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Impacts of Operational Management Proficiency Levels of Hotels on Operational and Marketing Related Decisions in Time of Crisis

Abstract

In this study, it is firstly aimed to develop a Hotel Operation Management Proficiency Scale and then to search if there are any differences between the decisions of hotels related to marketing and operation in time of crisis according to their proficiency levels. Data was collected from hotel managers of 112 hotels in Antalya region and quantitative research method was used to test the hypotheses. Findings show that as the operational management proficiency increases, hotels become more active in marketing, such as searching new market and developing new products in crisis time. Moreover, these hotels are not tending to decrease the quality level of their operations as it is seen in hotels with low level operation management proficiency, such as decreasing service quality, qualification of staff, and diversification of food and beverages.

Keywords: *Crisis management, Hotel management, Operation management proficiency scale, Antalya, Managers*

JEL Classifications: M10, Z31, C12

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1. Introduction

Hotel managers mainly deal with the problems of getting more customers, reducing cost, and getting the best out of staff (Jones and Lockwood, 2004). Hence there is an increasing overlap

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between the subjects of operation, marketing, and human resource management (HRM) (Johnston, 1999). Managing the demand and supply with giving high priority to customer service, service quality and productivity has become inevitable areas of interest for the hotel managers. Therefore, operating the hotels professionally so as to be competitive in a highly dynamic market conditions requires the managers to focus on both tangible and intangible assets of the hotels (Kim and Kim, 2005). To make that happen, professional hotel managers take care of customers, make the staff happy, and use the resources efficiently. It can be said that success of hotel operation management could be related to what extent customer relation is dealt professionally, working environment for staff is created appropriately, and resources are utilized efficiently. They all related how the operation management handled by the hotel managers.

On the other hand, one of the most important hallmarks of modern times is the existence of crises (Israeli, 2007) which can suddenly tarnish a destination's reputation that may take years to rebuild (Racherla & Hu, 2009). A negative image can hinder the intentions of tourists to visit the destination and results in a negative buying behaviour (Santana, 2004). It is, therefore, imperative for the hotel managers to be ready as far as possible to the crises since the tourism industry is so vulnerable against them. At this point, the perception of crisis and preparedness to it becomes critical while dealing with the crises. Hotel managers having disparate managerial capabilities or professional background could make different decisions in time of crisis.

Turkey suffered from a number of terror attacks across the country in 2015 and 2016. Many people died and wounded in connection with these terror attacks. Alongside all those terror attacks, Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane near the Syria-Turkey border on the 24th of November 2015 (Wikipedia, 2015) created political problems between two countries. Russia penned a decree introducing sanctions against Turkey. The document, signed on Nov. 28, 2015 envisages restrictions on the import of certain types of products from Turkey. In addition, as of January 1, 2016 Russia suspended the visa-free travel regime for Turkish citizens, Russian employers were not allowed to hire Turkish nationals, and charter flights were banned (Russia Beyond, 2017).

Regarding to the tourism statistics, the number of arriving foreigners in Turkey between January to May 2016 decreased by 22,93% compared to the same period of the previous year (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016). Antalya, owns one third of total bed capacity of Turkey with 500.000 beds, experienced a 42% decrease in total -with a drop of 96% in the tourist numbers from Russia which is known as the foremost tourism market of Antalya city (Antalya Governorship Airport Deputy Governor, 2016). It is stated in the press that the numbers indicate the worst decrease over the last 22 years in the Turkish tourism industry (Hurriyet Gazetesi, 2016). Turkish tourism industry found itself in the middle of a serious crisis environment as summed above. More particularly, the hotel firms in Antalya were faced the risk of a potentially harmful tourism season. At this study, the reactions of the four and five star hotels to the upcoming crisis are searched to understand whether there are any differences according to hotels' operation management proficiency level. Thus in this study it is aimed, firstly, to measure the operational management proficiency level of hotels from three perspectives, namely customer relation management, human resource management, and resource utilization. Secondly, it is aimed to search whether there are differences on the operational and marketing related decisions of those hotels in time of crisis, i.e. becoming more cost-oriented, sacrificing quality or searching new markets.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 Customer Relations and Service Quality in Hotel Operation Management

To understand the needs and wants of customers and offer the value added products to them is one factor to determine the success and failure of the businesses (King and Burgess, 2008).

