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Emotional intelligence and tacit knowledge management in hospitality

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Abstract

Purpose: Several researchers stressed that tacit knowledge is almost impossible to articulate, codify and thus to transfer. Based on the notion that tacit knowledge could be acknowledged, acquired and transferred through employees' behavioral patterns, this paper seeks to associate emotions - as determinant factor of behavior - with tacit knowledge management in hospitality establishments.

Methods: To prove the above association, a quantitative research was held on a stratified sample of 128 hotel employees in Northern Greece. The research model was based on Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) SECI knowledge transfer model and Salovey and Mayer Emotional Intelligence model.

Results: Findings indicate that both emotional intelligence (E.I.) and tacit knowledge are strongly associated, leading to the inference that E.I. is a structural element of tacit knowledge. Emotional intelligence is closely related to socialization and internalization. On the other hand, there is no correlation with the combination factor while the externalization phase of knowledge management has a medium correlation, with emphasis on the Emotional Understanding and Emotional Management.

Implications: At the socialization stage, the critical factors that shape the communication framework for the transfer of tacit knowledge are the ability to recognize, prioritize feelings, produce and exploit emotions to resolve problems. The capacity for empathy was pinpointed as significant too, mainly because informal communication plays an imperative role at this stage of knowledge transfer.

Keywords: tacit knowledge, emotional intelligence, hotel and human resources management

JEL Classification: D8, D83, D91

Biographical note: Spyros Avdimiotis since 2010 is an assistant professor at the International Hellenic University, Department of Management of Organizations Management and Tourism. He received his PhD from the Cyprus University on the field of Tacit Knowledge Transfer in Hospitality Establishments. His main scientific interests are knowledge management, human resource management and tourism business innovation strategies. Corresponding author: Spyros Avdimiotis (rdoffice@gmail.com)

1 INTRODUCTION

“For millions of years, mankind lived just like the animals. Then something happened which unleashed the power of our imagination. We learned to talk, and we learned to listen. Speech has allowed the communication of ideas, enabling human beings to work together to build the impossible. Mankind's greatest achievements have come about by talking, and its greatest failures by not talking”. Using these words, Stephen Hawking underlined the power of knowledge transfer in the evolution of humanity. However, it was not only the great scientist who distinguished the power of communication and knowledge. John's Gospel (subparagraph 1:1) gives prominence to knowledge which simulates to God “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.” Looking the course of knowledge during the centuries, indeed, from ancient years to the Middle-Ages, knowledge was seeking to address the issues of self-awareness and the pursuit of

righteous life. Somewhat ahead of the thinking of their times though, Aristotle and Plato both implied the need for research and knowledge justification. In this context, Aristotle distinguished knowledge into three categories: Techne answering to the question “know how,” Episteme answering to “know why” and Phronesis “the reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regards to human goods” (Hardie, 1980). Plato also defined knowledge as the “justified true belief,” indicating the three pillars of knowledge: Belief meaning the need of any person to notice and perceive the world, true meaning the existence of the belief and justified as the process to explain the true belief. Both philosophers prepared the ground for the advent of the industrial revolution era where knowledge gained a powerfully utilitarian character, attempting to give results mainly in production matters. Peter Drucker (1954) pinpointed that one of the main facts depicting the changing aspect of knowledge was the publication of the Encyclopedia (Encyclopédie, 1772) in France, which converted the experience into knowledge, the



apprenticeship into schoolbooks, the confidentiality into the methodology, the act into applied knowledge. In the same way, Daniel Bell (1999) underlined that what distinguishes the post-industrial society are adjustments in the attributes of knowledge itself as they were established and admitted, concerning business decision management and to their overall technical efficiency, prioritizing theory against empiricism. Currently, many researchers in the management knowledge field agree that in the contemporary information society there is a systematic use of theoretical knowledge (Chami & Kaminyoge, 2019), while business administration relies more often than ever on scientific research, aiming mainly at the production optimization – concerning mass production automation – according to quality and quantity standards.

