


# The role of leadership and emotional intelligence in destination management: A conceptual review

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## Abstract

*This study examines the importance of leaders' emotional intelligence skills in the tourism sector and their impact on both employee performance and destination management. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of leaders to understand and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others and to behave accordingly. In the management of tourism destinations, high levels of emotional intelligence in leaders can have positive effects not only on employee motivation and job satisfaction, but also on the sustainability and competitiveness of the destination. This article discusses the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership within a theoretical framework and discusses the applications of these two concepts in the tourism sector and especially in destination management. By analyzing the research in the literature, the effects of emotional intelligence on leadership and its benefits in the context of destination management are emphasized and practical suggestions are presented in this framework.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Leadership, Tourism, Tourist destination

## 1. Introduction

One of the ways to keep pace with change in today's competitive world is through the emotional competence of managers (Benson et al., 2014). Emotional competence refers to the effective management of emotions (Goleman et al., 2002). Indeed, many studies on this subject emphasize that effectively managed emotions will bring the individual to the forefront in professional relationships (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). At this point, the concept of emotional intelligence, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, has a remarkable meaning.

In the simplest sense, emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to observe one's own and others' emotions, beliefs, and inner worlds, and thus to use the information obtained to guide oneself and others (Barbuto et al., 2014). Today, emotional intelligence is recognized as one of the most important tools necessary for the implementation of leadership strategies (Benson et al., 2014). In this respect, emotional intelligence is important both in daily life and in business life. As a matter of fact, in recent years, it has been observed that many issues related to human resources are associated with emotional intelligence (Wolfe et al., 2014).

An important end of the emotional intelligence and leadership axis is the field of tourism. As a matter of

fact, in service-oriented sectors such as tourism, it is critical for employees to be able to control their emotional states and give the prescribed reactions in customer interaction and ultimately to maintain this whole emotional process in order to prevent any damage to tourism businesses (Türker, 2016). In the same context, in tourism, where the distinction between product and service is difficult, it is very difficult to keep customer and employee interaction on a common denominator, and the elaboration of the concept of leadership in businesses of all types and sizes in this structure, which is highly sensitive to environmental conditions, is also a matter of curiosity (Akin & Sezerel, 2015). As a result, in sensitive sectors such as tourism, which focus on people and where emotions are at the forefront, the context of leadership constitutes an important area of investigation. Therefore, in this study, the issue of emotional intelligence and leadership in tourism was examined from a conceptual perspective, and conclusions and suggestions were presented.

## 2. Basic Components of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various components necessary to understand and effectively manage emotions (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence involves perceiving, accessing, generating, understanding, and

reflectively organizing emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Ghalandari & Yadegari, 2014). This definition emphasizes the importance of emotional knowledge and information processing as key components of emotional intelligence (Fiori et al., 2021). Furthermore, emotional intelligence is characterized by components such as emotional sensitivity, maturity and competence. This enables individuals to skillfully recognize, interpret and manage human behavioral dynamics (Manjunatha & Narasimham, 2018).

### *Emotions*

Emotions are the basic element of the concept of emotional intelligence (Kılıç, 2013). When we approach the concept of emotional intelligence in terms of linguistics, the first component is the concept of "emotion". When we examine the word emotion, it is stated that its root comes from the word "motere" which means "to move" in Latin. It is stated by Goleman that when the suffix "-e" is added to the verb "to move" in Latin, the meaning of the word is to move away and this means that emotion leads to movement (Goleman, 1995).

The word emotion is translated into English as "emotion". In their definition, Salovey and Mayer argued that instead of defining emotion only as perception, it also includes mobilization (Kılıç, 2013). According to the Turkish Language Association (2023), the word emotion means "feeling", "the impression that certain objects, events or individuals arouse in the inner world of human beings", "intuition", "the ability to evaluate objects or events morally and aesthetically" and "a unique spiritual movement and mobility".

When we consider the concept of emotion from a psychological perspective, Budak (2000) defines emotion in the word psychology as "an observable behavioral structure that is the expression of a subjectively experienced emotional state" (Budak, 2000).