Thus, satisfying the customers in an efficient and effective way is one of the main objectives of hotel operations. Customer satisfaction has relationships with customer loyalty (Bowen and Chen, 2001; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000), service quality (Olorunniwo et al., 2006) and behavioural intentions (Cronin et al., 2000). As the importance of customer satisfaction realized more, better ways of communicating with customers and managing the relationships with customers have been searched. Many authors underline the importance of integrating the customer relationship management (CRM) into the operations of hotels (Piccoli et al., 2007; Sigala, 2004), and revenue management system (Noone et al., 2003).

The antecedents of good customer relationships have also been searched. For instance, Sigala (2004) states that culture, staff motivation, and development play a vital role on CRM's success. Numerous other researchers try to find out consequences of relationship quality in hotel industry. Kim and Cha (2002), searched 12 five star hotels in Seoul, found that better service providers' attributes resulted in higher relationship quality which led higher share of purchase and better relationship continuity and share of purchases. It is, on the other hand, imperative to have a robust relationship system before the customers consume the product, that is to say, an effective marketing function of a hotel can start a long lasting relationships with the customers. Gilbert et al. (1999), indicate that relationship marketing combined with World Wide Web can offer competitive advantage for hotel companies. These studies show that better managed hotels give high priority to customer satisfaction and customer relationship to get better results both in short and long term period.

2.2. Human Resource Management in Hotel Operation Management

Human resources management is an essential part of operation management of hotel business for providing high quality service (Hoque, 1999). Even, the impacts of human resource management (HRM) on organizational performance has been investigated whether they are universally relevant, that is to say high commitment human resource activities have positive impacts for the hotels' performance (Cho et al., 2006; Falcón et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2007), or contingent to the circumstances (Combs et al., 2006; Wood, 1999). HRM plays a significant role in operation management. Especially in service sectors where the moment of truth occurs through the contacts of customers with the front line employees, this role could easily be realized. Falcón et al. (2016), found, for instance, supervisors' commitment and satisfaction do lead to better economic results because of an improvement in customer results. On the other hand, managers face many problem in tourism industry: low skills, high turnover, low morale (Enz, 2009), shortages of low qualified managers, gap between education and industry needs (Zhang and Fu, 2004) and, impacts of seasonality (Jolliffe and Farnsworth, 2003) are among others. It is seen also that these problems are felt differently in different regions. As Enz (2009) states "Different aspects of the HR issue are more salient in various parts of the globe. For instance, managers in North American and Middle Eastern hotels were most concerned with attracting talented workers, but those in Europe cited retention as their top issue. In South America, training and morale surfaced as top issues. Hoteliers in Africa were more likely to cite labor shortages as a key concern" (p.578).

To ensure that hotel operations are managed professionally, hiring the right people suitable for the job and organizational culture becomes highly important subject. Managers of hotels, in their daily operations, attempt to evaluate employee delivery of emotional labour by measuring employees' commitment to the guest and other emotional effort factors (Johanson and Woods, 2008). Creating a suitable working environment for the employees has also direct and indirect effects on operation success and business performance. For instance, Wong and Ladkin (2008) found that cultivating creative environment has positive impacts on job related motivation. Jauhari and Manaktola (2009), suggest Indian hospitality industry managers to create better working conditions for employees to keep them stay in the industry for longer periods. Human resource management practices are also affective in turnover intentions

(Hemdi and Nasurdin, 2006). Especially training is related with the job satisfaction and intention to stay in the hotel (Chiang et al., 2005; Choi and Dickson, 2009).

