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WHAT ARE THE COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR FIVE-STAR HOTELS' PERFORMANCE?

BEŞ YILDIZLI OTELLERİN EKOLOJİK REKABET STRATEJİLERİ VE PERFORMANSLARINA YANSIYAN UYGULAMALARI NELERDİR?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of competitive environmental strategies on five-star hotels' performance in the Turkish hospitality sector from Antalya. The question defined for this research considers which dimensions of competitive environmental strategies are related to the five-star hotel's performance. The research question was pursued through in depth interviews with 9 quality managers of green star certified hotels. Data obtained from the interviews, observations and documents were analysed using NV software. The findings show that both cost and differentiation environmental strategies influence five-star hotels' performance, namely water and energy management, eco-branding and environmental education implications are conducive in achieving a performance above average.

Key Words: Competitive Strategies, Environmentally-Conscious Business, Hotel Performance, Five-Star Hotels.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Antalya'da faaliyet gösteren beş yıldızlı otellerin ekolojik rekabet stratejilerinin performansa yansıyan etkilerini araştırmaktır. Bu araştırma için belirlenen soru beş yıldızlı otellerin performansı ile ilişkili ekolojik rekabet strateji boyutları hakkındadır. Araştırma sorusu 9 adet beş yıldızlı otelin kalite yöneticileri ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılarak sorgulanmıştır. Görüşme, gözlem ve dokümanlardan elde edilen veriler NVIVO programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular hem ekolojik maliyet stratejisi hem de ekolojik farklılaşma stratejisinin beş yıldızlı otellerin performansını etkilediğini göstermiştir. Bir başka ifade ile beş yıldızlı otellerin su ve enerji yönetimi, ekolojik-markalaşma ve ekolojik eğitim uygulamaları ile ortalama üzerinde bir performansa ulaştığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rekabet Stratejileri, Çevreye Duyarlı İşletmecilik, Otel Performansı, Beş Yıldızlı Oteller.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, environmental pollution caused by enterprises has increased in terms of both production and consumption of products and services (Sarkis and Zhu, 2018). In response to global ecological problems, a growing number of firms are involved in eco-friendly activities in order to enhance their competitive advantage and their financial positions (Leonidou et al., 2016). In addition,

the ecological management approach, which is highlighted as a solution in scientific studies, has been developed on the basis that companies reorganize their strategies according to ecological variables through an integrated effort. This has led firms to focus on activities that would provide a balance between environmental and economic sustainability. In this way, through environmentally friendly strategies firms can save on operational costs, reduce the use of energy resources, minimize pollution, meet the needs of customers who have an awareness of ecology and increase their reputation. Nowadays, environmentally friendly practices have become a tool not only for ecological sustainability but for firms competitive advantage too (Delmas et al., 2011).

In recent years, hotel business has been providing eco-efficiency with various ecological activities and achieving over average performance. For example numerous energy saving systems such as sensor lighting or the use of fluorescent light bulbs are used (Sloan, 2013: 7). In addition, water saving options include the use of low-flow shower head and the use of grey water for other purposes such as garden, toilet and washing floors (Chien, 2017: 15). Because of the unpredictable and rapidly changing environment, the rapid development of new technology and changing customer characteristics, hotel business has to rethink their strategies for competitiveness (Tajeddini, 2010: 229). As a matter of fact, current researchers showed that competitive advantage could be achieved with environmental strategies and that hotels have adopted new ecological methods in their daily activities (Fraj et al., 2015; Durmuş-Özdemir, 2018). For this reason, the hotel management has been able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the light of long-term proactive strategies by reviewing the strategies for the protection of natural resources used (Aragón-Correa and Sharma, 2003: 71). Environmental competitive strategies refer to low cost, differentiation, or hybrid strategies and have the power to influence the firms' performance (Walsh and Dodds, 2017: 682). In this way the research aim to find out what kind of environmental competitive strategies hotel business adopt in order to sustain their performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Environmental Management Practices and Competitive Advantage

