

The Impact of Servant Leaders' Strategic Vision on the Development of Service Organizations: A Comprehensive Analysis

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Abstract. This paper aims to explore the significance of the relationship between servant leaders' strategic vision and the development of service organizations and considering the servant leader performance as a mediator. Servant leaders prioritize the growth and well-being of their organizations by transcending self-interest (Greenleaf, 1977). However, articulating a clear vision can be challenging for many leaders. In contrast, servant leaders excel at developing a strategic direction (Crupta, Crollakota & Srinivasan, 2007) that aligns their long-term vision with the strategic goals of their organizations. To assess the relationship between the research variables, this study utilized SPSS. The findings indicate a crucial correlation between servant leadership and strategic vision, with a strong association between servant leaders' strategic vision and the development of service sector organizations. In an ever-changing marketplace, service organizations are urged to adapt. Servant leaders, with their ability to navigate the horizontal structures of service industries, play a crucial role in leading such organizations towards stability and prosperity. This study sheds light on the significance of servant leadership and its impact on the strategic vision and development of service organizations. The findings emphasize the importance of leaders adopting a servant leadership approach, particularly within service industries. By nurturing a strategic vision and aligning it with organizational goals, servant leaders can effectively guide service organizations through the complexities of the marketplace and foster their growth and success. The insights from this research have implications for both theory and practice, providing valuable guidance for leaders seeking to enhance the development of their service organizations

Keywords: Strategic vision, Servant Leadership, Service organizations.

1. Introduction

It is an increasing fact that the world economy has changed to become a service economy that is consistent with the servant leadership. Effective leaders inspire employees to be more active and lively and proactive when performing out their operational duties. Leaders who apply the servant style develop good relationships and social exchanges with employees in order to promote information, knowledge that will also make people more confident and competent (Amin et al., 2019). The servant leadership empathizes on the act of placing the followers' requirements and wants before the personal needs of the leaders and thus serving them and empowering them to achieve the mission and objective of the organization. Leaders who do not have the recognition and willingness to be followed by their subordinates will face severe problems when circumstances require them to do so (Trogaidou & Triantari, 2023).

The early definitions of the servant leaders defined it as a leadership style and technique that stresses the positive development of followers (Greenleaf, 1979), whereas Van Dierendonck (2011) viewed servant leaders as those who empower and develop followers while exhibiting modesty, honesty, and interpersonal acceptance. Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) described servant leaders as leaders capable of taking responsibility for the greater organization and providing guidance to others, while stimulating followers to do the best by concentrating on the growth of their potential (Van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, De Windt, & Alkemaet, 2014).

The servant leadership style is found to have a positive relationship with the trust and commitment of the followers towards the organization, which in turn, increases the chance for leadership and organizational success (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). More importantly, Servant leaders are able to develop a strategic direction (Crupta, Crollakota & Srinivasan, 2007), that aligns their long-term vision with their firm's strategic goals.

The vision of a company is a varied objectives of strategic goals that the organization aims to achieve. The term "vision" refers to a broad description of intended direction that elicits emotional responses from venture members. Vision is the ability to perceive things clearly, especially in the future. Strategic vision, according to Hunger (2020), is a description of what the company can become. It was frequently stated in the mission and vision statements of an organization. A mission statement is a declaration that explains what an organization aspires to be.

The service sector executives are driven by a feeling of mission to reinvent in order to survive in a difficult external environment. Individual development is crucial, but it must be linked to the organization's performance (Smith, Montagno & Kuzmenko, 2004). The advancement and sustainability of a company is ensured by applying Servant leadership styles while focusing on the follower's personal growth.

Despite the fact that service industries are becoming more significant in the market place, but still very few research is made to scrutinize the relation between leadership practices and service industry. Undoubtedly, servant leadership will be a preferred style in the progress of the service industry. The purpose of this paper is to examine the significance of the relationship between the strategic vision of servant leaders and the development of service organizations.

2. Literature Review

To reach your objective, major efforts are required, therefore it is no surprise that most leaders struggle to come up with a flawless and transparent vision for their companies. Additionally, many organizations create a mission statement that, while a step in the right direction, may not satisfy the required vision of the organization (Osoka, 1997). A vision is a clear framework and approach in performing the tasks which will shape the future of the organization. It is expected to be demanding and instill a sense of existence in the shape of a more tangible promise of a greater future. Leaders are expected to develop a company vision. A vision is not the same as a goal. It's a more comprehensive description of why the

company exists and where it wants to go. A vision is merely a representation of what the firm aspires to be. A vision is a mental image of a better world that the management aspires to build in here and now, and it is also a mental image that a manager carries around in his/her perception in order to bring about the anticipated deviations in society.

