Strategic management

An analysis of its representation and focus in recent hospitality research

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to assess the level of strategic management topic representation within the academic field of hospitality. The study addresses the following questions: what is the frequency of articles related to the topic of strategy in recent hospitality journals? How does the content of these articles differ from the more general field of strategic management? And, what are the potential gaps where researchers in the hospitality field can make contributions?

Design/methodology/approach – This study looks at the number and percentage of strategy-related articles published in leading hospitality journals for 2005 through 2009. The determination of the percentage of strategy-related articles published and categorizing these articles by key strategy topic area required several steps: defining strategic management as an academic area within hospitality; determining key strategy topic areas and key words or terms; and defining characteristics of the hospitality field that may impact what is and what is not strategic management in hospitality. Hospitality journal articles were then coded as strategy-related or other, and (if determined to be strategy-related) the articles were categorized into one of ten key topic areas.

Findings – Overall strategy articles represent about 27 percent of the total journal articles from the five-year period. In comparing hospitality journals to the sole top-tier business journal focusing on strategy, this study indicates differences exist among key topic areas of focus. These differences seem to indicate that researchers in general strategic management tend to focus on less applied and more theoretical notions of strategy where researchers in hospitality strategic management tend to focus on more tactical methods when addressing questions of strategy.

Research limitations/implications – The limitations of this study are: the study focuses on four hospitality journals and the top-rated general strategy journal; and categorizing strategy articles was done using inter-judge reliability by the authors. Future research might identify a socially constructed definition of strategic management in hospitality.

Practical implications – The importance of strategic management and strategic thinking in hospitality and hospitality research has never been greater. With increasing turbulence in the global environment, the field of hospitality (and its related research) must assess and provide strategic approaches to address challenges and opportunities for the future.

Originality/value – The value of this study is in providing an overview of what has been studied in hospitality strategy in the recent past and pointing out future research opportunities for hospitality strategic management issues.

Keywords Strategic management, Hospitality services, Research

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The academic fields of both hospitality management and strategic management are relatively young (Ottenbacher *et al.*, 2009; Nag *et al.*, 2007). The hospitality

management umbrella includes numerous industry sectors and research in the area has focused on a wide range of management and business topics applied to the field. While hospitality management as a field encompasses numerous related areas (e.g. general management, marketing, sociology, economics, psychology, etc.), the same can be argued for the field of strategic management. Within the general field of strategy, the scholar participants have been trained in widely varying areas (economics, organizational theory, organizational behavior, marketing, etc.) (Nag *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, it is no surprise that definitions of strategic management within and outside the hospitality field vary in scope and terminology. Any academic field is defined as a "socially constructed entity" (Nag *et al.*, 2007); this social construct exists if a critical mass of scholars in the academic field believes it exists and adopts shared boundaries of its breadth and depth.

While Kuhn's (1962) assertion that a scientific community needs a shared identity of a field, this shared identity for the definition of strategic management in hospitality becomes more challenging given the diversity in backgrounds of hospitality researchers. In other words, the definition of this subfield is likely to be impacted by the specialist knowledge and technical norms of the hospitality researchers (e.g. Shapin, 1995). Thus, the concepts and clear definitions in the hospitality field, in general, and strategic management as a subfield, in particular, are expected to be fragile and lacking in consensus.

To further confuse the issue, it can be argued that due to the unique structure of the hospitality field (e.g. geographically-dispersed units, independent operators, franchising, etc.) there is a blurring of clear lines among traditional strategic, tactical and operational levels of decision-making. Or, due to the diverse nature of hospitality firms, Quinn's (1980) long-standing contention that whether an issue is considered a strategic one depends on the individual's placement in the hierarchy. For instance, while a business-level strategy for an upscale restaurant might include differentiation through its menu and food product development as part of the total product, a general manager at one of the units might use a strategy of incorporating unique (local) products, preparation/presentation methods, or service innovations to differentiate his or her unit from competitors in the local market. Both participants in these decisions could argue for the strategic intent of their decisions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the frequency of strategic management topics within recent research in the academic field of hospitality. Additionally, the following questions are asked:

- What percentage of articles in hospitality is related to the topic of strategy?
- How does the content of these articles differ from the more general field of strategic management?
- Based on the assessment of these two questions, what topics are likely to be areas that hospitality field researchers can make significant contributions in the future?

Finally, the study provides recommendations for future research and limitations of the current study.

Literature review

To assess the contribution of strategic management in hospitality research, a first step is to determine "what is" and "what is not" a strategic management subfield. While many

researchers in strategy have created definitions over the past several decades (Bowman
et al., 2002; Bracker, 1980; Fredrickson, 1990; Schendel and Hofer, 1979) a recent study by
Nag *et al.* (2007) provides an underlying consensus from those in the general field of
strategic management as well as boundary-spanning scholars in related areas
(economics, sociology, marketing, and management). In their study, the researchers
asked a large panel of strategic management authors to rate abstracts in leading
management journals as to whether or not they represented articles with a focus on
strategic management. From this analysis, they extracted a lexicon of strategic
management that created an implicit definition of the field. This definition provided six
elements that define strategic management. The implicit definition is described as:

> The field of strategic management deals with (a) the major intended and emergent initiatives
> (b) taken by general managers on behalf of owners, (c) involving utilization of resources (d) to
> enhance the performance (e) of firms (f) in their external environment (Nag *et al.*, 2007, p. 942).

