



A comparison of strategic planning practices in companies from the UK and Turkey

Strategic
planning
practices

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the nature and practice of strategic planning in two different environmental contexts, the UK and Turkey.

Design/methodology/approach – Employing a structured mail questionnaire, the study collected data from a sample of UK and Turkish firms. Using a sampling frame of 500 firms from the EXTEL database of UK listed companies, 113 usable responses were received for the UK firms. In total, 135 responses were obtained from the Turkish firms based on a sampling frame of 638 firms derived from the database of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry's 500 largest Turkish manufacturing companies and the database of companies quoted on the Istanbul Stock Exchange.

Findings – There are a number of significant differences between the strategic planning practices of Turkish firms and UK firms. Contrary to expectations, it appears that Turkish firms rather than UK firms are more favourably disposed to strategic planning. The exception to this is the adoption and use of a range of tools/techniques of strategic analysis, which are more regularly employed by UK firms than by Turkish firms.

Practical implications – Organisations should be aware that strategy formulation is futile without appropriate strategy implementation and should seek a coherent interface between those responsible for the strategic planning process and those responsible for implementation to ensure that each group is working to the same set of objectives. With the development of the market economy in Turkey, and the increased competition from foreign firms as globalisation proceeds, it may be necessary for the Turkish firms to increasingly adopt the techniques and tools of strategic planning.

Originality/value – This paper provides some important insights to the applicability of Western strategic management thinking to the business environment in emerging countries.

Keywords Strategic planning, Corporate strategy, United Kingdom, Turkey, Cross-cultural studies

Paper type Research paper



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Introduction

Despite the fluctuating popularity of strategic planning in its various guises since the 1960s, strategic planning has been perceived to be of benefit to companies (Glaister and Falshaw, 1999). One reason for this was the view that “there is a growing feeling that practical strategic advice can be based on sound deduction and systematic observation” (Foss, 1997, p. 3). A major factor in this resurgence of practical strategy making is the development of the resource based view of strategy (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991).

Strategic planning has been associated with the field of strategic management from its earliest foundations. These early developments significantly include those of Andrews (Learned *et al.*, 1965) and of Ansoff (1965). Strategic planning has also been known under various labels encompassing “long range planning”, “corporate planning”, “strategic management” in addition to “strategic planning” (see for example, Steiner, 1963, 1979; Steiner and Cannon, 1966; Ackoff, 1970; Ansoff *et al.*, 1976), although is not the purpose of this paper to review and dissect the nuances these different labels bring to the subject. From the perspective of classical strategic management theory, “strategy is considered a deliberate planning process (formal), initiated by top management (top-down), based on an elaborate industry analysis (rational) and aimed at designing a cohesive grand strategy for the corporation (consistency)” (Volberda, 2004, p. 36). These authors and others (see for example Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999) point out that when the term strategic planning is used the intent is to convey that a firm’s strategic planning process involves explicit systematic procedures used to gain the involvement and commitment of those principal stakeholders affected by the plan.

For our purposes we use strategic planning as a label to describe an organisational managerial process, which can be broadly “defined as the process of determining the mission, major objectives, strategies, and policies that govern the acquisition and allocation of resources to achieve organizational aims” (Pearce *et al.*, 1987, p. 658). To assist in this process a number of analytical tools and techniques were developed, such as strengths, weaknesses, opposition, threats (SWOT) analysis, Porter’s five forces industry analysis, the BCG growth-share matrix and McKinsey’s 7S model. Consistent with this approach is the assumption that the chief executive officer (CEO) can design a “grand strategy” for the entire enterprise.

An additional strategic planning system characteristic is the extent to which strategies within organisations result from a deliberate or an emergent process. Whether strategy formulation is, or can be, a deliberate process and the extent to which strategy emerges without any formal planning has been subject to debate. If strategies emerge within an organisation, it might be expected that some of the standard tools and techniques of the strategic planning process would not be explicitly utilised or reported by such an organisation.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the nature and practice of strategic planning in two different environmental contexts, Turkey and the UK. Cross-national cultural surveys of managerial attitudes and practices exhibit international differences (Hofstede, 1994; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998) and these differences have been well mirrored in managerial behaviour (Carr, 2005). In terms of managerial attitudes and work practices, UK firms, in general, have been characterised as adhering more to Anglo-American business culture than have Turkish firms. The latter have more commonalities to the Arabic cluster in terms of values, norms, behaviours in organisations and business relationships (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002) as well as governance and leadership practices (Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 2006).

Empirical evidence on strategic planning that compares practices between companies from different countries is very limited, particularly studies that examine the strategic planning processes of firms in a developed market economy and those located in a transitional economy. The findings of this study provide some important insights to the applicability of Western strategic management thinking to the business environment in emerging countries (Cheah and Chew, 2005; Haines, 1988). Turkey, in this regard, is an instructive case as it is currently at the centre of several debates due to its ongoing membership negotiations with the European Union (EU). The characteristics of the Turkish economy and its strategic location as a bridgehead between East and West make it an interesting case to examine the nature and role of the strategic planning process. Since the early 1980s, Government policies in Turkey have aimed at developing a free market economy and have encouraged an outward-oriented export-led development strategy. Significant progress has been achieved in the liberalisation of trade and investment policies and the pursuit of macroeconomic stability and economic growth. This policy stance has also contributed to a substantial increase in inward foreign direct investment to Turkey (Tatoglu and Glaister, 1998; Hadjit and Moxon-Browne, 2005). Comparison of two different country contexts provides a contribution to the literature as most prior studies on the strategic planning process have examined evidence from firms from a single country, either from a mature market economy or a developing country.