2.3. *Efficient Use of Resources for Hotel Operations*

Purchasing has been considered as an important strategy in organizations that impact the competitive advantages (Nassiry et al., 2012). Developing better relationships with the suppliers could lead higher customer satisfaction and business performance (Bensaou, 1999; Stanley and Wisner, 2001). Traditional purchasing systems have been transformed as a consequence of technological developments. E-procurement which means purchasing goods and services over the internet, is one area that the hotels use innovative technologies (Ivanovska, 2007) to reduce the costs (Kothari et al., 2005), reducing errors in order transmission, and reducing inventory levels (Kameshwaran and Narahari, 2007). It is mainly about finding the right amount of goods and supplies with the right prices.

Although hotel procurement is a back-of-the-house function, it involves human interaction between hotel service culture, end users, and suppliers (Au et al., 2014), which includes transforming raw materials into finished products/services with values (Kothari, et al., 2005). Indeed, purchasing and procurement facilities of hotels could be grouped into three parts according to their contribution level to production: not directly related in service production (i.e. cleaning agents), partly related in service production (i.e. software) and wholly related in service production (i.e. foods, beverages) (Tektaş and Kavak, 2010). It is reasonable for hotel managers to consider both quality and costs of all raw material and supplies to be competitive in the sector. Need for reducing energy consumption is another job of hotel managers to deal with due to its significant impacts on total cost. Energy cost can be significantly reduced in buildings without necessarily reducing the comfort of the building occupants with energy efficiency practices and technologies (Oluseyi et al., 2016). Hotel buildings are unique compared to other type of commercial buildings because they have different operating schedule for different functional facilities (Deng and Burnett, 2000). Therefore, hotel managers are obliged to find suitable solutions for decreasing the energy consumptions in rooms, general areas and other areas of service production.

Chan et al. (2001) states that “in the hospitality industry, proper maintenance and operation of the building services systems have a direct and significant effect on the guests’ impression of the hotel. For instance, in the event of inadequate air conditioning in a restaurant, noise generation from the fan-coil unit in a guestroom or water leakage in the main lobby due to poor maintenance, it will sacrifice the comfort of the guests, disrupt their activities and penalise the corporate image of the hotel” (p.494). Thus, the role of maintenance and repairs for hotel operation management should not be underestimated. The components of operation management proficiency of hotels, from the above discussion, could be shown as in figure 1.

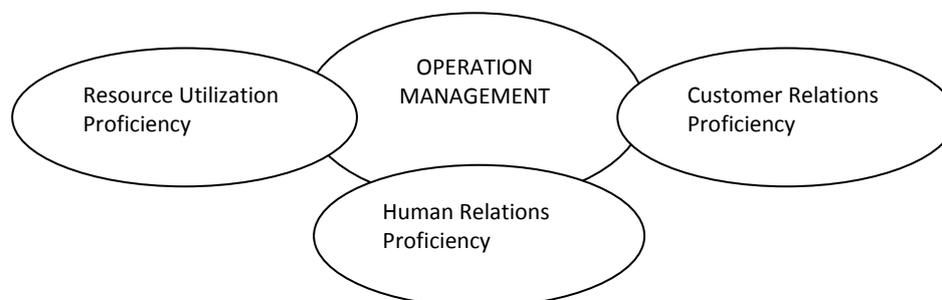


Figure 1. Operation management proficiency components of hotels.

2.4. Crisis Management

A crisis can be defined as an unplanned event arising from the internal (i.e. the deprivation of a key client, hardships in paying company debts, the illness or death of the owner, accidents, production problems, strikes) or external environment (i.e. terrorism acts, health-related communicable diseases, on-going civil unrest, hurricanes, earthquakes and tsunamis and global financial and economic downturn) of a country, region or organization (Gurtner, 2016) which can be a threat to physical and mental wellbeing, endanger the existence of entities that cannot overcome the problems using ordinary managerial procedures, cause disruptions in the operations (Okumus and Karamustafa, 2005) and stain a company's good reputation, damage its long-term profitability, growth or even its viability when it comes to business (Stafford et al., 2002).

