

## Outsourcing in Thermal Hotel Enterprises: The Case of Turkey

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to present the status of outsourcing practices in Ministry of Culture and Tourism registered and operation licensed thermal hotel enterprises in Turkey. This research was supported by 65 out of 72 thermal hotel enterprises operating in Turkey, and it is identified that 22 enterprises use outsourcing. As a result of the evaluation of the data gathered from the aforementioned enterprises, it is ascertained that thermal hotel enterprises consider thermal units, cure units, and SPA/Wellness services as their core competencies and outsourcing is not preferred in these areas, and instead, personnel transportation, security, animation and food and beverage services are mostly outsourced service areas. The important benefits gained through outsourcing are identified as emphasizing more on service quality and proficiency of the suppliers, consideration of the issue from an administrative perspective, increase in service quality, focusing more on core competencies, and reducing costs.*

**Key words:** Outsourcing, Tourism, Thermal Hotel.



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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization of the markets, new technologies, cultural changes and intense competitive environment (Espino-Rodriguez, et al. 2008; Wan and Su, 2010) force the enterprises to specialize in certain areas to be able to reduce the costs and work effectively (McIvor, 2008). This situation which requires restructuring the organizational structure and business processes resulted in the development and application of many new management approaches. Outsourcing is one of the management reshaping tendencies and has an extensive area of application (Belcourt, 2006). The main reasons why enterprises incline towards outsourcing, which is briefly described as “make or buy” (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000; Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla, 2005), include focusing on core competencies, gaining flexibility, reducing the costs and benefiting from technology advantages (Embleton and Wright, 1998; Kakabadse and Kakabadse: 2000; Fill and Visser, 2000; Jennings, 2002; Belcourt, 2006).

Outsourcing practices constitute one of the main strategies for reducing operation costs in hospitality enterprises within the tourism industry as well (Lam and Han, 2005). In hospitality enterprises outsourcing is commonly practised particularly in front office (reception and reservation), housekeeping (cleaning of the rooms, cleaning of the common areas, laundry), food and beverage (purchasing and delivery, restaurants, pubs, kitchen practices), maintenance (technical services, pool maintenance, garden landscaping), management (administration, training, personnel selection, sales activities, advertising and promotion, information systems), leisure time (recreational activities), hotel security (security and surveillance) (Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina, 2004: 297; Barrows and Giannakopoulos, 2006).

While having common characteristics with other hospitality enterprises with respect to provision of main accommodation services and activities, thermal tourism enterprises are unique enterprises with their cure units and recreational areas. Thus, thermal tourism enterprises have opportunity for outsourcing in cure centers, rehabilitation services and spa units besides the basic services. Within this framework, the research aims to determine what the extent, areas of application, reasons and expected benefits of outsourcing in thermal tourism enterprises are with a managerial point of view.

### THE CONCEPT OF OUTSOURCING

Outsourcing is a practice which traces back to tax collection operation in Roman era (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2005). Outsourcing, which is often defined by the researchers in accordance with their

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research aims (Espino-Rodrigues and Rodriguez-Diaz, 2008), is mainly described as “a business’s external provision of the services and activities, relying on a contract, that were previously offered by using the sources in-house” (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000; Belcourt, 2006). Outsourcing is not a simple purchasing decision. It is also rejecting to produce services in-house that can be procured via outsourcing (Espino-Rodrigues and Padrón-Robaina, 2004). Outsourcing has an extensive application area as a result of the fact that provision of processes defined in supply chain via outsourcing has become one of the most important practices of developing competitive advantage (Espino-Rodrigues and Rodriguez-Diaz, 2008: 328).

Outsourcing is not a management practice which is dealt independent of other contemporary practices. While turning towards outsourcing as a strategic approach, enterprises reduce costs, realize downsizing, find opportunity to focus on core competencies, which provides competitive advantage to them (Fill and Visser, 2000). Outsourcing is essentially a downsizing strategy. The main purpose of this strategy is to focus on certain areas (core competencies). This is virtually similar to pruning a vineyard. If you cut the wrong bud while pruning the vineyard, you can’t get grapes. In order not to make this mistake in outsourcing, the business should firstly determine its core competency (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2005). Quinn and Hilmer (1994) identifies effective core competencies as, skill or knowledge sets, flexible long-term platforms, limited in number, unique sources of leverage in the value chain, areas where the company can dominate, elements important to customers in the long run and embedded in the organization’s systems. According to the researchers, as core competencies in outsourcing offer long termed competitive advantage, they should absolutely be controlled and preserved by the enterprises. Also Espino-Rodrigues and Rodriguez-Diaz (2008) argue that there is a negative correlation between internal competency and inclination towards outsourcing, so any activity needs to be procured via less outsourcing, if it is a part of the core competency.