The rest of this paper is set out as follows: the next section provides a brief review of literature relating to the comparison of managerial and strategic planning practices in the UK and Turkish contexts and the research questions of the study. The third section sets out the research methods of the study. The findings and discussion are in the fourth section. Conclusions are in the final section.

Managerial and strategic planning practices in the Turkish and UK contexts

Although there is a dearth of research investigating Turkish management practices in general and strategic planning practices in particular, commentators and researchers tend to agree on certain characteristics of managerial and strategic planning practices in Turkey (Skinner, 1964; Lauter, 1970; Ramazanoglu, 1985). Among the frequently mentioned characteristics of Turkish managerial practices are a highly centralised organisational structure (Skinner, 1964; Terril, 1965; Lauter, 1969, 1970; Pasa *et al.*, 2001), reliance on short-term planning (Lauter, 1970; Iseri and Demirbag, 1999), less clear organisational strategies (Terril, 1965; Sozen and Shaw, 2002), reactive rather than proactive strategies and long-term vertical relationships (Skinner, 1964; Iseri and Demirbag, 1999). The nature of decision making in Turkish business organisations has been described as top-down and less participative (Lauter, 1969; Sozen and Shaw, 2002) and hierarchical relations are reported to be formal and status rigid (Pasa *et al.*, 2001). Turkish business organisations, probably due to overstaffing and top-down communication, have been found to have high administrative intensity (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999; Sozen and Shaw, 2002). In their work of understanding cultural diversity among 38 nations, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) noted Turkey to have the steepest hierarchy in its organisations and to resemble more the “family type” category. Sozen and Shaw (2002) argue that submissive and paternalistic tendencies, the avoidance of initiation and innovation are derived from a patriarchal benevolent and close-knit family system and authoritarian and rote learning based

education system. Such an administrative value appears to create action avoidance in terms of decision making and strategic planning.

As a close-knit society, business organisations in Turkey are dominated by private holding companies run by family members and professional managers (Gunduz and Tatoglu, 2003). As Pasa *et al.* (2001, p. 568) highlight “family members still hold permanent positions in organisations and continue to be responsible for relationships with state officials”. The state, in Turkey, from the early years of the republic, has been a major player in business life (Ramazanoglu, 1985; Bugra, 1994; Yamak, 2006) and often intervenes by frequent and predictable policy changes (Bugra, 1994; Pasa *et al.*, 2001). At a more fundamental level, Turkey has developed an “insider system” of corporate governance, which is characterised by few listed companies, a large number of substantial share stakes, and large inter-corporate shareholdings (Ararat and Ugur, 2003). While ownership structures of Turkish companies are relatively transparent, anecdotal empirical evidence suggests that statutory and executive boards are dominated by family members (Ararat and Ugur, 2003). The holding company structure of Turkish firms facilitates inter-corporate shareholding, but the ultimate owners of these companies are often family members, which indicate ownership and cash flow rights are not diffused (Yurtoglu, 2000). In their comparative survey of the role, purpose and contribution of boards between Turkish firms and Anglo-American firms, Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2006) concluded that business and interpersonal skills of Turkish chairmen and board members are wide-ranging, though their “neglect” of governance leaves the firm vulnerable in terms of a heavy reliance on one person, the owner/chairman, and tends to undermine the corporate reputation, especially from the perspective of attracting international strategic alliances and foreign direct investment.

The strategic decision-making and planning practices of UK managers have been described as formal and guided by unwritten rules (Mallory *et al.*, 1983). Axelsson *et al.* (1991) describe the UK decision-making style as a conservative approach coupled with personal rather than institutional connections. At the same time UK managers are found to be more individualist, task oriented and more ambitious (Hofstede, 1994; Axelsson *et al.*, 1991). Although an earlier study reported that UK firms did little planning beyond what was necessary for co-ordination (Granick, 1972) recent studies report more use of medium and long term plans in UK firms (Glaister and Falshaw, 1999; Falshaw *et al.*, 2005). Arruda and Hickson (2002) in a comparative study of UK and Brazilian managerial decision making found that UK organisations rely on a larger number of information sources and decision making is more formal, yet there seem to be some interpersonal connections at the apex.

