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**The Use Of Social Responsibility And Ethics On Hotels' Websites A study  
at 5 Star Hotels in Istanbul**

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**Abstract**

Today ethical principles and social responsibility projects proved to be for hotels where human resources are the major factors for the success at the industry. E-marketing is one of the widespread method for taking the advantage in such a kind of competitive environment. In this case, social responsibility projects and ethical principles that are implemented by the businesses have been very important as a part of marketing strategies in recent years. Moreover, websites play an important role as intermediary body of marketing strategies as well. Therefore, sharing ethical principles and social responsibility projects via websites is the key factor of effective marketing strategy. The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which 5 star hotels in Istanbul pay attention to share their ethical principles and social responsibility projects on their websites. For this purpose, the websites of 83 hotels in Istanbul have been examined by applying content analysis. The findings showed that only 25 of the selected hotels were interested in sharing their social and ethical values on their websites. In addition, the topic of ethical principles gained from the websites of 5 star hotels has been examined and social responsibility acts with their eight sub-categories has been evaluated separately. It was found that the hotels supported the projects related the most with education and the least with animals on their websites.

**Keywords:** Accommodation businesses, ethics, social responsibility

## INTRODUCTION

The businesses have worked to be useful to the society, to satisfy the expectations and needs of human beings, to be able to sustain their existence, be able to compete, and make profits. In the rapid changing world, the expectations and needs of consumers have been changing as well, the competition has been increasing from day to day with the technological innovations and globalisation. With the changing needs, the expectations of people from the businesses have changes as well and it has been necessary for businesses to be sensitive on social responsibilities and ethical issues (Isseveroglu, 2001). The businesses have conducted the social and public actions suitable with their own values by providing service to the society in accordance with their aims (Kaya, 2008).

Nowadays, customers express their reactions via individual or democratic organizations against social movements and expect the businesses to take similar reactions as well.. Businesses that are uninterested in environmental, economics, social and cultural problems and do not make any contributions to solve these problems may face with reactions by customers such as changing brand and complaining (Atesoğlu & Turker, 2010).

In his `Social Responsibility Of Businessman` book published in 1953 R.Bowe defines social responsibility as taking an action to protect values and intentions of communities. Moreover, social responsibility is the ethical principles where the international norms are regulated by the national governments for contributing to the benefits of the society.

The concept of social responsibility can be defined as a business to conduct a policy and activity strategy for satisfying needs and expectations of people who are inside and outside of the business and to satisfy people via these practises (Ozdemir & Yaman, 2008). These activity and strategies can be classified as economic, legal, ethics and charity responsibilities (Carroll, 1991). Besides, the concept of ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy examining moral phenomenons and behaviors in people's individual and social life for researching core of moral (Kozak & Guclu, 2006).

In the changing world, the increasing sensitivity of consumers and businesses against actions related with environment, human rights, cultural values and non-protected animals directed businesses to social responsibility projects and it caused them to give a place to these projects on their websites (Esrock & Leichty, 1998).

Electronic marketing is an important mean of marketing widely used in tourism industry. The mostly used areas of e-marketing in tourism businesses are hotel industry, airlines transportation industry, tour operator, travel agencies, rent a car businesses, destination management (Morkoç, 2009). E-marketing are used intensely by hotel industry (Zafiroopoulos, Vrana, & Paschalouidis, 2006) and the widely usage of internet has encouraged accommodation businesses to make investments on e-marketing (Pirnar, 2005).

In the first section of research, we will focus on social responsibilities and ethical concept and mention about the approaching of hotels toward e-marketing. In the second section, the websites of 5 star hotels in Istanbul will be analysed within giving place to the social responsibilities and ethical principles. The social responsibility projects and

ethical principles taking place on their websites will be categorized and a place will be given about the examples of fulfilled social responsibility projects will be presented in accordance with gained information.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The social responsibility actions have effected most sectors and displayed an improvement. The hotel businesses have been effected in the same way as well. Destroying of natural reserves and most actions such as negative projects effecting the environmental sustainability have displayed the rightness of businesses in having interest in social responsibility projects. In spite of these kinds of negative situations, some businesses have conducted kinds of projects with being aware of problems (Atesoglu & Türker, 2010). For instance, the project called “The Earth Guest Program” has arranged kinds of programs to encourage the existing local development and also to prevent destroying of environment (Lee & Park, 2009).