Recent strategic management studies show that firms are developing environmental management practices to sustain their competitive advantage and performance (Marchi, 2013; Molina-Azorin et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016; Famiyeh et al., 2018; Arda et al., 2019). The ecological outlook of firms can create a competitive advantage at local and global levels by adding value to products and services, creating new opportunities and conducting sustainable business activities (Atkin vd., 2012). Some scholars have argued that environmental practices decrease operational costs (Hasan, 2013; Famiyeh et al., 2018), others observed that differentiation is a prominent reason for the application of environmental management practices (Lee et al., 2010; Han and Kim, 2010; Walsh and Dodds, 2017).

In former management studies ecology has been perceived as a limit and / or extra cost for firms' operations, recently the additional costs generated by environmental regulations have been considered as cost savings in terms of more efficient use of natural inputs (Porte and Van der Linde, 1995: 122). Decreasing in costs is explained by the adoption of environmental practices that focus on firms' production processes (Hart, 1995: 1008). In this way environmental practices aim to reduce production costs by increasing the efficiency of production processes, reducing input and waste disposal costs (Hart, 1995; Shrivastava, 1995). For example, environmental activities can increase efficiency and decrease waste for both the company and the ecological environment. Christmann (2000: 667) observed a positive relationship between environmental practices and cost advantage and suggests that the higher the level of firms' innovation for pollution prevention technologies, the greater the cost advantage of environmental management practices is.

Reinhardt (1998: 46) emphasized the role of ecological differentiation in achieving competitive advantage and / or mitigating risks. The differentiation advantage comes from the green practices of environmental management, which focusses on product characteristics and market share. A firm can differentiate from competitors when it produces products with more ecological benefits or with less environmental costs than similar products (Reinhardt, 1998: 46). Depending on the author, the ecological differentiation can be attributed to higher payment and demand for market share. High payment explains consumers' willingness to pay more for products with more ecological value. Consumers agree to pay more than the perceived value to contribute to the environment. In this way,

firms will need to be able to gain market share, so ecological differentiation can be a tool to improve the firm's performance. Ecological product-oriented activities can be exemplified by redesigning packaging and products in a way that does not harm the environment and the development of new green products (Christman, 2000: 664). For example, Ekawati (2016: 2668) reported that there is a direct impact on the competitive advantage of eco innovation in the new spa products, that are produced in accordance with environmental protection rules.

2.2. Environmental Competitive Strategies

In 1980, Michael Porter defined cost leadership and differentiation strategies as competitive strategies. Depending on Porter (1980), the firms' competitive advantage is achieved through the efficient use of resources and by selling products or services at the lowest cost in the sector. On the other hand, a firm uses differentiation strategy to build unique products or services (Porter, 1980). On the basis of Porter's (1980) competitive advantage model, Orsato (2006) defined four types of environmental competitive strategies that are related to competitiveness and focus. The model in Figure 1 combines competitive strategies in an environmental context considering the competitive advantage and competitive focus.

