

WE DO MORE THAN WE CAN TELL. PERSPECTIVES OF TACIT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN TOURISM ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

Spyros Avdimiotis[®]

Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki

Tacit knowledge is a concept developed in connection with knowledge management research field. It is acknowledged as the cornerstone of competitive advantage; however, merely its possession does not guarantee an edge in fierce competition. Even though tacit knowledge holds a dominative role towards labor efficiency, productivity and innovation, the subject of tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer has been rather unexploited, mostly due to its intrinsic, highly personal and seamlessly bonded to holder's personality, attributes. The purpose of the article is to contribute to the exploitation of the embedded tacit knowledge of employees in hospitality establishments, a sector where the employment of tacit knowledge has to be extensive and foremost, capitalizing the maximum of personnel competences. Towards this goal, research hypotheses were built and tested, using SEM Methodology. The final outcome of the study revealed that task assignment customized to employees' personality and emotions is directly and positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer.

Keywords: *Tacit Knowledge Transfer, customization of workflow, Employee Personality and emotions,*



INTRODUCTION

Knowledge has been identified as an ongoing, dynamic process involving the overlapping actions of acquisition and transfer, stimulating growth and development in organizations (Davenport and Prusak, 2000; Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

During the last decades, there have been various attempts to classify the types of knowledge (Lemos and Joia, 2010; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), an early and seminal distinction, though, has been made by Polanyi, (1962) who distinguish explicit and tacit knowledge.

Explicit is the type of knowledge which is possible to codify, therefore feasible to diffuse, discuss, prove and acquire (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1991, Davenport and Prusak 1998). On the contrary, tacit knowledge is almost impossible to codify and manage. Polanyi (1966), postulated “*we know more than we can tell*” implying that tacit knowledge, is quite difficult to manage and transfer (Joia, 2007; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1997). Tacit knowledge management and sharing has been the subject of many scientific researches during the last few decades, but, as Shaw and Williams (2009) argued, it is still an emerging agenda in tourism, even though in hotel management operations, the value of tacit knowledge was deemed by the researchers as highly significant (El-Sharkawy, 2007, Hallin and Marburg, 2007, Wang and Noe, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Tacit knowledge widely, is considered to be the cornerstone of competitive advantage for a wide spectrum of organizations (e.g. Murray and Peyrefitte, 2007; BouLlusar and Segarra-Ciprés, 2006; Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2001 Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) deriving from personal experience and filtered through

possessor's personality and emotions. (O'Dell and Grayson 1998, Nonaka and Takeuchi 1996). Moreover, according to Hasher & Zacks, (1979), Dulani (1996) and Chilton & Bloodgood, (2008) tacit knowledge becomes a habit or a routine, frequently repeated and largely depended from intuition, feelings, emotions. insights and personality. In line with this, tacit knowledge has a highly personal nature, is subjective, thus difficult to formalize, manage, process, acquire, reutilize and transfer. Researchers such as Van der Spek & Spijkervert, (2007), Marquard (2006), Davenport and Prusak, (1998) Collins (1993), Hahn and Subramani (2000), Accenture (2000), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1996) Szulanski (2006), seem to agree on the basis that tacit knowledge is mainly subconscious and expressed, by "doing things" -individually or as a group-. Such behaviors could be the subject of observation, a story to remember, tell and discuss among the members of the personnel. In other words, tacit knowledge transfer success depends on the levels and ease of informal communication and relationship between the source and recipient.

Based on the preferences and value of tacit knowledge (Murray and Hanlon 2010), the initial scientific question was raised, focusing on "whether tacit knowledge can be successfully distributed among hotel employees and to what extent". To answer this question, the research used as a basic instrument, behaviors, which according to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1996) is a valuable resource of tacit knowledge. In fact the research addresses the ability of any organization's leadership to stimulate behaviors that could facilitate effective tacit knowledge management. Associating leadership styles and behaviors, Wagner and Hollenbeck (2005) and George and Jones (2011), support the argument that each leadership style falls into a particular set of workflow rules that exploit employee personal qualities, determining organizational behaviour and task performing methods.

Under the assumption of direct positive association between employees' personality, emotions and behavior, in hotel establishments, the basic working hypothesis is formed, arguing that the adjustment of task assignment to personality, and emotions will grant to employees the ability to develop behaviors that will reveal tacit knowledge

Taking into consideration the significance of job assignment flexibility and customization, the variable of Personality and Emotions (PE), was developed to observe integration with knowledge acquisition and transfer. The first two hypotheses were developed, to acknowledge the association between Personality and Emotions (PE) and tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA) and transfer (TKT) in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

H1a: Tacit knowledge acquisition process (TKA) is positively correlated with task assignment adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

H1b: Tacit knowledge transfer process (TKT) is positively correlated with task assignment adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

Nevertheless, the ability to comprehend the aspects of personality (Watson, 1989) and Emotions within the assigned task, requires trust, clear and thorough communication, commitment and appropriate organizational structures. Researching on the ability to value tacit knowledge, the variables interpersonal relationship, communication, trust, willingness to help and leadership style were observed and emphasized as significant. Roberts (2000) supports the argument that a stable, trustworthy and reliable Interpersonal relationship reduces the fear of knowledge sharing, while Grant (1996) stated that trust and socialization are equally important during the stage of knowledge share. Brachos et al (2007) highlights

the importance of social interaction and trust towards the effective knowledge transfer, while Lemos and Joia (2010) postulated that a personal relationship framework could be an ex ante precondition for knowledge diffusion, enabling the human factor to express their idiosyncratic characteristics.