In an article assessing hospitality strategic management content from a teaching
perspective, Okumus and Wong (2005) pointed out several differences between
hospitality and tourism strategic management texts compared to mainstream strategic
management texts. In their analysis, they determined that:

- the literature in strategic management applied to hospitality and tourism was
  limited;
- most of the literature focused on environmental scanning and strategy-structure
  issues;
- texts in the hospitality and tourism field appear two decades behind on strategic
  management content trends; and
- educators teaching strategic management are from a variety of related or
  unrelated backgrounds.

Since the Okumus and Wong (2005) article, several strategic management texts have
been published. In two prominent texts, key definitions specific to hospitality seem to
mimic the concepts proposed by Nag *et al.* (2007). In Enz (2010), the author suggests
that strategy can be defined in two ways: "as a pattern that emerges in a sequence of
decisions over time, or as an organizational plan of action that is intended to move a
company toward achievement of its shorter-term goals and, ultimately, its
fundamental purposes" (Enz, 2010, p. 17). Further, the author divides the strategic
management process into four main steps:

(1) situation analysis;
(2) strategic direction;
(3) strategy formulation; and
(4) strategy implementation.

Olsen *et al.* (2008) define strategic management as "the ability of the management of the
firm to properly align the firm with the forces driving change in the environment in
which the firm competes" (p. 6). Further, to achieve this alignment, the authors propose
that management must appropriately invest in competitive methods that maximize
financial value, create a business structure that facilitates the effective allocation of

resources, have the ability to identify change-driven opportunities, and identify methods that achieve competitive advantage (Olsen *et al.*, 2008).

Authors Enz (2010) and Olsen *et al.* (2008) point out several distinctive differences driving strategic management in the hospitality field. For instance, Olsen *et al.* (2008) point out that the industry is both capital- and labor-intensive. If this is the case, this issue should be reflected by a strong emphasis in analyzing both strategies for success in rising capital by hospitality firms as well as strategic human resource issues by researchers in the field. Further, the researchers point out the fragmented nature of the hospitality field; this fragmentation takes its form in a variety of ways including a collection of industries (foodservice firms, lodging firms, leisure businesses, travel businesses, attractions, and meetings and convention businesses), varying degrees of product vs. services focus across and within the industries of this field, the relative complexity of the field (i.e. many competitors in the industries that make up a predominantly mature industry lifecycle), a wide range of business structures within each industry (e.g. direct ownership, chains, franchising, asset management, consortia), and the unique differences in demand, supply and technology relationships across the collective hospitality field (Enz, 2010; Olsen *et al.*, 2008).

These characteristics create several areas for a unique emphasis in strategy that can be tested and demonstrated in the hospitality field. For instance, the fragmented nature of the field creates issues in strategic structures (a separation between the ownership of assets – for example hotel real estate – and the management of the assets or operations, franchising versus corporate ownership, etc.), innovation process management (a lack of protection from mimicry of innovative products and services in the field), and the strong entrepreneurial nature of the field, to name a few. Because of this diversity, a definition of what is and what is not strategy in hospitality is likely to be blurred. Therefore, Enz (2010) suggests the hospitality field has undergone a shift to a more strategic view in field businesses ranging in domains from investment to operations.

Given these characteristics (i.e. this proposed shift, the fragmented nature of the field, and the diversity in backgrounds of researchers in hospitality), it seems from the vantage point of the authors of this study that a more liberal or applied view of what is strategic management is appropriate. This liberal view is described more fully as a boundary condition of this study. In addition, to sort through the similarities and differences suggested in the literature between general strategic management and strategic management in hospitality, this study ponders four research questions. First, how popular have strategic management topics been in leading hospitality management journals? Second, what topic areas of strategy have been focused on most by recent authors in hospitality? Third, how does the topic focus differ compared with key topics in strategic management in general? And, what are the implications for future strategy research in hospitality?

Assumptions and boundary conditions

A boundary condition of this study is the authors' view of strategy. As with all researchers, the definition of a field of study is (in part) impacted by the researcher's beliefs and interpretations. This situation is certainly true in the general field of strategic management with many lively debates (e.g. Ansoff, 1991; Mintzberg, 1991; Rajagopolan and Spreitzer, 1997). Given the authors' backgrounds in strategy process,

marketing and innovation management, our underlying assumption about the role of process and unit-level strategic initiatives as part of the field of strategic management cannot help but lead to what could be described as a more liberal or applied interpretation of what is and what is not strategy (but not necessarily a recent interpretation; Barney, 1986; Linblom, 1959, Mintzberg, 1990; Quinn, 1980).

Second, during the coding process, we had to determine how specific or limiting we thought would be most appropriate and meaningful for the purposes of the current study. In other words, should we include hospitality articles that we consider definitely strategy or also those that we would describe as probably having a strategy focus? This designation of "probably" or "definitely" strategic management follows earlier studies in the area (Nag *et al.*, 2007). Because two of our objectives were to describe popular topic areas in hospitality related to strategy and implications for future research, we determined an approach that utilized articles that were both in the probably strategy and definitely strategy categories should be included in the articles defined as strategy-related in this study. Additionally, as the objectives of hospitality journals and research can (in many cases) be described as more applied than theoretical in nature, a more liberal or applied view of defining strategy articles seemed appropriate for this study.