According to Polanyi (1962), knowledge has been identified as a dynamic procedure, stimulating growth and competitive advantages to any organization. On that critical point Polanyi fundamentally distinguished explicit and tacit knowledge while thirty-two years later Vygotsky (1994) in his pursue to map the topography of knowledge in the human brain, postulate that explicit rests on the upper brain centres, while tacit knowledge lies mostly in the subconscious, supporting conscious (explicit) acts. Vygotsky's argument, provides the ground to define explicit as the type of knowledge which it is possible to codify, therefore feasible to transfer through verbal and written communication, while tacit knowledge was recognized as the type of knowledge which is almost impossible to classify and manage, mainly due to the fact that is mainly subconscious and closely connected to holder's social and personality traits. It could be stated that both Polanyi and Vygotsky are supporting the argument that tacit knowledge is almost impossible to convey. Very accurately on the subject Polanyi stated the phrase "we know more that we can tell" capturing in seven words the essence of tacitness and the barriers to thoroughly transfer that non-written and non-verbal type of knowledge. Polanyi and Vygotsky were not only researchers who stood by this argument. Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) lining up, described tacit knowledge as personal, context-specific, and consequently, hard to formalize and communicate, concluding that tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in individual's experience values, norms, beliefs, and emotions, justifying Vygotsky's and Polanyi's argument. Furthermore, Jasimuddin et al. (2005) also underlined that tacit knowledge stems from the life experience of individuals, making it highly distinctive and more difficult to explain and demonstrate. Gilbert Ryle in his work "The concept of mind" in 1949, in order to identify the importance of tacit knowledge wrote that an expert's mind dictates to the body how to take actions without any conscious reflection, building the capacity of "know-how", also consenting to the argument that tacit knowledge is a result of an individual's capability to process information but in a highly personal manner. It would be safe to support that tacit knowledge is continuously and subconsciously articulated by factors that are connected to the holder's emotions, is seamlessly bonded to the personality, feeds and supports the conscious expertise but even though it is the quintessence of our experiences and knowledge, it is almost impossible to transfer. Hence, the unequivocally critical question raised refers to the ability of organizations to

transfer tacit knowledge. In order to acknowledge the factors of tacit knowledge transfer, Nonaka and Takeuchi, built the S.E.C.I. model, inferring that knowledge convey evolves in four distinct stages: Socialization, where both ends share experiences and (mostly) informally communicate; Externalization, where knowledge recipient records information; Combination upon which stage the apprentice analyzes and organizes acquired information; Internalization, where the receiver adjusts information mainly through practice to personal status, building expertise and know-how. In their model Nonaka and Takeuchi identified the importance of observation and apprenticeship as a transfer and communication tunnel, highlighting alongside it the role of imitation. Szulanski, in 2006, also recognized the behavior as a significant gateway to transfer tacit knowledge, while Tsoukas (2009) confirmed that the guidance combined with repetition, compose the transfer route. Similarly Avdimiotis (2016) argued that "we do more than we can tell", indicating that this type of knowledge is internal in nature, mainly conveyed through employee's behavioral patterns leading to the suggestion that task assignments should be adjusted to personnel's working qualifications and personality characteristics. Furthermore, the issue of enhancing knowledge transfer within hospitality establishments has to be addressed. In response, we should focus on Emotional Intelligence as a factor to facilitate tacit knowledge transfer, attempting to associate both components and upon them deploy appropriate managerial practices to achieve competitiveness, productivity and labor satisfaction.

To explain the structure and role of tacit knowledge the value of paradigm will be used. Without any doubt, musicians have the theoretical and practical ability to read a music sheet and perform it on the instrument. The fundamental difference between reproduction and artistic performance lies to the capability of the musician to "perform" and not just to fetch out the piece, prioritizing the aesthetic perception and the emotional interpretation. In this significant example, the musician should not only be aware of how to play but also, how to perform as an artist and add his artistic notion. In short, the multi-annual theoretical and practical studies result in the capability of the musician to work in two layers. In the first basic level to focus on the technical part and follow- in an almost mechanical way or even subconscious manner- the music sheet and in the latter level to focus on the artistic performance, which is mainly the outcome of his aesthetic perception, including elements from his personal and collective culture. Accordingly, an experienced hotel employee knows how to maximize the guest's positive experience, how to handle a complaint and how to challenge satisfaction, without being able though, to express a general action plan or to create a customer's satisfaction "road map" for his co-workers. Avdimiotis (2016) postulated that indeed, a successful hotel employee should have sufficient theoretical competences to accomplish job-related tasks, but also be able- through experience- to train muscular and kinetic memory and perform the assigned work, setting primary focus and attention to guests' satisfaction and positive overall experience attainment. This dynamic synergy of explicit knowledge, subconscious body and mental memory and the ability to acknowledge and focus on the customer's needs could be the framework upon which