Outsourcing decisions are tactical and strategic decisions. The main motive in tactical decisions is the costs; other benefits and risks are not taken into consideration. Strategic outsourcing decisions are more detailed and include a rational decision making process (Espino-Rodrigues and Padrón-Robaina, 2004). Therefore, while deciding on outsourcing, the point of view of the enterprises should not be narrow and short termed but rather strategic and long termed to be successful. It is seen in the literature that many researchers (Quinn and Hilmer, 1994; McIvory, 2000; Fill and Visser, 2000; Jennings, 2002; Espino-Rodrigues and Padrón-Robaina, 2004; Belcourt, 2006) criticize that the main motives in the enterprises’ inclination towards outsourcing have a short termed point of view and aim to reduce the costs and they emphasize that this needs to be handled with a strategic perspective (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000; Espino-Rodrigues and Padrón-Robaina, 2005). Accordingly, Espino-Rodrigues and Padrón-Robaina (2004) highlight that strategic decisions aim to enhance the quality of the activities, improve the facilities, include the absence of the resources and are oriented to access the knowledge and competencies. Belcourt (2006) in her study which emphasizes the critical importance of outsourcing management indicates that cost benefit analysis needs to be carried out well first and points out to the importance of knowing whether supplier can perform the task better and more rapidly at the expected service level by fulfilling legal conditions and, the need to specify how this is going to be measured. Embleton and Wright (1998) remark that outsourcing should be a part of the company’s general strategy and emphasize that successful implementation of the operation requires analysis, examination, planning, and sophisticated human resources and management.

All in all, besides its benefits, outsourcing is a practice which may also cause problems like, in short or long term, excessive dependence on supplier enterprises, losing flexibility, emergence of communication problems, negative effect on staff, losing control over relevant processes and price pressure of the suppliers (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2000).

As Quinn and Hilmer (1994) highlight, both outsourcing decision and carrying on the activities with in-house sources have risks. However, if a business can identify its core competencies and procure other services extrinsically and synchronize them cleverly, it will increase capital return, reduce risks, gain flexibility and meet customer needs better with a lower cost. Similarly, Kotabe et al. (2008) point out that extreme practices in outsourcing culminate in bad results and highlight that too little outsourcing increases internal bureaucracy and cause a weakening in efficiency of activities not related to the market,

and on the contrary, too much outsourcing causes external technological dependence and inefficiency. Hence, when outsourcing, enterprises have to identify very well which services and activities they are going to procure via suppliers with respect to their area of activity.

### **OUTSOURCING IN HOTEL ENTERPRISES**

Hospitality enterprises, which include a variety of activities and where customer satisfaction is the main determinant of success and whose sales fluctuate seasonally, weekly and daily (Lamminmaki, 2008; Gonzales et al, 2011), are distinctive enterprises with their unique organizational structures and area of business. Intensive competitive market environment forces hospitality management teams to challenge the difficulties of reducing the costs and optimizing profitability (Burgess, 2007) and develop new administrative strategies and practices. Herein, that organizational structure, the main determinant of organizational performance, increases the interest in outsourcing among new strategies and practices developed in hospitality enterprises (Lamminmaki, 2007).

Main reasons of outsourcing practices in hospitality enterprises include gaining competitive advantage, increasing the service quality, reducing the costs, to focus on core competencies, gaining flexibility, providing added value, accessing to technology, skills, knowledge and human sources which are not available internally, and obtaining better service from suppliers (Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina, 2005; Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla, 2005; Wan and Su, 2010; Gonzales et al. 2011).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that although there are studies investigating outsourcing in hospitality enterprises published after 2000, these are not adequate. Information Systems, Food and Beverage and Technical Services are the mostly researched areas of outsourcing in hospitality enterprises (Gonzales et al. 2011). When the studies on outsourcing in hospitality enterprises are examined, it is seen that the common issues are costs, service quality and proficiency of suppliers, although their points of view are different according to their research subjects. Although it is not identified as primary tasks for managements in the results of some research; as highlighted before, reducing operational costs and increasing organizational performance form the main reasons for inclination towards outsourcing in hospitality enterprises as in enterprises in other sectors. Hospitality enterprises offer services as a result of its field of activity. Delivery of quality service is one of the main determinants of enterprises' existence. Therefore, it is obvious that hospitality managers should focus on service quality rather than costs in outsourcing decisions. For instance, Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla, (2005) underline that the main issue that management should primarily consider in outsourcing decision is what its effect will be on service quality. In their study on outsourcing and provision of services at the strategic dimension, Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina (2005) found out that hospitality managements emphasize the quality of the service that suppliers provide rather than reducing the costs in their outsourcing decisions, and they avoid from losing control of the services and specificity of the services rather than losing competitive advantage. Similarly, in their study on outsourcing decisions depending on asset specificity, Espino-Rodriguez et al. (2008) put forth that managers are eager about outsourcing if suppliers are able to contribute to the development of operational quality.