Although much has been argued about culture and its impact on management practices (Hofstede, 1994), Negandhi (1983a, b) provides some evidence that planning practices in developing countries are affected more by the institutional environment (i.e. government intervention, political instabilities, inflation level, state business relations, incentives or lack thereof) than societal values. Negandhi (1983a) further argues that, in developing countries, factors such as political instability and inflation and market conditions are more important to strategic planning practices than national or organisational culture. Owner-manager controlled firms, coupled with market conditions may create a centralised nucleus in organisations in emerging market economies. Governmental controls are also seen among the important factors in Negandhi's (1983b) earlier research in Latin America and India. Price and wage spirals, and subsequent inflation are serious problems confronting

many developing countries (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999). Therefore one may expect inflation and political instabilities to affect strategic planning practices and planning horizons more than national culture does. Table I provides a summary of managerial and strategic planning practices frequently reported for Turkey and the UK in terms of the following three dimensions: firm strategy, firm structure and management decision making.

	Turkish context	UK context
Firm strategy	Limited long-term plans (Lauter, 1970); Inadequate marketing planning (Lauter, 1970) Reactor (following rather than leading) (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) Long term vertical relationships (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) Undiversified sources of information (Lauter, 1970) Immediatism (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) Limited sources of information (Bugra, 1994)	Short termism (Carr, 2005) Gradualism (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Less risk-taking capacity (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Diverse sources of information (Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991) Conservative approach to decision making takes place within formal settings, but proceed by using unwritten rules (Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991)
Firm structure	Highly centralized (Lauter, 1970) Formalised (Pasa <i>et al.</i> , 2001) Large staffs (Skinner, 1964) High administrative intensity (Sozen and Shaw, 2002; Pasa <i>et al.</i> , 2001) Owners' personal influence (Bugra, 1994; Pasa <i>et al.</i> , 2001) Less powerful middle management (Wasti, 1998) Dominating authority figure (Bugra, 1994; Pasa <i>et al.</i> , 2001) Authority centred (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) Pyramidal and cascaded ownership structure (Ararat and Ugur, 2003)	Less powerful middle management (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) More powerful apex (Hickson, 1987) Decentralised system bounded by broad policy (Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991) Control based on less formal rules and more reciprocal, personal trust relationships (Mallory <i>et al.</i> , 1986) Respect for authority (Arruda and Hickson, 2002; Tayeb, 1988) Individual centred (Tayeb, 1988; Hofstede, 1994) Task oriented (Tayeb, 1988; Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991) Less cascaded ownership structure (Carr, 2005)
Management decision making	Confine the decision to entrepreneur owner- entrepreneurship (Bugra, 1994) Intuition and informal networking at the top (Bugra, 1994; Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) Top-down decision making (Iseri and Demirbag, 1999) No tolerance to opposition (Sozen and Shaw, 2002) Impersonal style (Wasti, 1999) Shorter decision making time – immediatist (Pasa <i>et al.</i> , 2001)	Confine the process to top élite-managerialism (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Squeeze-out opposition (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Unwritten rules (Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991; Tayeb, 1988) Diverse sources of information (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Less tolerance to opposition (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Longer decision making time-gradualist (Arruda and Hickson, 2002) Personal connections (Axelsson <i>et al.</i> , 1991)

Table I.
Managerial and strategic
planning practices in
Turkey and the UK

The prior literature has clearly identified differences between the Turkish and UK contexts. This leads us to expect that strategic planning practices will vary significantly between firms from these two countries. Consequently, our first hypothesis is:

H1. There will be systematic significant differences between the strategic planning practices of Turkish firms and UK firms.

In order to investigate these differences we categorise the nature and practice of strategic planning across a number of dimensions identified from the prior literature: planning characteristics, planning procedures, commitment to strategic alternatives, emphasis on areas of strategic planning, tools and techniques of strategic analysis, and views on the strategic planning processes. Based on the nature of the differences in managerial and strategic planning practices in the UK and Turkey identified in the literature review, we conjecture that firms in Turkey will be less inclined towards strategic planning. This is encapsulated in our second hypothesis:

H2. In general UK firms will be more disposed to strategic planning, reflected in the greater adoption of and commitment to the identified dimensions of strategic planning, than will Turkish firms.

Research methods

Sample

Employing a structured mail questionnaire, this study collected data from a sample of UK and Turkish firms. For the UK firms, a questionnaire and a covering letter were posted to 500 companies selected using a stratified random sampling plan from the EXTEL database of UK listed companies. After one reminder 113 useable responses were received, representing a 23 per cent response rate. Systematic size or industry differences could not be detected between respondents and non-respondents. The sample of 113 public limited companies had mean sales of £712 million and mean number of employees of 7,270. As only listed companies are contained within this sample frame it excludes many very small companies of fewer than 100 employees. This was not viewed as a serious threat to the study as many such companies are likely to be managed entrepreneurially and so have no recognisable strategic planning system. The UK sample is therefore composed of relatively large firms, with 54 per cent classified as operating in the manufacturing sector, and 46 per cent in the service sector.