In their study on 229 chain hotels by Diaz and Koutra (2013) found that more than half of hotel businesses did not use the information about social responsibility on their websites. In study about the visitors that came to Hong Kong by Kucukusta, Mak and Chan (2013), the visitors emphasized that the hotels should absolutely give place to information about mission, vision and environment.

In their study on the social responsibilities in hotels operating in Safranbolu Ucar and Turker (2013) found that the hotels were sensitive to the social responsibilities. In addition, they have taken an action in accordance with principles of social responsibilities. According to a study by Atesoglu & Türker (2010), it was observed that 50 percent of hotels have taken a place in projects about social responsibilities. However, it has been analyzed that a significant number of businesses tend to participate in next terms project. Therefore, it can be said that social responsibility will gain importance in hotel businesses.

The hotels are among the businesses that use the internet technology most actively throughout the global marketing actions and advertisement processes. (Soh, Q. , Gan, Chew, & Reid, 1997). The hotels have especially wanted to benefit from the easiness that the internet provides with creating their own internet websites. (Pınar, 2005). Creating their own websites and using it actively, the hotels have a great amount of assist in reaching potential customers in a faster way. (Turdaliev, 2009) in this case, the hotels have taken their places in online market via websites and a bridge will have been created between the customers and the hotels (Chunga & Lawb, 2003).

E-marketing helps hotels to make contacts with customers faster and easier, to be informed about expectations and demands, to answer customers’ questions faster. The websites whose cost is low and that are used openly to communication in global aspects are very important for hotels in marketing actions (Morkoc, 2009). Moreover, t e-marketing is used is its being more functional and featurable (Altas, 2010).

According to study by Boylu and Tuncer (2008), the areas of internet usage have been categorized as follows: communication,marketing, new production development,process development, decreasing the costs, presenting a service focused on customer,direct marketing,advertisement and introduction,delivery process.etc. the hotels have provided reservation service via their websites (Pınar, 2005). The hotels

aim to be able to effect their customers for online reservations by promising the best price (O'connor & Murphy, 2004).

Most of the customers have preferred to make bookings online instead of using mediators and traditional delivery services. (Jeong, 2003). The reasons why the customers tend to use the websites are saving time and benefiting from the appropriate price. (Chunga & Lawb, 2003; Liang, 2003) the potential customers have been able to get information about the product and service via internet and been able to compare the products and the services of other bussinesses. (O'connor & Murphy, 2004).

The content which takes place on a website should be about what it presents to customers. This content should not only contain what services and products are available but also the information of customer usage and website policy (Cox and Dale, 2002). In a content study that Ozkul, Gokce ve Ozturk (2010) examined the websites of 5 star hotels, it was found that the hotel websites are sufficient in scope of marketing and using but insufficient in content, information safety, directing and consumer services. In a study conducted about the assessment of the websites of businesses by Karamustafa, Bickes and Ulama (2002), it has been concluded that the websites have been stable.

In their study on businesses in Burdur, Cicek, Demirel, and Onat (2010) found that only 4 of 124 businesses were using their websites actively, 69 of them less effective and 55 of them were non-effective. In their study, Gureş, Arslan and Yalcın (2013) wanted to find out how actively the airline businesses were using their websites and as a result ,5 of 9 airline businesses mid-level and 4 of them were using actively. The results of these studies reveal that the businesses in turkey cannot benefit from the internet efficiently.