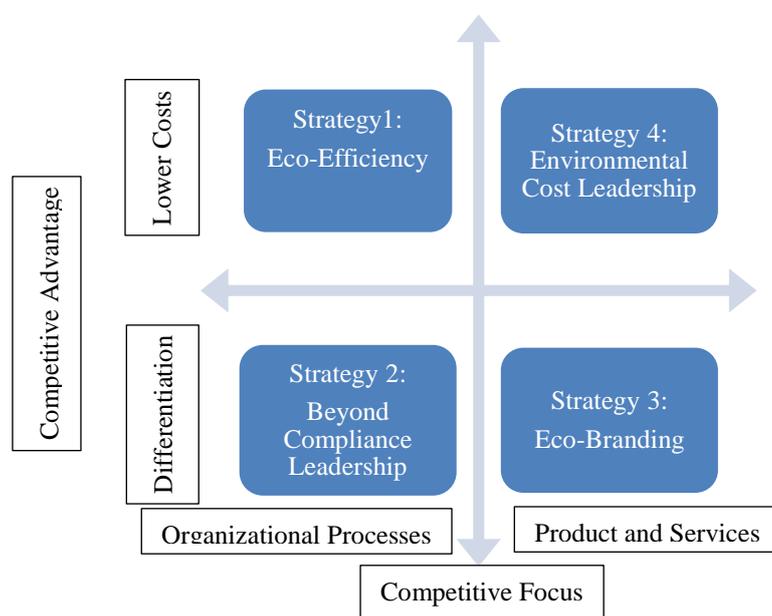


Figure 1. Generic Environmental Competitive Strategies

Resource: Orsato, 2006: 131

According to Orsato (2006), the eco-efficiency strategy is a direct result of sustainability. This strategy includes activities that reduce resource and energy consumption, minimize waste production, and provide economic gains and low costs. Generating energy from renewable sources, using less paper or low-energy computers can be an example of eco-efficiency (Christmann, 200: 675). Through increasing productivity by minimizing resource consumption, waste and pollution, eco-efficiency is among the strategies that businesses take into account to improve both competitiveness and environmental performance (Kabongo and Boiral, 2017: 959-960). Another strategy in the matrix is beyond compliance leadership. According to this strategy, firms, not just as a requirement (for example, having an environmental management system certificate) but are willing to spend money on environmental improvements (Orsato, 2006: 133-134). Benn (2006: 159) states that the transition to this strategy requires some cultural changes and attitudes. This strategy bases on the competitive focus and organizational process, and firms prefer to apply differentiation in organizational processes with this strategy. In order to increase the opportunities for differentiation in terms of environmental products and services, the application of eco-branding strategy is frequently found among firms (Orsato, 2006: 134). Firms can offer products with more environmental benefits than comparable products, or can differentiate environmentally products with fewer costs. The changes in products or production process generally increase the operating costs, but they enable the firms to acquire additional market share by filling the green market (Reinhardt, 1998: 46). In this context, eco-branding

is defined as a strategy that firms try to get rid of its competitors by offering environmentally friendly products and services.

The final strategy of the matrix is the environmental cost leadership strategy, that is realized with more radical innovations at lower operational costs (Orsato, 2006: 135). Marchi (2013) refers to this strategy, exemplifying a new line of products, for example the new "Econyl" yarn was used in an enterprise to reduce end-of-life pollution by using raw materials. In summary, environmental competitive strategies can create economic benefits associated with both business strategy and market strategy, such as reducing production costs, improving the competitive position, and entering new markets.

2.3.Environmental Competitive Strategies of Hotel Businesses

In recent years, the concept of environmental strategies has been accepted by more and more firms and this concept has been used as one of the driving forces of competitiveness (Jones, 2016: 41). In the hospitality sector, with various ecological practices of hotels provide eco-efficiency and achieve a performance above average (Rahman et al., 2012; Akdağa, 2014; Koç, 2014; Molina-Azorin et al., 2015; Walsh and Dodds, 2017). With the rapid development of new technologies in the changing and unpredictable global environment and changing customer characteristics, hotel business has begun to rethink their competitive strategies (Tajeddini, 2010: 229). Findings from the hospitality industry (López-Gamero et al., 2011; Pereira-Moliner et al., 2015; Leonidou et al., 2015; Walsh and Dodds, 2017) show that environmental-friendly hotels can both save cost and improve their brand image. According to Walsh and Dodds (2017: 682), hotels can achieve competitive advantage with environmentally sustainable low cost, differentiation or hybrid strategies. In particular, the low cost approach seems to have a substantial likelihood of accomplishing implementation of environmentally friendly activities, as the gains result in a measurable financial benefit (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Sharma, 2007; Yusof and Jamaludin, 2013). Hsieh (2012: 113) has found that hotel business increases their efficiency and contributes to ecological sustainability with low cost operational activities, like efficiently use of energy, water, waste management and eco-friendly supplies.

