A Study to Determine the Usage of Strategic Management Tools in the Hotel Industry

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Abstract

The competition both in international and national markets created a more complex and changeable market structure. This change forces companies to plan for long-term, examine the activities of rivals and designate dynamic decisions to sustain their lives. Our study focuses on the examination of strategic management tools, which help companies to increase their performance and profitability and analysis of usage level and satisfaction rates of these tools. The survey of this study is conducted on 110 middle and senior level managers of 32 three-star hotels, 32 four-star hotels and 46 five-star hotels that operate in tourism industry in Antalya. Analyses results revealed that customer relationship management (CRM), vision/mission statements and total quality management (TQM) were the most used tools in last five years while CRM, benchmarking and strategic planning are the most used tools currently. Moreover, this study indicated that there were some differences among hotel classification in their preference to use strategic management tools.

Keywords: Strategic Management, Strategic Management Tools, Hotels.

1. Introduction

The impact of increasing competition is not only felt by businesses but also individuals. When companies try to be the best among their rivals and enlarge their customer potentials and, similarly, individuals want to improve themselves and compete with each other to be the best. All these flexible environmental conditions force businesses and individuals to change their classical way of thinking to sustain their lives. Senior executives have to define strategic priorities in order to create some coherence in their strategy making processes, but at the same time they rely on individuals throughout the firm to bring to their attention ideas and opportunities for future market development (Birkinshaw, 2004:469). Therefore, both businesses and individuals should perceive strategic way of thinking as a lifestyle. Having a vision, planning by taking the possibilities into account and pondering the long-term projects are just a few needs which the new age has brought us.

Plans and projects change the classical structure of thinking and provide different, strong, sustainable and long-term returns and form the base of strategic management thought. In this study, we tried to determine the usage rates of...
strategic management tools in past and present time in hotels. We also tried to define the priorities of managers as regards to preferences of strategic management tools. Research population is limited to the hotel enterprises in Antalya which have three, four and five star.

This study will provide a general overview about strategic management and trends on strategic way of thinking from past to the present for hotels.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategic Management

In general it is stated that the word “strategy” is based on two different sources. One of these is the word “stratum” which means way, line or course and the other one is related to the Ancient Greek General Strategos’ name (Eren, 2006: 3). The strategy concept has been used as a military term for centuries. The word “Strategy” is specially used in the field of defense in reference to the name of the Ancient Greek General Strategos and also it is signifies the knowledge and tactics of this general in the field of defense (Aktan, 2009).

The historical development of the strategy concept in the field of management is discussed in the book “Strategy Safari” written by Mintzberg et al. (2005) and they focus on strategic management subject with “Ten Schools of Thought” title. Using the strategy concept in different areas has caused incomprehensibility. Taking a look at the different definitions will be useful for better understanding of the word “strategy”.

According to Mirze and Ülgen (2004) strategy is “set of dynamic decisions designated to reach objectives, by focusing on eventual results in long term which examines the activities of competitors”. Şimşek (2002) defined strategy as a long term plan which is formulated by considering a competitor’s plan. Dönçer (2007: 21) who approaches strategy as a regeneration process defines strategy as “a process of reorganizing the necessary tools and resources, planning the activities, guiding the operations and providing a competitive advantage to determine objectives which are compatible with changing environmental conditions”. Porter (2007) who evaluates strategy from the view of competition defines it as “setting decisions and activities according to level of competition in market and market opportunities which provide a superior position against competitors”. Kırım (2005) who evaluates strategy from the view of costumer defines it as “an ability to see the changes of customer preferences, observing the changes of worker’s work habits and providing goods and services to the customers with different benefits that our rivals can’t provide”. According to Welch (2005) who was a successful manager of General Motors, strategy is taking decisions which are definite and clear about how we will compete against our rivals. He also stated that strategy is not about scuffling with numbers and details but it’s a dynamic game which is life itself.

The business environment of the firm consists of all the external influences that affect its decisions and performance (Grant, 2005:68). Strategy development requires the firm to understand what critical variables are changing, the pace at which these changes occurring, and their likely impact on the firm (Fitzroy and Hulbert, 2005:57).