## **METHADODOLOGY**

In the last decade, content analysis method has been used in numerous researches in tourism and hospitality (Holcomb, Uphurch and Okumus, 2007; Kizilirmak, Alrawadieh, Kucukali and Atsız, 2015). In this research, content analysis was applied to examine acts related with social responsibility projects and ethical principles on hotels websites. Content analysis is defined as a qualitative approach analyzing and presenting oral, written and different materials objectively and systematically (Tavsancıl & Aslan, 2001). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), content analysis is also defined as a process gained written data in original content and messages by expressing and summarizing.

In the first section of this research, 5 star hotels detected by official websites of Cultural and Tourism Ministry are listed. All hotels websites are analyzed and in what level a 5 star hotel in Istanbul pays enough attention to share their ethical principles and social responsibility projects on their websites. In this process, the data obtained from websites is grouped by regulating and is formed categories. Sub of social responsibility category, examples gained from web sites are presented.

In this research, the data is collected from 25 of 83 hotels websites. No information related with social responsibility and ethical principles accessed on other hotel websites. Authors have come across information either in newspaper archives or internet sites related with social responsibilities of hotels whose information is

inaccessible on their own websites. However, these information are excluded from study because of that scope of study include only hotel websites.

As a result of analyzing the hotel websites, “ethical principles” are handled in one category and “social responsibility projects” are handled in 8 categories separately. In this study, the name and ID’s of hotels that were examined were not used due to ethical anxiety. Findings gained are presented in the following section.

### **A) ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

Concept of ethical is defined as a branch of philosophy examining values, value judgment and principles which shape and direct life of human beings (Yilmazer & Bahadır, 2011). Tourism industry is in connection with different society and naturel sciences on the occasion of feature of having multidisciplinary. Therefore, a lot of topics in tourism pertain to ethical principles and some dimensions of it cause to complex impacts (Payne & Dimanche, 1996). Socio-culturel, econims and environmental dimensions necessitate to analyse ethically tourism industry (Fennel & Przeclawski, 2003).

In this study, it has been detected that only one hotel gave support to the ethical principles on their websites. This result has been showed that hotels doesn’t give importance adequately to ethical values or not to have a need for webify their ethical principles on their websites.

### **B)SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS**

The data about social responsibility projects of hotels is gathered up by researchers. The researchers firstly analyzed the data gained by using coding method that is used in content analysis and categorized. Then, sub-categories (Table 1) that is found by researchers are reduced to 8 sub-categories by comparing with each other.

**Table 1.** The sub categories and the number of hotels.

| <b>Sub Category</b>    | <b>Number of Hotels</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sustainability         | 7                       |
| Environment            | 12                      |
| Education              | 12                      |
| Health and Security    | 4                       |
| Culture and Art        | 5                       |
| Human Rights (Society) | 10                      |

|          |    |
|----------|----|
| Children | 10 |
| Animals  | 2  |

### **1- Sustainability**

Understanding of sustainable tourism can be handled as a concept expected to become popular year after year and to validate in all branches of tourism. It is a necessary manner to evaluate sources used in tourism sustainably and to avoid from overutilization for this understanding. In addition, to support the local economic and to conclude local community in planning process are essential principles of sustainable tourism (Erdogan, 2012). The hotels expressing that they conduct and support sustainable projects on their websites show that they were integrated with principles such as value of future generation and natural life.

For the purpose of this paper, data related to sustainability was detected on 7 hotels web sites. It has been thought that it is not a enough count for advertising and marketing only with these projects and to make positive image in the eyes of potential customers. Additionally, data gained from 7 of 83 hotels fulfilling social responsibilities with regard to sustainability is seen inadequate as a positive development for improving sustainable projects.

Examples on analyzed hotels websites related with sustainability are shown below ;

- H 7 is conducted a project called “Sanctuary Project”. They have been running project since 2010 for the purpose of protecting biological diversity and habitat protection.
- H 11 is making investments for the sustainable and innovative applications for the people to adopt the people under the scope of “Green Program”. They mention that they run projects by improving sustainable projects such as based on education and innovation, recovery of environment, promoting global and local communities in terms of economical within vision and essential values of company.

