PAPER

Title: Servant Leadership and Team Creativity in the hospitality industry: The mediating role of Empowerment Climate and Team Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract: *Increasing globalization, coronavirus pandemic and great rivalry among national and international destinations entail that innovation and creativity have become critical factors for the competitiveness of firms in the tourism industry. Specifically, team creativity is critical to staying ahead in today's competitive hospitality industry. Recent research has suggested servant leadership fosters employee creativity, but the mechanisms and context in which this relationship emerges at team level is unknown. This paper aims to advance this area of research and analyzes the mediating role of empowerment climate and team citizenship behavior in the servant leadership-team creativity relationship. Support for our model was found using a sample of 343 teams, encompassing 835 respondents from various departments at 171 hotels in Spain, a leading international tourist destination. The results show that servant leadership had a positive indirect effect on team creativity, via the sequential application of empowerment climate and team citizenship behavior.*

Keywords: *Servant leadership, team creativity, empowerment climate, team citizenship behavior, hospitality industry, tourism destinations*

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JEL codes: *L83, M12*

1. Introduction

In a world recently relegated to exogenous shocks, such as the current natural, sociopolitical and human disaster of coronavirus pandemic, creativity and its support of innovation are vital for long-term corporate success in the hospitality industry, since hospitality firms that deliver the same products and services in the same way will not long survive to current problems (Zenker & Kock, 2020). In this context, tourists are more than ever before looking for new and unique experiences, and workers in this industry must be able to keep and attract new customers by satisfying their increasingly sophisticated demands. To do that, there has recently been more emphasis on teamwork and organizational teams in hospitality firms, since the members of these teams are increasingly collaborating and sharing among themselves their experience in order to provide new and more creative products and services (Hu et al., 2009). In fact, the use of work groups in hospitality industry is essential for the development of objectives and for raising competitiveness and creativity (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017). Thus, work groups in the hospitality industry need a more creative work-force to provide high quality services that can satisfy the needs of the customers who always expect "something different and extra" in a highly competitive environment (Claver-Cortes et al., 2006). Therefore, in the field of hospitality research, an increasing amount of attention has been paid to exploring the antecedents of creativity at group level, which is required to generate novel ideas for new products, services and process (Wang et al., 2014).

Focusing on the social learning theory, previous studies have proposed leadership style as a key antecedent of creativity (Bandura, 1986). These studies are based on the idea that individuals learn and change their behavior through models to follow in their immediate work environment rather than only by direct experience. In this sense, mechanism by which leadership style affects group creativity differs from that on employee creativity, so shed light on the link between leadership with team creativity has attracted increasing attention from scholars (Yang et al., 2017). Given the disparities in requirements and functions among leaders at varying levels (Chen & Bliese, 2002), effects of leadership on group creativity might vary among both supervisor and top levels. Considering that team creativity is a function of the processes of team cohesion and communication (Taggar, 2002), leadership of the team supervisor is of particular

relevance to enhance team creativity. Therefore, there is a need to conduct empirical research that explores the effect of direct supervisor leadership on group creativity.

In the dynamic workplace of hospitality, the importance of servant leadership style to enhance creativity has been highlighted. In this sense, the contagious nature of service implies that a servant leader can influence a team process, leading to group creativity. In work teams where team leaders and team members have frequent interactions, servant leaders would be viewed as role models for team members to emulate, leading to servant behaviors on the part of employees (Ye et al., 2020). Thus, when team leader has a high service orientation, team employees are also being given that orientation, so they are more committed to satisfy clients' needs, and they will be more motivated to offer new form of service by thinking outside the box, rather than follow conventional ways of doing things, which is crucial for generating creative ideas in the group (Li et al., 2021). Thus, previous studies proposed a positive link between servant leadership at group level (i.e., departmental managers) and group creativity, which is especially applicable to hospitality industry (Ling et al., 2016).

Is spite of the importance of this approach, there are continuing gaps in understanding what are the effects of servant leadership on creativity in the service industry, so it is essential to focus on this research question, from both theoretical and empirical perspective. Thus, we follow the requests of recent studies, such as Li et al. (2021) work, that highlight the need to clarify whether, how, and when servant leadership could motivate employees' creative behavior in the hospitality industry. From situational leadership theory, leader behaviors are effective in some situations but have no effect, or have dysfunctional effects, in others (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). Therefore, incomplete or inaccurate conclusions about the effect of servant leadership on creativity are possible if researchers do not consider the contexts in which leadership behaviors occur (Ling et al., 2016). Thus, in order to clarify the link between servant leadership and group creativity, a review of the literature shows that few recent studies have emphasized the importance of the critical mediators between these two variables (Yang et al., 2017). Empirical studies provided robust evidence demonstrating that team citizenship behavior (TCB) (Hsiao et al., 2015) and empowerment climate (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017) are influenced by supervisor leadership, but little studies examine the moderating role of TCB and empowerment climate between servant leadership and group creativity, especially in middle-level management in hospitality firms.

On the one hand, citizenship behaviors are a catalyst of creativity by altering the behavior of others group members, both overtly and covertly, in a beneficial direction conducive to the spontaneous acts of creativity (Kesen, 2016). In this sense, TCB enhances coworkers' and managers' creativity since these behaviors facilitate collaboration between work group members to adapt to environmental changes through a more creative perspective (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020). At the same time, TCBs are discretionary behaviors that are not recognized by the formal reward system. These behaviors tend to emerge from an intrinsic need for achievement, belonging, competence or affiliation, which arises when individuals feel the obligation to reciprocate, as may occur in contexts led by servant leaders (Newman et al., 2017). Thus, servant leadership engages workers inside the group and fosters extra role behaviors, described as TCB, that, in turn, lead to greater engagement by subordinates and often creates greater positive team results in the form of creativity and change (Lofquist & Matthiesen, 2018).