The competency of the services with respect to quality and qualification that suppliers offer is another issue that management has to pay attention to in outsourcing. Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina (2004) state that if there are suppliers that offer good and quality services, hospitality enterprises want to procure services via outsourcing in order to focus on core competencies. Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina (2005) indicate that hospitality managements consider losing control over the services and lack of knowledge about whether supplier has business ethics or not as the most important disadvantages in outsourcing. Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla (2005) remark that the synergy, the suppliers would provide for improving competencies and operations, can be utilized by the hospitality managements as an advantage. Espino-Rodriguez et al. (2008) state that if a hotel works with a supplier that has more knowledge and specificity, then this will affect also the financial performance positively.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this research is to investigate processes of outsourcing operations in Ministry of Culture and Tourism registered and operation licensed thermal hotels in Turkey with descriptive analyses. With the

results of analyses, it is aimed to contribute to literature and hotel managers by revealing areas of outsourcing practices in thermal hotels, reasons for outsourcing, supplier selection criteria, problems at practice, benefits of outsourcing and overall effects of outsourcing. In line with the identified aim, thermal hotels with tourism operation license operating in Turkey constitute the population of the research. In order to determine the number of enterprises forming the population, firstly, statistics of Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Investment and Enterprises were reviewed. However, it was identified that number of enterprises are incoherent and so it was decided to define the population with the numbers obtained from Provincial Directorates of Culture and Tourism. For this reason, a list of thermal hotel enterprises was demanded from Provincial Directorates of Culture and Tourism in Turkey. It is identified that there are 72 thermal hotels in Turkey representing the population of the research. As the population is limited in the research and as it is possible to access to all business managers, sampling method was not resorted and researchers tried to access all population one by one.

A draft questionnaire form was prepared after an extensive review of the literature related to the subject in order to gather data needed in the research. Following formation of the draft to be used as the research tool, it was aimed to improve the questionnaire's reliability and validity by having face to face interviews with the managers of 4 thermal hotel enterprises in Afyonkarahisar. After the interviews, statements in the questionnaire form which might cause ambiguity were simplified and corrected. In addition, scale reliability analysis was used in order to measure reliability of each subdimension of the questionnaire. Since reliability coefficients which are calculated as under 0.70 in scale reliability analysis are regarded as inadequate (Lehman et al., 2005), the lower limit of reliability coefficient or, in other words, Cronbach's alpha value, is regarded as 0.70.

A pilot test was carried out with the managers of thermal hotels operating in Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya and Denizli with the rearranged questionnaire form. After the pilot test, reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaires were identified as between the range of 0.80 and 0.93. If the reliability coefficients are between the range of 0.80 and 1.00, the scale is regarded as reliable (Özdamar, 1999). The first part of the questionnaire included closed-end questions as to characteristics of the business, ownership type of the business, number of rooms, beds and personnel of the business, managers' gender, position in the business, working time and level of education.

The second part which is aim to measure outsourcing operation in thermal hotels relies on studies of Lamminmaki (2003, 2005, 2007), Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robania (2004, 2005, 2005), Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla (2005, 2005), Rodriguez-Diaz and Espino-Rodriguez (2006), Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2000, 2005) and on studies of Özdoğan (2006), Korkmaz (2006), Kesgin (2005), Çetinkaya (2005) and İsfendiyaroğlu (2001) as literature in Turkey. The second part of the questionnaire firstly includes closed-ended questions measuring areas of outsourcing, activities carried out before outsourcing and level of outsourcing. Following them, there are five point Likert type scale questions in order to identify the level of agreement of the managers with respect to statements as to outsourcing operations. Statements in the Likert scale are arranged as: "1: definitely disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree, 5: definitely agree. The sub dimensions formed in order to examine outsourcing operation using Likert type scale and reliability coefficients related to these sections are as below:

- *Reasons for outsourcing:* In this subdimension, there are 11 statements such as "reducing costs", "more focus on core competencies" in order to identify the reasons leading the thermal hotels to outsourcing. Reliability coefficient in this section is 0.791.
- *Supplier selection criteria:* With statements like "stability of the supplier", "pricing level", it is aimed in this subdimension to identify which criteria the thermal hotel enterprises attach more importance to when choosing suppliers. Reliability coefficient in this section is 0.919.
- *Problems at practice:* There are 10 statements in this subdimension aimed at identifying problems emerging due to business, personnel and/or suppliers during the practice process in thermal hotel enterprises. Reliability coefficient in this section is 0.846.
- *Benefits of outsourcing:* In this subdimension, there are 11 statements such as "The cost was reduced", "Focusing more on core competencies was achieved." with respect to the question "Please state the benefits of outsourcing in your business in line with the statements below". Reliability coefficient of

this subdimension which was formed in order to measure the benefits obtained via outsourcing is 0.827.

- *The overall effects of outsourcing:* This subdimension includes 20 statements consisting of dimensions of service quality, financial performance, organizational structure and management in order to identify the overall effects of outsourcing on the business. As a result of the analysis, it is identified that reliability coefficient of this section is 0.890.

*Table 1: The Reliability Test Results of the Scales Used in This Study*

	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Overall Reliability	0.933	63
– Reasons for Outsourcing	0.791	11
– Supplier Selection Criteria	0.919	11
– Problems Faced in Practice	0.846	10
– Benefits of Outsourcing	0.827	11
– The Overall Effects of Outsourcing	0.890	20

At the data collection stage of the research, contact addresses of 72 thermal hotels were collected and questionnaire forms were sent to e-mail addresses of hotel managers with a cover letter indicating the aim and significance of the research. As response rate to online questionnaires was significantly low, questionnaires were printed and posted to the enterprises' addresses and the managers of the enterprises were asked to respond. 66 thermal hotel managers responded to the questionnaires carried out via e-mail or postal service during May-November 2012 period, and after evaluation, 65 questionnaires were identified to be acceptable to use. When the questionnaires collected from thermal hotels were evaluated, it was identified that 22 thermal hotels in total carried out outsourcing activities. Thus, data of these 22 thermal hotels were used in the analyses. In the analysis process, descriptive statistics were made use of in interpreting descriptive data and frequency and percentage of each variable are presented through tables. In the next stage, the agreement level of the thermal hotel managers with the statements related to outsourcing operations were presented via frequency tables. Mean, standard deviation and percentage analyses were carried out forming of the frequency tables.