### **2- Environment**

The hotels are always in connection with environment at different dimensions. These connections can harm the environment and lead to different damages. However, it is likely that the hotels take some precautions for minimising the negative environmental impacts at the purchasing process. Projects and policies contributed by hotels require to minimise the negative impact.

Business can contribute to the environment friendly projects by applying some policies such as purchasing recycled products, leaving minimal waste after using and using with healthy packaging products, purchasing of products that can provide energy savings, preferring the products that do not damage the natural environment in cleaning products and avoiding to waste products (Erdogan & Baris, 2007). Analyzed on hotels websites, data related to environment has been revealed on 12 hotels web sites.

Projects related with environment conducted by hotels are presented below;

- H 1 contributes to an act collecting unused papers for recycling with TEMA (Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats).
- H 19 given place to reward with “Green Star Certification” given by Tourism and Cultural Ministry.

### **3- Education**

Today in our world some countries improved actually in terms of technology emphasize importance of education. The public and private sectors in all countries have entered into the process of reconstruction for contributing to the education at the end of fulfilled innovations and improvements. They give important contributions related to education by conducting projects about education or contributing to social responsibilities related with existing education (Çetin, Çakıroğlu, Bayılmış, & Ekiz, 2004). When viewed from this aspect, a lot of businesses contribute to education by opening a school within the scope of social responsibility or open a course in its own structure.

Analyzing the content of hotels websites, data with related to education has been detected on 12 hotels web sites. Some hotels spread these information by newspaper, others present directly on their website within the scope of social responsibilities aims.

Some projects related with education conducted by hotels are presented below;

- Hotel 7 give some educations within to contribute education of the youngs, to present the sustainable career opportunities and to gain information about hotels skills.
- Hotel 12 mentioned that they conduct workshops related with kitchen education for mentally disabled students.

### **4-Health and Safety**

Health is usually referred to as a concept of including physical, social, emotional and spiritual states of people and satisfaction and quality of life and increasing gradually to fulfill him/herself. Concepts of health and safety are important for tourism industry. Because, people expect that food and beverages in hotels or countries that they will go should be healthy and safe foods; hotels conditions such as health, safety and clean rooms must be provided (Cihangiroglu & Deveci, 2011).

The analysis showed that information related to health and safety was detected on only 4 hotels web sites. To give some contributions and fulfill some projects related with health and safety will have an impact on potential customers when they make a holiday plan.

Some examples related with health and safety conducted by hotels are presented below;

- Hotel 3 donates to “Turkish Red Crescent” which is the largest humanitarian organization in Turkey and is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2,500 Turkish liras every year.

- Hotel 5 mentioned that they built a hospital through groups of company.

### **5-Culture and Art**

Today a great many businesses started to support social responsibility projects for the purpose of sustaining and protecting cultural values. They contribute to some projects in many areas with goals such as bringing to light the facing extinction cultural wealth, protecting cultural and art values and supporting with new initiatives.

Projects related with culture and arts supported by hotels are detected on 5 hotels websites. When thought positive contributions of artistic arts, exhibits, concerts, festivals and cultural activities to tourism, it can be said that these projects should be supported by hotels for creating advantage.

Some examples related with culture and arts conducted by hotels are presented below;

- Hotel 5 express to value the own museums in Ankara and İstanbul.
- Hotel 8 is organizing some activities about cultural. They have conducted same activities in different countries.

### **6-Human Rights (Society)**

It can considered that the society fulfilled human development criteria is well developed. In this case, social responsibility projects organized toward the handicapped, helpless, old, orphan people and people reintroduced to society have a place in social context.

Projects related with human rights are conceived on 10 hotels websites. Some projects toward human rights are presented below;

- Hotel 1 supports a campaign collecting plastic water bottle with blue cap for purpose of getting wheelchairs for disabled people.
- Hotel 12 supports to mentally disable students. They organize events and holy tour for them.

### **7- Children**

Projects conducted and supported by businesses related with especially education of children and youngs, socializing, reintroducing children and youngs to the society and growing confident individuals are considered that these projects will be benefited from children and it will attract potential customers, employees and posterity's interest.