On the other hand, literature defend that an empowerment climate is a prerequisite to generate creativity inside the group. These studies are based on the idea that a work group produces more creative work when its members perceive themselves as having interpersonal control over how to accomplish their own tasks, even if it involves "to depart from the script", so self-determination and empowerment climate are important determinants of group creativity (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). Moreover, studies on tourism industry have recently recognized the importance to empowered workforce to make decisions without consulting the supervisory hierarchy (Baum, 2015). In this sense, servant leadership generates genuine service environments in hospitality based on a more participatory philosophy, which can play a determining role in achieving an empowerment climate (Liden et al., 2015) which, in turn, determines group creativity.

On those grounds, the current research examines how servant leadership at group level influences on group creativity of teams in hotels. Moreover, this study investigates the mediating role of both empowerment climate and TCB in the relationship between servant leadership and group creativity. In addition, in order to analyze the link between both mediators' variables, research has indicated that servant leadership influences employee OCB through various mediating factors (Qiu et al., 2020), including the climate (Aboramadan et al., 2021). Specifically, Chon and Zoltan (2019) emphasize that servant leadership positively influences employee behaviors through the empowerment

climate. Consequently, we propose that empowerment climate will associate positively with TCB, which will sequentially mediate the positive relationship between servant leadership and team creativity. We focus on hospitality industry located in Spain World Heritage Sites (WHS) because tourism in historical towns has the potential to enable hotels' competitiveness by reinforcing connections within destinations and increasing the leverage of the resource base available in the territory (Su & Lin, 2014).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Servant leadership and team creativity

The competitive pressure in the current markets forces hospitality firms to be innovative in order to adapt their products and services to increasingly demanding consumers (Wang et al., 2014). The main input for innovation processes are creatives ideas, which may be brought by employees; since they are considered as the knowledge capital in the organization (Hughes et al., 2018). Thus, these firms must leverage this knowledge resource by supporting their employees to spur their creativity (Ye et al., 2020).

The literature on creativity has traditionally focused on personal traits of employees (Sun et al., 2012; Ruiz-Palomino & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2020), having still rather scant research about team creativity coming from interactive processes among their members. In many studies creativity is considered as generation of ideas, which can be applied to develop new products or processes or improve the existing ones. These useful ideas are yielded by employees to benefit the organization. Specifically, workplace creativity is supported by the cognitive processes and behaviours of the members' organization to create novel ideas (Hon & Chan, 2013). In this sense, the leadership style is known to be a very influential factor spurring creativity (Hughes et al., 2018). There is broad literature showing a direct relationship between organizational leadership and creativity (Hu & Liden, 2011; Yoshida et al., 2014); and also some studies focused on the tourism industry because of strategic role of employees whose tasks frequently require direct contact with consumers (Hon & Chan, 2013, Javed et al., 2017; Li et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2014). In this line, servant leadership, using a holistic approach to leadership that encompasses the rational, relational, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of leader–follower relationships, achieves that followers improve their abilities and hence their contribution to organization success (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders are genuinely concerned about followers' interest, over and above those of the

leader or organizational interests (van Dierendonck, 2011). Then, this attitude returns a sense of safety and trust in the work context that improves significantly individual and team-level outcomes (Eva et al., 2019).

Displaying an altruistic commitment to help followers to grow, servant leadership is a suitable approach to boost creative behaviors in the workplace of the hospitality firms because, using service to influence employees, these leaders work for improve their capacity and developing all their potential (Ruiz-Palomino & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2020). In so doing, servant leadership may influence the employees' innovative behavior in the workplace (Khan et al., 2021), since these leaders can promote collective work in order to generate and then implement novel and creative ideas (Yoshida et al., 2014). Servant leadership supports organizational processes that entail shared commitment improving confidence in the team's abilities and their members' creativity (Yang et al., 2017). As servant leadership theory contends, the exchange in the interaction between a leader and the members of his team is a key factor (Hu & Liden, 2011). The supportive role of leaders fosters team members' positive emotions, so they become more self-confident and proactive and, then as they possess an identity with leader-follower relationship arise a strong a personal motivation for contributing to organization that boosts their creative endeavors (Khan et al., 2021). Therefore, drawing on the above arguments, which are consistent with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we pose the next hypothesis.

H1: Servant leadership has a direct and positive relationship with team creativity.

2.2. Servant leadership and team creativity: The mediating effect of empowerment climate

Empowerment climate is a concept, either team level or organizational level, conformed by collective structural empowerment, but always drawing on perceptions of individuals (Chen et al., 2007) regarding structures, policies and practices, as well as power and authority decentralization of an organization (Li et al., 2018). When working together, shared experiences and common goals allow to create a shared notion of empowerment climate into a work team.

There is an increasing interest in empowerment climate because some studies consider it is a critical mechanism through which servant leaderships influences team creativity. Specifically, firms in the tourism industry because of demanding consumer depend

increasingly on creativity and teamwork for excellence in operations and, hence improving tourists' satisfaction (Hon & Chan, 2013).

