Servant leadership and perceptions of service quality provided by front-line service workers in hotels in Turkey
Achieving competitive advantage

Mustafa Koyuncu

Faculty of Tourism, Canakkale Onsekizmart University, Canakkale, Turkey

Ronald J. Burke

Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto, Canada

Marina Astakhova

Department of Management and Marketing, University of Texas, Tyler, Texas, USA, and

Duygu Eren and Hayrullah Cetin

Faculty of Tourism, Nevsehir University, Nevsehir, Turkey

Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this article is to examine the relationship of service employees perceptions of servant leadership provided by their supervisors/managers and employee's reports of service quality provided to clients by their hotels.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 221 frontline employees, a 37 per cent response rate, working in four- and five-star hotels in Cappadocia, Turkey. Previously developed and validated measures of servant leadership (Liden *et al.*, 2008) and service quality (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) were used and both were found to be highly reliable in this study.

Findings – Respondents were generally young, had relatively short organizational tenure and had high school educations. Respondents having longer organizational tenures and those working in five-star hotels reported lower levels of servant leadership. Longer tenured employees, and males, rated some dimensions of service quality lower as well. Service employees reporting higher levels of servant leadership from their supervisors/managers generally indicated higher levels of service quality.

Research limitations/implications – Some limitations should be noted. First, all data were collected using respondent self-reports, raising the limited possibility of response set tendencies. Second, the sample, while reasonably large, may not be representative of all hotel employees in Turkey. Third, all properties were located in one region of Turkey and may not be representative of hotel employees in other regions of the country.

Practical implications – First, organizations could select individuals exhibiting higher levels of servant leadership potential based on indications that these individuals are interested in developing long-term relationships with staff and co-workers and in helping them become more skilled in doing their jobs. Selection can also be augmented by servant leadership training (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Supervisors/managers could be coached to help them develop their staff and help them meet their

unique goals (Raelin, 2003). Finally, workplace cultural value supportive of both servant leadership and service quality can be identified, modeled by senior level managers, supported and rewarded.

Originality/value – Most studies focus on defining and measuring servant leadership or service quality. This study investigates the relationship between servant leadership and service quality.

Keywords Competitive advantage, Service quality, Turkey, Hotels, Servant leadership, Tourism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This research examines the relationship of perceptions of supervisor/manager servant leadership and quality of service provided by frontline employees of four- and five-star hotels in Turkey. There is considerable writing (see Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010; Kusluvan, 2003, for a review) that ways frontline workers are managed contributes to organizational performance and success. Effective servant leadership influences employee motivation and commitment, increases the quality of service provided to clients, increases client satisfaction and retention and makes these organizations more competitive in a demanding marketplace.

Leadership may have greater importance in the tourism and hospitality industry given the negative image of working in this sector (Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010). Negative features include low levels of pay, seasonal work, long work hours, the routine nature of many of the jobs, high turnover rates among frontline workers and the presence of poorly trained and autocratic supervision (Ayupp and Chung, 2010; Baum, 2007; Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010). Human resource management policies and practices have historically received low levels of attention by employing organizations in this sector (Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010).

Human resources are regarded as one of the most important aspects of organizations in the tourism and hospitality industry. Employees bring with them skills, knowledge, experience, ability, attitudes and values, behaviors and relationships both inside and outside the work unit or organization. Some of these (e.g. attitudes and values, behaviors, knowledge and skills) are influenced by the human resource management policies of the organization and the behaviors of supervisors and managers.

Servant leadership is important for success of organizations in the hospitality industry. Servant leaders encourage, motivate, inspire and enable their employees to achieve service excellence. They teach employees the right ways to provide better service and guide them by their own behavior. Servant leaders lead their employees by serving. Thus, employees receiving servant leadership from their manager/supervisor, provide better service to customers. Kusluvan and Eren (2008) suggest that servant leadership has an impact on employee performance and this contributes to organizational performance.

