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### **A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON STRATEGIC THINKING FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF HOTEL MANAGERS**

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#### **EXTENSIVE SUMMARY**

**Aim:** Increasingly competitive conditions in hotel businesses have led business managers to resist these conditions and to strategic thinking. Strategic thinking is defined as a process that finds alternative ways to compete and provide value to customers, and as a glue that holds many systems and initiatives together in a company. In this research, it was aimed to examine senior managers' of 4 and 5 star hotel enterprises operating in Istanbul (around Ataturk Airport) views on the strategic thinking.

**Method:** Qualitative research is designed to achieve the purpose of the research. A heuristic approach has been adopted in the research. Using the qualitative research method, the subjective and unconstrained perspectives of the hotel managers and their perspectives on strategic thinking were determined. Interview technique was used in order to reach the senior managers' points of view of strategic thinking in the research. The data of the study were obtained by interviewing with the hotel business managers. In the interview form, 9 open-ended questions were asked to the managers, including strategic thinking. In the process of collecting the data, 11 managers from 8 hotels operating around Ataturk Airport were interviewed. Interviews were held between 12.12.2016 and 28.12.2016 when the participants were available. During the interviews, notes were taken and the views of the managers were recorded. Descriptive analysis technique was used in the analysis of the obtained qualitative data. The framework that required for descriptive analysis of data was generated based on the questions on the interview form.

**Results:** The results of the study show that hotel management managers' strategic thinking perspectives can be evaluated in 5 dimensions, including the scope of strategic thinking, strategic thinking and organizational structure relationship, strategic thinking and strategic planning comparison, strategic thinking and competitive pressures and change and timing of strategies. Results of the research showed that according to the senior managers of hotel businesses, strategic thinking includes being open to changes, being innovative, using initiative, protecting the present situation, taking risks, benefiting from crises, being able to act flexibly, retreating when needed, multitasking managerial issues and having vision. For strategic thinking, organizational

structure needs to be constantly controlled. Weaknesses in organizational structure negatively affect strategic thinking. At this point, the organizational structure in the hotel business is variable, which also negatively affects strategic thinking has emerged as a result.

According to interviewed hotel managers, planning is indispensable, but according to some managers views, planning is not a suitable approach for the variable nature of tourism sector. However, planning and thinking are two indispensable approaches and complement each other. On the other hand, it is understood from the opinions of hotel managers that competition is at the center of strategic thinking. It is not possible to be successful for the strategic approach adopted without consideration competitors. Hotel managers stated that along with the fact that they have their own forms of movement, they also observed the situation of the competitors and compared their own moves and attitudes of the opponents. This situation show itself especially in price, brand, advertising and quality studies. Finally, it is understood that the timing of the strategy in the tourism sector is not be predictable with regard to the timing of the changes and strategies, that the changes are evolutionary, and that the strategic thinking approach has been problematic for hotel managers in terms of timing due to the variable sector conditions.