Methods

This study looks at the number and percentage of strategy-related articles published in leading hospitality journals for 2005 through 2009. The assessment of these articles took place during November and December 2009. The basic objective of this process was to determine the popularity of strategic management as an academic field in hospitality and the most frequently studied topic areas related to strategy. Because this objective was based on contemporary research issues, the most recent five-year timeframe was deemed appropriate. This five-year focus as a method to assess the most recent research progression follows earlier research in hospitality (Rivera and Upchurch, 2008; Severt *et al.*, 2009).

The first step in the assessment process was to determine which journals to include in the analysis. Several recent studies in hospitality have considered scholarly journal ranking using a variety of approaches (Kim *et al.*, 2008; Law and van der Veen, 2009; McKercher *et al.*, 2006; Pechlaner *et al.*, 2004; Svensson *et al.*, 2009). The methods used for ranking journal quality can generally be placed into two main categories:

(1) assessment by academic experts; and

(2) objective counting of some sort (Law and van der Veen, 2009).

These ranking approaches are not without criticism, but Law and van der Veen (2009) provide evidence of general congruence across both methods.

To determine the top-ranked hospitality journals to include in this study, we include journal ranking articles that were completed within the past five years, and those that seem to be the most relevant specifically to hospitality journal ranking (i.e. rather than tourism journal ranking). Thus, this study looked to three recent studies:

(1) Law and van der Veen (2009);

(2) McKercher *et al.* (2006); and

(3) Pechlaner *et al.* (2004).

The ranking values from Law and van der Veen (2009) were based on the average Google Scholar citations by journal per year. The ranking values from McKercher *et al.* (2006) and Pechlaner *et al.* (2004) were based on assessment by academic experts used in each study.

Table I provides an overview of the ranking level of top hospitality journals and the mean ranking across these three studies. From this process, this study selected four journals to include in the analysis:

(1) *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* (*CHQ*);

(2) *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (*IJHM*);

(3) *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* (*JHTR*); and

(4) *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (*IJCHM*).

The criteria for selecting these four journals include:

- the highest mean ranking across the most recent ranking studies;
- the primary focus of the journal on management-related issues in hospitality; and
- a manageable number of publications to assess.

The next task was to determine a method to assess the percentage of total articles in the selected journals related to strategy and to categorize the articles by key topic areas of strategy. This process required three main steps; the first step was defining strategic management as an academic field. Based on the earlier work of Nag *et al.* (2007) and similar conceptualizations in the hospitality field (i.e. Enz, 2010; Olsen *et al.*, 2008), this study defines the academic field of strategic management as dealing with key intended and emergent initiatives undertaken by general managers or owners that involve effective alignment of resources to enhance the performance of (hospitality) firms with a fit to changes in their competitive environment. The articles coded as containing hospitality strategy content were those assessed by the authors as articles that could be described as strategy-related (at the level of "probably" or "definitely" strategy; e.g. Nag *et al.*, 2007). This determination was based on a close reading of the article title, abstract, and keywords.

Hospitality journals	Law and van der Veen (2009)	McKercher *et al.* (2006)	Pechlaner *et al.* (2004)	Mean
CHQ	2	1	3	2
IJHM	3	2	8	4.33
JHTR	4	3	7	4.67
IJCHM	1	4	13	6
JHTE	7	5	14	8.67
FIU	8	6	N/A	7
JHLM	5	7	12	8
IJHTA	6	8	N/A	7
JFSBR	N/A	9	19	14
JHRHR	N/A	10	N/A	10

Table I.
Recent hospitality
journals rankings

To categorize journal articles by key topic areas, this study considered topics and content from several perspectives. Primary sources for content topics and subtopics from the general strategic management literature included Nag *et al.* (2007), Hitt *et al.* (2009), and the key tracks defined for the 2009 Strategic Management Conference (Strategic Management Society, 2009). The first stage in identifying key topic areas utilized the academic tracks laid out by the Strategic Management Society (SMS) for the 2009 Conference. The SMS is the largest international organization devoted specifically to strategy as an academic field. The annual call for proposals for the conference provides an important outline of current, key topic areas and keywords. A second stage was to compare this list to topics defined in Nag *et al.* (2007). Nag *et al.*'s (2007) article defining the field of strategic management represents the most empirically comprehensive and recent definition by consensus of those in the field and in boundary spanning fields. A third stage in this process was to compare these lists/descriptions to those presented in a text on general strategic management. Hitt *et al.*'s (2009) text on strategic management was used for this purpose. It is in its eighth edition and provides a respected format of traditional strategic management topics. To ensure topics specific to strategic management in hospitality were included, the study considered three recent hospitality texts and a recent article (Okumus and Wong, 2005) to provide key topics and key words. These texts include Enz (2010), Olsen *et al.* (2008) and Pizam (2005). All are well-respected sources for hospitality management and strategic management concepts.