Servant leadership

Greenleaf introduced the concept of servant leadership in his essay *The Servant as Leader* published in 1970. According to Greenleaf, servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and a more caring world."[…] It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious brings one to lead […] ". In Greenleaf's opinion, servant leaders put the needs of their employees before their own needs and help them to develop and to reach their maximum potential and achieve optimal organizational and career

success. Therefore, servant leadership is different from traditional leadership (www.greenleaf.org, 9 April 2013). In other words, servant leaders:

> […] want their employees to improve for their own good, and view the development of followers as an end, in and of itself, not merely a means to reach the leader's or organization's goals (Ehrhart, 2004, p. 69).

Servant leaders find ways to encourage and motivate their employees for good performance (Fletcher, 1999). They serve the servers by inspiring and providing opportunity for them to achieve. Servant leaders believe in the capability of their employees to achieve. Therefore, they see their role as setting a direction and a standard of excellence, and giving employees the tools and autonomy to perform (Berry *et al.*, 1994). In other words, servant leaders are responsible for the development of their employees and guiding them for better performance (Akiş, 2004).

Servant leaders establish service standards by their own behaviors and management styles. They lead by example. They are a model of service to all employees by encouraging, motivating, inspiring and enabling them to achieve service excellence (Berry *et al.*, 1994). Servant leaders that demonstrate strong servant leadership behaviors allow their employees to have an opportunity to learn the appropriate behaviors for service excellence first hand (Church, 1995). If employees receive high levels of servant leadership from their managers, they are more likely to provide excellent service to their customers (Church, 1995; Hallowell *et al.*, 1996).

Quality of service

Providing high quality of service is important in contributing to the success of organizations in the hospitality and tourism sector. But assessing service quality can be complicated because service quality is primarily subjective, involving an interpersonal experience of an individual providing a service and an individual receiving the service. Because service is intangible, heterogeneous and its' simultaneous production and consumption, quantitative measures of perceived quality are needed. These perceptions are also different from satisfaction with services provided. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) perceived service quality is a component of customer satisfaction.

Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) describe in great detail the development of a multidimensional scale for measuring perceptions of service quality. They define perceived service quality as a global judgment about the superiority of the service provided. Satisfaction, on the other hand, relates to a particular transaction. Service quality then includes several dimensions. Their measure was used in this investigation.

Service quality entails customer judgments regarding the superiority of a service offered (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) also suggest that service quality is a multidimensional concept comprising five dimensions, namely, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Reliability refers to ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness refers to willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Assurance refers to knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Empathy refers to caring, individualized attention given to customers. Tangibles refer to appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and written materials. Service quality assessment focuses specifically on these dimensions of service (Zeithaml and

Bitner, 2003) and customers evaluate the quality of service offered in terms of these dimensions.

Servant leadership and service quality

Books and journal articles addressing leadership draw associations between leadership skills and competencies, and leadership style and work unit or organizational effectiveness (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Bass, 1999; Locke, 1991; Tichy, 1997; Palus and Horth, 2003; Zaccaro, 2001). Commonly examined types of leadership have included transactional, transformational, charismatic, shared, results-based, leader-member exchange, full-range leadership, authentic leadership and, more recently, servant leadership (see Bass, 1998; Burke and Cooper, 2006; Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Pearce and Conger, 2003; Ulrich *et al.*, 1999).

Several studies have considered the role that leadership plays in the delivery of high-quality service, and a variety of other important work and organizational outcomes in the hospitality and tourism industry. Connell (2001) showed that effective leadership increased the skills of frontline employees. Simons and Robertson (2003) concluded that managers that were perceived to be fairer with others were associated with more favorable organizational outcomes. Finally, Tracey and Hinkin (1994) highlight the association of higher levels of leader transformational leadership and valued organizational outcomes.

Berry *et al.* (1994) suggested that delivering excellent service requires a special form of leadership called "servant leadership". Because servant leaders believe in their employees, they coach, teach, inspire and listen to them (Berry *et al.*, 1994). Thus, servant leaders show employees suitable ways to provide excellent service. Berry *et al.* (1994) interviewed staff of a medical center and reported the importance of servant leadership in service quality. They observed that servant leadership that offered direction, inspiration and support was associated with higher levels of service.