The concept of strategic management refers to the ability of a firm’s management to properly align itself with the forces driving change in the environment in which it competes. This alignment requires that management invest in competitive methods that yield the greatest overall financial values to the firm (Olsen et al., 1998). Companies in hypercompetitive environments succeed or fail based on their ability to manage the process of moving up the escalation ladders, jumping from advantage to advantage (D’Aveni and Gunther, 1994:215). As a result of this tough competition, we have to decide about which tools will provide us to sustain our profitability and compete against our rivals.

2.2. Strategic Management Tools

Recently, in parallel with changes and developments that world is facing, many new ideas and concepts have emerged in the field of management and organization. Flexible environment and intense competition atmosphere force companies to adopt new concepts, techniques and practices. Various new management techniques have emerged as a
result of this effort. Rigby (2001) made a research named “Management Tools and Techniques” which provides an overview to see what kinds of management tools are used and satisfaction levels of these tools. Strategic management tools which emerged with this strategic view and form the basis of our study are listed as follows:

1. Scenario Planning
2. Vision/Mission Statements
3. Strategic Planning
4. Benchmarking
5. Outsourcing
6. Balanced Scorecard (BSC)
7. Core Competence
8. Supply Chain Management (SCM)
9. Total Quality Management (TQM)
10. BCG Growth-share matrix
11. SWOT Analysis
12. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
13. Strategic Alliances

Table 1: Strategic Management Tools Which Used in the Research

| No. | Tools                           | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Scenario Planning               | Scenarios were developed to investigate the possible future environment for business and educational establishments involved in the requirements discipline, in a 20-25 year timeframe (Bush and Nuseibeh, 2006). |
| 2   | Vision/Mission Statements       | Mission statement is a set of explanation of the work, adopted values, approaches, philosophies to show the different sides of the work against rivals (Mirze and Ülgen, 2004). Vision is a forward visibility, a dream about the future status and success, a photo of potential future of a company (Dinger, 2007). |
| 3   | Strategic Planning              | It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions shaping the nature and direction of an organization’s activities within legal bounds (Bryson, 1988).                                                                 |
| 4   | Benchmarking                    | Comparing a company’s products, services and practices continuously with rivals’ or the leader of the industry’s products, services and practices (Bolat, 2000: 78).                                                                 |
| 5   | Outsourcing                     | Outsourcing is a management strategy focusing on activities which provides competition advantage and to take advantage of the specialized companies to operate business efficiently for activities not in the main areas (Geng, 2004). |
| 6   | BSC                             | Balanced Scorecard transforms an enterprise’s mission and vision into a strategic measurement system and a detailed performance measurement tool which provides a background for strategic management (Kaplan and Norton, 1999). |
| 7   | Core Competence                 | A core competency is about the knowledge on successes or failures in recombining knowledge resources. It not only differentiates among firms but it also differentiates inside a firm amongst several competencies (Banerjee, 2003). |
| 8   | SCM                             | Supply chain management is an integrated system which synchronizes a series of inter-related business processes in order to facilitate information exchange among various businesses entities (e.g. suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, third-party logistics providers and retailers) (Min and Zhou, 2002: 232). |
| 9   | TQM                             | According to Şimşek et al. (2007) total quality management is a management style which concentrates on quality level and based on the participation of all staff in order to achieve long-term customer satisfaction and obtain benefits for their staff and the community. |
| 10  | BCG Growth-share matrix         | In this technique, the strategic business units take their relative market power into account and analyze the growth rate of the sector while decisions are taken to improve a corporate strategy for business units (Mirze and Ülgen, 2004). |
| 11  | SWOT Analysis                   | SWOT Analysis is a technique which aims to provide the harmony between internal capabilities and external opportunities of a company in the process of strategy making (Mintzberg et al., 2005). |
| 12  | CRM                             | CRM helps companies improve the profitability of their interactions with customers, while at the same time; makes the interactions appear friendlier through individualization (Agrawal, 2002). |
| 13  | Strategic Alliances             | A strategic alliance is a partnership based on agreement when two or more businesses come together with their certain assets and capabilities to accomplish specific purposes without a new name or identity (Mirze and Ülgen, 2004). |
Hotel enterprises have an important role in the service industry which enlarges its economic capacity day by day. It is seen that both in Turkish and foreign literature, there are plenty of studies related to management and strategic management concepts with respect to hotel enterprises. But studies about strategic management tools are limited in the literature. There is not an exact limit about strategic management tools which are discussed differently in different sources.

