -0.094$ and $p > 0.001$). As a result, HPWS does not moderate the relationship the proposed relationship.

Figure 3: The “Two-Step Approach” conceptual framework

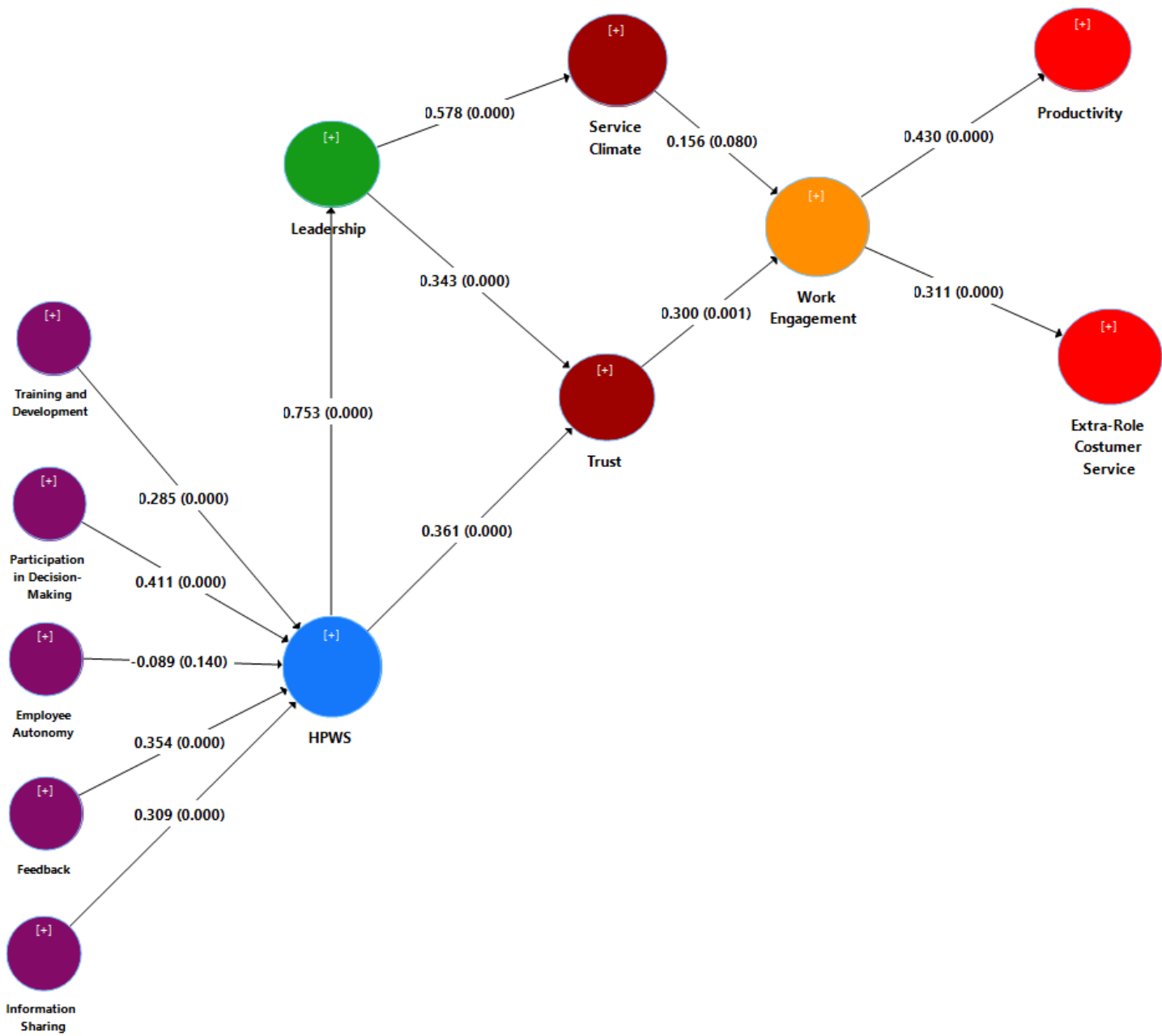


Table 1: Summary of Path Coefficients and Significance levels

Direct Hypotheses and corresponding paths	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	Hypothesis Support
Leadership → Trust	0.343	4.421	H1 supported
Leadership → Service Climate	0.578	14.191	H2 supported
Trust → Work Engagement	0.300	3.229	H3 supported
Service Climate → Work Engagement	0.156	1.766	H4 not supported
Work Engagement → Productivity	0.430	7.042	H5 supported
Work Engagement → Extra-role customer service	0.311	4.867	H6 supported
Trust → Productivity	0.129	2.904	-
Trust → Extra-role customer service	0.093	2.638	-
Service Climate → Productivity	0.067	1.651	-
Service Climate → Extra-role customer service	0.049	1.545	-
Mediation hypotheses and corresponding path			
Trust → Work Engagement → Productivity	0.129	2.904	H7a supported
Trust → Work Engagement → Extra-role customer service	0.093	2.638	H7b supported
Service Climate → Work Engagement → Productivity	0.067	1.651	H7c not supported
Service Climate → Work Engagement → Extra-role customer service	0.049	1.545	H7d not supported
Moderation hypothesis and corresponding path			
Moderating effect → Trust	-0.094	0.967	H8 not supported