Strategic direction, according to Crupta, Crollakota and Srinivasan (2007), entails defining a long-term vision of a firm's strategic goal. There are two aspects to the long-term vision: a tradition and clear statement and a vision. A heritage statement establishes the firm's intellectual underpinning, but a vision statement aims to expand that distinctiveness and pleases stakeholders by committing to an altogether new value-adding scenario.

It is an image of how the organization perceives itself, as the word "vision" implies. Most of the time, the organization's hopes for the future are just that: a dream. It may thus be difficult for the company to truly fulfill its goal in the long term, but the vision will create the necessary power and motivation to reach the objective of the stakeholders. When individuals talk about shared vision in companies, they are implying that members of the company have a communal psychological image of the future that unifies their efforts toward that goal. The vision statement expresses the organization's direction in a clear and precise manner. It should be extremely motivational, inspiring and difficult. Good vision statements function as slogans that entice individuals to pursue a goal. Good vision statements define the following categories of intentions:

- Wide, all encompassing, and forward-thinking.
- Looks into the future ends rather than the means to get there.
- Imaginative representation of the future state.
- Pervades the entire company.

The following is an example of a good vision statement:

- Motivating, inspiring and challenging.
- A slogan: it could be embodied in a slogan that is actionable.
- Easily shared and communicated across the entire company and the different stakeholders involved.

The sense of purpose of an organization is referred to as strategy. This aspect of strategy is explicitly mentioned by Ansoff (2007) and Drucker (1985): sketching out future paths that must be balanced against the organization's resources. However, having a goal in mind is not the same as having a strategy. To put the purpose into action, plans or activities must be devised. General Electric identified this policy as a description of how resources would be employed to maximize opportunities and to minimize threats in order to produce the desired result. Moreover, the majority of organizations, as part of the strategic vision, are attracting and retaining workers through tools like job involvement and tasks enrichments, and proper sequence planning in the HR domain. Furthermore, for the qualitative development of the service industry as well as quantitative development, management practices for service quality are being considered steadily in academia, and companies are applying it to the establishment of service strategies and making it the basis of organizational novelty (Ju, 2022).

Strategic vision, according to Hunger (2020), is a description of what the company can become. It was frequently stated in the mission and vision statements of an organization. A mission statement is a declaration that explains what an organization aspires to be. People in an organization want to know what their mission is, but only senior management has the authority to define and communicate it. CEOs with a very transparent and understandable vision, a great loyalty and admiration their firm and the capability to communicate with people are known to be successful. They are frequently seen as charismatic and dynamic leaders, which is critical for good business and investor trust in unpredictable and uncertain environment (Waldman, Ramirez, House & Puranam, 2001). They share many of the traits of transformational leaders, which are those that help an organization in better formulating a vision

(Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders have the capability to impact strategy implementation and planning due to the fact that they are characterized with three important traits:

- The company's vision is articulated by the transformational leader, who sees the company not as it is now but as it can be.
- By providing an example in terms of demeanor, appearance and action, the transformational leader creates a role for people to identify with and emulate. His values and attitudes toward the company's mission and activities are well-defined and articulated frequently.
- He conveys high performance expectations and expresses faith in the followers' ability to meet them.

No leader ever improves performance by setting easy to achieve goals that aren't challenging. When you set high expectations for others, they are more likely to deliver.

One of the first studies on servant leaders was by Greenleaf (1977) in which he formulated a conceptual framework and mentioned some of the historical figures of servant leadership styles like Jesus Christ. The "phenomenal" definition of leadership, according to Greenleaf (2008), is "serve first, not lead". Moreover, servant leaders attempt hardly to help their people become healthier, wiser, more independent, and more motivated to become leaders of the future (Greenleaf, 1977). Despite the fact that Greenleaf (1977) didn't initiate the required traits a servant leader should have but with no doubt he initiated the slogan to describe a servant leader: serve first, and then aspire to lead.