At the final stage of analysis of the research data, whether reasons for outsourcing, supplier selection criteria, problems at practice and benefits of outsourcing and overall effects of outsourcing varied according to independent (control) variables was tested. In identification of differences, it was decided to use non-parametric tests taking sample size and distribution of each factor into account. In this regard, in order to identify differences, Kruskal Wallis H test and Mann-Whitney U test were used. Firstly, Kruskal Wallis H test was carried out in order to test whether or not there is a significant difference among more than two groups which have non-parametric data (Eymen, 2007; 160). Also, Mann Whitney U test was carried out by comparing measures of two independent groups or samples with respect to a dependent variable in order to test whether or not there is a significant difference between the two distributions (Ural ve Kılıç; 2005; 241).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Within the research, firstly, the data on thermal hotels using outsourcing and their managers was examined and the results are presented in Table 2. According to results in Table 2, the majority of the thermal hotels using outsourcing (77.2 %) are four and five-star thermal hotel enterprises. So, it is possible to state that outsourcing activities are preferred more by the large scale thermal hotels. However, it should be noted that most of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism registered and thermal hotels in Turkey are four or five star hotels.

*Table 2: Descriptive Information on Thermal Hotels and Hotel Managers*

Variables			Variables		
<b>Hotel Class</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Ownership Type</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
5-Star	14	63.6	Single Person Operated	---	---
4-Star	3	13.6	Family	7	31.8
3-Star	1	4.5	Company	11	50.0
2-Star	1	4.5	Holding	3	13.6
1-Star	2	9.1	National Chain	1	4.5
Other	1	4.5	International Chain	---	---
No answer	---	---	No answer	---	---
<b>No of Rooms</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No of Beds</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
0-99	5	22.7	0-149	3	13.6
100-199	7	31.8	150-299	4	18.2
200-299	2	9.1	300-449	2	9.1
300-399	5	22.7	450-599	3	13.6
400 and over	3	13.6	600 and over	8	36.4
No answer	---	---	No answer	2	9.1
<b>No of Staff</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Years of Operation</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
0-99	9	40.9	1-3 years	11	50.0
100-199	6	27.3	4-7 years	5	22.7
200-299	3	13.6	8-11 years	3	13.6
300 and over	2	9.1	12 years and over	3	13.6
No answer	2	9.1	No answer	---	---
<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	16	72.6	Owner	2	9.1
Female	6	27.3	Operation Manager	1	4.5
<b>Education</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	General Manager	4	18.2
High School	4	18.2	Assistant General Manager	2	9.1
University	16	72.7	Thermal/SPA Manager	1	4.5
Masters	2	9.1	Department Manager	12	54.5
No answer	---	---	No answer	---	---
<b>TOTAL (n)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>TOTAL (n)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When the ownership type of the thermal hotels using outsourcing is analyzed, it is seen that 50 % of these hotels are company, 31.8 % are family business and 13.6 % are corporate companies. It seems that family enterprises are the second most common business type with respect to ownership types. It is identified in the research on this issue that these types of hotels are generally founded by the families who either have land in the areas of thermal sources or have the opportunity to invest in those areas.

Within the research, 12 of the hotels included in the analysis (54.5%) have less than 200 rooms, whereas, 8 of them (36.3%) have 300 or more rooms. Analysis of the number of beds in the thermal hotels shows that 50% of them have bed capacity of 450 or more. In addition, according to analysis results, in 9 thermal hotels, less than 100 people work and in 6 thermal hotels, 100-200 staff has been employed. The fact that most of the hotels in the study are four or five-star enterprises and this affects the number of rooms, beds and personnel which is high in this case.

The Table 2, the demographic characteristics of the managers in the thermal hotels presented in, indicates that 72.7% of the managers are male and 27.3% of them are female. Of the managers responding to the questionnaire, 54.5% are department managers and 18.2 % are general manager. While 50% of the managers have been working in the hotel for less than 4 years, 22.7 % have been working in the hotel for

4-7 years. In addition, most of the participants who are qualified as managers (72.7 %) are university graduates.

Today, with competition getting intense every day, thermal hotels incline towards outsourcing in line with certain strategic aims. Reasons forcing thermal hotels to outsource is analyzed in Table 3. According to results of Table 3, the most important reason for outsourcing in thermal hotels, compared to others, is "bringing new technologies to the hotel" ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.857, s.d: 1.153). Issues that are given more importance compared to others are "increasing service quality" ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.818, s.d: 1.220), "specializing in related areas" ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.810, s.d: 0.981), "reducing costs" ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.762, s.d: 1.179), and "focusing on core competencies" ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.762, s.d: 1.136). It is identified that reasons that are less important in outsourcing practices in thermal hotels, compared to others, are "realization of downsizing strategy" ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.333, s.d: 1.065), "adding value to the hotel via the image of suppliers" ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.762, s.d: 1.513) and "ensuring flexibility in the hotel and related areas" ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.950, s.d: 1.099).