Based on a close reading and synthesis of these documents, the authors determined the following list of main topic areas and key subtopics for strategic management in hospitality. To clarify each main topic area further, the authors used this synthesis approach to create basic definitions for each topic area. These definitions are provided in the form of general research questions that are at the heart of articles in key topic areas. Main topic areas, research questions, and key subtopics are outlined in Table II.

The second step in this evaluation and categorization process was to determine whether an article was definitely or probably strategic management content, and, if so, determination of the general topic area that it is best placed. To determine whether an article could be defined as strategic management, the authors considered each article's title, abstract, and key words. Many were easily identifiable as definitely strategic management related. But, many fell into a category of "probably" having strategic management content. Articles in this category required additional consideration and a determination was made by the agreement of both authors. This determination was made by asking two questions:

(1) Does the topic area relate to concepts of strategic ends or strategic means of an organization?

(2) Are the topic and its implications related to key words or subtopics of strategic management?

If both authors answered yes to these questions, the article was included as strategic management in nature.

Because of the unique characteristics of the hospitality field such as unique ownership characteristics and geographically-dispersed units (e.g. Enz, 2010; Olsen *et al.*, 2008) as well as the diversity in backgrounds of researchers in the field, the authors defined articles as strategic management in nature under the assumption that

Strategy and uncertainty – How do organizations deal with uncertainty in the environment? What (external) strategic relationships are formed to minimize the effects of an uncertain world?

Managing uncertainties
Strategic relationships and risk
Strategic alliances and networks (e-procurements, etc.)
Strategy and structure fit
Partnership portfolios
External relationships
Strategic configurations
Contingency theory
External environment
Environmental scanning

Strategy and the internal organization – How do hospitality organizations respond internally to address uncertainties, change, or differences while enhancing effectiveness? What are the implications for dimensions of organization and other initiatives?

Organizational forms
Corporate transformation and turnaround
Scenario planning
Real options analysis
Strategy process
Strategy and structure (e.g. efficiency and effectiveness)
Core competencies (e.g. service recovery, etc.), skills and capabilities
Organizational resources and allocation
Value-adding activities
Tangible and intangible resources (e.g. HRM)

Competitive strategy – Research questions are concerned with hospitality firms and their interactions within business markets over time. What are drivers of business performance? How do hospitality businesses interact to each other and/or their competitive environments? What is the source of competitive advantage? What skills and capabilities do firms need to gain and sustain competitive advantage?

Drivers of performance (e.g. IT, SHRM, etc.)
Competitive environments
Competitive advantage
Strategies and strategic initiatives
Competitive dynamics
Strategic group(s)
Vertical integration
Business-level strategy
Competitive strategy
Cost strategy
Alignment strategy
Competitive methods
Competitive rivalry

Corporate strategy, structure and governance – This area looks at the corporate and leadership levels. A key research question is: what governance mechanisms (organizational, financial, product portfolio) help firms manage change or risk and achieve greater effectiveness?

Executive pay and structure
Acquisitions, alliances and franchising
Geographic diversification
Diversification
Mergers and acquisitions
Portfolio and financial management
Strategic restructuring
Product market diversification
Corporate strategies
Corporate-level strategy (e.g. brand and image strategies, etc.)
Venture capital
Social and institutional factors
Organizational structures
Lateral organization

Table II.
Main topic areas and key subtopics in strategic management

(continued)

Global strategy – How does an extension of operations across national boundaries affect a firm? Which benefits and pitfalls are associated with international operations?	National boundaries MNC International operations International risks Global competitiveness Global strategic management Global strategies Global stakeholders Global R&D International strategy
Strategy process – What activities, practices and routines govern and impact the formation of strategies? What are the performance implications on the group, business, corporate, and network levels of a firm?	Strategic processes (e.g. planning versus learning, design, incrementalism, etc.) Decision-making process Strategy formulation Network of stakeholders and those involved in the process Strategic thinking Environmental scanning Environmental assessment Strategic leadership
Strategy implementation – What are the tactics used by a firm to execute its ends and means within the organization? In other words, what implementation tactics or steps are used to promote the manifestation of a strategic plan?	Tourism cluster Intended strategy Realized strategy Strategic outsourcing
Knowledge and innovation – How do firms improve their capacity to acquire new knowledge quickly? How do firms manage the internal and external demand for rapid changes in the knowledge required to respond to market requirements? What techniques can enhance knowledge sharing, knowledge development, innovation creation, and successful innovation execution? What can firms do to create rapid and effective innovations in response to new opportunities?	Knowledge development and know-how Knowledge sharing Innovation creation Innovation process(es) Innovation execution/implementation R&D process
The practice of strategy – This area reflects "how" organizations achieve their strategic goals or ends. For instance, what activities contribute to an organization's strategy? What do people in businesses and other organizations do to plan, pursue, develop and implement strategies?	Resource-based view (RBV) (e.g. SHRM, intangible resources, etc.) Strategic direction Mission and vision Organizational values (e.g. crisis management, pandemic planning, etc.) Strategic choice Strategy marketing plan (e.g. pricing, revenue management, strategic means, corporate menu engineering, etc.) Strategy evaluation and control
Entrepreneurship and strategy – Generally, entrepreneurial studies focus on a variety of strategy issues applied to small businesses. It can also apply to an entrepreneurial orientation in firms of all sizes and its role in allowing managers to pursue opportunities for growth and innovation driven by change or uncertainty	Intrapreneurs Entrepreneurial start-up Corporate entrepreneurship Strategic entrepreneurship Small business strategic issues

Table II.

strategic decisions and content can apply to multiple levels of a business field. Thus, strategic management in hospitality was assumed to be relevant to article content applied at the unit-level, corporate-level, strategic group-level, and regionally (i.e. a network of regional hospitality businesses involved in tourism strategy). This assumption follows the concept and definition of strategy professed by the learning school of thought (Mintzberg *et al.*, 1998; Quinn, 1980). For instance, the Berenguer *et al.* (2009) article on wine lists as a differentiation strategy was coded as an article containing strategic management content as it applies to unit-level and restaurant concept-level strategy.