According to Seibert et al. (2004) there are some organizational practices related to empowerment climate such as to *share information* -it entails that employees possess sensitive information about organization-, *autonomy* -it means that employees can make decisions and act autonomously in the team- and *accountability* -it involves total responsibility to team performance. Drawing from the Self-determination theory (Gagne & Deci, 2005), servant leadership could foster these practices in a work team, since employees develop a sense of freedom to make decisions about the processes design and carrying out of tasks (Khan et al., 2021).

Some studies have revealed a strong association between servant leadership and structural empowerment (Sun et al., 2012; Van Winkle et al., 2014) what means that servant leaders could influence the followers' perceptions about empowerment in the workplace (Allen et al., 2018). Servant leaders usually value followers for what they are but supporting their personal and professional development. In this context, work design become a key instrument of employees' empowerment by providing needed resources, developing capabilities, sharing decision-making processes (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010). Thus, servant leadership entails empower followers through developing their whole potential (Eva et al., 2019) what shows an association between this kind of leadership and psychological empowerment (Newman et al., 2017) and, in turn, a significant improvement of empowerment climate in the workplace.

Moreover, empowered employees might generate many benefits to the organization. Tourism industry's employees might specially motivated if they realize usefulness their work and their contribution to organizational success because of personal contact with consumers (Hon and Chan, 2013) and, then they become more proactive what spurs creative ideas (Javed et al., 2017).

The Self-determination theory (Gagne & Deci, 2005) supports that autonomy and participation in decision-making of the team members favors their growth and, in turn, their self-motivation at work. In doing so, it is known to be created the conditions to generate team creativity (Li et al., 2018). Employees having a high level of autonomy in their work must decide on daily issues and it is likely that in these situations, under pressure of problem-solving actions, arise creative ideas. Moreover, they are aware of ownership and control over their ideas and develop a sense of accountability that favors

their contribution to team performance (Sun et al., 2012). In addition, participation in the making decision processes entails sharing information with team members what is a key factor to team creativity. High level of information processing has a great potential to increase a team creativity since it is a source of novel ideas and innovative solutions (De Dreu et al., 2011). In this context, numerous and diverse perspectives and approaches are shared in the work team, generating a climate where the team members can provide their ideas, which are the main input to creativity. When employees have a shared perception, which is positive, about organizational practices for empowering, it produces some changes in their psychological states of empowerment and so it boosts development of team creativity (Hon & Chan, 2013).

Therefore, a team is more creative when the employees perceive they control their own ideas and autonomy to accomplish work, which spurs empowerment them. Then, from self-determination theory and considering that organizational conditions in which the team's members work influence their creative processes, empowerment climate is considered to be a key determinant of team creativity. From the above, we pose the next hypothesis:

H2: Empowerment climate mediates the positive relationship between servant leadership and team creativity.

2.3. Servant leadership and team creativity: The mediating effect of team citizenship behavior

As part of our effort to develop a comprehensive model to understand the complex relationship between servant leadership and team creativity, we are also interested in the potential mediating role of TCB. OCB has been defined as "performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place" (Organ, 1997, p. 95). At team level, it refers to the normative level of OCB exhibited in a work group (Ehrhart, 2004). Thus, TCB differs from individual OCB because it captures interactive elements of the team that are not included in the individual level of analysis (Ehrhart, 2004). Specifically, TCB occurs when team members interact and cooperate with each other on group tasks through the development of helping behaviors that enhance team functioning and goal achievement (Abu Bakar & McCann, 2016). From a dynamic point of view, such behaviors become normalized within the team and become a standard mode of team behavior (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011). TCB is especially important in the hospitality industry as it allows team

members to develop creative behaviors and suggestions aimed at satisfying multiple customer needs, which by the very unique nature of the service must be met on the spot (Hon & Lui, 2016). Our TCB -based analysis responds to Yang et al. (2017)'s call for the incorporation of mediating variables to enhance our understanding on how and why servant leadership affects team creativity.

Support for our mediation hypothesis requires several types of evidence. First, a positive relationship between servant leadership and TCB is required. This link is likely because servant leadership can act at both the individual and team level (Hunter et al., 2013). At the team level, servant leadership can serve as an "environmental stimulus" (Hackman, 1992) through the development of behavioral patterns that affect all team members (Eva et al., 2019). Specifically, servant leaders by displaying personal integrity and demonstrating genuine concern for meeting the personal and professional growth needs of all team members (Hu & Liden, 2011), are likely to foster among themselves normative collaborative activities and the development of quality relationships that can manifest in higher levels of TCB. These ideas are also in line with social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964) which predicts that the quality of social relationships induces tacit obligations to return "favors" on those who acted on their behalf until a psychological equilibrium in the relationship is reached (Gouldner, 1960). In this way, by showing support to all the members of the team, the practice of servant leadership is likely to encourage team members to reciprocate to the leader (and the team he/she is leading) in the same sense, through the development of normative behaviors that ultimately translate into higher levels of TCB (Ehrhart, 2004). In line with this described social exchange process that may occur in teams, previous studies have shown that servant leadership influences TCB (Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2018).

