


# Chapter 7

## Empowering Sustainable Innovation: How Servant Leadership Drives Innovation in India's Tourism Sector

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the link between servant leadership and employee outcomes, focusing on innovative work behavior and workplace thriving, with knowledge sharing as a mediating factor, using social exchange theory. Surveying 359 hotel employees*

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*across Delhi-NCR, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir through a two-wave method, data were analyzed via PLS-SEM using SmartPLS software. The results reveal that servant leadership significantly influences innovative work behavior and thriving, while knowledge sharing directly enhances these outcomes and mediates their relationship with servant leadership. This highlights the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of reciprocity and knowledge exchange to promote well-being and innovation. Organizations should adopt servant leadership practices and encourage knowledge sharing through collaborative tools and incentives. By applying a social exchange perspective, this study advances understanding of leadership's role in driving innovation and employee engagement within India's dynamic hospitality sector.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the current dynamic and competitive environment, businesses face the growing challenge of balancing the necessity for continuous innovation with the critical need to prioritise employee well-being. An effective method for attaining this equilibrium is servant leadership, which focusses on placing the needs of others at the forefront (Greenleaf, 1977). This approach to leadership emphasises the growth of employees, creating a supportive and nurturing workplace, and responding to their needs (Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership is associated with numerous beneficial results, including increased organisational citizenship behaviour, better work performance, and increased employee engagement, achieved through a focus on employee well-being and the development of robust leader-follower relationships (Eva et al., 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

The importance of leadership is highlighted by the unique challenges and opportunities present in India's tourism sector. Tourism acts as a vital driver for economic growth and cultural exchange, making a substantial contribution to India's GDP and job creation. Nonetheless, the sector encounters significant challenges in embracing sustainable methods, making certain that financial benefits do not result in ecological damage or the erosion of cultural heritage. Given the high levels of interaction with consumers, local communities, and ecosystems inherent in tourism, a leadership style that is both forward-thinking and people-oriented is essential. Servant leadership offers a strong framework to tackle these challenges, focusing on employee well-being, collaboration, and ethical decision-making. By empowering employees to thrive and encouraging innovative work behaviors, servant leaders can help tourism organizations achieve sustainable innovation, which is increasingly important in light of global concerns about climate change and resource depletion.

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