

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GENDER IN 4 AND 5 STAR HOTELS IN TIJUANA (MEXICO)

Isis Arlene Díaz Carrión
Ma. Cruz Lozano Ramírez
Julio César Montiel Flores
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
diaz.isis@uabc.edu.mx

Women have been a highly representative workforce for the Travel and tourism industry in Mexico (SECTUR-COLMEX, 2011) and hotels are among the most important business in this industry (Dai, Chen y Zhuang, 2016; O’Neill, 2012). Hotel industry represented 9.1 percent of direct Travel & Tourism GDP (INEGI, 2015) and it generates 6.2 percent of employment generated in tourism (INEGI, 2016) in Mexico.

Due to the highest presence of women as labor market, hotels are expected to be women friendly. However, critical studies have pointed out the presence of gender stereotypes (Fernández y Martínez, 2010; Burgess, 2003; Li y Wang, 2001; Chant, 1997), glass ceiling as well as other negative effects (Díaz-Carrión y Kido-Cruz, 2017; Samkangee y Dingani, 2013; OMT y ONU Mujeres, 2010; Díaz-Carrión, Verján-Quiñones y Castrejón-Alonso, 2014; SECTUR-COLMEX, op. Cit.).

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership is introduced by Burns (1978) as well as by Bass & Avolio by the end of past century (Bass, 1997; Bass y Avolio 1994). This style of leaderships promotes closer interactions among leader and subordinates to create an inspirational vision (Bass, 1985; Bass y Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 2013). To promote transformational leadership there are four key elements: 1] Idealized influence, 2] Inspirational motivation, 3] Intellectual stimulation and 4] Individualized consideration. (Bass, 1997; Bass y Avolio, op. Cit.). Transformational leadership is expected to generate new solutions to requiring businesses and their environments in order to adapt them to changing environments (Gumusluogly e Ilsev, 2009; Patiar y Lokman, 2009). Plus transformational leadership also focuses in transforming not only organizations but individuals (Minnett, Yaman y Denizci, 2009).

LEADERSHIP AND GENDER IN HOTELS

Tourism and gender studies are scant (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2015) and this situation also applies to gender and leadership in hotels (Marinakou, 2014); however, some studies have already revisited leadership with gender mainstream. By this way Maxwell (1997:233) uses a qualitative methodology to analyze female general managers in hotels located in Glasgow and Edinburgh; female managers consider themselves to work closer with their team works, to coach and to empower them.

Besides Ng & Pine (2003:93) use a quantitative methodology to analyze Hong Kong hotels. Their findings suggests that female general managers highly appreciate effective communication as a key element for their leadership style, female managers also consider to support their staff in a closer way than their male colleagues.

Additionally, Marinakou (2014:22) found that female general managers delegate more than male general managers, are more patient and kind, develop self-confidence and teach the value of cooperation and teamwork. While Díaz-Carrión y Kido-Cruz (2017:212) found that women leadership are more questioned than their men colleagues in Tijuana's hotels.

METHODOLOGY

Some critical scholars have identified transformational leadership more suitable to female managers; but few have further examined the reasons for that decision. In order to explore it this research uses a qualitative methodology to analyze the reasons that promotes the adoption of transformational leadership among female managers in 4 & 5 Star hotels in Tijuana. Qualitative methodology has been considered more suitable to his kind of studies (Marinakou, op. Cit.), since gender and leadership are both social constructions (Swirskya y Angelonea, 2015; Burgess, 2003). Moreover this kind of methodology also promotes intersectionality (Scholz, 2016; Wilson y Hollinshead, 2015) and more egalitarian societies (Woodward y Woodward, 2015). A total of 27 female managers and 10 male managers were interviewed from november, 2014 to march, 2015. Content analysis was performed using gender, leadership and life cycle as main categories (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2012:194).

TIJUANA

Tijuana is located 32°32'N , 117°3'W (INEGI, 2009:0). This border city has become a popular national tourist destination recently (Ruiz, Martínez y Verján, 2015; Bringas y Toudert, 2016) and has always been important as a Californian destination (Bringas y Toudert, 2016:114).