The sample frame for the Turkish firms was derived from the database of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry's 500 largest Turkish manufacturing companies and the database of companies quoted on the Istanbul Stock Exchange. After eliminating those companies listed in both databases, the sampling frame included a total of 638 companies. The survey questionnaire was mailed to the CEO of each company with a letter requesting that the CEO, or his/her senior executive in charge of strategy development within the organisation, should complete it. After one reminder 135 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 21.2 per cent, which was satisfactory, given the seniority of the respondents, and the confidentiality and complexity of the questionnaire. No systematic differences were found between responding and non-responding companies across the main characteristics of the Turkish sample such as size, industry and ownership structure ($p > 0.1$). The sample of 135 companies had mean sales of \$131.96 million and mean number of employees of

1,040. The sample is therefore composed of relatively large firms given the scale of the Turkish economy, with 85 per cent of the companies classified as operating in the manufacturing sector and 15 per cent in the service sector. In terms of ownership structure, 22 per cent of the sample companies were classified as state-owned, 59 per cent private-owned and 19 per cent foreign-owned.

Respondents

The distribution of UK respondents was 56 per cent CEOs (e.g., chairman, managing director) 18 per cent finance executives (e.g. finance director, company secretary) 18 per cent planning executives (e.g. planning manager, development director) and 8 per cent other senior executives (e.g. marketing director, land director). The Turkish respondents were 39.3 per cent CEOs (e.g. chairman, managing director), 14.8 per cent vice president, 11.1 per cent planning executives (planning manager, business development manager), 10.4 per cent finance executives (e.g. finance director, general coordinator) and 24.4 per cent other senior executives (e.g. marketing director, production manager and human resources director). Given the level of responsibility of respondents, the findings provide a good reflection of senior management's views on the strategic planning process.

Findings and discussion

Strategic planning characteristics

A number of planning characteristics of the sample of Turkish and UK firms are shown in Table II. Around 70 per cent of the firms in the sample have a written mission statement. Although a greater percentage of Turkish firms have a written mission statement compared with UK firms, there is no statistically significant difference between Turkish firms and UK firms according to whether they have a written mission statement. This is somewhat contrary to expectations, as it was anticipated that more UK firms than Turkish firms would have a written mission statement. Of the full sample of firms, 84 per cent have a set of medium/long-term objectives. As a proportion, more of the UK firms have a set of medium/long-term objectives than the Turkish firms ($p < 0.01$), which was expected. Only about half the firms have a person or a group with specific responsibility for identifying opportunities and threats, with, as anticipated, UK firms having a statistically higher proportion of such firms than Turkish firms ($p < 0.05$). Around two-thirds of the sample firms have a person or group with specific responsibility for identifying strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, about three-quarters of all firms have a group with specific responsibility for business/corporate and/or strategic planning. There is no statistically significant difference between Turkish and UK firms with regard to these characteristics. In general, it is surprising that a high proportion of sample firms seemingly have no one with specific responsibility for conducting basic SWOT analysis or overall planning. In part this could be because such responsibilities are diffused through the organisations with different people taking responsibility at different times. It may also be likely that, although such activities are carried out by the sample firms, they are not performed regularly enough (see below) to warrant the identification of a dedicated group with specific responsibility.

Strategic planning procedures

Figure 1 indicates the nature of company strategic planning procedures for the sample firms. As Figure 1 shows, for all strategic planning procedures apart from one, the UK firms have a higher mean score than the Turkish firms, with four of the planning procedures being statistically significantly different between the two groups of firms:

Table II.
Strategic planning
characteristics

Does your company have	All firms		Turkish firms		UK firms		χ^2
	No.	%	Yes	No	Yes	No	
A written mission statement	169	69.5	97	36	72	38	1.59
A set of medium/long term objectives	205	84.0	103	31	102	8	11.31**
A person or group with specific responsibility for identifying opportunities and threats in the external environment	123	50.4	58	76	65	45	6.03*
A person or group with specific responsibility for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your company	151	61.9	82	52	69	41	0.06
A group with specific responsibility for business/corporate and/or strategic planning	183	74.1	96	38	87	26	0.914

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Survey data

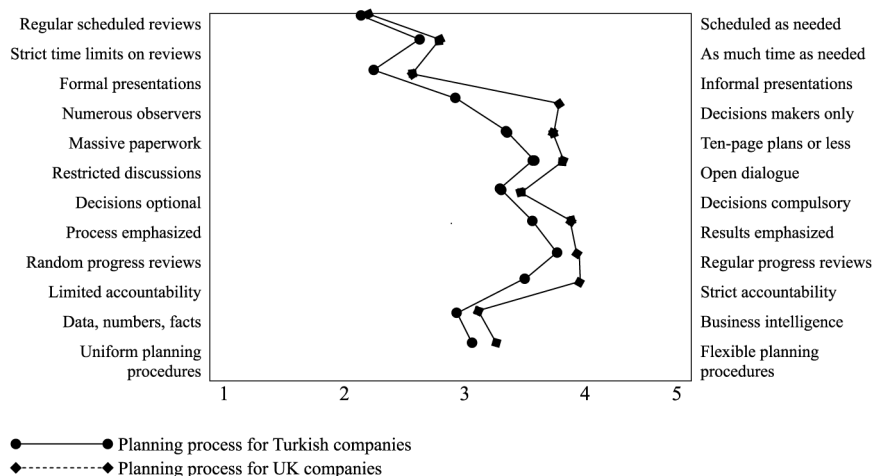


Figure 1. Nature of company strategic planning procedures in UK and Turkey

Source: Survey data

results emphasised rather than process emphasised; decisions makers only rather than numerous observers; business intelligence rather than with data, numbers and facts; and decisions compulsory rather than decisions optional. For all four items the UK companies have a significantly higher mean score ($p < 0.01$) than the Turkish companies.