**Table 3: The Reasons Which Force Thermal Hotels to Use Outsourcing**

	$\bar{x}$	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
			%	%	%	%	%	%
Reducing costs	3.762	1.179	4.5	13.6	9.1	40.9	27.3	4.5
Focusing more on core competences	3.762	1.136	4.5	9.1	18.2	36.4	27.3	4.5
Realization of downsizing strategy	2.333	1.065	18.2	45.5	18.2	9.1	4.5	4.5
Ensuring flexibility in the hotel and related areas	2.950	1.099	13.6	13.6	27.3	36.4	---	9.1
Increasing service quality	3.818	1.220	9.1	4.5	13.6	40.9	31.8	---
Bringing new Technologies to the hotel	3.857	1.153	4.5	9.1	13.6	36.4	31.8	4.5
Specializing in related areas	3.810	0.981	---	13.6	13.6	45.5	22.7	4.5
Creating a competitive advantage	3.571	1.248	4.5	18.2	18.2	27.3	27.3	4.5
Adding value to the hotel via the image of suppliers	2.762	1.513	27.3	18.2	18.2	13.6	18.2	4.5
Resource transfer and re-allocation of hotel resources	3.429	0.870	4.5	4.5	36.4	45.5	4.5	4.5
The risk reduction purpose	3.476	1.250	9.1	13.6	13.6	40.9	18.2	4.5

$\bar{x}$ : Mean s.d: Standard Deviation 1: Definitely Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Definitely agree, 6: No answer.

Outsourcing which has become popular in thermal hotels recently is an activity constituting a long operation with pre and post processes and should be assessed within the framework of strategic management perspective. Thus, there are activities that need to be carried out before outsourcing. In this sense, activities that thermal hotels carry out before outsourcing are examined in Table 4.

**Table 4: The Activities Fulfilled at Thermal Hotels before Outsourcing**

Activities Fulfilled Before Outsourcing	Yes	%	No	%	No answer	%
The level of service quality and its cost to the hotel was researched.	20	95.5	1	5.5	1	4.5
The decision was made on whether the activities to be outsourced were the core competences.	18	81.8	3	13.6	1	4.5
The decision was made on which activities are to be outsourced.	21	95.5	--	--	1	4.5
The cost-benefit analysis was made for the outsourcing.	17	77.3	4	18.2	1	4.5
The letters of intent were sent to the suppliers.	17	77.3	4	18.2	1	4.5
The suppliers' service quality levels and prices were researched.	20	90.9	1	4.5	1	4.5
The suitability of suppliers to the hotel's image was researched.	21	95.5	--	--	1	4.5

The level of authority to be given to the supplier was determined.	19	86.4	2	9.5	1	4.5
The selection process for the most suitable supplier was realized.	21	95.5	–	–	1	4.5
The person in charge of outsourcing was selected.	16	72.7	4	18.2	2	9.1
Written contract was signed for the outsourcing.	20	90.9	1	4.5	1	4.5

Findings in Table 4 confirm that hotels practicing outsourcing attach extensive importance to pre-practice activities within the strategic management perspective. All of the enterprises which participated in the research and practiced outsourcing realized *the process of deciding on which activities to be outsourced, researched the suitability of suppliers to the hotel's image and tried to select the most suitable supplier.*

*Assignment of an authorized employee for outsourcing in the hotel, carrying out cost benefit analysis and sending proposal forms to suppliers* are some of the issues that are not fulfilled by some thermal hotels. It is possible to argue that the reason for some thermal hotels' practicing outsourcing without carrying out cost benefit analysis is the obligation emerging out of the financial constraints related to labor force and tools-equipments.

Within the research, after examining the activities carried out before outsourcing practice, areas of outsourcing was examined and the results are presented in Table 5. It is seen in Table 5 that thermal hotels mostly prefer to outsource the services of personnel transportation (n: 12, 54.5%), security (n: 9, 40.9 %) and animation activities (n: 8, 36.4 %). Departments that thermal hotels practice outsourcing much more compared to others are food and beverage department (n: 7, 31.8 %), housekeeping department (n: 5, 22.7 %), and laundry department (n: 5, 22.7 %). Related results support the idea that the formerly mentioned obligation emerging out of the financial constraints related to labor force and tools-equipment affects the outsourcing practice.