Emotions are impulses that make us act. Emotions have two functions. First, emotions provide the energy necessary for taking action. Secondly, emotions enable the display of behaviors that are necessary to provide for one's own needs and that are used to direct oneself and one's environment (Tuğrul, 1999). According to Üstün (1990), the general function of emotions is to harmonize the individual with society and nature. Mcshane and Von Glinow (2005) stated that emotion occurs to create a state of readiness. According to Cooper and Sawaf (2000), emotions are the energy flow that puts the impulses coming from within people into action and the effect they spread to those around them.

The definitions put forward by different researchers in the field of emotional intelligence are in agreement on the point that the individual can make sense of his/her emotions, understand the emotions of others, develop appropriate reactions to them, adapt to the environment, cope with the difficulties he/she encounters, take action to realize the desired actions by taking advantage of the motivating power of emotions, and control the negative emotions that may prevent these actions in the right way (Karabulut, 2012).

### *Intelligence*

Throughout history, ideas about intelligence have been shaped by individual observations, philosophical theories, scientific developments and social values. For this reason, when intelligence is mentioned, mathematical and logical intelligence dimensions have been imagined until today. However, this situation has brought along some difficulties in understanding the concept of intelligence. This is because the concept of intelligence is too comprehensive to be limited to a single field. On the other hand, studies on intelligence from past to present have evaluated intelligence on a single basis. However, later studies have revealed that intelligence consists of a series of many factors (Sulukaya, 2012; Kızıl, 2014).

Many definitions of the concept of intelligence have been put forward from past to present (Sulukaya, 2012: 8). Especially psychologists and educators differ on this issue. According to psychologists, intelligence is a capacity, while according to educators, intelligence is the abilities that turn into performance (Kızıl, 2014).

According to Lewis M. Terman, intelligence is defined as "the ability to think abstractly", according to Davis as "the ability to solve problems by utilizing knowledge", and according to Bergson as "the ability to solve the problems of today's life by utilizing previous experience and knowledge and to adapt to the conditions of life" (Keleş & Kırıl, 2010). According to Wechsler, intelligence is the ability to understand the world, to think and to use resources in the best way when faced with difficulties (Çakar & Arbak, 2004: 26).

### **3. Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence has recently attracted the attention of researchers in explaining human behavior (Bindu et al, 2016; Gunkel et al, 2016; Lu and Kuo, 2016; LaPalme et al, 2016; Türksoy et al, 2015; Barbuto et al, 2014; Benson et al, 2014).

This new intelligence concept, which is defined as "Emotional Intelligence - EI" or "Emotional Quotient - EQ" in English and translated into Turkish as "Emotional Intelligence - EQ", has brought research on both emotion and intelligence to the agenda (Doğan & Şahin, 2007).

In the most basic sense, emotional intelligence is a set of abilities based on processing emotions and information about emotions (Cote et al., 2010: 496).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and insight of emotions, human energy and knowledge as a source of influence. Human emotions are the common denominator of core feelings, instinctual drives and emotional preferences. When trusted and respected, emotional intelligence enables a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of ourselves and those around us (Cooper & Sawaf, 2003).

According to another definition, emotional intelligence is defined as "the ability to make emotional empathy, to see and take into account the subtle differences between individuals' emotions, to recognize and accurately weigh one's own motives and the motives of others, to control emotions, and to respond appropriately to individuals' behaviors and emotions depending on changing life conditions" (Doğan & Demiral, 2007).

According to Yeşilyaprak (2001), emotional intelligence enables us to learn to recognize and evaluate our own and others' emotions, as well as to effectively reflect the information about emotions and the energy of emotions to our daily life and work and to respond to them appropriately.

According to Schilling, D. (2009:25-26), emotional intelligence can be defined as the capacity to perceive, evaluate, respond emotionally to and act on information of an emotional nature. This capacity stems from the emotional mind.

According to Konrad and Hendl (2005:11-15), emotional intelligence is another type of intelligence. This intelligence has five components: Knowing who you are, recognizing your own emotions and knowing how to use them to get healthy results, remaining optimistic when disappointed, empathy, ability and social skills in relationships. Emotional intelligence explains how much people can control their emotions and how they can use them more efficiently.

Goleman defined emotional intelligence as "the ability to understand one's own emotions, to approach others' emotions with empathy, and to regulate emotions in a way that enriches life" (Özdemir & Özdemir, 2007).