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The present study tries to approach the most commonly examined topics around HRM and to explain “the mechanisms that lead HR policies and practices to influence unit-level performance” (Nyberg, Moliterno, Hale & Lepak, 2014, p. 318), while it responds to the calls for further research in the hospitality sector (García-Lillo, Claver-Cortés, Úbeda-García, Marco-Lajara & Zaragoza-Sáez, 2018, p. 1753, 1754). Furthermore, the role of leadership and its impact on the employees were investigated, during a very crucial period for the hotel industry. Specifically, COVID-19 pandemic totally changed the situation around the tourism sector and affected in turn the stakeholders that are related to the hospitality industry (Hao et al., 2020), while it also altered the ways people work, affected their working timers and the place of work. This current situation has already created economic and functional problems. Hence, its investigation was deemed as extremely crucial.

At first, the relationship between leadership and trust was examined. Regarding transformational leadership, it has been established that trust in leader is a crucial element in an organization (Bass, 1985), while it is also associated with his or her characteristics (McAllister, 1995). Specifically, it has been demonstrated that when leadership is fair, the employees tend to create more trustworthy relationships with the organization (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). The present findings confirmed the hypothesis that the character of a leader is able to influence positively the levels of employees’ trust in the organization. Furthermore, the study investigated the connection between leadership and service climate. Service climate is a very important characteristic of an organization as it can influence employees’ service behavior and is also positively associated with service quality and customer satisfaction (Chuang & Liao, 2010). Moreover, it has been established that the nature of the leader can affect the service climate of an organization (Hui et al., 2007; Salvaggio et al., 2007). According to the results of the study the hypothesis regarding the positively relationship between the leader and the service climate was confirmed. The employees’ responses of the participant hotels, showed that leadership is able to modify their levels of trust to the organization, while also it can influence the service climate of it. These two relationships are essential for the existence of a healthy working environment, according to the previous literature evidence. Based on the above, it is essential the right leader for these organizations, because leader can be

correlated with feelings of trust on behalf of the employees and the wanted service climate.

Moreover, the study tried to shed light on the relationship among trust, service climate and work engagement. Regarding trust, there is evidence confirming the association with employees' engagement to the organization (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Employees' responses confirmed that theory, while the results of the analyses showed that trust is positively associated with employees' levels of engagement in their work. The association between trust and work engagement seems to be important and much needed in a working environment, as can - in return - influence unit's outcomes (Walton, 1985). However, despite previous studies' findings (Salanova et al., 2005), in the present study service climate was not positively associated with the engagement of the employees in these hotels. One possible explanation for the differing results may have to do with the fact that the service climates of the participant hotels are not focused in creating favorable reciprocal exchanges between employees and employers (Shantz, Alfes, Truss & Soane, 2013) in order to engage them in the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Generally, the lack of employee engagement can affect negatively cooperation among the workforce, creativity and behavior (Aryee, Walumbwa, Gachunga & Hartnell, 2016; Reijseger, Peeters, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2016; Luu, 2018).

Furthermore, an additional goal of the present study was to examine the role of work engagement. According to the theoretical framework followed, work engagement can influence the employees' productivity (Kahn, 1990; Harter et al., 2002; Rich et al., 2010) along with their extra-role behavior (Karatepe, 2013; Demerouti, Bakker & Gevers, 2015). Indeed, employees' work engagement has been proved to affect the performance of both individuals and organizations (Salanova, Rodríguez-Sánchez, Schaufeli & Cifre, 2014). In addition, according to the study of Bakker, Demerouti and Verbeke (2004), employees who were engaged to their organization performed better and had an extra-role customer behavior, based on their colleagues' ratings. In the present research the positive relationships of work engagement with employees' productivity and extra-role customer service were examined, among the participant hotels. Furthermore, these two hypotheses were tested and confirmed during the analyses, and in that way the findings showed the positive influence of work engagement on both productivity and extra-role customer service behavior. Moreover, there was a hypothesis which was referred to the mediating role of work engagement towards linking trust, service climate, productivity and extra-role customer behavior. Regarding trust, the results proved that work

engagement mediates its relationship with employees' job performance and their intention to go the extra mile. However, due to the fact that the study could not prove the positive influence of service climate over employees' work engagement, that hypothesis was not confirmed.