Results: strategy focus of the recent past

Once journal articles were coded as to whether or not they fell within this study's definition of strategy, the number and a percentage of strategy topics in the hospitality literature were calculated by journal, year and across the four journals used in this study. Figure 1 provides a graphic display of the percentage of strategy articles in each journal, breaking this percentage down by year from 2005 through 2009. Tables III and IV summarize the number and overall percentage for each journal and across all four journals over the five-year period.

Frequency of strategy articles in the hospitality literature

Overall, strategy articles as defined in this study represented about 27 percent of the total journal articles for the five-year period. The percentage of articles by journal and across time varied slightly (Table III). CHQ and IJHM had the highest percentage of strategy-related articles over the period (35 percent and 30 percent, respectively). JHTR
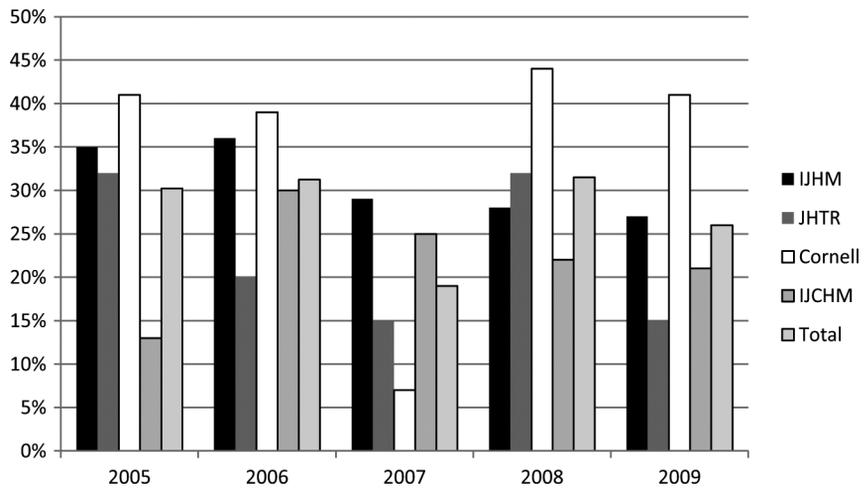

Figure 1.
Percentage of strategy articles in top hospitality journals 2005-2009

Table III.
Overall percentage of strategy articles in top hospitality journals 2005-2009

Journal	*IJHM*	*JHTR*	*Cornell*	*IJCHM*	Total
Overall percentage	30	22	35	22	27

and *IJCHM* had equal percentages of strategy-related articles at 22 percent. By year, the percentage of strategy articles was much lower in 2007 (18 percent) than in the other four years (ranging from 26 percent to 32 percent overall). *CHQ* was particularly light in terms of strategy-related articles in 2007 as a percentage. When the percentage of articles was compared to the number of articles, the differences were less pronounced. If fact, the number of strategy-related articles in 2007 was not substantially different from other years (e.g. 38 articles in 2005 versus 39 articles in 2007) given the total number of articles published across the four journals (Table IV).

In terms of article numbers (Table IV), the five-year total indicates 225 articles out of 828 were defined as probably or definitely strategy-related. Overall, this overview of strategy articles by percentage and numbers in top hospitality journals provides evidence of the substantial importance and popularity of strategic management as a research topic in the hospitality field. Specifically, more than one-quarter of all hospitality journal articles had strategic implications across journals and across time. This percentage was not substantially different from the percentages contained in top business journals in recent years (Nag *et al.*, 2007).

Topic area comparison
Table IV provides an overview of the number and percentage of strategy articles that had a primary focus in one of ten topic areas. While many of the articles had elements of two or more areas, the authors evaluated each article for its key topic area based on an assessment of the title, abstract, key words and subtopics shown in Table II.

The column in Table V titled "*SMJ*" is the number and percentage of strategy articles in each topic area published in *Strategic Management Journal* (*SMJ*) from 2005 through 2009. While there are several high-quality business journals that regularly

IJHM		JHTR		CHQ		IJCHM		Total	
12	(34)	7	(22)	12	(29)	7	(54)	38	(139)
16	(44)	5	(25)	13	(33)	15	(50)	49	(152)
20	(68)	4	(27)	2	(30)	13	(51)	39	(176)
18	(65)	7	(22)	16	(36)	13	(59)	54	(182)
20	(74)	4	(27)	9	(22)	12	(56)	45	(179)
86	(285)	27	(123)	52	(150)	60	(270)	225	(828)

Table IV.
Number of strategy articles and total articles (in parentheses) 2005-2009