During the same period of Greenleaf (1977), an author was performing studies on the collective characteristics of a servant leader, this author was Burns (1978).

Additionally, some amendments in the academic and practical concepts of servant leader occurred from the time this theory was first found. Some publications attempted to differentiate between the theory of servant leadership and leadership theories that are already existing, although other scholars investigated how to measure servant leadership characteristics.

Two terms shape the concept of Servant leadership: The leader who acts as a servant, both of which are "oxymoron" because they serve and lead at the same time. It may be tough for them to understand that they, as the leader, must also serve. Leaders who serve and servants who lead are both serving and leading the same time. However leadership researchers and practices have recently focused on the dynamic conceptual link and complementary responsibilities between servant hood and leadership (Bass, 1999; Chappel, 2000; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Graham, 1991; Spears, 1995).

When we explain theory, the most crucial thing to remember is where the theory came from. It can reveal the "broad picture" of the theory's growth as well as the "root" of the idea. The philosophy of servant leadership is dependent on the below philosophical foundation:

1. To serve is the foundation of servant leadership rather than the desire to lead. It challenges our previous assumption that leaders are expected to manage their powers, organize tasks, and show their subordinates the way.

2. Servant leaders are those who provide support out of conscience or to meet normative standards (Greenleaf, 1977: 14).

3. The servant leaders' self-awareness: They their contribution and styles as stewards, which are derived from the Greek word "aikonomia" which is translated as "house of manager". Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ executed servant leadership behavior. The word "servant" was used by Jesus or the Prophet Isa as a synonym for "greatness".

Jesus taught that the greatness of a leader is evaluated by a thorough commitment to serve fellow human beings; contrary to bathed their feet by saying "You called me teacher and Lord, then that is what I am". "Now that I am your teacher and the Lord washed your feet, you must wash the feet of others. As a teacher and Lord, this is an example for you". We conclude that the premise of servant

leadership is that leadership powers shift from “power over” to “power to”, that is, power as a motivator to choose to serve others.

How does Servant Leadership differ from Other Styles?

For decades, someone with significant characteristics, knowledge, and authority to control, accomplish, and lead people has been recognized and intimately linked with the concept leadership. Instead of displaying their authority and competence, servant leaders will act selflessly without regard for their own self-interest. The servant-leader is guided by the chances for followers to progress within the company (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Contrasting most styles of leadership that are focused on the organization’s goals, the central focal point for servant leadership is employees and supporting them to act efficiently in order to reach organizational goals. As mentioned by Greenleaf (1977), servant leaders are not narcissists in nature but they try to act in a collective manner. They are driven by a desire to help others rather than by a desire to gain power (Luthan & Avolio, 2003). Greenleaf’s (1977) most fundamental premise of servant leadership is “*primus inter pares*” (first among equals), which means that servant leaders don’t utilize their legitimate power to pressure the followers to perform tasks but rather persuade them about the meaningfulness of their jobs. They intended to provide backing for the needs of their followers while also leading them. Leading and serving becomes exchangeable.

According to Graham (1991), there are common points between servant leadership and other leadership styles such as transformational and charismatic leadership. The transformational and servant leadership, are both ethical and motivational. According to Smith, Montagno and Kuzmenko (2004), servant leadership creates a “spiritual generative culture” whereas transformational leadership creates an “empowered dynamic culture”. Its culture is linked to leader motivation, and servant leaders are motivated by an egalitarian mentality. This dmotive results in nonphysical spirituality where followers are concerned and triggered with internal development, with the organizational system assisting that progress.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, originates from a variety of motivational sources. The organization’s executives are driven by a feeling of mission to reinvent in order to survive in a difficult external environment. Individual development is crucial, but it must be linked to the organization’s performance (Smith, Montagno & Kuzmenko, 2004).

Some definitional clarity is required to shape an evaluation of this enormous and developing body of knowledge. The fact that tangible goods can vary from electrical services to tourism and hospitality to insurance to sports, is an issue with categorizing services as intangible products. “An act or performance offered by one party to another”, is one of the most generally used meanings. Despite the fact that the process is linked to a physical product, the results are fundamentally immaterial and will not outcome in possession of any of the end products (Lovelock, 2000, p. 3). “Services are intangible activities customized to the individual request of known clients” (Pine, Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 8). They further suggested that “experiences occur whenever a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual”. “While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are memorable” (1999: 11–12). To put it another way, their definition of experience broadens the boundary between commodity and services to include the intangible memory of an experience formed by a customer-organization contact. The service experience is stored in the mind rather than in the hands since it is intangible. Following Pine, Pine and Gilmore (1999), the authors of this paper propose that an intangible service entails all of the factors that come together to create a memorable experience for a consumer at a specific point of time.