There are virtually an endless number of potential organizational crises and they may also cause other sort of crisis (Kovoor-Misra et al., 2001; Richardson, 1994), for instance, ecological calamities, warfares, and terrorist attacks can produce economic and political problems, which in turn may end up a tourism crisis (Okumus and Karamustafa, 2005). It might be difficult for organizations to have contingency plans for every crisis circumstance (Rousaki and Alcott, 2006). Especially suddenness and uncertainty of the crisis induce high pressure for the managers to make rapid decisions with incomplete information (Stafford et al., 2002).

Managers' perceptions on risk play a major role in preparedness to crises (Mitroff et al., 1996; Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992; Rousaki and Alcott, 2006). Therefore, having a crisis management plan becomes essential for hotel managers as well as their marketing efforts. For instance, a written crisis management plan can be seen as management's commitment to protect their guests and can be used as a marketing tool to attract and retain their guests in response to the ever evolving man-made and natural disasters (Rittichainuwat, 2013).

Crisis management is a composite and obscure field of research (Burnett, 1998; Heath, 1998; Okumus et al., 2005). Crisis management refers to an integrated and extensive effort that organizations put into action with the intent to understand and prevent crisis, and to effectively manage those that occur, considering the interest of their stakeholders in each and every step of their plans and trainings (Santana, 2004). Crisis management involves three stages: crisis planning (a crisis in advance), implementation of crisis management (in the course of a crisis), and evaluation and control (after a crisis). Crisis planning assists organisations become crisis prepared rather than crisis prone (Ritchie et al., 2011). Crisis preparedness can be generally delineated as the preparedness to deal with the uncertainty induced by a crisis (Rousaki and Alcott, 2006). Reilly (1987) elaborated on the crisis readiness construct consisting of three dimensions: (1) *the internal functionality of the organisation* involving prompt response, how informed, access to crisis management resources, sufficient strategic crisis planning; (2) *the organisation's media management ability in a crisis*; and (3) *the perceived likelihood of a crisis striking the organisation* (Rousaki and Alcott, 2006).

Faulkner (2001) revealed the initial thorough framework for crisis management in the tourism industry. A significant aspect of this framework was to bring together hospitality and tourism organizations and the local communities into the crisis management phase and offered crisis management frameworks that fundamentally comprise of the following six phases: (1) *preevent phase*, (this phase is to underline potential crisis that is likely to be planned or prevented) (2) *prodromal phase*, when it is visible that a crisis is impending; (3) *emergency phase*, when the impacts of the calamity are perceived and operations are indispensable to preserve people and assets; (4) *intermediate phase*, when short term necessities of the people have been handled and restoration actions initiate; (5) *long term phase*, when the retrieval pursuits have been institutionalized and the organization, the community, and its stakeholders revert to the position before the calamity; and (6) *resolution*

and feedback phase, when organizations ascertain from the crisis and elaborate updated courses to handle the crisis experience (Racherla and Hu, 2009). Albeit there is no magic formula to foresee and manage crises (Okumus et al., 2005), at each phase, there are a wide range of operations that the community and industry can attempt to cope with a crisis (Racherla and Hu, 2009). Undertaking the proposed operations in each phase can undoubtedly assist hospitality and tourism organizations to prepare for and manage a crisis (Okumus et al., 2005).

We understand from above discussion that managing the crisis is hard issue and needs high professionalism in management. Analyzing the nature and possible impacts of the crisis and taking the right precautions at the right time could be the focal points in this manner. Hence, the proficiency level in operation management is directly related how the crisis is handled.

The general assumptions of this study are “hotels with high level of operation proficiency level have better financial performance” and “hotels with different level of operation management proficiency behave differently in time of crisis” and specific ones are “hotels with high level of operation proficiency will not sacrifice operation quality in time of crisis” and “hotels with high level of operation proficiency will be more active in marketing in time of crisis”. Based on the aforementioned discussion above, the following model was proposed as shown in figure 2.