Service quality has been of great interest to hospitality researchers for the past two decades. This research has focused on measuring service quality of hotels in the hospitality industry (Oberoi and Hales, 1990; Mei *et al.*, 1999; Ekinci *et al.*, 2003; Nadiri and Hussain, 2005; Öztürk and Seyhan, 2005; Akbaba, 2006; Eleren and Kılıç, 2007; Murat and Çelik, 2007; Yılmaz, 2009; Buzcu, 2010; Boon-itt and Rompho, 2012) and the relationship of service quality with other variables such as customer satisfaction (Oh, 1999; Kang *et al.*, 2004; Salazar *et al.*, 2004; Olorunniwo *et al.*, 2006), customer loyalty (Lee *et al.*, 2003; McCain *et al.*, 2005; Ladhari, 2009), behavioral intention (Alexandris *et al.*, 2002; Kang *et al.*, 2004; Salazar *et al.*, 2004; Olorunniwo *et al.*, 2006; Gonzales *et al.*, 2007; Ladhari, 2009), brand loyalty (Malik *et al.*, 2011), customer expectations (Gabbie and O'Neil, 1996), employee behavior (Kattara *et al.*, 2008), human resource management (Worsfold, 1999; Haynes and Fryer, 2000), business performance (Harrington and Akehurst, 1996; Worsfold, 1999; Haynes and Fryer, 2000), customer value (Oh, 1999), commitment (Worsfold, 1999), and organizational climate (Davidson, 2003).

There has been increased attention to servant leadership. Studies on servant leadership have focused on defining it (Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008), measuring it (Dennis and Bocarnea, 2005; Liden *et al.*, 2008; Sendjaya *et al.*, 2008) and studying it (Russell and Stone, 2002). Servant leadership has also been investigated in different cultures, e.g. mid-east Arab cultures (Sarayrah, 2004) and in the Chinese culture (Han *et al.*, 2010). Servant leadership has also been examined in different sectors, e.g. education (Bowman,

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2005; Hays, 2008), and in the public sector (Han *et al.*, 2010). There are also several studies comparing servant leadership with other types of leadership; transformational leadership (Stone *et al.*, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2004; Washington, 2007; Parolini *et al.*, 2009; Schneider and George, 2011), transactional leadership (Washington, 2007), self-sacrifice leadership (Matteson and Irving, 2006) and educational leadership (Crippen, 2004). In addition, studies have considered relationships between servant leadership and variables such as procedural justice climate (Ehrhart, 2004; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010), service climate (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010), leader trust (Joseph and Winston, 2005; Dannhauser and Boshoff, 2006), organizational trust (Joseph and Winston, 2005), employee attitudes (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010), employee performance (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2009), team commitment (Dannhauser and Boshoff, 2006), organizational citizenship behavior(Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010), job satisfaction (Anderson, 2005; Cerit, 2009) and emotional intelligence (Parolini, 2005).

This research examines the relationship of servant leadership and the provision of high-quality service by employees to clients in the tourism and hospitality sector, and is the first such study to the best of our knowledge. Servant leadership emerged as a potentially important leadership concept in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Greenleaf, 1977; George, 2003; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005). It emerged as a response to the dysfunctional, greedy and self-serving and failing leadership exhibited during this time. Servant leadership focuses on serving the needs of employees and larger communities inside and outside an organization (Badaracco and Ellsworth, 1993; Badaracco, 2002; Hunter, 2004). Servant leaders help employees reach their full potential, and builds trust by helping others first (Greenleaf, 1977).

The general hypothesis underlying this research would be that hotel employees perceiving higher levels of servant leadership being provided by their supervisors/ managers would rate the quality of service being provided to clients at a higher level. Servant leaders rely on one-to-one relationships to understand the aspirations, needs, abilities and potentials of each staff member. Servant leadership emphasizes integrity and ethical behavior. Unlike more traditional leadership approaches, servant leadership can extend outside the organization to wider communities and society at large.

Liden *et al.* (2008) developed and validated a multidimensional measure of servant leadership and found that it predicted community citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment and in-role performance in a sample of 164 employees and 28 supervisors from a single production and distribution company. The Liden *et al.* (2008) measures were used in this investigation.