The same argument on social interrelationship is supported by Wang and Noe (2010) who also highlight as catalytic factors of tacit knowledge transfer, the willingness to help, trust and communicate. Puusa and Eerikäinen (2011) argue that the transfer of the immaterial, subjective and abstractive nature of tacit knowledge depends on the extent of the learning culture, communication, trust and social network among the employees. Harvey (2012) support the argument of tacit knowledge transfer through the development of a knowledge grid based on mutual understanding and help, recognizing as enablers of transfer the experienced members of the staff. Hay (1995) and Argote et al (2003) also support the significance of employee behavior in correlation with the aforementioned factors of the Interpersonal relationship. Since the influence of social interaction and relationship between the staff members, was observed as significant, the consideration of the variable was required. Therefore, the parameter of Interpersonal relationship (IR) was observed, seeking to reveal the connection between IR and Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer. The assumption of tacit knowledge sub consciousness and synchronous expression of knowledge transfer and acquisition was also kept under consideration and for that reason the developed hypothesis seeks to directly associate the variable of SRN with TKA and TKT.

H2a: Interpersonal relationship (IR) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge acquisition. (TKA) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE)

H2b: Interpersonal relationship (IR) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer (TKT) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

The literature review clearly indicates that tacit knowledge depends basically on the human factor and the elements that define and characterize it. The challenge for the leadership of the organization is to create the appropriate environment for individuals and groups to subconsciously expose through routines and behaviors their valuable knowledge to their fellow co workers. Therefore, leadership style seems to be of conspicuous importance, providing the framework within which actions and behaviors of tacit knowledge transfer take place. Holsapple and Joshi (2000), Chan and Chau (2005) support the argument, that leadership is one of the most important factors of (tacit) knowledge transfer determining the manner and efficiency of the process, Jennex and Olfman (2006), linked leadership style and staff behavior with the development of effective knowledge transfer mechanisms, while several researchers (e.g Fayol 1949, Hodgson 1995, Wagner and Hollenbeck, 2005, Ojo 2009) emphasized that the management under any leadership style, establish codified grids of rules distributing responsibilities and authorities to control employees' behavior. The literature review also highlighted the importance of leadership style during the accomplishment of effective tacit knowledge management. As stated (Nonaka 1995) tacit knowledge is highly personal and quite difficult to distinguish, since it is mainly subconscious and substantially bonded with personal attributes qualities, for this reason the research focuses on the behavior of the staff members, as a reliable source and valuable mean of tacit knowledge transfer. Consequently, the effort to acknowledge the engagement of leadership and the establishment of customized task assignment towards the genesis of appropriate staff behaviours led to the development of specific research questions and hypotheses. Minding that Tacit Knowledge

Transfer and Acquisition are seamlessly and inseparably connected, a hypothesis was built associating the variable of Leadership (L), with the variable of tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA) and Transfer (TKT).

H3a: Leadership (L) is positively correlated Tacit Knowledge Acquisition (TKA) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

H3b: Leadership (L) is positively correlated Tacit Knowledge Transfer (TKT) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

The term Structured Communication refers to the state of mutual twofold interaction and information exchange between parts, using commonly understandable written or verbal code, in a commonly sensed reference scope, according to Feely and Harzing (2003). Verbal communication channels use words- symbols stimulating a reaction. Non verbal communication involves forms of non linguistic communication, which is perceived through senses, inducing the process of human interaction.

According to researchers, non verbal communication is subconscious, mainly signified and expressed using facial expression, hand and body moves (Fogel, 1981). Also, Rousseau (1985) supports the argument that in a non verbal communication phonetic instruments are utilized to express paralinguistic phenomena such as voice volume, tone, hue etc during the communication. Ellis and Beattie (1986), adhere the argument that interaction involves both manners of communication, also happening at the same time. For instance, a verbal communication is combined with non verbal signs, such as a shoulder or a head move.