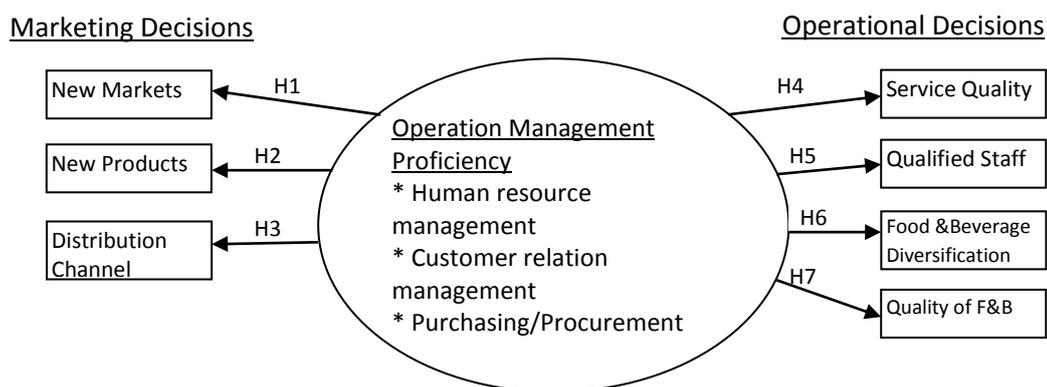


Figure 2. Research model.

More professional hotel businesses are supposed to be more active in marketing to decrease the negative impacts of crisis. Therefore the following hypotheses were proposed;

Hypothesis 1: *Hotels which search for new markets in crisis time are operated more professionally.*

Hypothesis 2: *Hotels which develop new products in crisis time are operated more professionally.*

Hypothesis 3: *Hotels which diversify their distribution channels in crisis time are operated more professionally.*

It is assumed that hotels with high rate of operation proficiency are less affected by the crisis so their intents on goods and services production and delivery would not be changed negatively in time of crisis. Hence following hypotheses were also proposed;

Hypothesis 4: Hotels which do not decrease the service quality in crisis time are operated more professionally.

Hypothesis 5: Hotels which do not decrease the qualification level of staff in crisis time are operated more professionally.

Hypothesis 6: Hotels which do not decrease the diversification of food and beverage qualification in crisis time are operated more professionally.

Hypothesis 7: Hotels which do not decrease the quality of food and beverage in crisis time are operated more professionally.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The aim of the study is to search whether there are differences in decisions made by the hotels so case study method is used. The crises occurred in 2015 and 2016 in Turkey and its reflection on upper scale hotels in Antalya, where is the most popular tourist destination of Turkey, was selected as the case study. Data were collected with the questionnaires from 4 and 5 star hotels between April and September of 2016. By doing so it could be possible to produce more accurate results whether any differences exist among the hotels with differing operational management proficiency levels. Out of 250 hotels, 120 hotels turned back the questionnaires and 112 were usable. Reliability and validity of hotel operation management proficiency scale and other variables used in the study are explained in the following sections.

3.2. Measures

Hotel operation management proficiency scale which aims to define the level of proficiency level of managers in hotel operation could be divided mainly into three parts: Customer relation and service quality, human resource management and, resource utilization efficiency and purchasing and procurement. For all three dimensions 5- point likert scale is used, 1 indicates "I totally disagree" and 5 indicates "I totally agree". Total score of the scale can be regarded as the level of hotel operation management proficiency.

To test the concurrent validity of the scale two variables were created: Satisfaction of average room rate and satisfaction of occupancy rate from previous year. The respondents were asked as "we were very satisfied with..." with a 5-point likert scale, 1 indicates "I totally disagree" and 5 indicates "I totally agree".

Marketing strategy changes in time of crisis will be measured by three dichotomous questions with the answer options of "Yes" or "No": "We developed new markets in 2016", "we developed new products in 2016", and "we diversified our distribution channel in 2016".