For the UK firms Figure 1 shows that a number of items are clearly greater than the mid-rank value of three, indicating that strategic planning procedures are typically characterised by strict accountability in the strategic planning process rather than being of limited accountability; that there are regular progress reviews rather than random progress reviews; and that results are emphasised rather than the process being emphasised. The findings also indicate that there is open dialogue of the planning procedures rather than there being restricted discussion; that planning procedures are characterised by decision makers only rather than there being numerous observers; and with plans of ten pages or less rather than the planning process involving massive paperwork. Only three items are considerably less than the mid-rank value, indicating that planning procedures involved regularly scheduled reviews rather than being scheduled as needed; that planning procedures are characterised by formal presentations rather than informal presentations; and that planning procedures included strict time limits on reviews rather than as much time as needed.

As noted, with the exception of four items, Figure 1 indicates a similar pattern for Turkish companies in terms of company strategic planning procedures. The findings in general indicate that the strategic planning process is a regular, formal process, carrying accountability. Again this is contrary to expectations, as it was expected that the Turkish firms would display a significant degree of difference in their strategic planning procedures when compared with the UK firms.

Commitment to strategic alternatives

The extent of the sample firms' commitment to various strategic activities is shown in Table III. For the whole sample the mean value for each of the activities is below the mid-rank measure, indicating a relatively high level of commitment for each activity. The greatest level of commitment is found with regard to specification of corporate

	All firms		Turkish firms		UK firms		t-value
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
Specification of corporate objectives/aims	2	1.87	1	1.70	2	2.08	-3.07**
Specification of business objectives/aims	1	1.85	2	1.71	1	2.01	-2.37*
Monitoring of results against strategic plans	5	2.17	3	1.92	6	2.45	-3.97**
Generation of strategies	4	2.15	4	1.99	4	2.35	-2.63*
Evaluation of strategies	6	2.24	5	2.02	7	2.50	-3.67**
Seeking commitment to plans from organisational members	3	2.11	6	2.07	3	2.17	-0.76
Fostering of supportive climate/atmosphere	7	2.50	7	2.58	5	2.42	1.12

Table III.
Commitment to strategic activities

Notes: The mean is average on a scale of 1 = very committed to 5 = not committed; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$
Source: Survey data

objectives/aims and specification of business objectives/aims. While still at a relatively high commitment, the lowest ranked activities involve fostering of supportive climate/atmosphere and evaluation of alternatives. Table III indicates that firms appear to have greater commitment to formulation aspects of strategy and relatively less commitment to the implementation and evaluation of strategy. In part, this may stem from the fact that firms find it relatively less difficult to commit themselves to aspects of formulation, such as specification of objectives, but more difficult to engage in implementation, fostering of supportive climate/atmosphere and evaluation activities. Caution must, however, be exercised with regard to this conclusion, because even with the lowest ranked activities, firms in the sample indicate an extent of commitment which is seemingly far below the mid-rank measure. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that firms in the sample are not committed to the lowest ranked activities, it is simply that they are somewhat less committed to these activities compared to the highest ranked activities.

Table III shows that while there is very little difference in rank order of commitment to strategic activities with regard to nationality of sample firms, a test of difference in means indicates that Turkish companies have a significantly higher level of commitment than the UK firms with respect to the following strategic activities: monitoring of results against strategic plans ($p < 0.01$), evaluation of strategies ($p < 0.01$), specification of corporate objectives/aims ($p < 0.01$), generation of strategies ($p < 0.05$) and specification of business objectives/aims ($p < 0.05$). There are, however, no significant differences between the UK and Turkish firms with regard to the extent of commitment to seeking commitment to plans from organisational members and fostering of supportive climate/atmosphere ($p > 0.1$).

Overall, these findings are surprising. Turkish firms display a greater degree of commitment to various strategic activities than do UK firms. This is again contrary to expectations.

Emphasis on areas of strategic planning

Table IV shows emphasis on particular areas of strategic planning for firms in the sample ranked by mean response. For the sample as a whole, the greatest emphasis is on quantitative objectives. This finding is consistent with the strong commitment the sample firms have to the specification of corporate and business objectives, reported

Emphasis on	All firms		Turkish firms		UK firms		t-value
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	
Quantitative objectives	3.83	1	1	3.87	1 =	3.98	-1.07
Internal capabilities of the company	3.78	2	2	3.79	2	3.76	0.82
Definition of the nature of the company	3.51	4	3	3.74	3	3.10	6.12**
Long-term variances from prior plans	3.15	5 =	4	3.43	5	2.83	4.73**
The effect of social, political and technological trends on the company	3.15	5 =	5	3.37	4	2.88	3.70*
Closely related markets	3.54	3	6	3.17	1 =	3.98	-6.74**
Contingency plans	2.85	6	7	3.02	6	2.66	2.81*
Totally new markets	2.68	7	8	2.75	7	2.60	1.07

Notes: The mean is average on a scale of 1 = little or none to 5 = a great deal; * $p < 0.05$;

** $p < 0.01$

Source: Survey data

Table IV.
Emphasis on areas of
strategic planning

when discussing Table III. The other areas of greatest emphasis are on internal capabilities of the company, on closely related markets and on definition of the nature of the company. The least emphasis is on totally new markets and contingency plans. The relatively greater emphasis on internal capabilities of the company contrasts with the relatively weaker emphasis on external aspects of analysis associated with the effect of social, political and technological trends on the company, indicated in comparatively low rank for this variable.