The tourism and hospitality sector in Cappadocia, Turkey

Tourism and hospitality are major contributors to the Turkish economy and are growing in importance (Duman and Tosun, 2010; Gokovali, 2010). According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism(2013), Turkey had about 33 million tourist visitors in 2011, ranking sixth in the world according to (World Tourism Organizations UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2012), and accounted for about US$28 billion in revenue, ranking twelfth in the world. Figures for 2012 reported about 36 million tourist visitors and accounted for over US$29 billion in revenue (Ministry of Culture and tourism, 2013). Cappadocia is one of the major cultural tourist destinations in Turkey with its unique geological, historic and cultural features. With these features, Cappadocia serves cultural tourism in Turkey and attracts tens of thousands of tourists for culture and

nature each year. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Cappadocia had about 800,000 tourist visitors in 2011(Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2013). Thus, well-educated and dedicated men and women are needed to better serve tourists to meet the human resource and management needs of an important and growing sector, a number of school and university programs were created (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Okumus and Yagci, 2006).

The tourism sector in most countries is facing several challenges including a low-educated workforce, high turnover among frontline employees, low job satisfaction and low pay, poor working conditions such as very long hours, and autocratic and untrained supervision (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000; Yesiltas *et al.*, 2010). Improved servant leadership is one possible avenue for addressing these challenges.

Method

Procedure

Data were collected from men and women working in four- and five-star hotels in Nevsehir, Turkey, using anonymously completed questionnaires between April and July 2012. Hotel managers were contacted and asked for help in the distribution and administration of the questionnaires. A total of 600 questionnaires were delivered to 14 hotel managers who agreed to take part. A total of 221 questionnaires were received, a response rate of 37 per cent. All held frontline service jobs in these properties.

Respondents

Table I presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Slightly over half were male (60 per cent), most were 27 years of age or younger (56 per cent), most had five years of less of organizational tenure (74 per cent), most had a high school education (53 per cent), most worked in the food and beverage department (36 per cent) and respondents were equally divided into four-and five-star hotels (53 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively).There was a slightly higher percentage of males in front office and food and beverage departments and a slightly lower percentage of males in accounting and housekeeping, and a slightly lower percentage of males working in five-star hotels than in the sample as a whole.

Measures

Personal and work situation characteristics. Six personal and work situation characteristics were assessed by single items. These were:

(1) gender;

(2) age;

(3) level of education;

(4) organizational tenure;

(5) department; and

(6) whether respondent worked in a four-or five-star hotel.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership was measured by a 28-item scale developed by Liden *et al.* (2008). This scale had seven dimensions:

(1) Conceptual skills.

(2) Empowering.

	N	%
Gender		
Males	122	59.8
Females	82	40.2
Education		
Elementary	36	18.3
High School	104	52.8
University	57	29.0
Department		
Front office	40	20.3
Food & beverage	71	36.0
Accounting	21	10.8
Housekeeping	38	19.3
Other	27	13.7
Age		
18-22	41	21.8
23-27	64	34.0
28-32	49	26.1
33-37	23	12.2
38 or above	17	8.8
Organizational tenure		
1-5 years	130	73.9
6-10	33	18.8
11 or more	13	7.4
Hotel rating		
4 star	104	52.8
5 star	93	47.2

Table I. Demographic characteristics of sample

(3) Helping subordinates grow and succeed.
(4) Putting subordinates first.
(5) Behaving ethically.
(6) Emotional healing.
(7) Creating value for the community.

Each scale had four items. In addition, a four-item measures of role model was created specifically for this study; role modeling being an additional way of guiding employees.

Respondents indicated the degree to which each item described their supervisor/manager on a five-point scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Each scale was found to have high levels of internal consistency reliability (α). Emotional healing ($\alpha = 0.82$), creating value for the community ($\alpha = 0.79$), conceptual skills ($\alpha = 0.80$), empowering ($\alpha = 0.78$), helping employees grow and succeed ($\alpha = 0.85$), putting employees first ($\alpha = 0.85$), behaving ethically ($\alpha = 0.86$) and role model ($\alpha = 0.81$). A composite measure based on the eight dimensions had a reliability of 0.91. Scores on the eight dimensions were all positively

and significantly inter-correlated ranging from a high of 0.69 (empowering and helping employees grow and succeed) to a low of 33 (empowering and role model), with a mean inter-correlation of 0.54.