Tacit knowledge being mainly subconscious refers mainly to non verbal communication, which remains though, a unique but yet an integral part of the formal communication structure. Towards this direction, the developed hypothesis answers to the scientific inquiry, to what extent the formal communication structure (FCS) interacts with tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA) and transfer (TKT)

H4a: Formal communication structure (FCS) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA), in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

H4b: Formal communication structure (FCS) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer (TKT), in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

In the demanding working environment of hospitality establishments, only seldom a person alone is fully capable to solve complex issues and problems faced in everyday working operations in hotel establishments. Co operation and synergies are (needed to be) developed between employees, to obtain the critical mass of information and respond successfully to emerging issues. Employees are turning to each other- and not to manuals or other written material- simply because answers include beyond words, valuable pieces of tacit knowledge, usually expressed with gestures. According to Handy (1994), people are likely more possible to turn to friends and colleagues to exchange ideas and get answers, while they are implementing the specific task. This procedure of knowledge signals exchange and creation, occurs simultaneously among employees, who act as knowledge transmitters and receivers as well. This argument has been supported from many researchers, who considered acquisition and transfer as two different and distinct activities, but “inseparably related” as Grant (1996) indicated. As noted, Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1996, Szulanski 2006, Chilton and

Bloodgood 2008, Joia and Lemos, 2010, among a plethora of other academics, predicated that both transfer and acquisition may co exist chronologically, as the same person could receive and transfer knowledge signals simultaneously. Seeking to discover the association of Tacit Knowledge Transfer (TKT) and Tacit Knowledge Acquisition (TKA), within the working environment of customized task assignment- taking under consideration elements of personality and emotions- , the following hypothesis was built and tested.

H5: Tacit Knowledge Acquisition (TKA) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personality and emotions (PE).

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

The primary objective of the study is to investigate the association of personality and emotions with the processes of tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer. The originality of the theory, in combination with lack of similar research models, led to the development of a theory building model, correlating the fixed variable of FCR with the variables of tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer and the latent variables of Interpersonal relationship, leadership style and formal communication.

To verify the validity of the model, a two phase, primary, qualitative and quantitative, research was conducted. The significant difficulty faced during the research design, was to acknowledge the extent of task customization according to personality and emotions in the hotels of the sample. To verify the extent of customization, interviews were conducted using semi structured questionnaires. In particular, the fixed (not random) variable of *personality and emotions (PE)* as categorical had to embed all hypothesized kinds of

customization: a) No customization at all b) partially customized and c) fully customized to personality and emotions. The challenging part of the research was to identify which type of task customization applied to each hotel separately and for that reason- in every hotel- two personal semi structured interviews were conducted, one with the general manager and one with the human resource division manager (first phase of the research). The items used for the semi structured interviews were obtained through a primary Delphi method research, between 5 members (3 academic staff members from the tourism management departments of the Cyprus University of Technology, and Alexander Technological Educational Institution 1 member of the industry and one member of the Cypriot Tourism Organization).

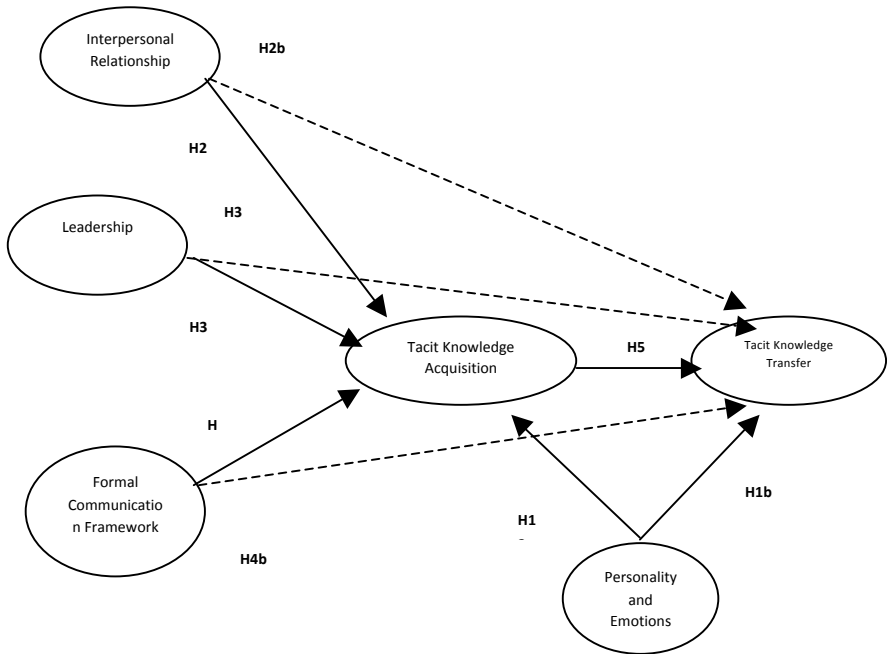
Upon the completion of the interviews, at least ten employees at each hotel were asked to respond on the structured questionnaire realizing the second quantitative phase of the research. The structured questionnaire was a synthesis of six sections each one consisted of an adequate number of 5-point Likert scaled questions, with answers varying from 1=Absolutely Disagree to 5=Absolutely Agree.

