

From Service To Sustainability: How Servant Leadership Drives Innovation And Competitive Advantage In Tourism Management

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Abstract

This study addresses the sustainability issues in tourism management by focusing on competitive advantage that has emerged as a crucial factor, necessitating leadership approaches to foster both innovation and responsible business practices. However, existing leadership models often fall short in addressing the balance between profitability, environmental responsibility, and social well-being, and thus, there remains a gap in understanding how servant leadership specifically influences competitive advantage and long-term organizational success within the tourism industry. In the backdrop of this gap, the study examines the mechanisms through which servant leadership cultivates an organizational culture that can potentially promote collaboration, ethical decision-making, and continuous improvement. Based on the sustainability-orientated innovation theory and resource-based view, the objective was to provide a novel framework that fundamentally reshapes our understanding of how servant leadership fosters stakeholder engagement, sustainability-orientated innovation, and long-term competitive advantage in tourism enterprises in the Indian context. Empirical evidence was collected from frontline employees and lower-level managers and analysed through R software. The analysis confirmed that servant leadership significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage. In addition, servant leadership significantly enhances stakeholder engagement and sustainability-orientated innovation, conducive to the indirect influence on sustainable competitive advantage. These insights contribute to leadership theory and sustainable tourism management by demonstrating that a service-driven leadership approach is a catalyst for engagement, innovation, and sustainability. The contributions of this study entail practical implications of embedding sustainability within operational and strategic frameworks, leading to improved brand reputation, increased employee and customer satisfaction, and long-term profitability in an eco-conscious market.

Keywords: Resource-Based View, Stakeholder Engagement, Sustainability-Oriented Innovation, Sustainability, Tourism Industry