Behavioural intents of hotel managers on goods and services production and delivery are measured for service quality, qualification level of staff, diversification of food and beverage, quality of food and beverage in time of crisis. The respondents were asked to tick one of three options: "will not change", "will increase", and "will decrease" to the statement of "when compared to 2015 in 2016...". The choices of "will not change" and "will increase" are compiled as one group in SPSS version 23 which means that at least no decline will occur in time of crisis and "will decrease" as another group meaning that crisis will force the hotels to sacrifice for some areas.

3.3 Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to explore the data. Descriptive statistics are used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents and profiles of hotels. Principal factor analysis was used to assess the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of the scale. Correlation analysis used to show the concurrent validity of the scale and independent t-test were used to test the hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Most of the hotels that took part in the study are members of a chain or a group (75,9%) of which mostly owns less than 10 hotels (40,2%). Hotels having more than 300 rooms account for 67,9% of the sample. Majority of the hotels (61,6%) are in service for less than 10 years. The questionnaire was filled in extensively by front office managers (71,3%) and general managers (15,8%) who are highly experienced in the sector (54,5% are more than ten years) and working in their current hotel more than 4 years (67,9%). The age of managers are generally between 31 and 40 (69,6%). Marketing and operational related decisions of hotels for the upcoming crisis are summarised in Table 1. It is realized that hotels mostly search for the new market instead of creating new product and tend to decrease the diversification of food&beverage but not their quality in crisis time.

Table 1. Marketing and Operational Decisions of Hotels in crisis time.

Marketing Decision	Yes	%	No	%
New Market	94	83.9	18	16.1
New Product	44	39.3	68	60.7
New Distribution Channel	75	67.0	37	33.0
Operational Decisions	S/I ^a	%	D ^b	%
Service Quality	75	67.0	37	33.0
Qualification of Staff	74	66.1	38	33.9
Diversification of Food&Beverage	61	54.5	51	45.5
Food&Beverage Quality	79	71.2	32	28.8

^aS/I: Same or Increase ^bD: Decrease.

3.2 Psychometric Properties

The Cronbach's Alpha of each factor varies between 0.796 and 0.842 which indicates high reliability of scale (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2006) and (KMO (.745) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (911 - .000) also indicates the suitability of data for factor analysis (Field, 2000). Factor analysis is done to see the construct validity of the proposed scale. The items removed due to low factor loadings are; "we do maintenance and repair properly", "we revise our systems to increase our energy productivity". Operational management proficiency factors of hotels were grouped into three factors as expected (Table 2). These factors are named as customer relations and service quality, human resource and process performance, and procurement and purchasing. The total variance explained is 65,3% which could be regarded as satisfactory. All items took place in the factors where they are expected to be which an indication of construct validity.

Table 2: Operational management proficiency factors for hotels.

FACTORS	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance explained
Customer Relations and Service Quality				0,842	26,3
we are performing customer relations regularly	4,16	,894	,813		
making our customers satisfied is our main goal	4,32	,967	,860		
service quality is top priority for us	4,32	,918	,784		
we are running marketing activities effectively	4,03	,981	,700		
we are using customer related indicators while measuring success of our business	4,12	1,011	,525		
Human Resource Management and Process Performance				0,811	22,3

we are not having problems finding staff with adequate qualifications	2,68	1,458	,701		
we are not having problems finding sufficient number of staff	2,87	1,441	,665		
we are giving high importance to satisfaction of our employees	3,52	1,324	,764		
we have sufficient number of trainings for employees	3,69	1,098	,622		
we are creating excellent working conditions for our employees	3,39	1,050	,749		
we are using internal processes related indicators while measuring success of our business	3,60	1,159	,546		
Procurement and Purchasing				0,796	16,7
we are very satisfied with cost of raw material and supplies that we buy	3,03	1,221	,905		
we are very satisfied with the quality of raw material and supplies that we buy	3,28	1,263	,928		
we are processing our procurement and purchasing effectively	3,67	1,179	,517		
Total Variance Explained					65,3
KMO	0,745				
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	911 (,000)				

Note: Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

It can be seen from Table 3 that positive and significant correlations exist between operation management scores and satisfaction level of room rate and occupancy rate. It means that more professionally managed hotels tend to reach more satisfactory performance level. This result could be regarded as an indicator of the concurrent validity of the scale.