Aristotle offers an idea about emotional intelligence with these words: "Anyone can get angry, that is easy. However, getting angry at the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, for the right reason and in the right way, that is not easy" (Aslan & Erkuş, 2008).

#### 4. Development of Emotional Intelligence

It is known that studies on the theory of emotional intelligence have gained momentum since the 19th century. Thorndike is recognized as the person who laid the foundations for the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence with the social intelligence theory he developed (Erdemir, 2013; Chatterjee & Kulakli, 2015). According to Thorndike, intelligence consists of 3 parts: mechanical, abstract and social intelligence. Mechanical intelligence represents the ability to comprehend mechanical systems. Abstract intelligence refers to the ability to understand ideas and symbols. Social intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and manage people (Dirican, 2013). In fact, the acceptance that IQ (Intelligence Quotient) is not the only criterion for success, the increasing importance attached to social sciences and the acceleration of human-oriented approaches are shown as the main reasons for the increasing importance of emotional intelligence (Erdemir, 2013).

The fact that human behaviors do not only emerge on a logical basis was revealed after the subconscious analyses carried out by Freud (Merlevede et al. 2006). In addition, Gardner emphasized the distinction between intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence with his theory of multiple intelligences. With the social intelligence theory he developed, Gardner revealed the importance of one's own social skill level as well as verbal and mathematical intelligence (Goleman, 2011). Gardner's social intelligence also includes the concepts of interpersonal intelligence and personal intelligence (Dirican, 2013). Emotional intelligence started to be used frequently in the literature in the 1980s. The concept of emotional domain was started to be used by Dr. Reuven with Bar-On studies. The basis of Bar-On studies is to determine the factors that lead people to success (Yaylacı, 2008). On the other hand, it can be said that the theory of multiple intelligences developed by Gardner in 1983 constitutes the infrastructure of emotional intelligence. The concept of "Emotional Intelligence", as it is known today, was derived for the first time in 1990 by Mayer and Salovey. Mayer and Salovey (1990) defined emotional intelligence as a sub-unit of social intelligence. The theory of emotional intelligence was popularized by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s (Benson et al., 2014).

#### Models of Emotional Intelligence

The models put forward for emotional intelligence are in two parts. These are the ability model and the mixed model.

The emergence of two different models of emotional intelligence stems from the fact that the ideas specific to the theories underlying the models are based on

different foundations. However, each model has its own measurements (Eröz, 2011).

According to the ability model, which is the first of these models, emotional intelligence consists of a group of abilities. This model emphasizes emotional knowledge and reasoning. Within the scope of the ability model, emotional intelligence is divided into four parts (Eröz, 2011): First part; the person perceives his/her own emotions or the emotions of others. Second part; perceived emotions are evaluated to facilitate thoughts. Third part: the evaluated emotions are analyzed so that the transition from one emotion to another or complex emotions in complex social situations can be understood. Fourth part: one's own emotions or the emotions of others are managed.

The second model, the mixed model, is more popular than the ability model. The mixed model combines emotional intelligence with social skills, personal traits and behaviors and makes claims about the success of this intelligence. This model considers emotional intelligence as a concept that includes not only emotion and intelligence but also motivation, dispositions, traits and personal and social functions in general (Eröz, 2011: 57). To summarize, while emotional intelligence is expressed with the notion of a single ability in the ability model, according to the mixed model, emotional intelligence has a "mixed" structure in which emotional, personal and social abilities interact with each other in order to solve real-life problems (Brown et al, 2006; Cote et al, 2010).

### ***Ability-Based Models of Emotional Intelligence***

#### **Mayer and Salovey's Emotional Intelligence Model**

Mayer and Salovey were interested in the ability area of emotional intelligence within the scope of the emotional intelligence model they developed. At the same time, MEIS (Multidimensional Emotional Intelligence Scale) consisting of 12 ability tests was developed by Mayer and Salovey. Mayer and Salovey saw emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence. According to them, emotional intelligence is the ability to understand emotions. In more detail, according to this model, emotional intelligence is a different form of social intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and control one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others and to use these emotions as a guide in one's own thoughts and behaviors. Therefore, according to this model, an individual who can understand the emotions of others at first and manage them in line with the emotions they perceive at the last stage is considered emotionally talented and intelligent (Oktay, 2013).