There are some researches about strategic management tools in foreign literature. Clark’s (1997) study emphasizes that usage level and usage purpose of the strategic management tools can differentiate according to country culture and strategic tasks. Gunn and Williams’ (2007) research reveals that organizations should not use single tools in their strategic decision-making processes as different tools might present alternative valid perspectives. Aldehayyat and Anchor’s (2008) research showed that most used techniques by Jordanian companies are financial analysis, PEST or STEP analysis, Porter’s five-forces analysis, and analysis of key (critical) success factors; that the use of strategy tools and techniques relates more to the size of company and less to the age and nature of business. Naaranoja et al.’s (2007) research found out that vision building strategically helped to motivate the employees and also there needs to be concrete and measurable objectives and strategies for every stage of the process.

Turkish literature has limited studies regarding the subject of strategic management tools. More importantly, there is not a specific study about hotel enterprises in the context of strategic management tools. Özalp et al. (2009) study revealed that strategic management tools are used by managers intensively by adopting to their organization structure by considering the literature. They also found out that managers satisfied with the successful results of these tools.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

In this survey we aimed to determine the usage rates of strategic management tools in past and current time in terms of hotels. Also we tried to define the priorities of managers as regards to preferences of strategic management tools which are affected by the economic, social and politic developments.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The survey of this study is conducted on 110 middle and senior managers of 32 three-star hotels, 32 four-star hotels and 46 five-star hotels that operate in tourism industry in Antalya. 451 hotels were contacted via email, post or phone and informed about the research. However 115 hotels accepted to participate in and fill out the research questionnaire. Questionnaires obtained from five hotels should be top managers or middle-level managers in their firms”. Data obtained from those 110 questionnaires were analyzed through the SPSS statistical packet program and usage levels of strategic management tools were tested through percentage analysis. ANOVA analysis is also used to determine the differences about priorities of managers as regards to preferences of strategic management tools according to hotel classification.

3.3. Analyses and Results

To measure the usage level of strategic management tools, usage satisfaction level of strategic management tools and priorities for preferences of strategic management tools scale of Rigby (2009) was used. After a literature research about strategic management tools, 13 popular and common tools are accepted and used in the context of research. However, 18 items were used to determine the priorities for preferences of strategic management tools. The Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.72 which indicates the reliability of scale used in that survey.

The sample consisted of 110 respondents working as middle and senior managers in 3 (%29.1), 4 (29.1) and 5 (41.8) star hotels in Antalya, Turkey. Males accounted for %65.5 of the sample. About half of the sample is between the ages of 36-50. %47.3 of the respondents had manager title, %25.5 had assistant manager and %27.2 had
department manager titles. The average tenure with the current organization was 5 for respondents. In terms of education, %72.7 of the respondents held at least bachelor’s degree.

Table 2 Usage Rates in Last 5 Years According to Hotel Classification

| Strategic Management Tools                  | 3* Hotels % | 4* Hotels % | 5* Hotel % | Total Usage % |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1. CRM                                     | 94          | 89          | 91         | 91            |
| 2. Vision/Mission Statements               | 68          | 88          | 87         | 81            |
| 3. TQM                                     | 70          | 83          | 86         | 80            |
| 4. Benchmarking                            | 72          | 87          | 78         | 79            |
| 5. Strategic Planning                      | 59          | 75          | 87         | 74            |
| 6. Supply Chain Management                 | 75          | 39          | 74         | 63            |
| 7. Core Competence                         | 57          | 63          | 65         | 62            |
| 8. Outsourcing                             | 88          | 38          | 57         | 61            |
| 9. Scenario Planning                       | 56          | 38          | 78         | 57            |
| 10. SWOT Analysis                          | 31          | 50          | 65         | 49            |
| 11. Strategic Alliances                    | 50          | 32          | 57         | 46            |
| 12. Balanced Scorecard                     | 44          | 31          | 26         | 34            |
| 13. BCG Growth-Share Matrix                | -           | -           | -          | -             |

Hotel managements’ preference of strategic management tools differentiates from industry sector because of the human-based structure of the service sector. Strategic management tools’ usage rates in last five years are shown in the table above. CRM is the most used tool for all classes of hotels. Vision and mission statements is the 2nd most used tools for four and five-star hotels when three-star hotels focus on outsourcing. It can be explained that when four and five-star hotels have enough capacity to operate their own basic and non-basic facilities, three-star hotels focus on their core areas and leave other areas to the professionals with respect to cost problems. Four and star hotels also try to protect their brand image with vision/mission statements. Quality is a very important factor for hotels which are responsible to meet the expectations of customers. As a result of this view, total quality management took the 3rd place as the most used tools. Balanced scorecard and BCG Growth-Share Matrix are not well known by hotel managers, so managers are reluctant to use these tools.