employees' soft skills are refined and matured. The challenge for HR management is to coordinate all employees and departments and tune them as an orchestra, placing each member in the right place, with the (appropriate) responsibility. At this point, emotional quotient could be a useful tool to acknowledge staff dexterities and customize tasks with employees' skills.

2 EI AS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a rapidly growing scientific area, having caught the attention of the scientific community. In terms of defining emotional intelligence, perhaps the most widely accepted scientific definition is "the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189), implying that the emotionally intelligent person can (i) identify and perceive, (ii) manage, (iii) use, (iv) understand, regulate and customize emotions. According to Goleman (1995) emotional intelligence consists of the following abilities: Understand and manage emotions, motivate ourselves, recognize emotions in others (empathy), and handling relationships. A quite significant contribution was offered by Reuven Baron (1985) who developed the Baron model, where Emotional Intelligence was defined as an array of non-cognitive abilities, competencies, and skills that influence holder's ability to succeed in dealing with environmental demands and pressures. The essential components of Baron theory combine (i) interpersonal skills of self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization, (ii) Intrapersonal abilities of empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationship, (iii) adaptability deriving from problem solving skills, flexibility and reality testing, (iv) stress management and tolerance control and finally (v) general mood, stemming from optimism and happiness.

Apart from the discipline of psychology, emotional intelligence as a scientific field attracted the attention of human resource management and organizational behavior researchers, who had already spotted the association between emotional intelligence and organizational performance (Koman & Wolff, 2008). It could be said that a few years ago the term "emotion" in the enterprise field was covered under a negative perspective, given the fact that any expression of emotions was understood as an action- or a sign- of weakness. It is now widely accepted- in both academia and the hospitality industry- that employees continue to subconsciously transfer their emotions, recognizing in their utterance, a critical behavioral benchmark. In line with Goleman, Lopes et al. (2006) supported the argument that emotional intelligence contributes to efficiency, facilitating the employees and the leadership to formulate cooperative relations, to check and manage emotions and anxiety and to perform, even under pressure. George (2000) states that emotional intelligence is an essential factor in personal life, making the individual socially accepted, both in the workplace and in the workplace where the emotional intelligence interacts effectively contributing in the development and viability of businesses. On these grounds,

Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005), developed an integrated model representing the five aspects of competence: cognitive, functional, personal, ethical and meta-competence and, according to them, emotional intelligence is closely connected with behavioral patterns and competencies. Given the characteristics of emotional intelligence as a determinative factor of employees' behavior, the association of both emotional intelligence and tacit knowledge management could lead to interesting inferences regarding employees' behavior, understanding and stimulation to transfer knowledge. Both Tacit Knowledge and Emotional intelligence, no matter their hue and characteristics, feed from the subconscious and at the same time impact significantly on the behavior of the individual.

In an effort to proceed and improve discussion, this research aims to pinpoint the connection between tacit knowledge Management and Emotional Intelligence forming the argument that Emotional intelligence has a positive connection with tacit knowledge transfer, and therefore it should be taken into account when a task is designed, assigned and fulfilled by the management, within hospitality establishments. To acknowledge the connection between factors, the Salovey and Mayer's model was used, mainly because it evolves in four stages, having (at least) a symbolic resemblance to Nonaka and Takeuchi's S.E.C.I. model. Researching the overall correlation between Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer with Emotional Intelligence, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis (1) SECI model factor of Socialization, is positively associated with Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Development model.