**Table 5: The Thermal Hotel Departments Where Services are outsourced**

	Yes	%	No	%		Yes	%	No	%
Front Office	1	4.5	21	95.5	Security	9	40.9	13	59.1
Housekeeping	5	22.7	17	77.3	Personnel	12	54.5	10	45.5
					Transportation				
Food & Beverage	7	31.8	15	68.2	Customer Relations	1	4.5	21	95.5
Laundry	5	22.7	17	77.3	Animation	8	36.4	14	63.6
Accountancy	1	4.5	21	95.5	SPA/Wellness Services	4	18.2	18	81.8
Sales & Marketing	2	9.1	19	90.9	Thermal Units	1	4.5	21	95.5
Human Resources	4	18.2	18	81.8	Other	3	13.6	19	86.4
Technical Services	4	18.2	18	81.8					

The results of Table 5 indicate that thermal hotels do not practice outsourcing in SPA/Wellness services (n: 4, 18.2 %) particularly in thermal units (n: 1, 4.5 %). From this point of view, it can be argued that thermal services and SPA/Wellness services are regarded as a critical factor in providing competitive advantage in thermal hotels and therefore, they are regarded as core competencies.

In thermal hotels in which outsourcing are practiced mainly in the areas of personnel transportation, security and animations, outsourcing is practiced at different levels according to practice area and state of the owned sources. As given in Table 6, while 27.3 % of thermal hotels outsource the activities by handing it over to a totally external brand, the other 27.3 % outsources only personnel and tools-equipments. 18 % of thermal hotels realize outsourcing practices just for staffing. It is understood from the comments in the questionnaire forms of the research that thermal hotels that practice outsourcing mainly in food-beverage and animation activities carry out outsourcing only staffing practices. On the other hand, it is seen that thermal hotels sign a contract with an external firm in areas that require expertise such as personnel transportation, security and SPA/Wellness services, and outsource whole of the related activities.

Table 6: The Level of Outsourcing Practices in Thermal Hotels

	n	%
Outsourcing is used for staffing	4	18.2
Outsourcing is used to obtain tools-equipment	3	13.6
Outsourcing is used for both staffing and obtaining tools and equipment	6	27.3
Outsourcing is used in everywhere possible including department management	3	13.6
Services are outsourced in regards to a contract signed between related department and an external brand	6	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Thermal hotels in tourism sector take certain criteria into account in selection of suppliers for the efficiency and success of outsourcing practices. Hence, the research aims to identify criteria on which the managers of thermal hotels focus in selection of suppliers. Results of analysis are presented in Table 7. The results indicate that in selection of suppliers, thermal hotels primarily consider the criteria of *having sound reliable references* ( $\bar{x}$ : 4.636, s.d: 0.727) and *sufficient service capacity of the suppliers* ( $\bar{x}$ : 4.545, s.d: 0.671). Supplier's having necessary quality certificates, technical expertise and experience and stability stand out as factors that are paid more attention to among other criteria. A general assessment of Table 7 indicates that thermal hotels exercise intense efforts in supplier selection process to choose the most convenient supplier or suppliers.

Table 7: The Supplier Selection Criteria in Thermal Hotels

	$\bar{x}$	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
			%	%	%	%	%	%
Stability	4.524	0.602	--	--	4.5	36.4	54.5	4.5
Technical expertise and experience	4.524	0.750	--	4.5	--	31.8	59.1	4.5
Better financial situation	4.091	0.921	--	9.1	9.1	45.5	36.4	--
Adequacy and variety of resources	4.409	0.734	--	4.5	--	45.5	50.0	--
Having sound reliable references	4.636	0.727	--	4.5	--	22.7	72.7	--
Sufficient service capacity of supplier	4.545	0.671	--	--	9.1	27.3	63.6	--
Activity plan to be applied	4.364	0.658	--	--	9.1	45.5	45.5	--
Cultural harmony	3.909	1.109	--	13.6	22.7	22.7	40.9	--
Price level to be applied	4.364	0.492	--	--	--	63.6	36.4	--
Provision of modern amenities	4.227	0.813	--	4.5	9.1	45.5	40.9	--
Having necessary quality certificates	4.455	0.671	--	--	9.1	36.4	54.5	--

$\bar{x}$ : Mean s.d: Standard Deviation 1: Definitely Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Definitely agree, 6: No answer.

Enterprises face various problems resulting from management, personnel and supplier firms in outsourcing activities carried out for different reasons such as increasing service quality, reducing costs and so on. These problems that can arise during outsourcing operations can also be faced by thermal hotels. Managers' views towards problems faced by thermal hotels during outsourcing process are examined in Table 8. As seen in the table, thermal hotels do not face problems in outsourcing practices. From this perspective, it can be stated that outsourcing processes in thermal hotels are being exercised smoothly.

Table 8: The Problems Faced by the Thermal Hotels during Outsourcing Process

	$\bar{x}$	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
			%	%	%	%	%	%
We experienced lack of knowledge and experience on outsourcing and management	2.864	1.037	4.5	45.5	9.1	40.9	--	--
We were unsuccessful in placing the essential conditions on outsourcing contracts	2.591	1.182	18.2	36.4	18.2	22.7	4.5	--