Support for our mediation hypothesis also requires a positive link between TCB and team creativity. This is likely to occur since, considering that team creativity is a reflection of the cohesion processes and relationships established within the team (Taggar, 2002), team OCB can be a fundamental catalyst of team creativity (Kesen, 2016). TCB has been identified by the literature as an essential element that allows altering the team's way of acting and thinking towards the employment of creative solutions oriented to meet any goal or challenge (Khan et al. 2020). In this way, TCB is likely to enhance team creativity as these behaviors facilitate collaboration among its

members and the approach of different ideas that allow the team to adapt to changes in the environment through a more creative perspective (Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020). This situation is especially sensitive in the hospitality industry as the working environment of teams is inherently complex in having to provide quick and creative responses to frequent customer problems or demands (Hu et al., 2009). In this sense, the degree to which team members develop TCB through collaborative efforts and constructive support, allows creating, in a normative way, opportunities for the generation of new ideas and initiatives that give a quick response to different problems (Abu Bakar & McCann, 2016).

In all, the evidence presented above sets the stage for the proposal of TCB as a mediator of the relationship between servant leadership and team creativity (see Figure 1). Therefore, in addition to the direct effect of servant leadership on team creativity (H1), we believe that the practice of servant leadership has an indirect effect on team creativity through fostering TCB. With servant leadership, TCB is expected to be higher, and TCB is also predicted to benefit the development of higher levels of team creativity. Thus,

H3: TCB mediates the positive relationship between servant leadership and team creativity.

2.4. Empowerment climate and team citizenship behavior as sequential mediators

Having proposed two variables, empowerment climate and TCB, as mediators of the relationship between servant leadership and team creativity (see Figure 1), their order must be addressed. To this end, research suggests that the presence of a specific climate within the team assumes that people are subject to the same rules, policies and procedures (Dietz et al., 2004). Thus, based on social information process theory (SIP; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), the empowerment climate, like other specific climates, conveys to workers information about the types of both formal and informal behaviors that are accepted within the work team. Thus, employees adopt their behaviors based on the information they gather from their work environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). That said, we can infer that the social environment in which the employees perform their activities is an important source of information. It allows the team to understand the behaviors that are socially acceptable (Biddle, 1979), which should lead employees to adopt their role and behaviors according to the social environment in which they operate (Van Dyne et al., 1995). In our case, we consider that team members who are

subjected to the same rules, policies and procedures that emphasize and reward employees who take the initiative for the development of appropriate actions and decisions (Kirkman et al., 2004), may be inclined to the development of extra-role behaviors within the team (Zhong et al., 2011).

These arguments are in line with social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964) since an empowerment climate gives team members greater meaning, impact and autonomy to their work (Kirkman et al., 2004), thus fostering in them greater satisfaction levels (Seibert et al., 2011), as well as a larger desire to return the "favors" received (Gouldner, 1960). Indeed, the enriching and rewarding work environment they may enjoy when they feel their whole team is empowered, may cause in them the development of proactive behaviors oriented towards both peers and the team (Newman et al., 2017). Thus, when team members perceive that there is support geared toward allowing teams to have autonomy and freedom to make their own decisions about how to act on a day-to-day basis (captured through the empowerment climate), team members become more engaged and aware of their work and, therefore, may exhibit higher levels of TCB (Lee et al., 2018). These elements are especially important in the hospitality industry as empowerment climate helps teams to meet heterogeneous customer needs that, at times, are likely to be unmet through formal procedures, and necessarily require the team to go beyond and engage in extra-role behaviors to meet customer requirements (Ma et al., 2021).

In all, we expect a positive impact of an empowerment climate on TCB. It, when combined with Hypothesis 2 (a positive link between servant leadership and empowerment climate) and Hypothesis 3 (a positive impact of TCB on team creativity), leads us to contend that empowerment climate and TCB sequentially mediate the positive relationship between servant leadership and team creativity, as depicted in Figure 1.

H4: Empowerment climate will associate positively with TCB, which will sequentially mediate the positive relationship between servant leadership and team creativity.

3. Research method

To test these relationships, a survey instrument was designed to collect data in the hospitality industry located in Spain WHS. These cities stand out for offering a specific

type of tourism, cultural tourism (Richards, 2007). Cultural tourists, through their different sensibilities, expect to receive an exclusive and quality service during their stay (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Therefore, given the need to provide creative solutions to different customer demands and to deliver high quality service, the hospitality industry in WHS is likely to benefit from having servant leaders in their teams. Moreover, from a cultural point of view, Spain is characterized by a high-power distance (Hofstede, 2022), so employees may voluntarily accept the presence of supervisors who develop servant leadership. In this way, Spain can be an interesting research context to analyze the study variables, being a different from the United States where most of the research related to servant leadership theory has been conducted (Eva et al., 2019).

3.1. Sample and data collection

Three different types of questionnaires were designed for the different roles present within the hotel establishment: general manager, supervisor, and employee. These questionnaires were pilot tested on a convenience sample of 3 managers, 10 supervisors and 25 employees. Complementarily, interviews were conducted with the pilot test participants to obtain information regarding whether the items plated were clear, understandable, and appropriate (Neuert & Lenzner, 2016). After minor changes were made to the questions posed, the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaires were confirmed by conducting a focus group with five academics with research experience in the hospitality industry.

The study population was limited to those hotel establishments that had a minimum operational structure consisting of at least three work teams (e.g., reception, kitchen, housekeeping), each headed by a supervisor. Based on these considerations, the 384 hotels of Spain WHS that met this criterion were contacted. After obtaining authorization from 171 general managers (response rate of 44.53%), the questionnaires were distributed to the employees and supervisors of the different hotel teams. To guarantee anonymity and correct nesting of the data, each hotel establishment was provided with a sealed ballot box, which could not be tampered with so that employees and supervisors could deposit the surveys. In addition, this box was guarded by a trusted employee of the general manager who had the task of encouraging the rest of the employees to publish their responses. In the end, data were obtained from 343 work

teams (with a minimum of three members), consisting of a total of 343 supervisors and 835 workers.