Differentiation strategies that have a tendency to meet the stakeholders' expectations, can increase hotels' image in the sector (Punitha and Rasdi, 2013). Miles and Covin (2000) state that the reputation of a firm depends on environmental differentiation strategy. Providing environmental-friendly products/services also affects the intention of tourists to visit the hotel (Lee et al., 2010). For example, tourists who are informed about organic products may like to stay in the hotel because of their contribution to ecological sustainability (Han and Kim, 2010). In the highly competitive hotel sector, hotels follow differentiation strategies using different technologies to meet the wide range of customers and to provide better services. In this way, hotels can improve their performance with research and development facilities and technological activities. According to Vatan and Poyraz (2016: 27), the easiest thing hotels can do for their success is to make environmentally friendly innovations. In summary, environmental-friendly activities emerge as an important factor in terms of hotel competitiveness, in other words hotel business should develop environmental competitive strategies to be successful and attain a performance above average (Walsh and Dodds, 2017; Durmuş-Özdemir, 2018: 38).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was examined by 5-Star hotels in Antalya that have the "Environmentally Friendly Accommodation Establishment" certificate. The semi-structured interview questions were the basic data collection tools of the study. In the qualitative data collection process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the quality manager of 9 hotels selected by random sampling. The data collection process of the research consisted of two stages. In the first stage, 6 quality managers were interviewed between October 2018 and December 2018, and in the second one 3 quality managers were interviewed between December 2018 and January 2019. In the first stage of the data collection process was used data from Mihaela Podubnii's (2019) master's thesis "Analysis of Environmental Competitive Strategies and Dynamic Capabilities of Hotel Businesses in Creating Competitive Advantage". In the second stage of the research process, the authors of the current study included 3 more hotels. In the analysis of qualitative data, NVIVO12 program was used in the analysis of data. The semi-structured interview question form consists of three parts. First part contains some relevant information about

environmental friendly activities of the hotels, second part refers to the dimensions of competitive strategies and the last part contains questions about firm performance.

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained from the research are summarized by making direct quotations from the opinions of the managers who participated in the research according to the determined themes. When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that 95% of the managers who participated in the research stated that they carried out the applications related to water and energy management in their hotels. The same manager group stated that they achieved cost advantages in their activities with ecological approaches related to water and energy management. In addition, 74% of managers stated that they reduced the operating costs for waste management. 16.6% of managers stated that investments to be made in radical technologies for ecological activities would reduce operational costs.