Table 3 Present Usage Rates According to Hotel Classification

| Strategic Management Tools                  | 3* Hotels Usage % | 3* Hotels Satisfaction | 4* Hotels Usage % | 4* Hotels Satisfaction | 5* Hotel Usage % | 5* Hotel Satisfaction | Total Usage % | Total Usage Satisfaction |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. CRM                                     | 85                | 4.13                   | 87                | 4.20                   | 94               | 4.05                   | 90            | 4.13                    |
| 2. Benchmarking                            | 75                | 4.00                   | 92                | 4.20                   | 78               | 4.16                   | 81            | 4.12                    |
| 3. Strategic Planning                      | 75                | 3.59                   | 77                | 4.25                   | 84               | 4.24                   | 79            | 4.08                    |
| 4. Vision/Mission Statements               | 79                | 3.87                   | 73                | 4.09                   | 82               | 4.20                   | 79            | 4.07                    |
| 5. TQM                                     | 73                | 3.79                   | 77                | 4.00                   | 82               | 4.10                   | 78            | 3.98                    |
| 6. Supply Chain Management                 | 79                | 3.86                   | 60                | 4.34                   | 76               | 4.11                   | 72            | 4.06                    |
| 7. Core Competence                         | 71                | 4.20                   | 69                | 4.30                   | 71               | 4.00                   | 70            | 4.14                    |
| 8. Outsourcing                             | 83                | 4.22                   | 61                | 4.05                   | 62               | 3.87                   | 70            | 4.03                    |
| 9. SWOT Analysis                           | 50                | 3.63                   | 73                | 4.00                   | 71               | 4.00                   | 65            | 3.92                    |
| 10. Scenario Planning                      | 60                | 3.70                   | 58                | 4.13                   | 72               | 4.23                   | 65            | 4.06                    |
| 11. Strategic Alliances                    | 54                | 2.89                   | 60                | 4.00                   | 61               | 3.74                   | 61            | 3.59                    |
| 12. Balanced Scorecard                     | 48                | 3.44                   | 48                | 3.50                   | 47               | 3.84                   | 48            | 3.57                    |
| 13. BCG Growth-Share Matrix                | -                 | -                      | -                 | -                      | -                | -                      | -             | -                       |

Customer relationship management is on the top by both in the usage and satisfaction rates of the tools. Benchmarking which is seen as a strategic management tool by managers is took the second place in usage rates.
Developing competitive structure of the industry increased the value of benchmarking and also affected the usage rates of this tool. Compared to past years, benchmarking reached the 2nd place from 4th place. Strategic planning which provides a more detailed future plan for companies reached 3rd place from the 5th place. Vision/Mission statements and total quality management still maintain its importance for hotels in terms of image and quality service.

Table 4 Priorities for Preference of Strategic Management Tools

| Priorities of Strategic Management Tools | 3* Hotels | 4* Hotels | 5* Hotels | Total Agree |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Innovative activities are very important for the improvement of our company. | 4.44 | 4.75 | 4.61 | 4.60 |
| Organizational culture is as important as strategy for business success. | 4.25 | 4.88 | 4.48 | 4.53 |
| We consider the possible changes for the future during decision making process. | 4.25 | 4.57 | 4.48 | 4.44 |
| Customer demands and expectations form the basis of our business activities. | 4.25 | 4.88 | 4.18 | 4.40 |
| Our company maintains activities by with awareness of its abilities. | 3.94 | 4.63 | 4.22 | 4.26 |
| When taking long-term decision, senior managers’ ideas are considered primarily. | 4.38 | 4.32 | 4.14 | 4.26 |
| We always carry out our activities by considering the aim to become a leader in the market. Providing quality service is more important than owning a big share in the market for our company. | 4.07 | 4.32 | 4.18 | 4.19 |
| Our company has a powerful structure to perform all of its activities. | 3.75 | 4.38 | 4.14 | 4.10 |
| Employee performance forms the basis of our performance evaluation process. | 3.63 | 3.75 | 4.04 | 3.84 |
| We will pursue sustainability initiatives even if they hurt our profits. | 4.19 | 3.44 | 3.74 | 3.79 |
| We prevented the negative effects of 2009 crisis by pre-anticipating. | 3.00 | 4.00 | 3.92 | 3.68 |
| We share our dreams with customers and employees to have a better image. | 3.13 | 3.57 | 3.22 | 3.30 |
| We take our decisions based on short-term financial returns. | 3.13 | 3.00 | 2.87 | 2.99 |
| Our company isn’t selective for supplying of necessary goods and services. | 2.50 | 2.82 | 2.79 | 2.71 |
| We make our decisions by drawing imaginary tables for the future to reach our aims. | 3.13 | 2.75 | 2.27 | 2.66 |
| Our company can act as an imitator when it’s necessary. | 2.50 | 2.57 | 2.48 | 2.51 |