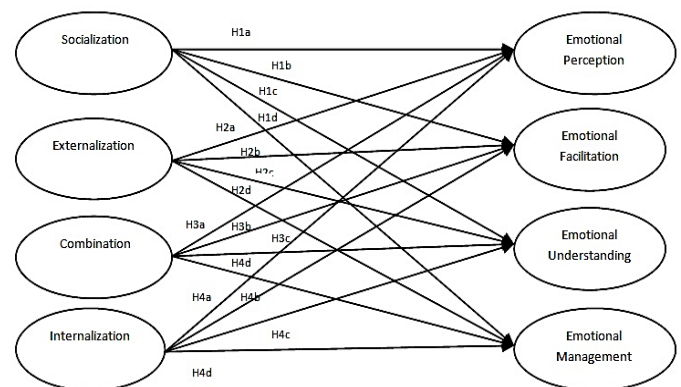
Hypothesis (2): SECI model factor of Externalization, is positively associated with Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Development model.

Hypothesis (3): SECI model factor of Combination, is positively associated with Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Development model.

Hypothesis (4): SECI model factor of Internalization, is positively associated with Mayer and Salovey's Emotional

2.1 Development of model

Figure 1. Primary and Secondary hypotheses structure



In any of the hypotheses (figure 1), Emotional Intelligence is considered a fully structured factor, including all four dimensions of the ability to perceive, facilitate, understand and manage emotions. To be more precise and thorough, four

secondary hypotheses per SECI model factor were developed (in total sixteen), inquiring to acknowledge the association respectively of Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization with Salovey and Mayer's structural factors of emotional perception, facilitation, understanding, and management. For each SECI factor, the appropriate case was structured in order to acknowledge its association with Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Development model.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research intends to investigate the association/relationship between Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Development, with Nonaka and Takeuchi's Knowledge Management model. The originality of the theory, in combination with the lack of similar research models, led to the development of a theory building model, correlating both cases.

Regarding Emotional Intelligence, the questionnaire of emotional intelligence designed by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000) was employed, which include all common grounds of the aforementioned Emotional Intelligence measurement theories. For each factor, a five (5) rate Likert scale of the agreement was selected to assess emotions, emotional honesty and emotional feedback, self-control management optimism, self-esteem, persistence, ethical awareness, understanding, appreciation of the feelings of others empathy and the ability to manage relationships. To measure Tacit Knowledge transfer and acquisition, the initial SECI model was also employed, consisting of four factor items, measuring the ability to (a) understand, evaluate, assimilate and utilize knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002; Lane & Lubatkin, 1998), b) combine existing knowledge with that obtained (Cohen & Levinthal 1990); (c) recognize sources of knowledge reception, such as observation, discussion, storytelling (Szulanski, 1996; Zahra & George, 2002; Tsai, 2001; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995); and (d) extract information from seminars; databases etc, (Keys, 2006).

Going through the implementation held between May to June 2018, a stratified sample of hotel employees was used, working full time in 3, 4- and 5-star hotels in Thessaloniki and Halkidiki, in the region of Central Macedonia in Greece. The criteria used to stratify the sample were the category of the establishment, the number of employees, years of employee experience, department, education, and gender. Being aware of the low typical response rate, a 2 step approach methodology was used. The first step included the initial contact though an e-mail or phone call to the managing director informing about the survey while the second step included the actual implementation of the research procedure with duration of approximately one hour. Out of 190 distributed questionnaires, 128 valid were gathered, in 16 hotels in Halkidiki and Thessaloniki.

To analyze primary research outcome data Structural Equation Modelling statistical method of analysis was implemented, in order to find the association between independent and dependent variables. To verify the cohesion of variables, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to determine the number of factors that are successfully loaded explaining sufficiently the variable, and sequently a path analysis was implemented, to represent reliably and