FINDINGS

Women leadership in Tijuana's hotels is recognized but we also found gender stereotypes related to it. As general managers, women are scant in Tijuana: 3 out of 15 hotels have a woman as a general manager. This is consistent with other findings (Li y Wang, op. Cit.:191; Kattara, op. Cit.:241; Yang, 2011:367).

The presence of women as general managers in hotels is not only limited at the time: *I do not remember... I have been working for a decade in this hotel... so far, the general manager has always been a male* (woman, middle management, chain hotel, civil union with children). In general, even though women have been increasing their participation in hotels during the last decades, they are still underrepresented in this position.

Most of interviewees consider this is due to lack of interest: *women are not interested* (woman, middle management, independent hotel, civil union with child). This perception also appears in other studies (Maxwell, 1997; Ng y Pine, 2003; Marinakou, op. Cit.); unless this is not fully explored in this paper, we consider important to note that, in the case of women, interviewees considered that professional development is just related to professional aspects without considering the impact of personal sphere.

Plus, gender stereotypes generate department or positions considered socially acceptable in Tijuana (Human Resource, Events or Housekeeping) the main reason for that is the high care work rate associated.

Traditional gender stereotypes are recurrent in order to recognize some characteristics that defines transformational leadership like negotiation, teamwork, effective communication and empowerment: *When you have to deal with people... women are more warm people* (woman, middle management, independent hotel, single without children).

Gender stereotypes also impact to transformational leadership where negotiation, teamwork or empowerment is automatically related to motherhood (man, general manager, chain hotel, divorced with children; man, middle management, chain hotel, civil union with children) rather than as well thought-out strategy. We recommend the recognition of the quality of women' work in promoting transformational leadership, as well as the elimination of essentialisms in order to fully generate neutral leadership styles (Medina-Vicent, 2015).

Transformational leadership is more common among women, but some men also prefer this style; however, underpinned reasons to support their choice differ. To women managers, especially those with children, it is essential to rely on their work team to solve care work while avoiding work-family conflict: *If one day I need to get out of the office to... let's suppose I have a medical emergency because my daughter is sick... I trust in my work team to handle my absence... that is the reason I empower them, to manage themselves in the best way if I am not here* (woman, middle management, chain hotel, divorced with children).

In the case of male managers, care work was not relevant to chose transformational leadership style, even in the case of those with children. The amount of care work among women without children and men with children is low, as a result to be transformational leaders could be an effective strategy to enjoy more free time to personal projects.

According to our findings, women promote transformational leadership to avoid conflicts, to foster collaboration and to build partnerships inside their area as well as outside it. To some female managers, this is an important step in the recognition of their leadership: *You do not command, you go with your team work or with other department and explain what must be done so that you get their support, I feel better if I get my team work support* (woman, middle management, independent hotel, single without children). Even if women prefer to negotiate, they do not avoid to command, but it is considered as the last

choice (woman, middle management, independent hotel, civil union with children). On the contrary, their male colleagues consider the exertion of power as something natural and do not hesitate while commanding; women are more talking person and men do not give explanations for everything (men, middle management, independent hotel, divorced with children).

Our study also found the lack of formal spaces to socialise women leadership in Tijuana, the lack of mentoring has been considered important for some critical scholars (Linehan y Walsh, 1999:266; Li y Leung, 2001:193). In addition to this lack of formal spaces there is also a limitations in the case of informal spaces that are highly masculinised: *There are colleagues that go to soccer matches... they socialise out of the hotel, to me it is difficult I either go with them to the match or with my daughter to her match* (woman, middle management, independent hotel, civil union with children).

For future studies we recommend to consider salary and other bonuses as relevant considering gender discrimination and the impact of them in the choice of leadership style. Secondly, we also recommend the inclusion of other categories while defining stratified sampling, this would allow other non-traditional gender categories. Finally we also suggests to replicate the study in other destinations in order to evaluate the importance of care work while choosing a leadership style and the strategies applied by other hotels are trying to empower women leadership.