Service quality. Perceptions of the quality of service provided by the hotel to clients was measured by a 22 item instrument, SERVQUAL, developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). This measure had five dimensions:

(1) Tangibles (4 items, $\alpha = 0.86$): physical facilities, equipment and appearance of staff.

(2) Reliability (5 items, $\alpha = 0.87$): provide promised service, dependable and accountable.

(3) Responsiveness (4 items, $\alpha = 0.82$): willingness to help clients and providing prompt service.

(4) Assurance (4 items, $\alpha = 0.79$): knowledgeable and courteous staff able to inspire trust and confidence.

(5) Empathy (5 items, $\alpha = 0.86$): individual and caring attention to clients.

The total SERVQUAL scale, 22 items, had an internal consistency reliability of 0.94.

Respondents indicated their perceptions of the quality of service provided to clients on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Scores on the five dimensions were all positively and significantly correlated ranging from a high of 0.92 (tangibles and reliability) to a low of 0.60 (empathy and reliability), with a mean inter-correlation of 0.70.

Each dimension of servant leadership was significantly and positively correlated with each dimension of SERVQUAL, and the total scores of the two composites were correlated 0.61 ($p < 0.001$; $n = 212$). Correlations across these dimensions ranged from a high of 0.53 (being a role model and reliability) to a low of 0.30 (conceptual skills and tangibles), with a mean correlation across servant leadership dimensions and SERVQUAL dimensions of 0.40.

Statistical analyses. Both correlational and hierarchical regression analyses were used.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Respondents assessed the levels of servant leadership provided to them by their supervisors/managers as fairly high. The modal response on a five-point scale was 4 (agree) with the mean response being 3.5, SD = 0.70. These ranged from a high of 3.9, SD = 0.92, on behaving ethically to a low of 3.1, SD = 1.02, on putting employees first.

Respondents also rated the quality of service provided to clients in their hotels as also fairly high, mean ratings being 3.9, SD = 0.62 (4 = agree). Scores on the five dimensions ranged from a high of 4.0 on both responsiveness and assurance, SD = 0.71 and 0.71, respectively, to a low of 3.9, SD = 0.72, on empathy.

Only 2 of the 10 inter-correlations among the personal demographic items (excluding department) were significantly different from 0 ($p < 0.05$). Older respondents also had longer job tenures ($r = 0.65$), and older respondents had lower levels of education ($r = -0.16$).

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Individual characteristics as predictors of servant leadership and SERVQUAL
Table II presents the correlations between five personal characteristics and the eight dimensions plus the total score o for servant leadership and the five dimensions and the total score on SERVQUAL. Relatively few statistically significant relationships were observed ($p < 0.05$). The following comments are offered in summary.

Considering first relationships with servant leadership dimensions and their composite measure, gender, age and level of education had not relationship with these. Longer tenured respondents rated levels of servant leadership lower on conceptual skills, empowering, helping employees grow and develop, putting employees first and role model, as well as on the composite score ($rs = -0.17, -0.16, -0.20, -0.20, -0.20$ and -0.18, respectively). In addition respondents working in five star hotels rated servant leadership lower on Emotional healing, Creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping employees grow and develop, putting employees first, behaving ethically, role modeling and on the composite measure ($rs = -0.18, -0.22, -0.26, -0.27, -0.23, -0.16, -0.17, -0.20$ and -0.27, respectively).

Now considering relationships with perceptions of SERVQUAL, level of education and star rating had no relationship with these perceptions. Older respondents rated level of empathy lower ($r = -0.16$); longer tenured employees also rated level of empathy lower, as well as having lower ratings on the composite measure of SERVQUAL ($rs = -0.24$ and -0.16, respectively); and males rated both reliability and responsiveness lower than females did ($rs = -0.16$ and -0.17, respectively).