Table 1. Environmental Cost Strategies and Reflections on Performance

Themes (%)	Expressions	Reflections on Performance
Water and Energy Management (95%)	<p>Y5: <i>With environmental-friendly approaches we are able to reduce our costs considerably. Unlike our competitors, we make money and protect nature. For example, air conditioners in our rooms are compatible with both the outside door and the balcony door: the air conditioner is activated according to the doors. In other words, air conditioners are in the form of central systems, all energy saving.</i></p> <p>Y3: <i>We reflect environmental-friendly practices in our operational strategies. The common problem of today's firms is to protect the ecology while reducing costs. The fact that you are more environmentally friendly may cause you to reduce costs. For example, we collect rainwater with certain systems. Then we use it for irrigation purposes. For landscaping, we reduce our cost of irrigation, carry out the reuse and also give what nature has back to nature.</i></p> <p>Y8: <i>The use of electricity is at the top of today's high costs. So it's pretty precious. The consumer wants to use it in an unlimited manner because s/he is on vacation. In order to attain this balance, we make practices that reduce costs and make consumers happy and at the same time protect nature. For example, we produce electricity in our tri-generation system, which is a cost advantage for us. For instance, our vehicles are used to carry our customers to other buildings in the facility.</i></p> <p>Y5: <i>We operate with our solar water systems. After all, this is Antalya. It is possible to benefit from solar energy at zero cost every season.</i></p> <p>Y6: <i>Essentially, one of the highest reasons for getting the 50001 energy management system is to save energy! We continuously monitor our energy consumption. If there is any deviation, we do the root analysis of this in our consumption! Go to the center of the problem with root analysis. Because there is a global crisis and we do not want to reduce our market share, nor do we want to give up our current activities. We automatically become environmentally conscious with controlled applications in energy consumption.</i></p> <p>Y2: <i>With water and energy savings, we reduce costs for environmentally sensitive applications. For example, we leave the duvet cover card in the rooms and it is enough to use this card when you want it to be washed! Normally while you can replace the bed sheets every day, you can change it for a room maybe twice a week! It also automatically reduces the use of chemicals, water and energy consumption!</i></p> <p>Y9: <i>Water is an important resource. It is both expensive and difficult to find. For this reason, all our faucets and shower faucets and our siphons in our facility are designed for saving system. Batteries spend a maximum of 6 liters of water per minute with a special system. Our siphons are 6 liters and below. We can reuse all wastewater coming out of the rooms with the treatment system called biopart. Water that is treated in an efficient rainwater quality is used for irrigation purposes. Thus, we reduce our annual water consumption and have a costly attitude.</i></p>	Cost Advantage
Waste Management (74%)	<p>Y8: <i>We collect waste electronic tools and equipment in particular. For this we have training panels in our facility. We have taken the task of using these panels for information purpose. We have work that produces service intertwined with nature. The continuity of this work is possible with the existence of ecology. For example, we have to inform our customer and employee that a battery cannot be integrated with nature. Otherwise, in the long run, we are the one who will take the cost burden due to ecological damage.</i></p> <p>Y7: <i>We have various activities regarding waste management. The priority is to preserve nature. Then we also control our costs. For example, we have significantly reduced paper consumption on site. In the first stage, we carry out our goods acceptance process with electronic systems instead of paper. In another application, we put as much paper napkins as the number of customers in our restaurants. Our customer can take paper napkins from the buffet when needed. I would like to point out that we have not encountered any problems in these applications and at the same time we have also reduced our costs.</i></p> <p>Y3: <i>Organic waste, packaging waste, contaminated waste, hazardous waste! They all have an ecological significance. Therefore, we store them all separately. We then send them to the recycling or re-use firms over the document. We declare these to the Ministry of Environment at the end of the year. Thus, we provide a national contribution.</i></p> <p>Y2: <i>We pay special attention to beverage waste in service delivery to our customers. Because we work with the all-inclusive system. This gives our customers unlimited access to the right to arbitrary consumption, drinks cannot be fully consumed. For this reason, we prefer devices (such as kegs) or equipment for beverage with a great amount of volume. Thus, we make compulsory consumption with glass. Or we do not provide drinks anywhere as a bottle! We do not provide in boxes! We're giving it from the keg! It is at the same time economically more advantageous and less waste. Ecologically more advantageous! By offering the same quality product in a different way, we protect both the ecology and the costs.</i></p> <p>Y4: <i>From the golf course, we are seriously identifying grass wastes. It could be used as compost. This will reduce our transaction costs. What is important is to protect the environment while minimizing the costs reflected in the activities</i></p>	Environmental Performance and Cost Advantage