Topics	SMJ	Total hospitality	IJHM	JHTR	CHQ	IJCHM
Strategy and uncertainty	6	3	0	15	0	5
Strategy and the internal organization	9	5	5	7	8	2
Competitive strategy	22	15	15	7	10	22
Corporate strategy and governance	29	18	19	15	27	13
Global strategy	7	8	8	4	14	5
Strategy process	4	4	6	7	0	2
Strategy implementation	1	5	5	11	0	7
Knowledge and innovation	13	6	8	4	2	8
The practice of strategy	8	32	30	26	37	32
Entrepreneurship and strategy	2	4	5	4	2	5

Table V.
Percentage of articles in key strategy topic areas

include strategic management content (i.e. *ASQ*, *AMJ*, *AMR*, *Organization Science*, and *SMJ*), *SMJ* was selected by the authors as an indicator of topic areas published in strategic management to minimize selection bias as the journal contains exclusively strategic management content. Further, the selection of *SMJ* as the exclusive journal for consideration in this study eliminated the need to evaluate a large number of micro-OB or HR articles for strategy content resulting in a relatively conservative interpretation of strategy research in business (e.g. Nag *et al.*, 2007).

In addition to being the only top tier journal devoted exclusively to strategic management (Okumus and Wong, 2005), the *SMJ* is the output of the largest, international strategic management organization (Strategic Management Society). Therefore, the authors assume the articles represent research of the highest quality in the field and research topics deemed timely by highly regarded peers in the strategy field. The column titled "Total hospitality" in Table V provides a percentage of articles in each topic area across the four hospitality journals used in this study for the 2005-2009 timeframe. In comparing the *SMJ* topic areas with those from hospitality journals, several differences emerge. Articles published in *SMJ* had a substantially higher focus in three topics:

(1) competitive strategy (22 percent versus 15 percent for hospitality),
(2) corporate strategy and governance (29 percent versus 18 percent for hospitality); and
(3) knowledge and innovation (13 percent versus 6 percent for hospitality).

Articles published in the hospitality journals had a substantially higher focus in the topics of strategy implementation (5 percent versus 1 percent in *SMJ*) and the practice of strategy (32 percent versus 8 percent in *SMJ*).

For the most part, these differences suggest that researchers in general strategic management tend to focus on the strategic ends questions of strategy, whereas researchers in hospitality strategic management during this timeframe tended to focus more on strategic means or application questions of strategy. Research questions that focus on strategic ends, commonly described as "what" organizations do in regards to strategic management, are primarily concerned with issues associated with strategy content, strategic planning, environmental scanning, and strategy-structure relationships. The strategic means (or "how") research questions are more closely associated with studying "how" action plans derived from strategic ends are applied and have a tendency to be more tactical in nature. In the general business area, these issues include many areas such as how strategy is formulated and implemented as well as issues of action plans, marketing strategies, etc. (Harrington, 2005). For hospitality researchers, these issues are applied in the form of questions surrounding topics such as brand formulation strategies (e.g. Hyun, 2009), the value of franchising strategies (Hsu and Jang, 2009), pricing application strategies (Noone and Mattila, 2009), environmental scanning behaviors (Jogaratnam and Law, 2006), etc.

These differences seem to reflect a tendency for a more applied approach to hospitality research in general. One might assume this more applied approach could be the result of differing objectives by hospitality journals compared to general business, the backgrounds and interests of the hospitality researchers in the area (Okumus and Wong, 2005), or a reflection of the unique characteristics of industries that make up the hospitality field suggested by earlier authors (Enz, 2010; Olsen *et al.*, 2008). In any case,

these characteristics appear to manifest themselves in the form of more process-based or applied research topics in the strategy area and a blurring of the lines between strategic, tactical and operational decisions (e.g. Quinn, 1980).

In regards to strategy topics across hospitality journals, the journals were consistently high in the practice of strategy topic (ranging from 26 percent to 37 percent) and relatively similar for many topics. Differences were apparent with *JHTR* higher in strategy and uncertainty (15 percent), *IJCHM* higher in competitive strategy (22 percent), and *CHQ* higher in corporate strategy and governance (27 percent) and global strategy (14 percent). This finding indicates differences across hospitality journals in areas of focus or as perceived by potential authors for appropriate submission.

Discussion and implications

Overall, the literature related to strategic management in hospitality was shown to be a popular research area over the past five-year period. This popularity and contribution were consistent across top hospitality journals and relatively consistent across time. The divergence between key strategy topic areas in the *SMJ* and key hospitality journals provides evidence of differences in research focus when strategy is applied by hospitality researchers to the hospitality field. The apparent focus of hospitality articles on more applied strategy questions and strategy practice indicates a potential opportunity for hospitality researchers to contribute to these lesser-studied areas in the general business field of strategy. The characteristics of industries in the hospitality field may lend themselves to contributions to academic knowledge and managerial implications in this regard.

The apparent lesser focus of hospitality articles on the traditional strategic ends strategy questions and strategy theory indicates an opportunity for hospitality researchers to contribute to strategy research in the hospitality literature by analyzing issues such as dimensions and drivers of business performance, hospitality business interactions, competitive advantage and its sources, corporate governance mechanisms, and the benefits or pitfalls associated with international hospitality operations.