To implement the designed research a multistage sample of 750 questionnaires, including the structured and the 107 semi structured ones, were administered during a 4 month period (March to June 2013) to individuals working full time in 3, 4 and 5 star hotels in Northern Greece. The criteria of selecting the hotels were a. the existing infrastructures and services, (regions of integrated tourism development, urban centers etc) b. the capacity, c. tourist arrivals, d. number of employees. Mindful of the typical low response rate in similar surveys, a mixed approach was used to increase the number of responses. This included a traditional mail followed by a telephone call to arrange an appointment with the managing director and proceed with the fulfilment of the questionnaire. The research implementation procedure in each hotel was the same, with duration of approximately 3 hours. Upon the

arrival in the hotel establishments, the interviews with the managing director and the HR manager were contacted and afterwards, at least ten employees were asked to fulfill the questionnaire. To avoid any misunderstandings, the researcher had a close monitor of the procedure. It was a quite facilitating coincidence the fact the author was a member of the team who delivered the study of national strategic spatial planning in the tourism sector in Greece and it was quite convenient to inform the industry and contact the survey simultaneously. The questionnaires were answered under the discrete inspection of the researcher therefore, Out of 643 distributed questionnaires, 598 valid were gathered, along with 107 interviews in 56 hotels in northern Greece (Halkidiki, Thessaloniki and Pieria).

The employed statistical method used to analyze the outcome of the survey was Structural Equation Modelling. SEM is not merely a single statistical technique, but a set of analytic tools that utilize covariance matrices to address model hypotheses. Furthermore, SEM provides a series of statistical methods that allow to association between one or more independent variables and one or more dependent variables. According to Valluzzi et al (2003) SEM as a mathematical technique, enables the analyst to proceed to quantitative estimates of model parameters and to estimate goodness of fit of the theoretical model. In this research, Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to represent with reliable and convenient way, the structure and the hypothesized relationships among the observed variable of Task assignment to personality and emotions, to the latent variables of Interpersonal relationship, Leadership, Formal Communication Network.

Figure 1. Model



RESULTS

The task assignment method followed in each organization can be one of the following categories: (a) Strict, (b) flexible according to the qualifications of the employee and (c) fully customized, adapted to the personality of the employee. In order to study the effect of assignment type on the transfer of tacit knowledge, it is desirable to introduce the variable Personality and Emotions (PE) as an exogenous variable in the SEM model and perform a single group analysis, rather than treating it as a grouping variable in a multi-group analysis. The variable *personality and emotions (PE)* is thus introduced in the main analysis as a fixed, observed exogenous variable. This is acceptable in SEM analysis (with e.g. Maximum

Likelihood estimation) independently from the distribution of the fixed variable, provided that the following conditions are true:

For any value of the fixed variable, the random variables in the model have a conditional normal distribution. 2. The conditional variance-covariance matrix of the random variables is the same for every pattern of the fixed variable. 3. The conditional expected values of the random variables depend linearly on the values of the fixed variable. In order to check the above conditions, a multi-group analysis was performed for each group of hotels falling into the category of strict, flexible or customized task assignment, respectively.

The condition for normality was met, with some relaxed requirement regarding the deviation for normality. It is noted that also in the normality tests performed on the full sample, several variables were found as non-normal and, in the most severe cases, the corresponding items were rejected, however a moderate deviation from normal distribution was accepted. In order to check that the impact on the estimation of the model was not severe, the parameter estimation was verified with the Scale-Free Least Squares method, which is not sensitive to non-normal variables.

In order to check the equality of variances-covariances of all variables among different groups, a multi-group model has been specified in AMOS with the restriction of equal variances-covariances, according to the method proposed by Sörbom as an alternative to the analysis of covariance (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1978). This model was checked against the model itself, which allows variances-covariances to vary freely among groups and the difference in the resulting χ^2 and in the degrees of freedom were used to check if the hypothesis of equal variances can be accepted.

The values of the variable *Personality and emotions* are considered as ordered regarding the adaptability of the task assignment method in each organization. The expected values of all

variables were indeed linearly dependent on the values of the variable (adjustment) to personality and emotions.

MEASUREMENT AND MODEL EVALUATION

The relevant statistics indicate acceptable fit of the measurement model. The model yielded a χ^2 value of 2181.604 with 648 degrees of freedom ($p=0,000$) In response to chi-square's in built limitations, the CMIN/DF fit (χ^2 divided by the degrees of freedom) surfaced as the more appropriate fit statistic with values less than 3 indicating an acceptable fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The final model revealed an acceptable CMIN/DF of 3,367. These values established acceptable fit according to the criteria suggested by (Bagozzi and Yi 1988, Hair et al. 1988, Fornell and Larcker 1981): $\chi^2/df < 5$, CFI $> .9$, GFI $\geq .8$, AGFI $\geq .8$ and RMSEA $< .06$. In particular, the model achieved a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0,63, with a lower boundary of a two-sided 90% confidence interval for the population of .060 and an upper boundary of .066. Moreover, the model produced a CFI (Comparative Fit Index) score .941, and an IFI (Incremental Fit Index) score .936; all falling within the acceptable ranges ($>.90$) for acceptable fit (Hair, et al, 2010). PRATIO (.922) and PCFI (.867) were also within acceptable fit thresholds [Mulaik et al. 1989] Regarding CFI and IFI threshold of $>.95$, measurements were also acceptable.