We minimized the social desirability basis (SDB; Randall & Fernandes, 1991), following the main recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). Specifically, the survey cover letter indicated that: (a) the results would be used for academic research purposes only; (b) there were no right or wrong answers, (c) honest responses were highly appreciated, and (d) anonymity of responses was guaranteed. Specifically, to guarantee the anonymity of the participants, in addition to establishing the collection of the questionnaires through a sealed box in each of the hotel establishments, as described above, the questionnaires did not require their names, the company for the they worked or the specific characteristics of their work.

In addition, regarding the design of the questionnaire, different measures were taken against the possible influence of the bias of the common method (CMB; Conway & Lance, 2010). Specifically, several recommendations from Conway & Lance (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, variables names were not included to avoid possible inferences about their possible relationships. Second, contextual variables were introduced in the questionnaire to serve as distracters. Third, the questionnaire ensured the physical and psychological separation of the study variables to make them appear unrelated. Thirdly, the pilot test, the interviews and the focus group with academics described above ensured the adequate structure of the questionnaires and the use of simple and concise items. Finally, care was taken in choosing the most appropriate sources for each of the study variables. Particularly, employees in the team were selected to measure the servant leadership of the supervisor. However, empowerment climate, TCB and team creativity were measured using both employees' and supervisors' ratings, allowing to minimize the problem of same-source bias (Ostroff et al., 2002) and thus to have a more objective indicator of the study variables.

In terms of demographics, 53.17% of employees are under 35 years old. However, most of the supervisors are between 36 and 55 years old (66.77%). Employees were mostly female (59.16%), although there was near gender parity among supervisors (49.85% male and 50.15% female). In addition, most employees and supervisors are hired on a permanent basis (64.55% and 68.51%, respectively), being the percentage of supervisors providing their services full time (95.92%) slightly higher than that of employees (87.78%). In terms of education, 54.13% of the followers had secondary

studies (48.06% for supervisors) and 33.66% had the equivalent of a European Union college degree (44.03% for supervisors). Finally, in terms of organizational tenure, while 74.06% of supervisors have more than 5 years of experience in the hotel, only 49.58% of employees have the same tenure.

3.2. Measures

We used valid and reliable scales to measure each of the variables in our study. Since the survey originated in English and our respondents spoke Spanish, we followed Brislin's (1980) back-translation procedure. To do so, first, the items of each of the scales were translated from English to Spanish by a bilingual professional. Second, another bilingual professional translated them back into English. Finally, the two bilingual specialists compared the translation with the original to ensure the equivalence of the survey in both languages.

Based on the criteria of Mackenzie et al. (2005) and Hair et al. (2017) that allow distinguishing between reflective (Mode A) composites (containing highly correlated indicators believed to be caused by a target latent construct) and formative (Mode B) composites (containing indicators that may determine the construct without necessarily being highly correlated), our survey only contained Mode A composites.

The scales used seven-point Likert-type response formats (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree") and showed good internal consistency. Table 2 shows Cronbach's alphas and composite reliabilities.

Servant leadership. Team employees used Ehrhart's (2004) reliable 14-item scale to rate servant leadership of their supervisors. Sample items were, "My supervisor spends the time to form quality relationships with service unit employees" and "My supervisor emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community". Because our interest is focused on analyzing leadership at the team level, employees' ratings within each team were averaged. To confirm that this aggregation of the individual scores to team level was appropriate, we calculated the within-team agreement score (rwg, James et al. 1984) and two intraclass correlations: ICC(1), or the proportion of variance in ratings due to membership, and ICC(2), or the reliability of team mean differences (Bliese, 2000). The average rwg value was 0.83 (SD = 0.12), while ICC(1) was 0.69 and ICC(2) was 0.88. All three values assume acceptable values to infer that aggregation at the team level was appropriate (Bliese, 1998). In addition, an ANOVA

also showed significant differences between the means of the teams ($F = 12.48$, $p < .001$).

Empowerment climate. All team members (employees and supervisors) completed the 6-item measure, developed and validated by Seibert et al. (2004), to indicate their perceptions of empowerment climate within their teams (e.g., "Team members provide direction and training to enhance members' freedom to experiment"; "My team recognizes individuals for taking initiative"). Supervisor and employees' ratings within each team were averaged. All the relevant indices (median rwg = 0.79, SD = 0.15, ICC(1) = 0.59, ICC(2) = 0.74) exceeded the levels required to justify aggregation (Bliese, 1998) and an analysis of variance revealed significant differences between teams in their level of empowerment climate ($F = 8.98$, $p < 0.01$).

Team citizenship behavior. Supervisors and employees completed the 16-item organizational citizenship behavior measure, developed and validated by Lee and Allen (2002), to indicate their perceptions of the level of citizenship behavior within their teams. Although Lee and Allen's scale was designed to capture citizenship behaviors directed toward individuals (OCBI) or the organization (OCBO), we can apply it to the team context. Following previous recommendations (Hofman et al., 2007), we operationalize it at higher levels of abstraction, so a second-order Mode A construct with these two highly correlated dimensions was created. Sample items of each dimension are: "In my team employees show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations", and "Employees offer ideas to improve the functioning of the team". The ANOVA indicated significant differences ($F = 4.37$, $p < 0.01$); the median rwg value was 0.78 (SD = 0.11), the ICC(1) score was 0.21 and the ICC(2) 0.48. All values well exceeded the acceptable thresholds for inferring that aggregation to the team level was appropriate (Bliese, 1998).