## **5. Mixed Models of Emotional Intelligence**

### ***Golemann Model of Emotional Intelligence***

According to Goleman, success in life is achieved through emotional intelligence rather than standard intelligence (IQ). Goleman expresses emotional intelligence with the concepts of providing intrinsic motivation, not deviating from the goal despite negativities, controlling impulses, controlling mood, not allowing problems to demotivate, empathizing and not losing hope. Essentially, Goleman's emotional intelligence model was inspired by Mayer and Salovey. Nevertheless, the two models differ in terms of the way the processes are followed. Accordingly, Mayer and Salovey based on being able to manage emotions at the end of the process realized through emotional intelligence. In Goleman's model, on the other hand, what is desired to be achieved is to be able to manage relationships rather than managing emotions (Goleman, 2000). Accordingly, it can be said that Goleman's model is more externally oriented than Mayer and Salovey's model.

According to Goleman, the sub-dimensions that make up emotional intelligence are accepted as the building blocks of emotional intelligence today.

### ***Cooper and Sawaf's Emotional Intelligence Model***

The relationship between the concept of emotional intelligence and leadership characteristics was first discussed by Cooper and Sawaf. The model developed by Cooper and Sawaf took emotional intelligence out of the discipline of philosophy and put the model they developed into practice. The four dimensions that make up the scope of this model are named as the four cornerstones by the researchers. These dimensions are as follows (Cooper and Sawaf, 2000: 1);

1. Learning Emotions: Building a place of personal effectiveness and trust. In this stage one learns about emotions and tries to control them.
2. Emotional Fitness: By expanding the space of trust built, the ability to listen and manage conflict is achieved.
3. Emotional Depth: Life and work are aligned with goals. A number of ways are suggested to reinforce the goals with feelings of commitment and responsibility.
4. Emotional Alchemy: Resilience to problems and pressures is acquired. Competitiveness improves, creative impulses are strengthened.

### ***Reuven Bar-On's Emotional Intelligence Model***

Bar-On defines emotional intelligence as all non-cognitive elements that play a role in coping with

demands and sanctions from the environment. The Bar-On model is the model in which the first scale to test emotional intelligence was developed. Bar-On's approach to emotional intelligence is explained by success or performance in real life.

According to the Bar-On model, emotional intelligence indicators include elements such as understanding others, listening to them, adapting to change and being optimistic. When explained in more detail, it is seen that the dimensions that make up emotional intelligence within the scope of the Bar-On model are as follows (Oktay, 2013).

1. Personal Awareness: Being aware of one's own inner world and being able to make choices in line with one's own resources.
2. Interpersonal Relationships: Having a sense of empathy and social responsibility, and being able to establish good relationships with others.
3. Adaptation to Conditions and Environment: Coping with the demands and requests from the environment and solving problems under these conditions.
4. Stress Management Dimension: The ability to withstand stress in any environment and to control internal stress.
5. General Mood: Having a positive outlook on life, maintaining a reasonable level of life satisfaction in general.

These five dimensions in the Bar-On model also constitute the five sub-dimensions of the scale consisting of 133 statements used to test emotional intelligence.

### ***Emotional Intelligence and Leadership***

Leadership requires the ability to understand subordinates' emotions. From this point of view, the concept of "emotional capability" has been mentioned since the first years of leadership theories (George, 2000). For example, according to Dasborough (2006), leader behaviors play a role in the emotional reactions of employees. Today, it is a well-known fact that the understanding of employees within the scope of leadership behavior and the ability of leaders to control their own emotions are accepted as one of the factors that constitute effective leadership (Antonakis, 2009). In this regard, George (2000) explained the importance of emotions in leadership behavior. According to George (2000), a leader can be effective if he/she can fulfill the following five dimensions;

1. Establish common goals for the organization.
2. To instill in employees the importance of their work and a sense of appreciation.

3. Ensuring the sustainability of feelings of desire, trust, optimism and harmony within the organization.

4. Promote flexibility in decision making and decision change.

5. Creating an organizational identity.

All these dimensions mentioned above have an aspect based on emotions. Therefore, according to George (2000), the level of emotional intelligence is important in being an effective leader.