A number of measurements were conducted with the aim of assessing the construct validity of the proposed theory. The construct validity, the extent to which the measured items actually reflect the theoretical latent construct proposed, was evaluated in terms of convergent validity. In this process, all latent variables were treated as exogenous, i.e. there were no paths pointing from one variable to another but there was provision for correlation paths between all combinations of variables. The criteria used were that all factor loadings for the observed variables were $>0,6$, the

Construct Reliability and Average Variance Extracted were $CR > 0,7$ and $AVE > 0,5$

Table 1: Structural model and hypotheses testing

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's a	CR	AVE
IR	6	0,939	0,94	0,73
FCS	4	0,852	0,85	0,89
L	7	0,959	0,96	0,79
TKA	9	0,940	0,94	0,64
TKT	10	0,965	0,97	0,74

Standardized path coefficients and the significance of the hypothesized relationships were utilized. The values extracted suggest that hypothesis H1a can be supported since positive associations were revealed between Personality and Emotions (PE) variable and tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA), (the standardized path coefficient was $\beta = 0,090$, with $p < 0,001$). H1b hypothesis was supported with $\beta = 0,064$ and $p < 0,003$. The H2a Hypothesis was also supported (the standardized path coefficient was $\beta = 0,631$ with $p < 0,001$). H3a hypothesis had standardized path coefficient $\beta = 0,335$ with $p < 0,009$, was also backed up. Hypothesis H4a was accepted, achieving a value of $\beta = 0,197$ and $p < 0,0001$ while H5 the final hypothesis had a value of $\beta = 0,990$ ($p < 0,001$).

The strong connection between Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Tacit Knowledge Transfer (Hypothesis H5) indicates the indirect correlation of the (b) group hypothesis. That means that hypothesis H2b was supported achieving $\beta = 0,316$, The H3b had an indirect value of $\beta = 0,231$ and finally hypothesis H4b achieved $\beta = 0,061$. Evidence for the association is provided through the AMOS

software (Amos Output, Estimates, Matrices, indirect effects), as shown in the table 2.

Taking into account the direct and indirect matrices of the model, the research postulates the positive connection between the variables of Leadership, Interpersonal relationship and Formal Communication Structure. Meaning that in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities and furthermore, the framework of job description is adjusted to labor skills and personal characteristics, the transfer of tacit knowledge is feasible

Table(2): Indirect correlations

	PE	L	FSR	IR	TKA	TKT
Acquisition	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Transfer	,097	,352	,207	,665	,000	,000

Overall, the analysis exhibited that 11 of the 11 postulated hypotheses can be accepted. The overall hypotheses research outcome is represented in the following table (3):

Table (3): Hypotheses confirmation

	<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Results</i>
H1a	<i>Tacit knowledge acquisition process (TKA) is positively correlated with task assignment adjusted to employees' Personality and Emotions (PE).</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H1b	<i>Tacit knowledge transfer process (TKT) is positively correlated with task assignment adjusted to employees' Personality and Emotions (PE).</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H2a	<i>Interpersonal relationship (IR) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge acquisition. (TKA) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' Personality and Emotions</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H2b	<i>Interpersonal relationship (IR) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer (TKT) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted</i>	<i>Supported</i>

<i>to employees' personal qualities</i>		
H3a	<i>Leadership (L) is positively correlated Tacit Knowledge Acquisition (TKA) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H3 b	<i>Leadership (L) is positively correlated Tacit Knowledge Transfer (TKT) process, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities.</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H4a	<i>Formal communication structure (FCS) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge acquisition (TKA), in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H4 b	<i>Formal communication structure (FCS) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer (TKT), in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H5	<i>Tacit Knowledge Acquisition (TKA) is positively correlated with tacit knowledge transfer, in a working environment where task assignment is adjusted to employees' personal qualities</i>	<i>Supported</i>

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

While undertaking the literature review, it became clear, that tacit knowledge management as research field in hotel management studies is still in its infancy, despite its critical significance charge and value. It was also strong evidenced, that tacit knowledge is strongly bonded with employee behaviors, communication, influences and interaction and therefore, since literature also supports the argument that behavior is determined by personal qualities. To support the theory building argument, a research was carried out to examine the association between task assignment customization to employee's Personality and Emotions and tacit knowledge management, in the working environment of hotels, in Northern Greece. The utilization of structural equation modelling enabled us to gain an in-depth holistic perspective of the causal

linkages of the aforementioned constructs within the hospitality landscape.