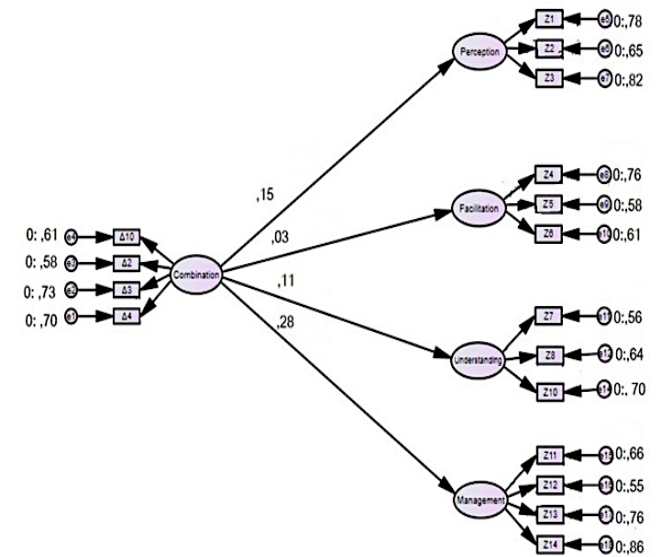
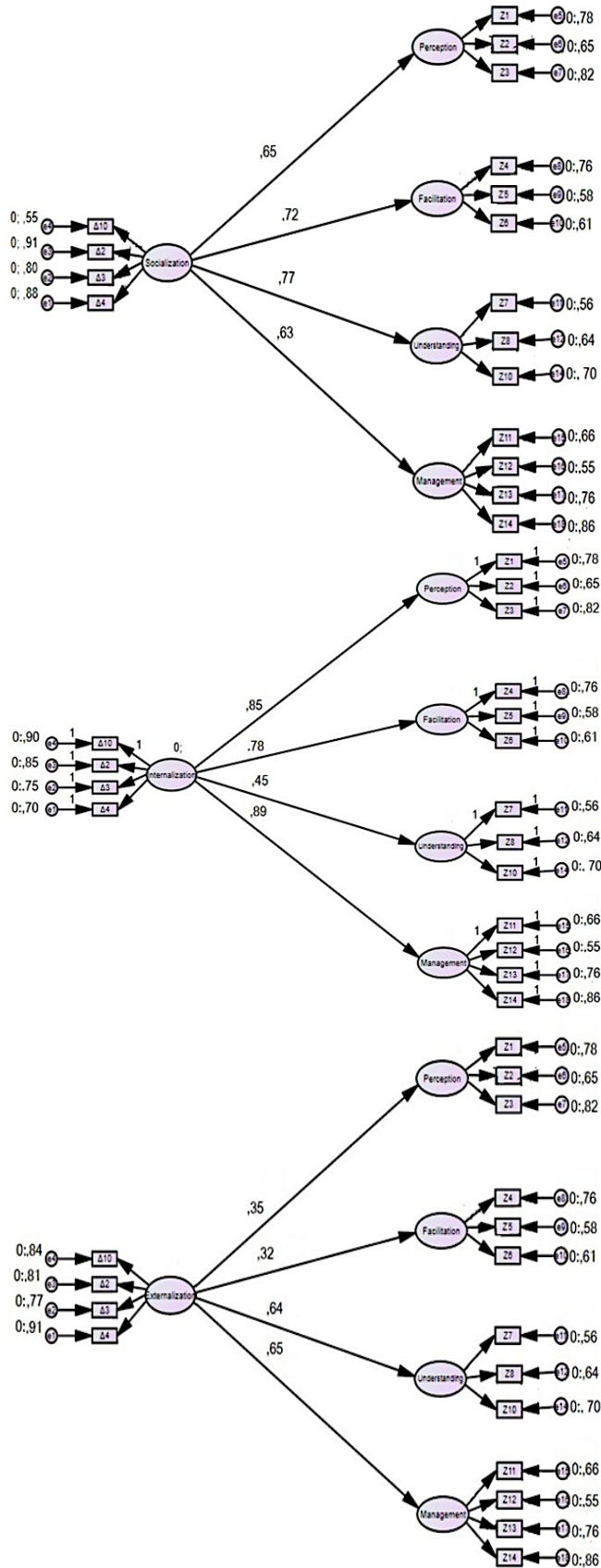
conveniently, the structure and the hypothesized relationships among the variables of SECI model and Emotional Intelligence (EI). The internal cohesion and consistency was tested using the Cronbach's alpha indicator, which scored a 0.939 value.