Table 3: Correlation between operation management factors and satisfaction level of average room rate and occupancy rate.

		Satisfaction of average room rate previous year	Satisfaction of occupancy rate previous year
Customer Relation Management	Pearson Correlation	,440**	,354**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	110	110
Human Resource Management	Pearson Correlation	,392**	,248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,009
	N	109	109
Procurement and Purchasing	Pearson Correlation	,199*	,237*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,038	,013
	N	109	109
Operation Management -Total	Pearson Correlation	,463**	,360**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000
	N	108	108

Note:** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

To test the Hypotheses (1 through 3) that are related to marketing decisions made by the hotel managers in crisis time, independent t-test was employed. Marketing related questions were

asked as “yes” or “no” questions. Total operation management score indicates that the hotels with high scores give more importance to search for new markets and new products in time of crisis. Especially the hotels with high scores on human resource management create these differences. High customer oriented hotels are also tending to search for new markets in time of crisis. On the other hand, there is no significant difference for diversifying the distribution channels in terms of operational management proficiency (Table 4). Hence, hypothesis 1 and 2 are supported and hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table 4. Marketing related decisions in crisis times by operational management factors.

Marketing Decision Items	New markets			New products			Diversifying distribution channel		
	Yes	No	t	Yes	No	t	Yes	No	t
Scales									
Customer Relation Management	4,27	3,78	2,09*	4,25	4,15	0,64	4,25	4,08	1,05
Human Resource Management	4,07	3,27	2,86**	4,27	3,73	2,63**	4,07	3,69	1,69
Procurement & Purchasing	3,37	3,13	0,89	3,47	3,24	1,13	3,31	3,37	0,34
Total Operation Management Scale	3,98	3,41	3,03**	4,08	3,78	2,11*	3,96	3,78	1,36

Note: ** p<.01; *p<.05.

Hypotheses 4-7 are tested with the independent t test and the results are given in Table 5. Operation management related decisions were asked whether the hotel is going to decrease the service quality, qualification level of staff, diversification of food & beverage, and quality of food & beverage in crisis time. It was found that the hotels which do not decrease the service quality, qualification of staff, and diversification of Food&Beverage in crisis time are operated more professionally. Hence, Hypothesis 4, 5 and 6 are supported. It is seen also that the differences for “service quality” and “qualification level of staff” mainly occur due to the human resource management perspectives of hotels whereas difference of “diversification of food and beverage” is highly affected by the procurement and purchasing management understanding. On the other hand, hotels do not differ significantly in terms of decision about decreasing the quality of food&beverage which might be explained by the fact that hotel managers, no matter of their degree of proficiency in operation, assume the quality of food and beverage should not be sacrificed even in crises times. Thus hypothesis 7 is rejected.

Table 5. Operational decisions in time of crisis by operational management factors.

	Service Quality			Qualification of Staff			Diversification of F&B			Quality of F & B		
	S/I ^a	D ^b	t	S/I ^a	D ^b	t	S/I ^a	D ^b	t	S/I ^a	D ^b	t
Customer Relation	4,19	4,17	0,164	4,24	4,08	1,02	4,25	4,12	0,88	4,2	4,14	0,37
Human Resource	4,14	3,53	2,85**	4,09	3,64	2,09*	4,12	3,74	1,84	3,94	3,9	0,19
Procurement & Purchasing	3,49	2,98	2,35*	3,46	3,06	1,8	3,57	3,05	2,64**	3,38	3,22	0,7
Total Operation Management Proficiency Scale	4,01	3,65	2,45*	4	3,67	2,14*	4,04	3,72	2,24*	3,91	3,84	0,45

Note: ^aS/I : Same or Increase ^bD: Decrease. ** p<.01; *p<.05.

5. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

Hotels are operated in highly competitive and fragile market conditions. This makes the operation of these businesses through management of human resources, procurement and purchasing, and customer relation, is crucial for any organization that has been affected by diverse types of crisis. In this sense, it is, hence, crucial for organizations to be prepared for crises to cope with their potentially negative impacts (Augustine, 1995; Fink, 1986; Heath, 1998; Okumus et al., 2005; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993). Even if the negative impact of crises seems to have been greater, crises may also have positive impact and provide opportunities for organizations (Burnett, 1998; Fink, 1986; Kovoov-Misra et al., 2001; Okumus et al., 2005). On the one hand, crises have frequently been damaging outcomes involving a diminish in demand and revenues, ascendant costs, the disturbance of natural operations, defects in communication movements and in decision making, staff lay-offs, the abandonment of investments, tense living and business environments, and the closure of organizations (Kash and Darling, 1998). On the other hand, “to introduce new programs,” “reduce costs,” and “gain experience” in managing crises are well known examples of having opportunities (Okumus et al., 2005).

Crisis circumstances involve rigorous and prompt implementation of decisions (Rousaki and Alcott, 2006). To face this challenge, hotels ought to be managed professionally in terms of customer relations, human resource management, and also with an understanding of using resources efficiently. A key success factor of managers is the ability to forecast issues in the internal and external environment, to take measures in advance to impede or cope with crises and to respond to crises quickly. Parsons (1996) assert that a pre-crisis, managers enjoy significant responsibilities to fulfil, such as gathering the indispensable data, remarking and analyzing the signals that a crisis might happen, recognizing its reasons, making crisis plans, creating a crisis team and building good communication channels. Organizations can avert or mitigate some crises' negative fall-out so as to achieve this, senior managers should believe in the importance of crisis planning and management (Burnett, 1998; Okumus et al., 2005). The purpose of crisis management and crisis planning is, hence, to enhance the crisis preparedness of the organization (Rousaki and Alcott, 2006).

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether any differences exist on handling the crisis among the hotels with differing operational management proficiency levels. To that end, this study attempted to fill a gap in the literature in two ways. Firstly, operational management proficiency scale of hotels was developed which could be used in different studies by the authors. Secondly, through many hypotheses developed, it was tried to expose whether any differences exist between the hotels' marketing and operational decisions according to their proficiency levels in time of crisis. Several differences were found.

One important observation is that service quality, qualification level of staff, and diversification of food and beverage were significantly different indicating that hotels having more professional operation management tend not to decrease these domains in time of crisis. Hence, more professionally operated hotels unlikely decrease their service quality, qualification level of staff, and diversification of food and beverage in time of crisis. The final implication is that more professionally operated hotels were likely to search for new markets and to develop new products in time of crisis. More particularly, high customer oriented hotels were also tending to search for new markets in time of crisis. In this sense, the decrease in foreign visitors can be retrieved by an increase in diverse market, resulting in an alteration of quest proportions (i.e. domestic market). To manage crises effectively, managers should have knowledge of crisis management and operation management proficiency including human resource, customer relation, and purchasing and procurement and resource efficiency skills. Consequently, an organization's operation management proficiency should be of such

quality to enhance the effectiveness of crisis management and planning for the hospitality and tourism industry.

This point generates suggestions for future research. Nonetheless, some limitations of this study have to be condensed jointly its contributions. One limitation of this study is the survey sample. Data were collected generally from five-star hotels and other sorts of accommodation facilities were ignored because of the time and budget limitations. Secondly, generic based-crisis studies draw strong attention from tourism researchers in the tourism field and lack of specific-crisis literature, this study attempted to fill a research niche by measuring the operation management proficiency in hotel industry in course of crisis. Future studies will offer a comparison of crisis management and operation management proficiency in different locations and different industries (i.e. travel agencies), which can, in turn, better support the crisis preparedness and operation management proficiency of a regional hospitality and tourism industry.

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