In some situations, emotional intelligence may become more important than other types of intelligence. One of the best examples of this situation is high stress conditions where cognitive resources are limited (Salas et al., 1996). Because human interaction and emotional intelligence level follow a directly proportional course. As human relations increase, the need for emotional intelligence in the work environment also increases (Jordan & Troth, 2004; Offermann et al, 2004).

Emotional intelligence is also a determinant of the quality of subordinate-superior relationships (Antonakis, 2009: 252). Zhou and George (2003), as a result of their research, found that emotional intelligence improves leadership skills within the organization.

The impact of cognitive intelligence on leadership tendencies is undeniable. Cognitive intelligence comes to the fore especially in matters that require intellectual prudence (Antonakis, 2009). However, it is seen that cognitive intelligence loses its importance under certain conditions. In this context, as a result of the research conducted by Judge et al. (2004), it was determined that leaders with high levels of cognitive intelligence are successful in working conditions with low stress levels. Therefore, as mentioned before, the importance of emotional intelligence increases for leaders in work environments with high stress levels.

Emotional intelligence also has an impact on leadership tendency. According to Cote et al. (2010), the leadership tendency of employees who are more emotionally intelligent is higher than other employees. Because a person with a high level of emotional intelligence will easily perceive other people's emotional state, goals, attitudes and points of interest. Therefore, the emotionally intelligent employee will have the chance to influence other employees through this information. Therefore, it can be said that emotionally intelligent employees will have stronger leadership tendencies. In organizations where such employees are demotivated, informal groups are more likely to form.

Emotional intelligence consists of skills to understand emotions that are used to facilitate thinking (Chopra & Kanji, 2010). At this point, an individual who uses

emotions to facilitate thinking and understands the consequences of emotions can analyze information in depth. In this way, they can make decisions that will improve group performance. For example, a person who realizes that he/she becomes excessively optimistic when he/she is in a positive emotional state can expect to return to his/her normal mood when making decisions about the group of employees. In this way, the effectiveness of the leader who makes rational decisions about the group increases (Antonakis, 2009).

Individuals with high emotional intelligence contribute to the increase of intellectual skills by using their emotional experiences to understand the external world. For example, a person with a high level of emotional intelligence can identify the problem of a person with a high level of anxiety and develop strategies to combat it. Failure to recognize anxiety will cause distraction and confusion to remain unsolved (Chopra & Kanji, 2010).

According to Goleman (1998), the common characteristic of effective leaders is that they have a high level of emotional intelligence (Chatterjee & Kulakli, 2015). It is possible to come across such statements frequently in the literature (Druskat & Wolff, 2001).

## 6. Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Tourism

### *Emotional Intelligence in Tourism*

Emotional intelligence in tourism is an important factor in the tourism industry, affecting both tourists and service providers. Research emphasizes the importance of integrating emotional intelligence in tourism service agents and tourists (Borges et al., 2021). Tour guides with high emotional intelligence are successful in managing emotional information in stressful situations, problem solving, coping with unexpected events and increasing social interactions in tourism destinations (Al-Okaily et al., 2023). In another similar study, it was revealed that employees with high emotional intelligence in travel agencies performed better even under difficult conditions and showed higher levels of job satisfaction (Hasan, 2022). In this context, embedding emotional intelligence in the tourism sector can improve both the overall tourist experience and employee satisfaction by effectively managing service encounters between service agents and tourists (Prentice, 2020; Prentice, 2019).

Emotional intelligence has a particularly important place in the relationships between tourism sector employees and in all tourism services that directly affect guest experiences (Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012).

While perceived as emotional intelligence in tourism, experiential intelligence is one of the social skills which empowers tourism employees to show compassion and care for customers. It is thus, in this respect, an important factor in recognizing and satisfying the expectations of the guests (Barnes et al., 2020). Such training programs on emotional intelligence within the tourism sector may raise the quality of service by education of personnel with relevant cognitive and emotional competencies (Kallou et al., 2022).