The results of the analysis show that the most important factor which shapes the preference of strategic management tool is innovative activities (x=4.60) for hotels. Organizational culture (x=4.53) is the second most important factor which provides harmonization between strategic management tools and culture of the organization. Considering possible changes to make decisions (x=4.44) is another important factor for hotel managers when they plan long-term profitability and performance. Costumer demands and expectations (x=4.40) and awareness of its abilities (x=4.26) are also important factors for hotels when deciding which strategic management tool is more useful them.

Table 5 ANOVA Analysis Results

| Hotel Star | Organizational Culture | Sustainability Initiatives | Imaginary Tables | Costumer Demands & Expectations |
|------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 3*         | N                      | X = SS                    | X = SS           | X = SS                         |
| 4*         | 32                     | 4.25 ± .91               | 3.00 ± 1.56      | 3.12 ± 1.43                    |
| 4*         | 32                     | 4.87 ± .33               | 4.00 ± 1.01      | 2.75 ± 1.27                    |
| 5*         | 46                     | 4.47 ± .65               | 3.91 ± 1.02      | 2.62 ± 1.27                    |
| ANOVA Analysis | p = 0.001            | p = 0.001                | p = 0.013        | p = 0.000                      |
| Hotel Star | N                      | X = SS                    | X = SS           | X = SS                         |
| 3*         | 32                     | 4.06 ± .98               | 3.75 ± .67       | 3.93 ± .75                     |
| 4*         | 32                     | 4.25 ± 1.21              | 4.37 ± .70       | 4.62 ± .60                     |
|            |                        |                           |                  | 3.43 ± 1.38                     |
According to the results of ANOVA analysis, there are differences between the priorities for preference of strategic management tools and hotel classification. When four star hotels consider organizational culture, customer demands and expectations strongly, three and five star hotels consider them as well, but not as strong as four star hotels. Sustainability initiatives are also important factors for four and five star hotels except 3 star hotels. When idea of drawing imaginary tables for the future is not supported by five star hotels, three star hotels respond as undecided. A powerful structure to operate all kind of activities by itself, providing quality service for its customers and awareness of its abilities are very important factors for four star hotels. Outsourcing is also considered as an important factor for three star hotels compared to four star hotels.

### 4. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the usage rates of strategic management tools according to the past and present situations of the hotels. Furthermore, this study focused on the priorities of the hotels when they preferred which tool was more useful and profitable for their activities. This study indicated that hotels, which were trying to increase their profitability and customer potential in past years, used tools which are based on the customer satisfaction like CRM, Vision/Mission Statements and TQM. After the structure of the competition has changed and escalated, hotels changed the tools they were using to compete against their rivals. Focusing on customer expectations became more necessary when they have lots of alternative options about where they can spend their money. Accordingly CRM still remained in the first place in the current position as the most used tools. Comparing our activities with rivals’, supporting decision making process with strategic motives and planning not only long-term but strategically are some factors that companies should consider. Benchmarking ranked the 2nd place and Strategic Planning ranked the 3rd place in current position as most used tools. A surprising result is that Core Competence outshines with satisfaction level compared to other tools and ranked the 1st place.

Innovative activities, organizational culture and considering possible changes for the future are the most important factors for hotel managers about preferring tools. Following new technologies to improve communication, harmonizing tools with organizational culture and observing external environment changes help companies to compete against their rivals.

However, this survey is conducted on three, four and five star hotels of Antalya, Turkey. It is recommended that further researches can be conducted on city hotels, and also in different countries for the generalization of findings.

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