Servant leadership and SERVQUAL
Hierarchical regression analyses were then undertaken in which predictors were entered in two blocks. The first block of predictors ($n = 5$) included: gender, age, organizational

	Gender	Age	Tenure	Education	Star rating
Servant leadership					
Emotional support	-0.12	0.05	-0.04	-0.04	-0.18*
Creative value	-0.04	0.05	-0.02	-0.01	-0.22*
Conceptual skills	-0.12	-0.06	-0.17*	0.09	-0.26*
Empowering	-0.07	0.07	-0.16*	-0.04	-0.27*
Helping others	-0.06	0.05	-0.20*	0.02	-0.23*
Putting other first	-0.01	-0.02	-0.20*	0.02	-0.16*
Behaving ethically	-0.09	-0.03	-0.20*	-0.08	-0.20*
Role model	-0.09	0.01	-0.11	-0.04	-0.17
Total servant leadership score	-0.09	0.03	-0.18*	-0.02	-0.27
SERVQUAL					
Tangibles	-0.14	-0.07	-0.14	0.08	0.02
Reliability	-0.16*	-0.06	-0.13	0.01	-0.09
Responsiveness	-0.17*	-0.04	-0.09	0.07	-0.03
Assurance	-0.08	-0.06	-0.05	0.01	-0.10
Empathy	-0.08	-0.16*	-0.24*	0.05	-0.08
Total SERVQUAL Score	-0.13	-0.10	-0.16*	0.07	-0.04

Notes: *Correlation is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level of confidence or greater; Ns range from 212 to 221

Table II.
Personal demographics, servant leadership and service quality

tenure, level of education and whether hotel was rated four or five star. The second block of predictors was the eight dimensions of servant leadership described above. When a block of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance ($p < 0.05$) individual items or measures within these blocks having significant and independent relationships with SERVQUAL dimensions were identified (again $p < 0.05$). This approach to analysis controls for the effects of personal and work situation characteristics before examining the relationships of servant leadership dimensions with SERVQUAL.

Table III presents the results of these analyses. The following comments are offered in summary. First, both blocks of predicts accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on tangibles. Respondents working in five-star hotels rated level of tangibles higher ($B = 0.15$), and respondents with higher rating levels of emotional support and role modeling also rated Tangibles higher ($Bs = 0.32$ and 0.22, respectively). Second, both blocks of predicts again accounted for a significant amount

Service quality	R	R^2	ΔR^2	p
Tangibles (n = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.28	0.08	0.08	0.05
Star level (0.1)				
Servant leadership	0.69	0.47	0.39	0.001
Emotional support (0.32)				
Role model (0.22)				
Reliability (n = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.28	0.08	0.08	0.05
Servant leadership	0.63	0.40	0.32	0.001
Emotional support (0.22)				
Role model (0.21)				
Empowerment (−0.22)				
Responsiveness (n = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.28	0.08	0.08	0.05
Gender (−0.16)				
Servant leadership	0.56	0.31	0.23	0.001
Assurance (n = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.18	0.03	0.03	NS
Servant leadership	0.51	0.26	0.23	0.001
Creating value (0.26)				
Role model (0.23)				
Empathy (n = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.29	0.09	0.09	0.05
Servant leadership	0.57	0.32	0.23	0.001
Servant quality total score (N = 154)				
Personal demographics	0.29	0.08	0.08	0.05
Servant leadership	0.66	0.44	0.36	0.001
Emotional support (0.21)				
Creating value (0.22)				

Table III.
Servant leadership and service quality

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or increment in explained variance on reliability. Respondents rating levels of emotional support and role modeling, and empowering higher also rated reliability higher as well (Bs = 0.27 and 0.21, respectively), while those rating empowering higher rated levels of reliability lower (B = −0.22). Third, although both blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on responsiveness, no independent and significant relationships were preset. Fourth, servant leadership dimensions accounted for a significant increment in explained variance on assurance; both creating value for the community and role modeling had significant and independent relationships here (Bs = 0.26 and 0.23, respectively). Fifth, although both blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on empathy, no item or measure was found to have an independent and significant relationship with this service outcome. Finally, both blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on the total SERVQUAL score with both emotional support and creating value for the community having significant and independent relationships with this composite measure of service quality (Bs = 0.28 and 0.22, respectively).