As observed, the demand for emotional intelligence in tourism and hospitality activities shows that there is a need to improve the emotional abilities of the employees offering service (Koç & Boz, 2019). In tourism business, to enhance success and the quality of service, they are urged to recruit staff with emotional intelligence competencies and offer them continuous training to enhance emotional intelligence and emotional work competence. Moreover, the studies of the level of emotional intelligence among hospitality professionals emphasize the need for emotional intelligence in tourism, as Scott-Halsell et al. clarify in their research in 2008.

It is not only utilized in terms of employee and guest relations, but also in the marketing process of the sector. Emotional intelligence is effective not only in post-sales but also during pre-sales processes in the tourism sector (Manna & Smith, 2004). In that sense, the application of emotional intelligence also covers marketing strategies in the tourism sector. Emotional intelligence has particularly lent itself to marketing research through the evaluation of consumer satisfaction with the use of facial recognition and neuromarketing techniques (Srivastava & Bag, 2023).

Emotional intelligence is part and parcel of tourism governing interactions between service providers and tourists at large influencing overall customer experience. If integrated into trainings, recruitment, and service encounters, emotional intelligence would boost service quality in the tourism and hospitality sector. If one acknowledges the existence of emotional intelligence and the effect it has on workers and customers, businesses can create much more positive and satisfying experiences for all whom it touches in tourism.

### *Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Tourism*

The concept of leadership in the tourism sector is a multifaceted concept that is significantly influenced by emotional intelligence. Studies have emphasized the role and importance of emotional intelligence in increasing the effectiveness of leadership in leadership development programs (Sadri (2012). The association of emotional intelligence with transformational leadership in the tourism sector suggests that

employees with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more susceptible to receive leadership training based on influencing themselves. This allows transformational leadership behaviors to be frequently seen in the tourism sector (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010).

Moreover, the emotional intelligence of leaders in the tourism sector explains a significant portion of the variation in leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes, highlighting the importance of leadership success in the sector (Echevarria et al., 2016). In other words, in the tourism context, emotional intelligence plays an important role in shaping leadership styles and behaviors (Hasan, 2022). Emotional intelligence is particularly important for leaders in the tourism industry because it enables them to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, inspire teams, and sustain organizational success through effective relationship management (Hsu et al., 2022). In this sense, emotional intelligence has been identified as a key ingredient in effective leadership that underpins success in leadership roles in the tourism industry and beyond (Higgs, 2003).

The relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness extends beyond individual performance to organizational outcomes. Research has shown that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement, highlighting its role in fostering a positive work environment and workforce engagement (Quang et al., 2015). In addition, emotional intelligence has been identified as a critical factor in enhancing competitive advantage from a resource-based perspective. This suggests that organizations can use emotional intelligence to gain a strategic leadership capacity. (Voola et al., 2004). Thus, the importance of the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership to advance organizational success and maintain competitive advantage in tourism emerges.

Emotional intelligence not only affects leadership effectiveness, but also various aspects of organizational behavior and performance. Studies have shown that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between talent management practices and leadership skills and emphasizes the role of a mediating variable in enhancing leadership ability (Baharin et al., 2023). In the tourism industry, where service quality and customer satisfaction are prioritized, emotional intelligence plays a critical role in shaping leadership practices (Hasan, 2022).

### ***Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Destination Management***

Destination management is a complex process of planning, developing, marketing and managing a tourism destination in a sustainable manner. In this

process, the role of leaders is vital because the success of the destination depends to a large extent on their decision-making, steering and management skills (Moran & Beitsch, 2015). In this context, emotional intelligence stands out as a critical element that increases the effectiveness of destination managers.

Emotional intelligence includes leaders' ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, understand the emotions of others and empathize accordingly. In destination management, these skills enable leaders to make effective decisions in a complex and dynamic environment, communicate well with various stakeholders and successfully manage crisis situations. (Petković, Bradić-Martinović, & Pindžo, 2023). Leaders with high emotional intelligence can build stronger relationships with stakeholders and increase the reputation and attractiveness of the destination.

The tourism sector is vulnerable to crises. Unexpected events such as pandemics, natural disasters or economic fluctuations can threaten the attractiveness and sustainability of a destination. Emotional intelligence helps leaders act with composure in crisis situations, make solution-oriented decisions and communicate effectively with affected stakeholders. (Wittmer & Hopkins, 2022). For example, regaining the trust of tourists after a natural disaster and meeting the needs of local people will be possible thanks to the emotional intelligence skills of leaders.