A commodity like petroleum is most probably to have certain immaterial characteristics (e.g., “I believe that West Virginia coal burns cleaner than Ohio coal”). Similarly, an intangible service may be connected with some tangible components (e.g., “The comfortable psychiatric couch made

it easier to tell the doctor about my problems”). Nonetheless, there are distinctions between purchasing wheat or corn and receiving mental treatment, attending a rock performance or learning.

Developing distinctions between businesses that produce tangible items and those that produce intangible services is further complicated by the fact that management and organizational distinctions exist even between services. For example, several writers (Bowen, 1990; Lovelock, 1983), suggested that McDonald’s and a movie theater have more in common than McDonald’s and a full service restaurant. Because of the rising use of technology, such as the Internet, some services can now be supplied without the need of personnel to interact with clients during typical transactions.

This minimizes the necessity to pay as much attention to one of the conventional aspects of services research: consumer interaction with a customer support representative. Despite disparities in services, the authors expect that the difference discovered in this paper will apply to the majority of them. Furthermore, looking at managerial variations, between different types of service organizations is outside the scope of this study.

Servant leadership can have a significant and positive impact on the service industry. Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the needs of employees and focuses on serving others rather than a traditional hierarchical approach. In the service industry (Miao, Newman, Schwarz & Xu, 2014), where the quality of service and customer satisfaction is paramount, this leadership style can lead to several benefits:

1. **Employee Satisfaction:** Servant leadership fosters a culture of support and empowerment. When employees feel valued and cared for by their leaders, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and motivated to deliver exceptional service
2. **Improved Customer Service:** Leaders who practice servant leadership set an example of putting the customer first. This attitude permeates the organization and influences employees to go the extra mile in meeting customer needs, resulting in improved customer service and higher customer loyalty
3. **Enhanced Employee Engagement:** Servant leaders encourage open communication, active listening, and collaboration. Employees feel engaged and invested in their work when their ideas are heard and valued, leading to higher levels of commitment and dedication to their roles
4. **Reduced Turnover:** In the service industry, high employee turnover can negatively impact the quality of service. Servant leadership promotes a positive work environment and a sense of belonging, reducing turnover rates as employees are more likely to stay with an organization where they feel supported
5. **Skill Development and Empowerment:** Servant leaders focus on developing the skills and capabilities of their team members. They provide opportunities for growth, training, and mentorship, empowering employees to take on more responsibility and contribute effectively to the organization's success
6. **Increased Innovation:** Servant leadership encourages creativity and innovation by fostering an atmosphere of psychological safety. When employees feel comfortable taking risks and sharing new ideas.
7. **Strong Organizational Culture:** The values of servant leadership, such as empathy, integrity, and humility, will be ingrained in the organizational culture. This positive culture can attract top talent and enhance the overall reputation of the service industry organization

In summary, servant leadership can create a virtuous cycle in the service industry, where employees feel valued and empowered, leading to improved service quality, higher customer satisfaction, and ultimately, better business outcomes. By prioritizing the well-being of employees and customers alike, organizations can create a sustainable competitive advantage in the service sector

3. Methodology

The objective of the study will be discussed in this section in addition to the selection of participants and research design and finally the analysis of the data will be presented.

The foremost aim of the research is to investigate the effect of strategic vision of the servant leadership on the development of service organizations.

A questionnaire was structured based on the literature review and using single scales previous used and validated for our research. Experts' opinion in the service industry were considered to shape the final version of the survey. An introductory letter was attached at the beginning of the questionnaire to highlight the objectives of the survey, and to assure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants and their responses. The questionnaire contained close ended questions with Likert-scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree). Data was transformed to google form and the link was sent via WhatsApp to the sample chosen. Random sampling was utilized in choosing our respondents.