While the focus of this study has looked backwards in terms of strategy research and topics, the current global business environment provides a basis for a number of interesting areas for future strategy research in hospitality. Given uncertainties in the current global business cycle, hospitality strategy research is likely to be needed to address continued dynamism into the future whether the volatility is driven by economic issues, competitive interactions, political uncertainties, environmental issues or pandemics. Some of these areas are presented in the following sections under the ten key topic area headings.

Strategy and uncertainty

This topic area draws from issues of how organizations deal with uncertainty in the environment. Hospitality studies defined as falling within this content area were primarily focused on the impact of forming alliances or networks by hospitality firms to reduce risk or uncertainty (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2006), managing uncertainty in the form of crisis management (e.g. Tew *et al.*, 2008), or more traditional uncertainty issues (e.g. Harrington and Kendall, 2005).

Future research in this topic area should move beyond tactical or marketing perspectives and provide more in the form of theory development. Further, research should assess the most important uncertainties facing hospitality organizations and any implications for strategy practice. Questions in the strategy and uncertainty area might include:

· How are strategic relationships between hospitality and non-hospitality firms used to minimize uncertainty?

· Can strategic relationships with governments or state-owned enterprises be formed to minimize negative effects for hospitality organizations?

· Should these take the form of strategic alliances, globally distributed R&D units, multi-partner deals, industry networks or partnership portfolios?

Research in corporate capital accessibility in uncertain times and unique firm structures are also worthy areas with practical implications. Given the nature of geographically/globally distributed units in hospitality, important research questions exist on how hospitality firms access resources and capabilities with new firm structures and distributed units? Issues on how firm-level capabilities are developed in these situations and the means by which uniquely structured hospitality firms might organize for innovation have substantial implications for hospitality decision makers.

Strategy and the internal organization
This area of research focuses on how hospitality organizations respond internally to remain or enhance competitiveness. This internal response may address uncertainties or organizational change differences while maintaining or enhancing effectiveness. This process may involve new organizational forms, corporate transformation and turnaround, core competencies skills and capabilities, or tangible and intangible resources. Our resulting analysis indicated that there were 11 articles that could be defined as being strategy-related within this topic area. Many of these articles related to service recovery systems, new organizational forms (i.e. outsourcing of varying types), and strategic human resource initiatives. Others (e.g. Chathoth *et al.*, 2006; Gursoy and Swanger, 2007) were related to internal strategic decisions or factors leading to successful turnaround or financial effectiveness.

Given the uncertain and the changing world in which hospitality firms operate, future research might include how hospitality organizations might internally address new uncertainties and enhance effectiveness in responding to changes in the world. For instance, what are the implications for numerous dimensions of the internal organization and initiatives in hospitality (e.g. new organizational forms, scenario planning, real options analysis, and other techniques that might be used by hospitality firms to cope with uncertainty, change and to enhance competitiveness)?

Competitive strategy
This traditional strategy area concerns itself with questions on how hospitality firms interact within business markets over time, what the drivers of business performance are, and what the source of competitive advantage is. Topics identified in this area include drivers of performance (e.g. IT, SHRM, etc.), competitive advantage, strategic initiatives, competitive dynamics, strategic groups, vertical integration, etc. Some of

the recent topics in hospitality in this area include competitor analysis or orientation
(Anderson and Guilding, 2006; Dev *et al.*, 2009), competitive strategies (Jönsson and
Devonish, 2009), and competitive advantage (Piccoli, 2008).

A renewed interest to this area and potential contributions to both hospitality and
generic strategy research may be addressed in questions such as:

- How do hospitality businesses interact to each other and/or their competitive
  environments?
- What are the implications for similar service industries?
- What is the source of competitive advantage in other service industries and is it
  applicable for hospitality firms?
- How do competitive, social, and institutional factors affect the uncertainties
  within and across industries in hospitality?
- Are there new combinations of proactive and reactive strategies that hospitality
  firms should undertake?
- In a faster-paced business environment, what are the tradeoffs for hospitality
  firms undertaking new strategies, and at what speed should these take place?

Corporate strategy and governance
A number of hospitality studies have focused on corporate governance, strategy and
structure (e.g. Chathoth and Olsen, 2007a, b). Corporate level strategy issues such as
those related to brand, brand image and social factors have been particularly popular
for study (e.g. Hanson *et al.*, 2009; Holcomb *et al.*, 2007; Holverson and Revaz, 2006).
Future hospitality researchers in this area should address:

- What governance mechanisms at the corporate and leadership levels help
  hospitality firms manage uncertainty, change, and risk?
- How does change affect the ideal composition of the board or top management
  team in hospitality settings?
- Is there a connection between hospitality executive pay level and firm
  performance?
- How can hospitality firms' growth be fueled through acquisition or alliance in a
  dynamic environment?
- How does political and economic uncertainty affect strategic decisions on the
  level and nature of geographic and product/service diversification?
- Does the nature of the current financial markets, market sectors or country affect
  the desirability of particular corporate strategies for hospitality firms?