Social responsibility projects with regard to children are found out on 10 hotels websites. To increase life quality of youngs and children who are in need of help and to support more some projects conducted about them is a positive behavior for next generation and businesses.

Two social responsibility projects regarding children can be listed;

- Hotel 14 mention that they defend children's rights in their vision and ensure better living conditions for needy and exploited children all over the world.
- Hotel 4 support SOS children village.

## **8- Animals**

Some projects related to improving awareness of animal love and their life rights and freedoms are conducted especially by civil society organizations and private sector. It is crucial that businesses support some social responsibility projects conducted with regard to leave the animals back to their habitat and meet their protection, care and treatment needs. To support projects conducted about sharing same world with animals and awareness of integration cause to positive results for both animals and people.

Social responsibility projects about animals are found out on 2 hotels websites. These are presented below;

- Hotel 1 regularly visits an animal shelter and donates food to shelters.
- Hotels 3 mentioned that foods are taken regularly from the hotel by HAS.

## **CONCLUSION**

Today businesses and customers are more in connect with each other along with impact of globalization and technological innovations. Internet technologies mediate between communication and connection acts. Socio-cultural, economic and environmental improvements experienced around the outside of the business require them to follow these improvements. Any change happened around the outside of the business reflect on customers and customers spread this information swiftly. Customers who go to a business have shared their experience and the information gained about business on websites. This situation shows that businesses should dwell on reviews commented by users via internet.

With improving of internet technology, businesses create a website for the purpose of introducing themselves and to be able to offer their goods or services. With this communication channel, businesses can present developments and changes to consumers and can carry out some acts such as advertising, promotion, marketing, sales and reservation as online.

Accommodation businesses providing goods or services are labor-intensive business. These are affected direct or indirectly from the developments happened around of its. Fort this reason, accommodation businesses create a website and present some information about businesses by making their advertisement and promotion on their website. In addition, giving some social responsibility projects on their websites or different communication channels. Accommodation businesses are trying to reflect themselves more to customers.

In this research, it was attempted to determine the extent to which 5 star hotels in Istanbul pay to share their ethical principles and social responsibility projects on their websites. Under the scope, the websites of 83 hotels in Istanbul have been examined in detail with content analysis. Ethical principles and social responsibility projects have been evaluated separately. As the result of the research, it has been displayed that only

25 of them are interested to share their social and ethical values on their websites. Projects related with social responsibility are sustainability, environment, education, health and safety, culture and art, human rights, children and animals. It has been found out that the hotels supported the projects related the most with education and the least with animals on their websites. It has been detected that only one hotel gave support to the ethical principles on their websites.

As a result of this study, the data related with social responsibility and ethical principles obtained from the websites of hotels does not provide adequate information. In addition, the study findings related with stability of websites were consisted with other similar studies conducted previously (Karamustafa, Bickes and Ulama, 2002; Cicek, Demirel, and Onat, 2010). 83 hotels websites are analyzed in detail and 25 of them are interested to share their social responsibility projects and ethical principles. This finding which is with regard to insufficient number of hotels website is consisted with other similar study (Diaz and Koutra, 2013). However, accommodation businesses tend to share their social responsibility projects and ethical principles (Uçar &Turker, 2013; Atesoglu &Turker, 2010). Therefore, it shows that this finding can be seen as a improvement within the sharing social responsibility projects and ethical principles.

This study contributes to hotel businesses an opportunity for sharing their social responsibility projects and ethical principles with their potential and existing customers. It has foreseen that hotel businesses would pay attention to sharing social responsibility projects and ethical principles on their websites. It is suggested that hotel businesses need to share their social responsibility projects and ethical principles on their website for potential and existing customers. In addition, these projects should not shared on newspapers or other sources. It is also suggested that hotel businesses conduct social responsibility projects.

There are some limitations of this study, the study is conducted only in 5 star hotel businesses in Istanbul and some of the information about social responsibility projects and ethical principles was inaccessible on hotels websites. For the further studies, researches could use larger samples and apply on different destinations.

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