Team creativity. All team members, including supervisors, completed Valentine et al. 's (2011) well-established, 4-item team creativity scale (e.g., "My team and I encourage each other to try new things, even though they might not work"; "My team and I are willing to try creative solutions to solve difficult problems"). Team creativity was also aggregated to team level. All the aggregation indices (median rwg = 0.83, SD = 0.17, ICC(1) = 0.67, ICC(2) = 0.83) exceeded the levels required to justify aggregation (Bliese, 1998). Further, the ANOVA revealed significant differences between teams in their level of team creativity ($F = 8.23$, $p < .01$).

Control variables. We used two control variables that have been incorporated in previous research as antecedents of team creativity. We included team education as control variable because educational level has been recognized as an influence on team creative behavior (Jia et al., 2014). Team education was measured by the average educational level of participants in each team using a six-point response format (1 = primary studies; 2 = secondary studies; 3 = intermediate vocational training; 4 = advancen vocational training; 5 = bachelor degree; 6 = postgraduate degree). Once the educational level scores of each of the team members were obtained, their mean was calculated. Additionally, we controlled for team size effects because this can affect team dynamics (Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Fan et al., 2021). We measure team size by the number of employees on each team we survey. Prior to hypothesis testing of our general research model, and in accordance with Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), we examined our empirical findings to determine whether it was necessary to include these two control variables. In a first step, we analyze our model including the two control variables. In a second step, only the variable that was significantly related to our dependent variable was included. Finally, in a third step, the control variables were not included. The results showed no significant differences across the three models. Therefore, none of the control variables was included in the model.

3.3. Data analysis

We used SPSS v.24.0 to generate descriptive statistics for our sample. To test our hypotheses, we relied on partial least squares (PLS), using Smart PLS 3.3.6 (Ringle et al., 2015). This is a powerful and robust statistical procedure (Henseler et al., 2009) that allows us to obtain complete structural equation modeling suitable for testing our mediation hypotheses (Henseler et al., 2016). In addition, PLS provides consistent regression parameters comparable to other structural equation modeling approaches (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Power analysis developed with G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) for regressions with three independent variables confirmed this point, as our post hoc calculations resulted in a power of 99.9%, indicating that the number of informants was large enough to test our relationships (Cohen 1988) without incurring a Type II error. As recommended (Hair et al., 2017), our PLS analysis used 5,000 subsamples to generate standard errors and bootstrap t-statistics with n-1 degrees of freedom (where n is the number of subsamples) to assess the statistical significance of path coefficients.

For the multiple mediation model, the bootstrap method with 5,000 subsamples was used in PROCESS v3.4 (Hayes, 2017).

4. Results

4.1. Common method variance

Two post hoc statistical tests were conducted to confirm that common method variance (CMV) was not a serious problem. First, Harman's one-factor test revealed an unrotated factor solution involving seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining over 79% of total variance. Because the first factor explained 37% (less than 50%), CMV appears not to be a serious concern in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Second, the marker variable technique (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) helped to reach the same conclusion. We introduced one marker item (i.e., the mean level of familiarity of team respondents with a particular film; that was measured using a seve-point Likert-type scale: 1 = "not familiar," 7 = "very familiar"), which is not theoretically related to any of the study variables and our analyses demonstrated that the mean correlation coefficient value for the marker item with the items of any of the variables was far below the 0.05 threshold (Rönkö & Ylitalo, 2011). Moreover, all parameter estimates that were significant in our research model experienced no significant change in a model where the marker item was related to each of the study variables. Thus, CMV had an insignificant effect on our data.

4.2. Measurement model

Following Conway and Lance's (2010) recommendations, we estimate the reliability and validity information for our reflective measures, and we obtain evidence of individual and construct reliability and convergent validity. Results also reveal a good discriminant validity for all our measures.

The individual items that constitute servant leadership, empowerment climate, TCB and team creativity are reliable, mostly above the desired level of 0.707 (Hair et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha coefficient and Dillon-Goldstein composite reliability (ρ_c), which both refer to summed scores, indicated good reliability and internal consistency for the reflective constructs, with values above the 0.70 threshold required for advanced research (Henseler et al., 2009). This finding was confirmed by Dijkstra and Henseler's (2015) composite reliability measure (ρ_A), an improved, unique, consistent reliability measure for PLS construct scores, which showed values above the recommended 0.70

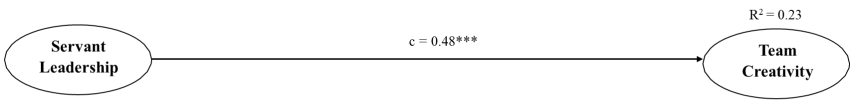
cut-off. The AVE for each construct was also greater than 0.50, indicating convergent validity for our reflective constructs (Henseler et al., 2009).