4 FINDINGS AND MODEL EVALUATION

Factor analysis: Due to potential conceptual and statistical overlap, an attempt was made to produce a tight set of distinct non-overlapping variables from the full set of items underlying the construct. Therefore, the variable of EI was subjected to CFA analysis using SPSS software v.20, to determine the underlying dimensions of Emotional Intelligence. The KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity was used, along with varimax rotation. The KMO value was .959, with approx. Chi-Square 6227, df 45 and <0,000 sig. The loadings where above 0.70 hence no items were excluded, explaining 73% of the total variable. CFA yielded four factors- with eigenvalues greater than 1-, confirming Salovey and Mayer's model: (i) Emotional Perception and Expression, (ii) Emotional Facilitation, (iii) Emotional Understanding and (iv) Emotional Management. Under the same rationale, a CFA was conducted for the SECI model as well, to ensure that the model was thoroughly employed. In this case, the KMO value was 0,888 (sig less than 0,000). Loadings were statistically acceptable with an average loading value of 0,68, yielding (and also verifying) the four factors of Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization, explaining over 78% of the variable.

Regarding Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) path analysis, cases were developed correlating each factor of SECI model to Mayer and Salovey emotional development model, (see figure 1). In each case, the conditions for normality were met. To realize the associations between variables, a statistical multi variable model was built as Jöreskog and Sörbom (1978) indicate. It should be stated that the overall Cronbach's alpha internal reliability test reached the value of 0,939, while the construct Reliability and Average Variance Extracted of the model were $CR > 0,7$ and $AVE > 0,5A$. Inductively, the overall model, was checked for adequate measurement fit and more significantly, it yielded a χ^2 value of 1607.1 with 374 degrees of freedom ($p = 0,000$), revealing an acceptable CMIN/DF of 4,692 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Moving forward to values which established acceptable fit and statistical significance, the model achieved a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0,60 standing at the threshold of Bagozzi and Yi 1988, Hair et al. 1988, Fornell and Larcker 1981 fit criteria, while the model produced a CFI (Comparative Fit Index) score .939 and an IFI (Incremental Fit Index) score .939; all falling within the acceptable ranges ($> .90$) for acceptable fit (Hair et al., 2010). PRATIO (.921) and PCFI (.850) were also within acceptable fit thresholds (Mulaik et al. 1989) Regarding CFI and IFI threshold of $> .95$; measurements were also acceptable. The values extracted from the statistically reliable model, suggest that hypothesis regarding the factors of Socialization, Externalization, and Internalization can be supported. The factor of Combination against the Mayer and Salovey model was not supported.

Figure 2. Association between SECI model socialization factor and Mayer- Salovey EI model



In particular, Socialisation had a positive and significant association with the factor of emotional perception of 0,65 (p-value 0,001), with emotional facilitation also a strong association of 0.72 (p-value 0.000), emotional understanding 0,77 (p-value 0,002) and emotional management 0,63 with p-value 0,001), as can be seen in Table 1. Similarly, the factor of Externalization had low to medium correlation with Emotional development model, achieving 0.35 correlation intensity with emotional perception (p-value 0.003), 0,32 with emotional facilitation (p-value 0,001), stronger association (0,64) with emotional understanding, with acceptable p-value and also significant correlation with emotional management (0,65 and p-value 0.004).

Table 1. Hypotheses status of confirmation

SECI Factor	Emotional Intelligence Factor	
Socialization	Emotional Perception	Supported
	Emotional Facilitation	Supported
	Emotional Understanding	Supported
	Emotional Management	Supported
Externalization	Emotional Perception	Supported
	Emotional Facilitation	Supported
	Emotional Understanding	Supported
	Emotional Management	Supported
Combination	Emotional Perception	Not Supported
	Emotional Facilitation	Not Supported
	Emotional Understanding	Not Supported
	Emotional Management	Not Supported
Internalization	Emotional Perception	Supported
	Emotional Facilitation	Supported
	Emotional Understanding	Supported
	Emotional Management	Supported