We could not intervene the supplier on their specialty subjects	2.500	0.964	9.1	54.5	13.6	22.7	--	--
The supplier company gave us misleading information on the scope and quality of their services	1.818	0.733	36.4	45.5	18.2	--	--	--
We could not achieve the expected productivity and quality from supplier's services.	2.333	0.856	9.1	59.1	13.6	13.6	--	4.5
We found out that the communication with the supplier was inadequate	2.227	0.612	4.5	72.7	18.2	4.5	--	--
We could not form the mutual confidence between enterprises.	2.286	0.845	13.6	50.0	22.7	9.1	--	4.5
We experienced difficulties in the implementation and delivery of services on time	2.727	1.120	13.6	36.4	13.6	36.4	--	--
We experienced difficulties in performance evaluation and auditing.	2.682	0.839	--	54.5	22.7	22.7	--	--
We partly lost control over activities related to Outsourcing	1.773	0.813	40.9	45.5	9.1	4.5	--	--

$\bar{x}$ : Mean **s.d**: Standard Deviation **1**: Definitely Disagree, **2**: Disagree, **3**: Neutral, **4**: Agree, **5**: Definitely agree, **6**: No answer

Thermal hotels expect various benefits from outsourcing activities that they realize in certain areas in accordance with strategic aims in parallel with their intended purposes of use. As seen in Table 9, in which views of managers on benefit of outsourcing are examined, the most significant benefit provided by outsourcing in thermal hotels is identified as *the increase in service quality* ( $\bar{x}$ : 4.091, s.d: 0.868).

Table 9: The Benefits Gained Through Outsourcing in the Thermal Hotels

	$\bar{x}$	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
			%	%	%	%	%	%
The cost was reduced.	3.727	1.032	--	18.2	13.6	45.5	22.7	--
Focusing on more basic skills was achieved.	3.818	0.958	--	13.6	13.6	50.0	22.7	--
Downsizing strategy was realised successfully.	2.591	1.054	9.1	50.0	18.2	18.2	4.5	--
Helped to increase the elasticity in related areas.	3.500	0.859	--	18.2	18.2	59.1	4.5	--
Services quality was increased.	4.091	0.868	--	9.1	4.5	54.5	31.8	--
New Technologies were obtained.	3.409	1.008	--	22.7	27.3	36.4	13.6	--
Specialization in related areas was achieved.	3.667	0.966	--	13.6	22.7	40.9	18.2	4.5
A competitive advantage was gained in competition with other hotels.	3.364	1.049	--	27.3	22.7	36.4	13.6	--
A value gained from making use of the supplier's image.	2.909	1.151	4.5	40.9	27.3	13.6	13.6	--
Transfer of resources and re-allocation of enterprise resources were achieved.	3.429	0.811	--	13.6	31.8	45.5	4.5	4.5
The purpose of risk reduction was performed successfully.	3.773	0.922	--	13.6	13.6	54.5	18.2	--

$\bar{x}$ : Mean **s.d**: Standard Deviation **1**: Definitely Disagree, **2**: Disagree, **3**: Neutral, **4**: Agree, **5**: Definitely agree, **6**: No answer

Table 9 reveals that the second most significant benefit of outsourcing in thermal hotels is *focusing more on core competencies* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.818, s.d: 0.958). Other significant benefits of outsourcing are as follows respectively; *realization of risk reduction purpose* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.773, s.d: 0.922), *reduction of costs* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.727, s.d: 1.032), and *achievement of specialization in related areas* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.667, s.d: 0.966).

The least significant benefit of outsourcing compared to others is *successful realization of downsizing strategy* ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.591, s.d: 1.054). An overall evaluation of the results points out those benefits obtained through outsourcing in thermal hotels parallel with intended purposes of outsourcing.

At the last stage of descriptive analyses the overall effects of outsourcing practice on the enterprises are examined. Results of analyses performed with this aim are presented in Table 10 with four main dimensions. An overall assessment of analysis results suggests that the most important effect of outsourcing practices in thermal hotels is seen within the context of service and service quality increasing ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.883). Administrative benefits ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.718), financial benefits ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.383) and organizational benefits ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.326) respectively follow increase in service and service quality.

A detailed analysis of results in Table 10 suggests that outsourcing practiced in thermal hotels contributed most on the issues of *increasing of the level of customer satisfaction* ( $\bar{x}$ : 4.00, s.d: 0.690) and *saving time for the management* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.955, s.d: 0.653). Other main contributions of outsourcing practices are the issues of *quality of the rendered service* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.909, s.d: 0.868), *increasing of service variety* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.909, s.d: 0.750), *more efficient utilization of staff* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.909, s.d: 0.684), and *focusing of management on core competences* ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.818, s.d: 0.907). On the other hand, the issue provided less contribution in thermal hotels compared to others is *realization of downsizing strategy* ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.591, s.d: 1.008).