We assessed the discriminant validity of our reflective measures in two ways (Hair et al., 2017). On the item level, we evaluated the cross-loading criterion; as required, the cross-loading matrix showed that all items loaded on their intended constructs more than on any others. On the construct level, we used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, which was satisfactorily met. Results show that the AVE for each construct was greater than the variance that each construct shared with other latent variables. Finally, the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) values were significantly different from 1 and below the most conservative threshold of 0.85. Discriminant validity was also confirmed by the HTMT inference criterion and the Fornell–Larcker criterion; the HTMT values are significantly different from 1, and the square roots of AVE for each variable are greater than the correlation of each variable with the others, respectively (Hair et al., 2017).

4.3. Structural model analysis

Figures 2 and 3, and Table 1 contain findings related to the study hypotheses. The total effect (c) of servant leadership on team creativity is positive and significant ($c = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$; Figure 2), thereby supporting H1. However, when mediators (empowerment climate and TCB) were added, servant leadership's direct effect (c') was dramatically decreased and nullified (Figure 3). Thus, this total effect (c), which is the sum of the direct effect (c') and indirect effects ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_3 + a_1b_2b_3$), is not direct but, basically, indirect.

Figure 2. Results of the direct model

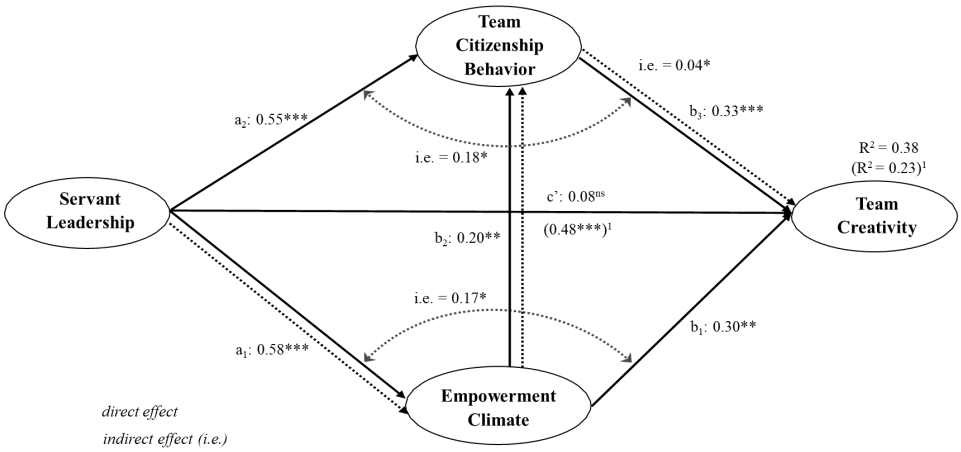


Note: Significance level: ***p < 0.001

Regarding the test of the study's mediation model (H2, H3, H4), the findings help confirm the predictions. As Figure 3 reveals, in a model where empowerment climate is the exclusive mediator between servant leadership and team creativity, the indirect effect is significant, as confirmed by the bias-corrected bootstraps at a 95 per cent confidence interval ($a_1b_1 = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$; Lower Bound = 0.09, Upper Bound = 0.28;

Figure 3), thus supporting H2. Likewise, in a model where empowerment climate is absent and TCB is the exclusive mediator in the servant leadership-team creativity relationship, the indirect effect is also significant ($a_2b_3 = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$; Lower Bound = 0.12, Upper Bound = 0.25; Figure 3), in support of H3. In both models, the increase in R^2 relative to the unmediated model is marked, with increases in the variance of team creativity of 0.09 and 0.10 when the exclusive mediator is empowerment climate and team OCB, respectively (Table 1). Finally, when both mediators are included in the model, the indirect effect between servant leadership and team creativity instead appears to exist via empowerment climate and TCB sequentially, as this indirect effect is significant ($a_1b_2b_3 = 0.04$; $p < 0.05$; Lower Bound = 0.02, Upper Bound = 0.07; Figure 3), thus giving support to H4. In this model, the increase in the R^2 of team creativity is the largest, around 15 per cent compared to the unmediated model (Figure 2 versus Figure 3, Table 1). In addition, the bias-corrected bootstraps at a 95 per cent confidence interval confirm that the total indirect effect between servant leadership and team creativity is significant ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_3 + a_1b_2b_3 = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$). Overall, the servant leadership-team creativity relationship is fully mediated by empowerment climate and TCB sequentially (moderate mediation effect, $f^2 = 0.24$; Table 1). The size of the total indirect effect ($a_1b_1 + a_2b_3 + a_1b_2b_3 = 0.39$) compared to that of the direct effect ($c' = 0.08$) is large, with a total indirect effect accounting for about 80 percent of the total impact of servant leadership on team creativity (Table 1).

Figure 3. Results of the mediated model



Note: Significance level: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001; ns = not significant. [1]Results of the direct model

Table 1. Servant leadership-team creativity mediated relationship. Mediated and unmediated models

Dependent variable	Team Creativity	Team Creativity	Team Creativity	Team Creativity	Size of the mediation effect
	Unmediated Model	Mediated Model via EC	Mediated Model via TCB	Mediated Model in serial	Unmediated Model
Servant leadership	β: .48***	β: .26**	β: .22**	β: .08^{ns}	↓
Empowerment climate (EC)		β: .37***		β: .30**	
Team citizenship behavior (TCB)			β: .40***	β: .33***	Mediated Model
R^2	.23	.32	.33	.38	in serial
Change in R^2	-	$\Delta R^2 = .09$	$\Delta R^2 = .10$	$\Delta R^2 = .15$	$f^2 = .24$

Notes: ***p < .001; **p < .01, ns: not significant (one-tailed test); EC = Empowerment Climate; TCB = Team Citizenship Behavior. $f^2 = (R^2\text{included} - R^2\text{excluded}) / (1 - R^2\text{included})$. Effect sizes of f^2 between .15 and .35 are moderate in size (Cohen, 1988).