Table IV shows that while there is relatively little difference in the rank order of the areas of strategic planning between the UK and Turkish firms, a test of difference in means shows that Turkish firms place a significantly higher level of emphasis on the following areas of strategic planning than the UK firms: on definition of the nature of the company ($p < 0.01$), on long-term variances from prior plans ($p < 0.01$), on the effect of social, political and technological trends on the company ($p < 0.05$) and on contingency plans ($p < 0.05$). The UK firms, in contrast, place a significantly higher degree of emphasis on closely related markets ($p < 0.01$) than Turkish firms. Again these findings are largely contrary to expectations. In general Turkish firms place greater emphasis than do UK firms on a number of areas of strategic planning.

Tools and techniques of strategic analysis

Table V shows the extent of use by the sample firms of a range of tools and techniques of strategic analysis, ranked by regularity of use. For the full sample, the first three ranked items exceed the median value of the scale: SWOT analysis, financial analysis of competitors, and spreadsheet "what if" analysis. The SWOT analysis and financial analysis of competitors both imply consideration of external influences on the firm, which is well reflected in the assessment of the opportunities and threats embodied in the SWOT analysis. Internal analysis, although part of the SWOT analysis involving the assessment of strengths and weaknesses, is apparently given less focus as reflected in the technique of core capabilities analysis being ranked eight equal. Also, it is rather surprising that both PEST analysis and Porter's five-forces/industry-attractiveness

	All firms		Turkish firms		UK firms		t-value
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean ^a	Rank	Mean	
Economic forecasting models	5	2.73	1	2.73	8	2.73	0.02
SWOT analysis ^b	1	3.07	2	2.62	4	3.60	-5.00**
Scenario construction	8 =	2.33	3	2.56	11 =	2.07	2.56*
Financial analysis of competitors	2	3.05	4	2.50	3	3.68	-6.49**
Analysis of organisational culture	6	2.46	5	2.17	7	2.80	-3.54*
Spreadsheet "what if" analysis	3	3.03	6 =	2.16	1	4.00	-10.46**
Analysis of "key" or "critical" success factors	4	2.94	6 =	2.16	2	3.85	-9.37**
Corporate modelling/strategic planning software	7	2.41	8	2.02	6	2.86	-4.44**
Stakeholder analysis	9	2.14	9	1.86	9	2.47	-3.94**
Core capabilities analysis	8 =	2.33	10	1.84	5	2.88	-5.92**
Experience curve analysis	12	1.69	11	1.78	14	1.58	1.37
Value chain analysis	10	2.01	12	1.77	10	2.29	-3.13*
PIMS analysis ^c	14	1.56	13	1.75	16	1.34	2.94*
PEST or STEP analysis	13	1.61	14	1.58	13	1.64	-0.35
Portfolio matrices ^d	11	1.79	15	1.54	11 =	2.07	-3.20**
Porter's five-forces/industry attractiveness analysis	15	1.51	16	1.37	12	1.68	-2.36*
Delphi ^e	16	1.32	17	1.28	15	1.36	-0.81
Soft systems methodology (SSM)	17	1.18	18 =	1.17	17	1.20	-0.36
Cognitive mapping	18	1.17	18 =	1.17	18	1.18	-0.23

Notes: ^a The mean is an average on a scale of 1 = not used to 5 = regular; ^b or TOWS or "WOTS up" analysis; ^c profit impact of market strategy analysis; ^d e.g., BCG; growth-share; GE's nine-cell industry attractiveness-competitive strength matrix; ^e qualitative group forecasting technique; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Survey data

Table V.
Use of tools and techniques of strategic analysis

analysis have low rankings, with means well below the value of 2. This casts some doubt on the nature of the external analysis in the SWOT analysis conducted by firms. The standard strategic analysis approach would recommend that PEST and Porter's five-forces analyses would be integral parts of the external analysis of the company, leading to a considered view of the opportunities and threats confronting the firm. It is something of a puzzle that while firms in the sample are making use of SWOT analysis, they appear not to employ PEST analysis and Porter's five-forces analysis when doing so. Little use is made of value chain analysis and portfolio matrices. Relatively few of the sample firms make use of the Delphi technique, soft systems methodology or cognitive mapping. The latter finding is not surprising, since this is a relatively new technique compared to many others listed, and it is likely that awareness of this technique is limited among this sample of firms.