Mixed method was selected as the design method of this research. The questionnaire was sent to be qualitatively analyzed by experts. Whereas, descriptive statistics and ANOVA test were used to analyze the data. The sample for this study was randomly selected amid directors and top managers of Lebanese organizations. A sample of 178 respondents received the survey, where 108 returned. After cleaning the data 101 were considered valid for analysis.

Reliability

To test the internal consistency and reliability of the survey, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was measured. This measure will provide to what extend the items of the study are correlated to each other.

As can be seen in table 1 that all coefficients are greater than 0.7 and thus the scale is considered with high consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Prepared by authors

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
MeanSV	7.1826	1.800	.673	.469	.840
MeanSL	7.3818	1.629	.716	.543	.802
MeanSI	7.2881	1.624	.785	.619	.735

Regression Analysis:

Table 2: Regression analysis, prepared by authors

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				Sig. F Change
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	
1	.670 ^a	.449	.444	.52520	.449	87.982	1	108	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), MeanSV

The value of F is 87.982, which is significant at 5 %; it states that the model is fit. The value of R

(0.670) and the R square (0.449), presented in Table2, infer that 44.9 % of the difference in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables

Analysis of the data:

The dependent variable was tested for normality. The Shapiro-Wilk coefficient was found to be 0.257 which means that the answers were normally distributed thus we can use parametric tests in SPSS. The Q-Q test also backbones the results of normality.

Table 3: prepared by authors (2023)

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
MeanSI	.091	110	.026	.985	110	.257
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

The data was checked for outliers and none was found so we don't need to remove any respondents.

Validation of H1:

Linear regression analysis between the two variables was utilize to analyze the correlation. H1 reveals the impact of strategic vision on the servant leader performance. As Anova is < 0.05, then the hypothesis is valid.

Table 4: prepared by authors (2023)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.260	1	20.260	55.475	.000 ^b
	Residual	39.443	108	.365		
	Total	59.702	109			
a. Dependent Variable: MeanSL						
b. Predictors: (Constant), MeanSV						

Validation H2:

H2 reveals the impact of servant leader performance on the Service organization development. As Anova is < 0.05, then the hypothesis is valid.

Table 5: prepared by authors (2023)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.465	1	28.465	120.115	.000 ^b
	Residual	25.594	108	.237		
	Total	54.060	109			
a. Dependent Variable: MeanSI						
b. Predictors: (Constant), MeanSL						

4. Conclusion:

The objective of the study is to study the impact of the strategic vision of servant leaders on the development of service industries considering servant leader performance as a mediator. After the analysis of the data, we reached a conclusion that the strategic vision will result in better performance of servant leadership according to the significance of the first hypothesis (Anova coefficient = .000^b). The second hypothesis was also significant (Anova coefficient = .000^b) and thus we conclude that the better performance of the servant leader will outcome in development of service organizations. It is with no doubt that in a competitive market and with Globalization, servant leader is a needed style in the leadership of the majority of organizations.

The impact of servant leader's strategic vision on the development of service organizations is momentous. It fosters alignment, employee engagement, customer focus, innovation and sustainability. By combing servant leadership principles, with a clear strategic vision, organizations can create a positive and impactful environment that derives growth and success in the long run.

From a theoretical point of view, the literature on the strategic vision of servant leader is scarce. The choice of service industries is a major contribution of this research, especially with the recession that those industries faced post COVID-19. Moreover, as traditional manufacturing firms increasingly rely on services for revenues, they are realizing the need for understanding the variances between managing tangible products and the overall managing of the production of a service (Gronroos, 2000). When the former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch, openly proposes that his company is currently categorized as a service organization, it is evident that the theoretical and applied distinctions between physical and intangible generating enterprises are becoming increasingly difficult to make.

The conclusions of this research have vastly proven the need of servant leaders in the service industry with high level of strategic vision.

In a highly volatile and competitive market, the proper management of organizations is of great importance. Most service industries are fragile in nature and this requires strategic vision. Organizations are eager to adapt to the changes in the external environments with flexibility and enhancing the managerial skills of their directors. Servant leadership appears to be very suitable for service organizations. Strategic vision in such unpredictable environments is a top priority. The findings of this study will be sent to large number of service industries and follow up on the outcome is monitored.

Despite all the efforts done by the authors, nevertheless, some drawbacks took place due to financial constraints. The authors wished to send the survey to more companies or meet in person for in-depth interviews but this was not an easy task.

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