Investments in Radical Technologies (16,6%)	<p>Y6: We have a technology investment with nature: cylinder ironing. Even when you want to iron a palm-sized handkerchief, this iron provides as much energy as the size of the handkerchief. One thing we must mention here is the fact that we did not make this investment for ecological contribution. We did it because it reduced costs. But then we discovered that this investment provided an ecological benefit.</p> <p>Y5: We use waste oil filtration technology in our kitchens. We made a considerable investment. But our initial investment was to reduce the oil use rate. Then we realized that we made an investment in ecology. In fact, it has also reduced our costs.</p> <p>Y1: Now we have started a project in the region, and we are the first that try it. The project is about a technological transfer, that is to say, it shows the calculation of buffet waste products by technology, how much waste we get and in which areas we get them and what we should to do in order minimize it. We will be the first in applying it!</p>	Cost Advantage
Government Support (33,3%)	<p>Y3: We are able to get tax cuts according to energy usage rates. This type of tax breaks exclusive to the accommodation sector also provides ecological protection. But we make serious gains.</p> <p>Y4: Green Star certificate improves both service quality and economic advantages: because we have to make regular waste, water and energy management in our facility. For example, if there is leakage in water, it appears in regular inspections carried out every year. Thus, we reduce our costs by carrying out a legal practice that is friendly with ecology.</p> <p>Y5: We are working in a systematic way about ecology. Green Star certificate can be very helpful in this process. As the certificate is a quality certificate, we provide the competitive advantage with minimal costs.</p> <p>Y4: Because we work with Green Stars, we are making various applications within our hotel. In the first years where we received a green star certificate, we couldn't realize that these applications reduced our operational costs. When we integrated some of the applications forced by the document with our current operational processes, we started to save more. For example, one of the criteria of the Green Star Certificate is to reduce the chemical wastes used in washing the laundry. While we were doing this through legal obligations, we were also saving a bit of resources with less detergent consumption.</p>	Cost Advantage

When Table 2 is examined, 92% of the managers participating in the research emphasized the importance of cooperation with the stakeholders and ecological education in the activities aimed at protecting ecology and it was determined that these activities were applied in the hotels and increased customer satisfaction. In addition, 86% of the managers stated that they realized various social responsibility activities in order to create ecological brand, as well as increasing the corporate image through various certification processes.

Table 2. Environmental Differentiation Strategies and Reflections on Performance

Themes (%)	Expressions	Reflections on Performance
Environmental education + Environmental cooperation with stakeholders (92%)	<p>Y4: Today, hotels that are sensitive to ecology are preferred. Because today's consumer profile has changed. In other words, there is a sensitive consumer group who thinks that an environmental-friendly business is sensitive to human being. Therefore, we apply ecological training activities with our customers. For example, our customers can join in the production process in our land where we grow organic crops: in this process, we emphasize the importance of organic agriculture to them, we also offer cookery training with organic products, and also we are having a friendly process with ecology. In the following season, our same customers can even choose us to see the crops they have planted. The choice also brings customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Y6: In our facility there is lily of the sand that is running out of genes. As we are in a natural habitat environment we have to share what we've learned from scientists, or if we don't provide training, we may have even prepared the end of a gene resource. Because we protect sand lily in a special area and surround it. And we're putting informative signs into that area. When we realized that the signs weren't enough this year, we first put informative cards in the room about sand lilies, and then we did activities with themes describing the importance of sand lilies. In fact, together with our employees, we announced the importance of our lily of the day with banners. Positive opinions of our customers participated in this event both affected the satisfaction level and increased our sales. We gave education while protecting the ecology. We also made a difference in education.</p> <p>Y2: We turned off the light for a minute on Earth Day. Our aim was to avoid the consumption of electricity and thus to support the conservation of ecology. It worked. We were in a position to follow the satisfaction of our guests who shared this activity on social media. Of course, before this event, we informed our employees and customers. We gave them some kind of training. Within the scope of the training, we talked about the ecology and the future damaged due to electricity consumption in the last 50 years. We created a difference with this application.</p> <p>Y1: We have hotel information catalogs in guest room. There are all kinds of information about the hotel in the catalog. But more importantly, there is information to preserve the ecology. For example, there is information about energy saving, waste sorting and conservation of biological life. We also conduct interactive training to protect ecology within the facility. Because we want everyone, who enters the order of the hotel, to care about ecology. For this reason, we start our activities within the context of environmental awareness in the mini club process.</p> <p>Y5: We are doing joint work with the municipality on environmental awareness. The support of the local government, for example, in the process of collecting oil, waste batteries, waste food, encourages us.</p>	Satisfaction
Green Suppliers (33,3%)	<p>Y4: Most of the time, we ensure that the products we supply are labeled environmentally.</p> <p>Y2: We buy our products at local sales points. We support regional development, reduce logistics costs and reduce carbon emissions. In fact, the carbon footprint is very important to us. We do fundamental calculations for this. For example, we have a goal to complete the procurement process for a maximum of 110 kilometers. Without doubt, we cannot achieve our goal in some products, but at least we get a goal.</p>	Environmental Performance

Y6: *In recent years, environmental awards are strengthening our brand. Because even if you do not know us when we take the certificates and share them on our web page or in social media, you can be impressed.*

For example, the fact that we have Travel Life has impressed our European guests.