For the sample of Turkish firms, all of the items are clearly below the median scale value of 3, indicating relatively little use of a broad range of tools/techniques of strategic analysis. However, there appears to be occasional use of a limited set of analytical techniques. For the Turkish firms the highest ranked tools/techniques of strategic analysis are: economic forecasting models, SWOT analysis, and scenario

construction. The reason that these tools/techniques are ranked relatively highly may be associated with the volatile economic conditions of the local business environment. For a long period Turkey has experienced severe economic crises and suffered from chronic inflation with a fluctuating exchange rate. In such a highly turbulent business environment, companies may be using these tools/techniques relatively frequently in an attempt to anticipate likely changes in economic conditions. Another reason for the use of these techniques may stem from the ease with which they may be undertaken given the widespread availability of computers and relevant software.

Table V shows that there is some variation in rank order of the tools/techniques of analysis between the Turkish firms and UK firms. A test of difference in means between the two groups of firms indicates significant differences for the whole set of strategic tools/techniques with the exception of economic forecasting models, experience curve analysis, PEST analysis, the Delphi technique, soft systems methodology (SSM) and cognitive mapping. With the exception of scenario construction and PIMS analysis, the UK firms have consistently a relatively higher mean use of a broad range of tools and techniques compared with Turkish firms. This finding is not particularly surprising. We anticipated that UK firms would tend to employ a greater repertoire of tools and techniques of strategic analysis than Turkish firms. Given that modern management techniques are more developed in the UK than Turkey, it was expected that UK firms would be more sophisticated in their use of such tools and techniques relating to strategic planning and to have a greater understanding and capability in their use. Of the 18 listed tools/techniques of analysis the associated mean value for UK firms exceeds 2 for 12 of them; in contrast the mean value of 2 is exceeded by only eight tools/techniques of analysis for Turkish firms. Moreover, the highest mean score for the Turkish firms is 2.73 (for economic forecasting models), whereas this mean score is equalled or exceeded by eight tools/techniques employed by UK firms. It is therefore clear that there is greater use and more regular use of a wide range of tools/techniques of strategic analysis by UK firms than by Turkish firms.

Views on strategic planning processes

Respondents' views on a number of statements concerning the strategic planning process are shown in Table VI. For the full sample greatest agreement was found for the statements "formal strategic planning is/would be an effective way to achieve improved financial performance", "strategic planning process achieves a good fit between the external environment and the internal capabilities of the organisation", and "our strategic planning has been effective in achieving our objectives over the past five years". Agreement with these statements indicates a very positive attitude towards the strategic planning process by the sample firms. In contrast the sample firms tend to disagree most with the statements that "the strategy adopted has "emerged" over time without being the result of a deliberate plan" and in particular that "strategic planning has encouraged excessive bureaucracy". It may also be noted that the statement "the strategy adopted is the result of a very deliberate process" has a greater level of agreement and is ranked somewhat higher than the statement that "the strategy adopted has "emerged" over time without being the result of a deliberate plan". The perception among the sample firms clearly appears to be that strategy formulation is more of a deliberate process than an emergent process.

There are radically contrasting rankings of the statements between Turkish firms and UK firms. The three highest ranked statements of the Turkish firms do not coincide with the three highest ranked statements of the UK firms. The highest ranked

	All firms		Turkish firms		UK firms		t-value
	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	
Formal strategic planning is/would be an effective way to achieve improved financial performance	1	3.71	1	3.81	4	3.60	1.48
Our strategic planning has been effective in achieving our objectives over the past five years	3	3.52	2	3.54	6	3.50	0.26
The strategy adopted is the result of a very deliberate process of formulation	5	3.49	3	3.43	5	3.56	-0.84
The making of strategy has been effective	6	3.46	4	3.42	6	3.50	0.56
The implementation of strategy has been effective	4	3.50	5	3.39	3	3.63	-1.77
Strategic planning is seen as important	8	2.55	6	3.34	8	1.64	13.23*
Strategic planning process achieves a good fit between the external environment and the internal capabilities of the organisation	2	3.55	7	3.24	1	3.91	-5.05*
The strategy adopted has "emerged" over time without being the result of a deliberate plan	9	2.52	8	2.58	7	2.45	0.85
Strategic planning has encouraged excessive bureaucracy	10	1.95	9	2.31	9	1.56	5.76*
Strategic planning has resulted in rigidity and inflexibility of response to the changing environment	7	2.87	10	2.02	2	3.85	-16.86*

Table VI.
Views on strategic
planning processes

Notes: The mean is an average on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; * $p < 0.01$
Source: Survey data

statements for Turkish firms, which are above the median scale value of 3, indicate favourable attitudes towards strategic planning, with the highest ranked item being that "formal strategic planning is/would be an effective way to achieve improved financial performance". There is also broad agreement that strategic planning has been effective in achieving objectives over the past five years and the making of strategy has been effective. Consistent with this view, the negative statements regarding strategic planning achieve the lowest rankings: "strategic planning has encouraged excessive bureaucracy" and "strategic planning has resulted in rigidity and inflexibility of response to the changing environment". The sample firms indicated little agreement with both of these statements. This compares to the UK firms where the three highest ranked statements are: "strategic planning process achieves a good fit between the external environment and the internal capabilities of the organisation", "strategic planning has resulted in rigidity and inflexibility of response to the changing environment", and "the implementation of strategy has been effective".