Significantly strong was the association/relationship between internalization and emotion intelligence model; and particularly, perception had a strong correlation of 0,85, Facilitation up to 0,78, emotional management 0,89, while emotional understanding had a surprisingly medium correlation with the factor in internalization 0,45. In all cases, the p-value was in acceptable margins, ranging from 0,000 to 0,002. The factor of Combination seems to have no association what so ever, with the emotional intelligence model. Emotional perception had low intensity of 0,15 and p-value 0.008, Facilitation scored 0.003 with p-value 0.22, Understanding of emotions scored also 0.11 with unacceptable p-value and likewise, emotional management

margined up to 0,28, with p-value 0,9. Overall, the analysis exhibited that both hypotheses can be accepted as shown in Table 1.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Fenstermacher (2005) in his article “the tyranny of knowledge: What artificial intelligence tells us about knowledge representation” states that computer systems might perform same tasks with tacit knowledge using alternative representations. It seems that Technology somewhere in the future will exceed the human brain possibly in every way, but until then, however, a more focused look at the way theoretical and electronic knowledge is applied, it could recognize that it is established in tacit commitments. Even the most theoretical aspect of knowledge cannot form an entirely standardized system eliciting and applying it, due to the fact that it necessarily contains a personal quality – the human factor – who corresponds, adjusts and applies knowledge in a way inherent to personal values and future anticipations. In other words, personal knowledge is in charge of any business decision making and procedures in a unique and unprecedented way. Moreover, the discussion regarding the relationship between tacit knowledge transfer and emotional intelligence can be also based on the acceptance that every organism is an emotional field (Armstrong, 2000), within which overwhelming and sophisticated vertical and horizontal interpersonal relations occur, inevitably influencing leadership, trust, job satisfaction, anxiety, conflicts, decision making, etc. In this context, the importance of personal perception and emotions in the choice of any entrepreneurial decision taken within the hospitality establishment holds an imperative role. However, regardless the importance of human emotions and the contribution of human factor in the decision-making process, academia did not focus sufficiently on the connection between emotions and tacit knowledge management. This is why Fineman (2003) postulated – in a way ‘complained’ – that within knowledge management literature review, the emotional factor was substantially omitted. Indeed, until relatively recently, emotion as a component of collaborative and individual interest perception, determining organizational behavior, continues to be of limited interest. However, simple enumerations of the published articles in scientific journals indicate that increasing numbers of researchers are focusing on emotions as a criterion of organizational behavior.

This research draws its focus on emotional intelligence, seeking to understand the association with tacit knowledge transfer and acquisition. Findings supported the initial hypotheses that Emotional Intelligence is positively associated with Tacit Knowledge Management, indicating that both elements are closely associated with employees’ behavioral patterns. Indeed, Mayer and Salovey’s model factors of perception, facilitation, understanding and emotional management have an enormous impact on employees’ behavior and routines which according to aforementioned researchers, construct the main route of tacit knowledge transfer. In more details, emotional perception which indicates the ability to identify emotions, to express

them accurately has a strong positive connection with Nonaka and Takeuchi’s factors of Socialization and Internalization and a medium with Externalization. Also, the factor of emotional facilitation which demonstrates the ability to redirect and prioritize feelings, generate emotions to facilitate judgment, problem-solving and creativity also has a positive connection with the factors of Socialization and Internalization; Likewise, the factors of emotional understanding referring to the ability to understand the status and consequences of relationships and interpret complex feelings and the factor of emotional management which describes the ability to handle relationships and emotions have also strong positive association with the factors of Socialization, Internalization and Externalization as well. Hence, it could be argued that the tight connection of Emotional Intelligence with the factors of Nonaka and Takeuchi Knowledge Transfer Model indicate the significance for management to focus on emotions and employees’ behavior and adopt new strategies –shifting orientation to the subjects and not merely the object- to re-establish knowledge transfer techniques taking under consideration emotional driven behavioral acts, such as habits, patterns and routines. As Christou (2013) indicates as the final “product” of a hospitality establishment is the acquired experience, and in alignment with his argument, it could be suggested that management should acknowledge and adjust the working position to the person and not vice versa. The current research leads to the conclusion that hotels incorporating the strategy of emotions exploitation seem to keep their staff more satisfied coherent and interested, giving the chance to express themselves, build teams, strengthen ties, take initiatives and finally to confirm the working position to their actual capabilities. Research findings also indicate, that the customization of the assigned tasks to personnel emotional capability, allow employees to be more involved, confident, less stressed, and willing to share and receive knowledge. Moving a step forward, in a hotel where emotions are valued, employees feel more comfortable, to communicate, trust, take successful initiatives and participate in a learning and knowledge transfer and acquisition environment and also be more willing to help, create synergies and work as a team. Regarding the HR policy determination level, it is argued that emotional intelligence is the framework upon which interpersonal relationship and trust strengthens the bond between administration and employees, creating a culture of co-operation and mutual understanding (Mansfield, 2018). In the level of strategic planning, the 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 (Volgger et al., 2017).