Last but not least, HRM practices examined on the participant hotels were "training and development", "participation in decision making", "feedback", "information sharing" and "employee autonomy". In the present study, it was tested if HRM practices can moderate the relationship between leadership and trust. According to Sun et al. (2007), HPWS can affect organization's "contextual or environmental conditions" (p.571). The implementation of HRM practices can influence the relationship between hotels and their employees (Tang & Tang, 2012). Moreover, Salanova et al., (2005) in their research with a sample of hotels and restaurants employees proved that practices such as training and autonomy can make them more engaged in customer service, and in that order, they adopt more positive perceptions of their unit's service climate. The HRM literature has already shown that HPWS can positively affect leadership (Boxall & Purcell, 2003) and trust (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Macky & Boxall, 2007). However, the results of the analyses did not confirm the moderating effect of HRM practices in the association between leadership and trust.

In summary, the sample of the present research was consisted of 278 employees in 4- and 5- star hotels in Greece, during Autumn. The evidence of that study showed the essential role of the leader in the hotel industry, in order to increase employees' feelings of trust and organization's service climate. Moreover, work engagement proved to be associated with employees' levels of trust. Also, the present study confirmed that a trustworthy relationship between employees and employers is capable of encouraging the extra-role customer behavior and the job performance. Furthermore, the implementation of the suitable HRM practices in these environments was examined. The nature of the leadership and a supportive system seem to be very important characteristics, in order to increase employees' feelings of trust and engagement, while they can also affect the service climate of the organization and employees' attitudes. Nevertheless, the HR departments of the hotels, so as the management, should focus their strategies on practices that have positive effects on their employees.

6. Practical and Theoretical Implications

The study suggests practical and theoretical implications which can lead to positive performance-related outcomes. In that research, the character and the nature of the leader of a hotel, proved to have impact on employees' dispositions and unit's outcomes. Since the appropriate leadership style can encourage employees' engagement and extra-role customer behavior (Li & Hung, 2009), organizations should focus on employing the most suitable and qualified people for these positions. Furthermore, employees tend to feel higher levels of engagement when they feel comfortable with their leader (Mayer et al., 1995). Also, in cases where leaders try to create an image which is clear to their followers and based on professionalism and trustworthiness, employees, in advance, tend to respect and recognize their prosocial behavior (Zhu & Akhtar, 2013).

In addition, the implementation of a high-performance work systems seems very important for the hospitality sector. In situations where there is fair treatment, employees' positive attitudes can be promoted, leading to better service behaviors, higher service quality, and bigger number of satisfied customers. (Tang & Tang, 2012). The practices that are being implemented in these systems have positive effects on employees' well-being and can create a healthy work environment. Furthermore, frontline employees are essential for the organizations' performance, due to their direct access to the customers on a daily basis (Chuang & Liao, 2010).

Moreover, according to the study's findings, the combination of the appropriate HRM practices, with a leader with the wanted characteristics, leads to increased employees' productivity and extra-role customer behaviors. In that way, organizations should put extra effort so as to create a working environment, in which employees have the opportunity to achieve self-development and achieve goals, in order for both company and its subordinates to succeed. Hotel as a service organization is able to achieve better performance by providing the appropriate practices to its employees (Chuang & Liao, 2010). Generally, hotels' HRM department and management should focus on practices and strategies which can influence employees' behaviors and provide better outcomes.

Another key to remember is that this year hotels proved to be the prominent victim of the pandemic and had to deal with unprecedented situations. As a result, future research should focus on examining hotels' crisis management (Jiang & Wen, 2020). In addition,

due to the travel restrictions and the present situation, it seems crucial for hotels to seek for new marketing and management practices.

7. Limitations

Notwithstanding the theoretical contribution, the research contains some limitations, that open up further research in the future. First, this present study is cross-sectional in nature, since the data was collected at a one time-point, so the directions of the causality among variables cannot be examined. However, it has been issued that “a lot of good work can still be done cross-sectionally, as in the exploration of different theories of employee well-being, especially when a strong theory-driven model is tested through structural equation modelling” (Boxall, Guthrie & Paauwe, 2016, p. 109).

Also, the data was collected from thirteen hotels in Greece (4- and 5- star), so there is a need the hospitality sector to be examined further, across different hotel categories. Moreover, the low number of the participant hotels was because of the pandemic situation, while also many organizations employ less people than before, so it was more difficult to collect answers. Due to the fact that the present findings have derived from the Greek hotel industry, future research should focus on observing alike concepts in different circumstances, since the results may have limited applicability to other industries or cultures.

Finally, the data for the implemented practices was collected from the interviews with the HR managers. In general, it has been established that there are different HRM practices for each “employee group” (Zhang, Zhu, Dowling & Bartram, 2013, p. 3199) and that employees’ opinions as to the practices that are being implemented can be different from the ones that managers have. Hence, future studies need to adopt a “multilevel” approach by adding together both aspects and opinions. (Ang, Bartram, McNeil, Leggat & Stanton, 2013, p. 3089).

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