Y5: *The majority of the guests are now coming to the hotels through agents via the internet. In this process, they investigate whether you are doing environmental-friendly activities within the scope of social responsibility. If you have already become a brand in this matter, they prefer again without thinking. No doubt your performance is also affected.*

Y2: *We share all activities aimed at protecting ecology through social media tools. Because our image is affected.*

Y8: *Our hotel is environmental-friendly and has created a brand in this direction. For example, we have a cat house in our hotel. Thanks to the cat house our brand became stronger. Our image increased. There is the idea that those protecting the animal pay attention more to the customers. For instance, in respect of waste management, we deliver all forgotten materials in our hotel especially to people in need through the municipality. So we are used for good instead of throwing them out. In fact, we tell our customers to bring their belongings that they will throw out and let us convey them to those in need and thus share our social responsibility process.*

Y7: *We supported a school's ecology project in the city center. A fashion show was organized by the recycling materials in the project. We gave the students the recycling materials we collected in our hotel, and they turned them into many different materials, from booklets to cocktail ornaments, and gave it back to us for reuse. While we are presenting these products to our customers, we shared our social responsibility by using labels that indicate that they are the output of the project. Thus, our image increased.*

Y4: *To publish documents, such as green star, on internet sites gives prestige! We work together with European tourists in general, and we draw more attention in their eyes. So we gain repeat guest in an easier way.*

5. CONCLUSION

Environmentally-conscious business is an approach that is developing rapidly in the recent years and which appeared as a result of the fact that businesses should be sensitive to the environmental problems in the world. The environmental pollution caused by the firms is increasing in the production and consumption of both products and services. This led firms to implement practices that would provide balance in the ecological sustainability and economic sustainability practices. Thus, enterprises can save on operational costs through environmentally friendly strategies, reduce the use of energy resources, minimize pollution, meet the demands of customers who are conscious of ecology and increase their reputation. Especially in the hospitality industry, the increasing competition has been the result of the efforts of the hotel enterprises to achieve performance above the average with different competitive strategies. In other words, the hotel contributes to ecological sustainability as well as to economic sustainability through various activities that are sensitive to the environment. Thus, hotels both protect the ecology and create a competitive space in their markets. According to the research results, the cost advantage emerged as the first concrete result of the environment-friendly cost strategy. In other words, systematic measurement of waste, monitoring water and energy leakage and resource management have shown significant improvements in terms of savings and efficiency in almost all the hotels surveyed. In this study, it was found that actions to reduce water and energy consumption, and waste management creates a competitive advantage. Especially with the use of energy and water saving equipment, it helps hotels to lower their costs. From an economic point of view, it has been noticed that hotel business achieve performance above average by using environmental-friendly equipment that seems to be very cost-effective, namely by investing in radical technologies (eg. trigeneration, iron scrap). However, in search of this type of strategy, only 16.6% of respondents concluded that they are making huge investments in radical technologies.

Research findings related to environmental competitive strategies show that the use of differentiation strategy in achieving above average performance is more critical than cost strategy. This result is consistent with the results of various studies that emphasize that ecology-sensitive differentiation strategies are important in enhancing the performance of the enterprise (Miles and Covin, 2000; Lee, 2011; Walsh and Dodds, 2017). In addition, it was concluded that the five-star hotels that cooperate with stakeholders in various ecological conservation activities, offer ecological training to their employees/customers, participate in the national and international certification process and invest in various social responsibility projects related to ecology increased the customer satisfaction and increased the brand image.