The findings supported the basic hypothesis that the variable of Personality and Emotions was positively connected with tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer. Since the connection cannot be confirmed under total consistent (*ceteris paribus*) conditions, the variables of interpersonal relationship, leadership and formal communication were also included. The evidence that came through the research indicate that via holistic consideration of employee intrinsic and extrinsic traits they develop behaviors operating as tacit knowledge subconscious transmitters, reinforcing at the same time the intellectual capital of the hotel. This tacit knowledge tank is the subject of observation and discussion among other employees who capture and filter through their intrinsic scheme of values and beliefs. More analytically, within the variable of Interpersonal relationship (IR) the items of mutual trust was depicted, the extent of informal communication, interpersonal relationship, willingness to offer, and participation in social events were very well loaded. The research so far is affirmative to prior research as mentioned before, showing that socialization is one of the necessary and sufficient conditions of tacit knowledge flow. Being in line with literature in this argument also proves that socialization proximity tends to be one of the central pillars of tacit knowledge management process. Accordingly, the variable of Leadership comprised by the items of seeking alternative approaches to manage a problem, the ability of the leader to discern the personal characteristics of staff members, to encourage initiation, creativity, knowledge exchange, to care about their personal life, to have the ability to build friendly and co operation relationships. The loadings achieved and the positive connection with knowledge acquisition is consistent with the existing and aforementioned literature as well. The hypotheses regarding the communication framework were also supported, proving the accuracy of the research. Szulanski (2002), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1996), Disterer 2003, Malhorta (2005) Sun and Scott

2005, Murray and Peyrefitte 2007, Grant (1996), Brachos et al (2007), Lemos and Joia (2010) they all agree on the importance of formal and informal communication making quite clear the distinction between the two types of communication, who also are seamlessly related together. On this issue Malhotra (2005) implies that communication schemes and procedures surely exist, but the real knowledge transfer happen at the organization's cafeteria, between the coffee machine and the water cooler. The acceptance of the hypothesis is in line with the existing literature proving that the formal communication framework may have a positive correlation with explicit (Sigala and Chalkiti, 2007) and tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer. Regarding the issue of weak connection between customized task assignment and Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer, the answer - and the contribution of the research in the field of tacit knowledge management- is that the findings are in line and confirm the existing literature pointing out that tacit knowledge is indeed difficult to transfer, but not impossible.

Another important issue that comes up in the surface is the connection between tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer. As it was stated earlier, tacit knowledge is mainly subconscious and simultaneously active. This parallel but yet, different processes, cannot be clearly separated. Being more specific, the variable of transfer was including the items (notions) of sharing knowledge and discussing, along with the items of experimentation. During the primary analysis of undimensionality, a Principal Components Analysis was contacted, revealing one factor with high loadings ($>0,7$), explaining the 77,18% of the variable. Based on that statistical element, there was no ground to split the transfer factor in to behavioral items (discuss, share, exchange ideas, express experiences etc) and knowledge experimentation and initiatives taken. The PCA analysis on Transfer and Acquisition also highlighted the very strong connection between them.

INDUSTRY IMPLEMENTATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Tacit knowledge is a vital but thus far, less exploited part of knowledge mainly due to its subconscious and depended from personal characteristics and attributes, preferences. As noted, prior research appears to support the argument that social and direct communication, among employees, is conducive to knowledge sharing, leading to an organizational culture, positively subjected to knowledge acquisition and transfer (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). Tacit knowledge management though, requires more than a positive organizational culture. Research suggests it is important management to adopt new strategies –shifting orientation from the object to the subject-, being able to design tacit knowledge transfer initiatives that are aligned with existing working habits and routines (McDermott and O Dell, 2001), insuring that employees are more involved, confident, less stressed, willing to share knowledge and work together and overall being satisfied with their working status quo. The adoption of a management strategy incorporating staff’s personal characteristics increases the effectiveness of tacit knowledge management initiatives, contributing at the same time the necessary social closeness, communication efficiency and knowledge sharing culture. It is management’s duty to acknowledge these qualities and adjust the working position to the person and not vice versa. Moreover, in a hotel working environment, where the final “product” is the acquired experience, management ought’s to synchronize the establishment of a learning and sharing culture with efficient management strategies and employees’ satisfaction.

In more details, the contacted research proved that hotels incorporating the strategy of Personality and Emotions exploitation seem to keep their staff more satisfied and interested, giving the chance to express themselves, take initiatives and finally to conform the working position to their actual capabilities. Moving a step

forward, employees feel more comfortable, to communicate, trust, help, take successful initiatives and participate in a learning and knowledge transfer and acquisition environment.

The crucial point remains at the stage of evaluation and placement of each member to the right place. Task assignment, also based on personal characteristics and qualities, requires an adequate level of acquaintance with the employees, their skills and their personal attributes and psychological characteristics. Task customization to working and personal qualifications, provides the opportunity to integrate work with personal characteristics, increasing significantly the levels of satisfaction and commitment. In a hotel where task assignment takes under consideration personality elements and emotions, the research revealed a strong positive relationship between the factors of tacit knowledge acquisition, transfer and the factors of interpersonal relationship, communication and leadership. The strong association of all factors provides a stable ground for the leadership to acknowledge and utilize the whole range of employee capabilities achieving at the same time staff's commitment towards the organizational goals. Focusing on the functional level of administration, Srivastava, S. (2011) and Abrams et al (2003) support the argument that in a working environment of trust and social closeness, employees, act with discretion; they seem to be consistent between word and deed; they are willing to establish a sure and frequent communication; they are more willing to collaborate; they make decisions fair and transparent. Also according to Brachos (2007) there is a reduction of complexity on the working environment allowing staff members to solve easier any possible conflicts, while employees seem to acquire the appropriate flexibility to bypass bureaucracy, creating at the same time multiple channels of knowledge sharing and transfer mechanisms, reinforcing the culture of knowledge transfer, in the learning organization. According to the research findings in a working environment with close interpersonal relationships,