5. Discussion and conclusions

In the context of hotels, this paper firstly analyzes the direct relationship between servant leadership and group creativity of work teams. Findings show that teams of hotels with higher levels of servant leadership tend to generate more creativity. Thus, as expected, it is desirable for hotels to propel a servant leadership at team level, fostering a service orientation focus on satisfy clients´ demands through new form of service, which is critical to generating creativity inside the team. In assessing the direct relation, this study confirms that the positive effects of servant leadership on team creativity dominate also at group level, as already demonstrated in previous literature (Ling et al., 2016).

Although the literature provides rich evidence supporting the role of servant leadership on group creativity, works ask for the need to exploring the mediating mechanisms in the relation between servant leadership and creativity (Liden et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2017). Various scholars proposed the use of empowerment climate and TCB as mediating mechanisms (Hsiao et al., 2015; Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017); so, this study also proposes these two mediating effects ¬–empowerment climate and TCB– between servant leadership and team creativity. Results show positive moderating effect of both empowerment climate and TCB. Thus, leaders in teams´ hotel with a higher degree of servant orientation tend to develop an empowerment climate and TCBs, which in turn, leads to increased team creativity. However, when the mediating

variables were included in the model, the direct effect between servant leadership and team creativity become no significant. Furthermore, a significant and indirect effect between servant leadership and team creativity was detected by means of empowerment climate and TCB.

Finally, we found evidence supporting our sequential model, in which team-level servant leadership fosters empowerment climate, which, in turn, enhances TCB (Chon & Zoltan, 2019), to ultimately boost team creativity. Our findings demonstrate that through encouraging empowerment climate among their employees, servant leaders enhance TCB, which is crucial to enhancing team creativity. In this sense, we found that empowerment climate and TCB fully accounted for the direct positive effect of servant leadership on team creativity.

Cumulatively, this research attempts to make several theoretical and practical contributions. First, creativity at individual level has been largely analyzed by previous studies (Yeh & Huan, 2017), but we contribute to the literature that demands new business models based on group work to adapt the labour structure, traditionally configured around employees, to the dynamic and uncertain environments in tourism industry (Linuesa-Langreo et al., 2017). Therefore, given the significant roles that hospitality teams play in service encounters, this study tests antecedents of creativity at team level to add empirical evidence to contemporary creativity research.

Second, servant leadership is a particularly effective leadership style in the hospitality industry since the principle to “serve others” aligns with the creating an overall service experience mission in tourism firms (Brownell, 2010). Based on social learning theory, our research contributes to the extant literature by revealing the underlying mechanisms through which servant orientation of leader influences team creative. Practically, we offer implications regarding how to improve team creativity through leader's behaviors (Ye et al., 2020).

Third, this research examines the mediating effects of empowerment climate and TCB, providing new insights on the mediating mechanism underlying the relationship between servant supervision and team creativity. Thus, the main contribution of this paper is the finding that servant leadership developed by the direct supervisor facilitates the achievement of greater team creativity when servant leadership is driven through an empowerment climate, which in turn is driven through TCBs. In order to respond to the univocal relation traditionally established between servant leadership and team

creativity, we emphasize the role of empowerment climate and TCB as variables that driving the relation between servant leadership and team creativity. We therefore conclude that the development of empowerment climate and TCB are mediating factors improving the relationship of servant leadership and team creativity for teams´ hotels.

The findings have useful implications for management practice. Our findings suggest that servant leadership of direct supervisor sets the stage for a positive team-based experience in which empowerment climate and TCBs can be blended to enhance team creativity to build a competitive advantage. This competitive advantage is especially timely amid the hospitality industry challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as new and different ways of delivering services are needed. In hospitality organizations, creativity is the essential footstep in the innovation process, as it is a preliminary point for organizational innovation (Mittal & Dhar, 2016). Teams´ employees in the hospitality industry engage in a large number of face-to-face service encounters, and creative is needed to maximize service quality and customer satisfaction (Tung et al., 2017). Our findings imply that to respond to clients demands with creative ideas, requires leaders attend to group-level team functioning by practicing servant leadership. Thus, firms should train teams´ managers in servant leadership skills. The use of these skills has the potential to foster a spiral of empowerment climate and TCBs, both required to the team creativity. In this line, we recommend that hotels´ teams enhance a servant orientation of direct supervisors to extrapolate the benefits of this kind of leadership. Accordingly, direct supervisor in hotels´ teams that address their servant leadership to generate an empowerment climate and this to generate TCBs, will be in a better position to generate creative inside their team.

This study is not free of limitations. The model does not present a global explanation of team creativity in hospitality industry. At the same time, in spite of the partial character of the model, we observe that the factors and effects studied significantly take account of the heterogeneity of team creativity in the context of hotels. As possible future avenues for extending this research, we propose to replicate these models with other types of industries where workgroups are important to firm competitiveness. Another interesting research line might be the analysis of individual hotels by means of case studies in order to assess the extent of development of each hotel vis-à-vis the latent potential. Such an exercise would go a long way to elucidate the characteristics of hotels that perform better in terms of team creativity.

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