Emotional intelligence, as proved from the research is a critical factor of tacit knowledge management and should be taken into account, to understand and handle the skills of each member of hotel staff. The positive connection between tacit knowledge and emotions, allows us to support the argument that emotional intelligence and tacit knowledge are working as cogwheels towards satisfaction, performance improvement, team coherence, and goal unity. Nevertheless, tacit knowledge, as formed from values, customs, roles, traditions, beliefs, and perceptions provide the stable

framework upon which emotions and behaviours occur, able to enhance distinctive competitive advantages and substantially support and foster enterprise adaptation and overall quality improvement... but this happens only when management assign tasks according to employees' emotional capabilities, personality traits and working qualifications.

5.1 Final remarks and conclusions

Emotional intelligence is closely related to Socialization and Internalization. On the other hand, there is no correlation with the Combination factor while in Externalization phase of knowledge management has a medium correlation, with emphasis on the Emotional Understanding and Emotional Management (on the ability to participate in a workgroup and create a Learning Environment). As a conclusion on the associations that materialized in the research, it could be stressed that at the Socialization stage the critical factors that shape the communication framework for the transfer of tacit knowledge are the ability to recognize, prioritize feelings, produce and exploit emotions to resolve problems. The capacity for empathy was pinpointed as significant too, mainly because informal communication plays an imperative role at this stage of knowledge transfer. During Socialization, communication and sharing experiences between team members is shaped through emotions and feelings, and it would be wise for management to use EI to strengthen teamwork and improve communication. In the Internalization knowledge transfer phase, where knowledge is customized to the holder's personality primarily through imitation, repetition and practice, the ability of staff members to recognize feelings, prioritize, manage emotions and understand how other members feel, have an enormous contribution on tacit knowledge transfer. During Internalization, knowledge is settled in the subconscious, being firmly bonded to emotions and feelings. In both stages of Socialization and Internalization, hotel administration has a strong opportunity not merely to work and reinforce teamwork, but also to reduce conflict intensity, build consistency and finally, in the future to promote and acquire the culture of teamwork, where sustainable competitive advantages may occur.

Emotions are less important (in connection with tacit knowledge management), at the stages of Externalization, where knowledge transfer – as Nonaka and Takeuchi postulate – employees are recording information, formally communicate and brainstorm as a team, exchanging information and thoughts. At this stage without any doubt, communication and teamwork are exceptionally important, but the whole process seems to be mostly conscious, having a greater impact on explicit knowledge (Vaz et al., 2017). Moreover, the phase of combination is crucially decisive on explicit knowledge management and transfer, having an equally strong impact on the manner employees categorize and organize information. Nonetheless, in hospitality establishments, where human interaction is part of the overall experience, emotions, tacit knowledge, team cohesion and are parts of the success puzzle. The glue is the capability of hotel administration to assign tasks adjusted to personnel's emotion, technical dexterities and personal characteristics. Finally, underpinning the fact that tacit knowledge is the cornerstone of competitiveness in tourism and specifically in

hospitality-related establishments, emotional intelligence could be used as a tool for assessment, team building, cohesion practices, task assignment procedures and overall to be used as one of the primary criteria to customize tasks references on employees' working qualifications and personality traits, advancing to behaviors adequate to facilitate tacit knowledge transfer.

5.2 Future prospects and research limitations

This paper starts the conversation on the subject of tacit knowledge management and emotions. The stratified sample of 128 employees in Central Macedonia- Greece might set a barrier regarding the validity of final conclusions, therefore it would be extremely useful to enrich the sample and geographically widen it. Future research also, should focus on the appraisal of emotional intelligence and the customization of tasks assignments to hotel establishments' employees. It would be also quite interesting to focus on the possible correlation between Knowledge Management, Emotional Intelligence and types of Leadership.

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