connections create a belief that each person has some level of concern for the other therefore employees are more willing to help, create synergies and work as a team. Regarding the HR policy determination level, Goleman (1998) argues that interpersonal relationship and trust strengthens the bond between administration and employees, creating a culture of co operation and mutual understanding. Nergiz et al (2011), Levin and Cross (2004) also support the argument that in an environment of trust and co operation, employees undertake initiatives, being innovative and active. In the level of strategic planning, organization tends to be able to ground on a strategic plan using innovative capabilities, commitment and cooperation, achieving at the same time high levels of employee satisfaction

REFERENCES

- Accenture (2000). Andersen Consulting, Collaboration and Knowledge Management
- Argote, L., & Ingram, P. (2000). Knowledge transfer: A basis for competitive advantage in firms. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82, 150–169
- Argote, L., McEvily, B., & Reagans, R. (2003). Managing knowledge in organizations: An integrative framework and review of emerging themes. *Management Science*, 49(4), 571–582.
- Bagozzi, R.P. και Yi, Y., (1988). On the evaluation of structure equation models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 16, 74-94.
- Becerra-Fernandez, I., & Sabherwal, R. (2001). Organizational knowledge management: A contingency perspective. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18(1), 23-55.
- Bou-Llusa, J., C. Segarra-Ciprés, M. (2006) "Strategic knowledge transfer and its implications for competitive advantage: an integrative conceptual framework", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 10 Iss: 4, pp.100 – 112.

- Brachos, D., Kostopoulos, K., Soderquist, K. and Prastacos, G. (2007) 'Knowledge effectiveness, social context and innovation', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp.31–44.
- Cabrera, E. F., & Cabrera, A. (2005). Fostering knowledge sharing through people management practices. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16, 720–735
- Chan, I., & Chau, P. Y. K. (2005). Getting knowledge management right: Lessons from failure. *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, 1(3), 40-54.
- Chilton, M.A. & Bloodgood, J.M. 2008. The Dimensions of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge: A Description and Measure. *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, 4(2): 75-91
- Collins, H.M. (1993), "The Structure of Knowledge", *Social Research*, Vol. 60 No 1, pp. 95-116.
- Davenport, T. and Prusak, L. (2000), *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage What They Know*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Disterer, G. (2001) "Individual and Social Barriers to Knowledge Transfer", *Proceedings of the 34th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, pp. 3008-3014.
- Ellis, A. & Beattie, G. (1986). *The psychology of language & communication*.
London: Weidenfield and Nicolsen
- El-Sharkawy, O. (2007). Exploring Knowledge and Skills for tourist guides: Evidence from Egypt. *Tourismos An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*,. 2(2):77-89.
- Fayol, H. ,*General and Industrial Management*, English Translation, Pitman 1949
- Feely, A.J.; and Harzing, A.W.K. (2003) "Language Management in Multinational Companies." *Crosscultural management: an international journal*, 10(2): 37-52.
- Fogel, A. (1981). The effect of brief separations on two month child infant. *Infant behavior and development*, 3, 315-330
- Fornell, C. και Larcker, D.F., (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unbearable and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, No. 18, 39-50

- George, J. & Jones, G. (2011). *Understanding and managing organizational behavior* Prentice Hall PTR.
- Goleman, D. (1998a). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Goleman, D. (1998b). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, November/December.
- Grant, R. M. (1996). Toward a knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17, 109–122.
- Hahn, J. and M. Subramani (2000). A Framework of Knowledge Management Systems: Issues and Challenges for Theory and Practice. 21st Annual International Conference on information Systems, ICIS 2000, December 10-13, 2000, Brisbane, Australia, pp. 302-312
- Haldin-Herrgard, T. (2000) “Difficulties in diffusion of tacit knowledge in organizations”, *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp. 357-365
- Hair, J. F.; Black, W. C.; Babin, B. J.; Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis. A Global Perspective*, 7th edition, Upper Saddle River: Pearson
- Hair, Jr.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L. και Black, W.C. (1998) *Multivariate data analysis*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Handy., C. (1994). *The age of paradox*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press
- Hallin, C. A., & Marnburg, E. Knowledge management in the hospitality industry: A review of empirical research. *Tourism Management* (2007),
- Harvey, J.F. (2012) "Managing organizational memory with intergenerational knowledge transfer", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 16 (3): 400 – 417
- Hasher, L., & Zacks, R. (1979). Automatic and effort full, processes in memory. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 108, 356-388.
- Hay, J. 1995. *Transformational Mentoring*. McGrawHill Book Company.
- Hodgson, G. (1995) ‘The Necessity of Habits and Rules’, *Research Papers in Management Studies*, University of Cambridge, No. 5