The findings show that both cost and differentiation environmental strategies influence five-star hotels' performance, namely water and energy management, eco-branding and environmental education implications are conducive in achieving a performance above average. Based on Orsato's

(2006) work, which defines four generic environmental competitive strategies (See Figure 1), this study analyzes in detail the environmental competitive strategies according to the hotel sector. Figure 2 shows the environmental competitive strategies of hotels adopted according to Orsato (2006).

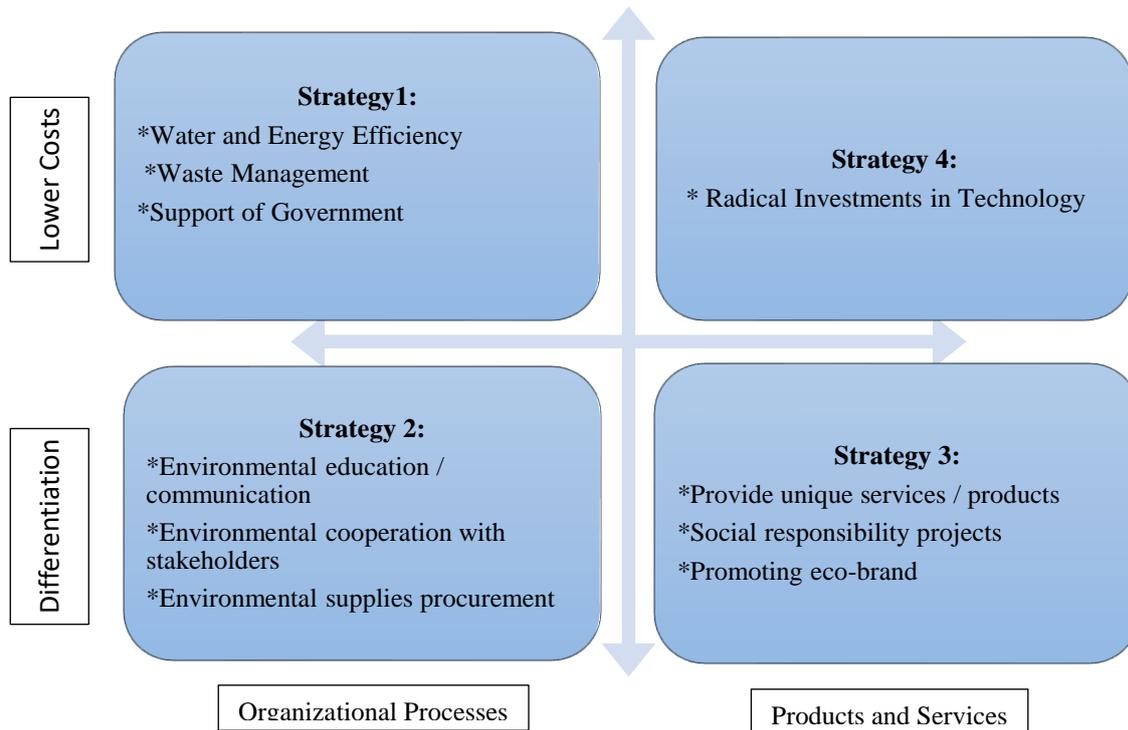


Figure 2. Environmental Competitive Strategies in the Hotel Industry
Resource: Figure 2 was developed by the authors adapted from Orsato(2006)

In summary, research results provide evidence of the existence of mixed environmental competitive strategies in five-star hotels and their impact on hotel performance. The results of the study provide new information that the simultaneous implementation of environmental competitive strategies has the power to drive the performance of five-star hotels. These results are valid for some of the 5 star hotels with a green star certificate operating in Antalya Region. Due to its specific sectorial and structural conditions, these results are limited to the generalizability of the tourism sector. The application of the research questions to the whole population or the repetition of it at a different tourism point of the country is important both for testing the validity of measurement instruments and for increasing generalizability.

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