Table 10: The Overall Effects of Outsourcing Practices in Thermal Hotels

	$\bar{x}$	s.d	1	2	3	4	5	6
			%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>INCREASING SERVICE AND SERVICE QUALITY</b>			<b>3.883</b>					
Increased the service quality	3.909	0.868	--	9.1	13.6	54.5	22.7	--
Increased the service variety	3.909	0.750	--	4.5	18.2	59.1	18.2	--
Helped to increase the level of customer satisfaction	4.000	0.690	--	4.5	9.1	68.2	18.2	--
Made it possible to follow technological innovations	3.714	0.784	--	4.5	31.8	45.5	13.6	4.5
<b>FINANCIAL BENEFITS</b>			<b>3.383</b>					
Helped to reduce the need for capital	3.286	1.056	--	31.8	13.6	40.9	9.1	4.5
Helped to reduce staff costs	3.545	0.963	--	22.7	9.1	59.1	9.1	--
Helped reduce the cost of energy and raw materials	3.227	1.110	--	36.4	18.2	31.8	13.6	--
Helped to transform fixed costs to variable costs	3.476	0.928	--	18.2	22.7	45.5	9.1	4.5
Reduced commissions paid to intermediaries	3.381	0.865	--	13.6	40.9	31.8	9.1	4.5
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS</b>			<b>3.326</b>					
Enabled the successful realization of downsizing strategy	2.591	1.008	9.1	45.5	27.3	13.6	4.5	--
Increased the number of expert employees	3.318	1.041	4.5	22.7	13.6	54.5	4.5	--
Helped to reduce the number of staff	3.227	1.066	--	36.4	13.6	40.9	9.1	--
Enabled more efficient utilization of staff	3.909	0.684	--	4.5	13.6	68.2	13.6	--
Helped to increase the flexibility of organization.	3.364	0.790	--	13.6	40.9	40.9	4.5	--
Accelerated the process of adaptation to changing environmental conditions	3.545	0.858	--	13.6	27.3	50.0	9.1	--
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE BENEFITS</b>			<b>3.718</b>					

Saving time for the management	3.95 5	0.65 3	--	4.5	9.1	72.7	13.6	--
Enabled management to focus on more core competences	3.81 8	0.90 7	--	13.6	9.1	59.1	18.2	--
Provided convenience to management in controlling and evaluation	3.68 2	0.89 4	--	13.6	18.2	54.5	13.6	--
Helped the implementation of a new enterprise management techniques	3.63 6	0.84 8	--	13.6	18.2	59.1	9.1	--
Helped develop the skills of managers	3.50 0	0.91 3	--	18.2	22.7	50.0	9.1	--

x: Mean s.d: Standard Deviation 1: Definitely Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Definitely agree, 6: No answer

However, when the intended use of outsourcing in thermal hotels is examined, it is concluded that aims to realize downsizing strategy remain highly in the background. Similarly, areas that outsourcing practices contribute to most are in harmony with outsourcing purposes. Within this respect, it can be argued that outsourcing processes in thermal hotels are carried out smoothly and as planned and desired outcomes are achieved.

## CONCLUSION

In this research, which aims to reveal areas of outsourcing in thermal hotels, reasons for outsourcing, criteria for selection of suppliers, problems faced at practice, benefits of outsourcing and overall effects of outsourcing, outsourcing practices in thermal hotels operating in Turkey is examined within the context of processes via the analysis of the data gathered from 22 thermal hotel enterprises. The most significant finding obtained in the research is that, unlike what is anticipated, outsourcing practices are very limited in thermal units and SPA/Wellness services in thermal hotels. From this point of view, it can be argued that thermal hotels consider this kind of activities as core competencies and regard these activities as a key element of competitive advantage. It is identified within the research that main activities in which outsourcing is practiced in thermal hotels are personnel transportation, security services, animation activities, food-beverage services, housekeeping and laundry services. Results of the research reveal that main reasons for outsourcing in thermal hotels are "bringing new technologies to the hotel, increasing service quality, specialization, reducing costs and focusing more on core competencies". In line with these main reasons, issues of prominence before the practice of outsourcing in thermal hotels are deciding on which activities to be outsourced, investigation of the suitability of supplier firms, investigation of quality level of rendered outsourcing services and suppliers, prediction of costs of outsourcing to the hotel, signing written outsourcing contracts. It is identified, on the other hand, that the criteria that is preferred most in supplier selection for outsourcing activities in thermal hotels are soundness and reliability of supplier's references, adequateness of service capacity, having essential quality certificates, stability, technical expertise and experience.

It is revealed in the study that the most significant benefits of outsourcing in thermal hotels are increase in service quality, focusing more on core competencies, realization of risk reduction purpose, reducing costs, and specializing in their areas of business. On the other side, it is concluded that primary outcomes such as increasing customer satisfaction throughout the business, increasing quality and variety of rendered services, more efficient utilization of staff, saving time for management and focusing of management more on core competencies are achieved through outsourcing.

Results of this research support the results obtained by various researchers in Turkey (Türksoy, 2005; İplik and Çınar, 2005; Türksoy and Türksoy, 2007) and in different countries (Lam and Han, 2005; Espino-Rodriguez and Padrón-Robaina, 2005; Espino-Rodriguez and Gil-Padilla, 2005; Wan and Su, 2010; Gonzales et al. 2011) who work on the subject of outsourcing in hospitality enterprises. In addition, for a better understanding of the issue and for increasing contributions to the sector, issues such as the suppliers' role on outsourcing preference, management of supply chain in outsourcing and particularly why thermal hotels do not prefer outsourcing need to be researched. Also, more detailed studies

investigating outsourcing activities in thermal hotels from resource-based and transaction cost perspectives in line with strategic management principles should be carried out and the results should be compared.

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