- Holsapple, C. W., & Joshi, K. D. (2000). An Investigation of factors that influence the management of knowledge in organizations. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 9, 235-261
- Jennex, M. E., & Olfman, L. (2006). A model of knowledge management success. *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, 2(3), 51-68.
- Jöreskog, K. G. και Sörbom, D. (1988). PRELIS. A program for multivariate data screening and data summarization. User's Guide (2nd Ed.). Chicago: Scientific Software International
- Lemos, B. and Joia, L.A. "Tacit Knowledge Transfer within Organisations" (2010) .AMCIS 2010 Proceedings. Paper32 <http://aisel.aisnet.org/amcis2010/32>
- Levin, B.Z. and Cross, R. (2004) 'The strength of weak ties you can trust: the mediating role of trust in effective knowledge transfer', *Management Science*, Vol. 50, No. 11, pp.1477–1490
- McDermott, R., & O'Dell, C. (2001). Overcoming cultural barriers to sharing knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 5(1), 76–85.
- Malhotra (2005), "Integrating Knowledge Management Technologies in Organisational Business Processes: getting real time enterprises to deliver real business performance", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2005 pp. 7-28.
- Mulaik, S. A., James, L. R., Van Alstine, J., Bennett, N., Lind, S., & Stilwell, C. D. (1989). Evaluation of goodness-of-fit indices for structural equation models. *Psychological Bulletin*, 105, 430–435.
- Murray, S. R. & Peyrefitte, J. (2007), 'Knowledge Type and Communication Media Choice in the Knowledge Transfer Process.', *Journal of Managerial Issues* 19 (1) , p111 - 133
- Murray, A., Hanlon, P. (2010) An Investigation into the Stickiness of Tacit Knowledge Transfer. 13th. Annual Conference of the Irish Academy of Management, Cork Institute of Technology, 1-3.
- Nergiz, H., Kozak, M. & Balta, S. (2011). Ethical approaches and their application in hotel managers' decision making, *Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*, Vol. 6, No.1, pp.84-104.

- O'Dell, C. and Grayson, C.J. (1998), "If only we knew what we know: identification and transfer of internal best practice", *California Management Review*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 154-74.
- Ojo, O. (2009). Impact Assessment of Corporate Culture on Employee Job Performance, *Business Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 388-397.
- Polanyi, M. (1966), *The tacit dimension*. New York, Anchor Day Books.
- Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004), *The Future of Competition: Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Puusa, A and Eerikäinen, M. (2011). "Is Tacit Knowledge Really Tacit?" *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* Volume 8 Issue 3 (pp307 - 318), available online at www.ejkm.com
- Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995), *The Knowledge-Creating Company, How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1991) *The knowledge creating company*, Harvard Business Review
- Roberts, J. (2000). "From Know-how to Show-how: Questioning the Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Knowledge Transfer". *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management* 12 (4): 429–443.
- Rousseau, D. (1985). Issues of level in organization research: Multi level and cross-level perspectives. In L.L Cummings & B.M. Staw (Eds), *Research in organizational behaviour* Vol. 7, pp.1-37). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press
- Sigala, M., Chalkiti, K. (2007) "Improving performance through tacit knowledge externalisation and utilisation: Preliminary findings from Greek hotels", *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, Vol. 56 Iss: 5/6, pp.456 – 483
- Srivastava, S. (2011). Economic Potential of Tourism: A Case Study of Agra. *Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*, Vol. 6, No.2, pp.139-158.
- Shaw, G. & Williams, A. (2009) Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organizations: An emerging research agenda. *Tourism Management* 30:325-335

- Szulanski. G. (2006). Presumptive Adaptation and the Effectiveness of Knowledge Transfer, *Strategic Management Journal* Vol. 27, N°10, pp 937-957.
- Szulanski. G. (2002). Getting it Right the Second Time, *Harvard Business Review* Vol. 80, N°1, pp 62-69.
- Tabachnick, G. G., and Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Experimental Designs Using ANOVA*. Belmont, CA: Duxbury
- Van der Spek, R., & Spijkervet (2007) *Knowledge Management: Dealing Intelligently with Knowledge*, in: J. Liebowitz and L. Wilcox, Eds., *Knowledge Management and Its Integrative Elements* (CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL)
- Wang, S. & Noe, R. (2010). Knowledge sharing: A review and directions for future research. *Human Resource Management Review*. 20:115-131.
- Wagner J., Hollenbeck J. (2005). *Organizational Behavior. Securing Competitive Advantage*. Routeledge, New York and London.
- Watson D.(1989). Strangers ratings of the five robust personality factors: Evidence of a surprising convergence with self report. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 120-128

Spyros Avdimiotis (soga@tour.teithe.gr) is an assistant professor at Alexander Technological Educational Institution, Department of Business Administration, discipline tourism and hospitality management BO Box 141 Sindos Thessalonikii.