Destination management requires balancing the expectations of many different stakeholders (locals, tourists, government officials, tourism businesses, etc.). Leaders with high emotional intelligence are better able to build an effective communication bridge between these stakeholders and understand the needs and concerns of each group. This ensures long-term destination sustainability and a fair distribution of the benefits from tourism. (Suwandana, 2019). Tourism destinations need to continuously develop innovative solutions to remain competitive (Azmi, Che Rose, Awang, & Abas, 2023). Leaders with high emotional intelligence can create a work environment that encourages the emergence of innovative ideas. At the same time, these leaders are better able to deal with resistance to change and enable their teams to adopt innovative strategies.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Studies have shown that emotional intelligence positively affects leadership in the tourism sector (David & Ciarrochi, 2005). The fact that the leaders of the sector have high emotional intelligence has a positive impact on the performance of the employees, which naturally enables tourists to receive quality service and have good experiences (Hasan, 2022). In other words, emotional intelligence significantly

influences service encounters in the tourism sector, shaping the interactions between service providers and their customers (PohTheng, 2019). In tourism, emotional intelligence positively affects not only service providers but also tourists' experiences and intentions. There is also a relationship between tourists' emotional intelligence and their travel intentions, suggesting the influence of emotional intelligence on tourist behavior (Ye et al., 2022). It can also influence residents' emotional responses to tourism development, highlighting the broader societal implications of emotional intelligence in the tourism sector (Zhang et al., 2021). In addition to these insights, the concept that encompasses emotional, cultural and experiential intelligence can be referred to as hospitality intelligence as a framework to enhance customer experiences in the tourism sector (Rehman et al., 2022).

Emotional intelligence is associated with various styles of leadership and emphasizes its versatility to guide different leadership approaches within the tourism sector (Tang et al., 2010). It would, therefore, be proper to say that it has positive effects, especially on the transformational leadership style, and the effect plays an important role in the success of the business through its positive effect on the performance of employees (Krisnanda & Surya, 2019). Within the tourism business sector, specifically for tourism managers, emotional intelligence enhancement regarding leaders can raise the engagement and performance of the employees by offering them a proper work culture in tourism businesses; from this aspect, finally, this situation can positively enhance the tourists' experience.

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is one of the most imperative facets for effective leadership in the tourism industry. It relates positively to styles of leadership, organizational outcomes, and employee engagement. Those leaders who have high emotional intelligence and work within the tourism sector are capable of motivating their employees and enabling them to build positive relationships within the organization. Understanding the role of emotional intelligence in leadership development programs, tourism companies can design trainings in this direction and train a new generation of leaders who are equipped to be competitive in the global environment. It proves that EI is a critical factor in achieving success in relation management with tourists. Dimensions such as self-awareness, self-management, motivation, social skills and empathy directly positively affect human communication and long-term relationships with tourists (Sofiyabadi et al., 2012). Similarly, when the literature is examined, it is seen that emotional intelligence positively affects leadership orientation, effective leadership and leadership performance and

emphasizes its impact on leadership outcomes (Muştu & Kaya, 2022).

The current study places great emphasis on emotional intelligence and leadership in destination management. In regard to its findings, this research emphasizes that leaders high in emotional intelligence are well situated in dealing with the intricate nature of tourism destinations. Leaders high in EI would handle all the needs of stakeholders easily, nurture positive relations, and enhance the destination's overall experience.

Emotional intelligence is what helps leadership understand and manage their own and people's emotions, so it forms a very necessary requirement in surmounting the interpersonal challenges in destination management. Emotional intelligence embedded in leadership practices would strengthen the setting and foster cohesion to result in sustainability and success in tourist destinations. It is important that managers of destinations fully understand the value of emotional intelligence in leaders. On the other hand, improvement and development of emotional intelligence among leaders lead to better decision-making, greater stakeholder support, and increased tourist satisfaction. For this reason, training programs in the area of emotional intelligence should be taken into consideration for effective leadership, which is a precondition for long-term competitiveness and success of tourism destinations. Destination managers can take advantage of emotional intelligence to enhance operational efficiency and create a more harmonious and supportive working environment, thus contributing to more sustainable and better-managed tourism destinations.

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