Table VI shows that there are a number of significant differences between the UK firms and Turkish firms regarding the level of agreement to the negative statements as well as the statements emphasising that the importance of strategic planning and its achievement of a good fit between the external environment and the internal capabilities of the organisation. Turkish firms indicate relatively more agreement to the statements that "strategic planning is seen as important" ($p < 0.01$) and "strategic

planning has encouraged excessive bureaucracy” ($p < 0.01$) than the UK firms. In contrast, the UK firms demonstrate more agreement to the statements that “strategic planning has resulted in rigidity and inflexibility of response to the changing environment” ($p < 0.01$) and “strategic planning process achieves a good fit between the external environment and the internal capabilities of the organisation” ($p < 0.01$) than Turkish firms. On balance these findings indicate that Turkish firms are more favourably disposed to strategic planning processes compared to UK firms.

Conclusions

This paper is one of the few studies to examine the strategic planning process from a comparative perspective in a sample of firms from a transitional economy and an advanced market economy. The research questions of the paper, posed in two hypotheses – that there will be systematic significant differences between the strategic planning practices of Turkish and UK firms, and that in general UK firms will be more disposed to strategic planning, reflected in the greater adoption of and commitment to the identified dimensions of strategic planning, than will Turkish firms – were examined by comparing proportions and mean responses between the two groups of firms. The first hypothesis is largely confirmed in that we report a number of significant differences between the strategic planning practices of Turkish firms and UK firms. This finding tends to support the previous research on managerial and strategic planning practices in both countries, as summarised in Table I. Contrary to expectations, however, it appears that it is the Turkish firms rather than the UK firms that are more favourably disposed to strategic planning, as reflected in the greater adoption of and commitment to the identified dimensions of strategic planning. This finding largely supports the arguments of Negandhi (1983a, b) in that the institutional imperfections and market inefficiencies inherent in most emerging markets might explain the firms’ positive attitude towards strategic planning practices. The exception to this is the adoption and use of a range of tools/techniques of strategic analysis, which are more regularly employed by UK firms than Turkish firms. It has been conjectured that the expected difference between Turkish and UK firms would again be a function of the difference in the institutional environments in which the two groups of firms operate. Future research could subject this conjecture to rigorous examination and in particular it would be useful to examine why Turkish firms appear to be more favourably disposed to strategic planning than UK firms.

While the findings of this study provide a contribution to our understanding of the nature and practice of strategic planning in two different country contexts, there are a number of other potential areas for future research that might provide significant value. First, it would be a useful contribution to investigate the relationship between firms’ views on the strategic planning process and their use of strategic planning techniques. Another area of future research would be to examine the relationship between strategic planning and organisational performance. In doing this, the impact of various contexts on the planning-performance relationship should be taken into account, for instance, different national and societal contexts (such as developed versus emerging country), as well as ownership contexts (for example, family businesses or public sector organisations). There is an obvious need to advance understanding of strategy as a changing, plural and contingent practice, rather than the standard one assumed in much conventional teaching and research. Therefore, interdisciplinary insights from historians, sociologists, management scholars and senior practitioners

would prove useful in understanding strategic planning and strategy-making in different contexts.

A number of implications for management practice arise from the findings. First, firms in the sample have a relatively short time horizon across most dimensions of strategic planning. This may indicate a generally short-term perspective, which may not always be in the best interest of the firms. If strategy is fundamentally concerned with “the long term direction of an organization” (Johnson and Scholes, 2002), managers should be encouraged to adopt a longer time horizon when engaging in the strategic planning process. Second, firms appear to have a greater commitment to formulation aspects of strategy and relatively less commitment to the implementation and evaluation of strategy. This finding may be a reflection of the organisational responsibilities of the questionnaire respondents who may be more concerned with formulation than implementation. The different emphasis within an organisation on strategy formulation and strategy implementation may arise because different groups of managers are responsible for each of the activities. If this is the case there is a danger that this may result in the breakdown of coordination and communication between the two groups and to the strategy being implemented in an incoherent manner to the detriment of organisational performance. Each organisation should be aware that strategy formulation is futile without appropriate strategy implementation and should seek a coherent interface between those responsible for the planning process and those responsible for implementation to ensure that each group is working to the same set of objectives. Third, the comparison of the UK firms and Turkish firms in the sample reported here indicates that the UK firms adopt a broader and deeper repertoire of tools and techniques of strategic planning than do Turkish firms. Both groups of firms, however, tend to believe that the strategy process is more a deliberate process than an emergent process. With the further development of the market economy in Turkey, and the increased competition from foreign firms as globalisation proceeds, it may be necessary for the Turkish firms to increasingly adopt the techniques and tools of strategic planning. In doing so, it will be interesting to observe whether the Turkish firms’ views on the strategy process come to more closely resemble those of foreign firms.

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