Discussion and conclusions

This study investigated the relationship between service employee's perceptions of servant leadership provided by their supervisors/managers and employee reports of service quality provided to customers by four- and five-star hotels in Cappadocia, Turkey. The findings obtained in this study make several important and useful contributions. First, previously developed scales were used to measure servant leadership and service quality. A new measure called role model was developed and added to the servant leadership scales. The measures of both servant leadership and service quality were found to have high levels of reliability and relate to each other in hypothesized ways.

Second, our respondents, who worked in four- and five-star hotels, generally rated the levels of servant leadership they received from their supervisors/managers, and the levels of service they provided to clients at a generally high level. Supervisors supported employees emotionally, empowered them, helped them grow and succeed, put them first, served as role models for them, behaved ethically and created value within the hotel and wider community. Hotel employees responded by providing customers with the service promised, helped customers, offered prompt service, behaved courteously and performed in a confident manner.

Third, personal characteristics such as gender, age and level of education were relatively independent of respondent perceptions of both levels of servant leadership experienced and levels of service provided (see Table II). But both organizational tenure and star rating of hotel had some relationships with both levels of servant leadership received and levels of service quality provided. Longer tenured employees and employees working in five-star hotels perceived lower levels of both servant leadership experienced and levels of service quality provided to clients (see Table II).

Finally, levels of servant leadership were found to be associated with some dimensions of service quality (e.g. tangibles, reliability and assurance) and with the composite SERVQUAL measure (see Table III), providing support for the general hypothesis underlying the research. Respondents reporting receiving higher levels of servant leadership form their supervisors/managers indicated they provided higher

levels of service quality to their customers. Thus supervisors/managers interested in improving the quality of service provided to customers should consider the merits of servant leadership in motivating and engaging employees in the provision of higher quality service.

Practical implications
Several practical implications follow from our findings. First, organizations could select individuals exhibiting higher levels of servant leadership potential using indications that these individuals are interested in developing long-term relationships with potential subordinates and co-workers and in helping others become more skilled in doing their jobs. In addition selection can be augmented by servant leadership training (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Supervisors/managers could also be coached in servant leadership values and skills to help them develop their staff and support goals of staff to help them fill and satisfy their unique needs (Raelin, 2003). Finally, workplace cultural values supportive of both servant leadership and service quality can be identified, modeled by senior level executives, supported and rewarded. Because the majority of our respondents were relatively young, hospitality organizations that provide higher levels of servant leadership are more likely to have positive effects on absenteeism and turnover by providing a fulfilling work experience.

Limitations and future research directions
Some limitations should be noted to put the results into a larger context. First, all data were collected using respondent self-reports raising the limited possibility of response set tendencies. Second, the sample, while reasonably large, may not be representative of all hotel employees in Turkey. Third, all properties were located in one and the same region of Turkey and again may not be representative of hotel employees working in other regions of the country.

These preliminary results suggest that undertaking further research on the antecedents and consequences of servant leadership the hospitality sector has merit. First, additional important work and well-being outcomes need to be included. The former would include levels of work engagement, intent to quit, engaging in employee voice and organizational citizenship behaviors; the latter would include work and family conflict, burnout and psychosomatic symptoms. Second, conducting this research in other regions in Turkey would add to our understanding of potential boundary conditions of our results. Third, using a longitudinal design would allow researchers indicators of absenteeism and turnover data as well as performance evaluation ratings of supervisors/managers. Fourth, it would also be possible to include client perceptions of service quality and their satisfaction with service provided, as well as other more "objective" measures of hotel effectiveness. Fifth, an evaluation of efforts to enhance levels of servant leadership provided by supervisors/ managers via training would also have potentially useful implications.

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Corresponding author

Ronald J. Burke can be contacted at: rburke@schulich.yorku.ca