Global strategy
Several recent studies have considered how extensions of operations across national
boundaries affect a hospitality firms' overall risk and performance (e.g. Graf, 2009;
Lee, 2008; Whitla *et al.*, 2007). While more and more hospitality firms look to
multi-national means for growth and diversity, most hospitality research limits its
contribution by minimizing cross-national effects and focusing on one specific
country setting. Therefore, future research should seek to address this limitation
and look at:

- How do multi-national hospitality firms deal with risk and uncertainty?
- Which benefits and pitfalls are associated with international hospitality operations (e.g. global competitiveness, stakeholder issues, or global R&D/service innovation)?
- How can international risks be mitigated by hospitality firms?
- How might international hospitality organizations deal with inconsistent polices across its markets?

Strategy process

This research area focuses on the activities, practices and routines that impact the formation of strategies as well as the performance implications at the group, business-unit, corporate, and network levels of analysis. This area receives less attention in both the general strategic management and hospitality strategic management literatures. While much of hospitality research appears more tactical and applied in nature, it seems this more applied approach by researchers in the field would provide many opportunities to fill the numerous gaps in this literature stream. Recent studies in this topic area specific to hospitality include cultural affects on the strategic process (Ayoun and Moreo, 2008a, b), environmental scanning behaviors (Jogaratnam and Law, 2006) and strategy-making models (Harrington, 2005).

Numerous questions remain to be addressed by researchers that would contribute to a greater understanding of connections among:

- hospitality strategy process capabilities associated with conditions of uncertainty;
- performance consequences of strategic processes used in hospitality; and
- determining which processes lead to consensus-building.

The strategy process area overlaps with more traditional organizational behavior topics and the impact on strategy formation. Therefore, given the diverse backgrounds of hospitality researchers, it seems likely that hospitality research groups bringing together a variety of knowledge areas would provide contributions to the large gaps in this research topic area. In particular, research providing new insights into issues such as:

- decision-making and the decision-making process during greater uncertainty;
- group, business-unit, corporate or network factors that influence the evolution of strategic initiatives;
- the role of emotions and micro-practices in strategy processes; and
- how techniques or tactics can be designed to improve strategic processes or decision-making are important topics for future research.

Strategy implementation

While strategy implementation was one of the lowest percentages across the hospitality literature, it still received much more attention than in *SMJ* during the same time period. This finding was in contrast to Okumus and Wong's (2005) finding from a teaching perspective.

A traditional view of the area of strategy implementation looks at the tactics used by a firm or firms to execute ends and means. In other words, what implementation

tactics or steps are used to promote the manifestation of a strategic plan? In the case of hospitality, the study of strategy implementation can be extended to consider tactics used in network organizations, tourism clusters, regional efforts to implement a regional reputation or identity, and the implementation of strategic outsourcing. Recent studies in the hospitality literature have covered a variety of implementation areas including the implementation of outsourcing (Bolat *et al.*, 2009), service quality implementation (Gomes *et al.*, 2007) and implementation of a corporate identity (Herstein *et al.*, 2007).

Due to the substantial impact of the implementation process on strategic initiatives (Harrington and Kendall, 2006; Bryson and Bromiley, 1993), the strategy implementation topic area appears to be under researched in both the general strategy area and hospitality strategic management. Much like the strategic process topic and research, this area lends itself to more qualitative and longitudinal approaches in assessment. Potential hospitality research questions that come to mind include:

- Given the unique structural challenges in the field, what can hospitality firms do to improve their ability to successfully implement new initiatives, services, and strategies?
- What techniques can enhance implementation of strategic initiatives at business-unit, corporate, or regional tourism levels?

Studies addressing these questions are likely to contribute to several literature streams.

Knowledge and innovation

Because knowledge and intellect are key issues for managing innovation and creating an innovative climate, topics on knowledge development and knowledge management are included with innovation and innovation management in tracks of generic strategic management (Strategic Management Society, 2009). The general strategic management literature provided studies in this topic area (knowledge and innovation) about twice as often during the five-year period of this study (13 percent of articles compared to 6 percent of hospitality strategy articles). Given some of the characteristics stated by earlier researchers in hospitality strategy (e.g. a lack of protection from mimicry of innovative products and services, geographic distribution of business units, and a wide range of business structures), the need for research on the innovation process in hospitality and the contribution potential to both hospitality and other service environments is substantial.

Because of the rapid nature of change and uncertainty, knowledge and innovation issues are a strategic imperative for most firms and managing these processes effectively appears to be key (e.g. Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2007). Research in the following areas is needed to address knowledge and innovation issues in the hospitality field:

- How does uncertainty or change affect investments in knowledge development at the corporate and business-unit levels in hospitality?
- Given the unique structural challenges in the field, what can hospitality firms do to improve their capacity to acquire new knowledge quickly?

- How does the hospitality competitive environment impact knowledge or innovation longevity?
- What techniques can enhance knowledge sharing, knowledge development, and innovation creation given, the structural challenges of the hospitality field?
- How best can management set strategic directions for hospitality innovation processes?
- What can hospitality firms do to mobilize rapid innovations in response to new opportunities?

Studies addressing these questions are likely to contribute to generic strategy, services management, and hospitality literature streams.

The practice of strategy
The research area of the practice of strategy represents the biggest difference in the topic focus of hospitality researchers and general strategy researchers. Nearly one-third of all hospitality articles defined as being strategy-related focused on strategy practice. This finding indicates a more tactical and unit-level focus in the hospitality literature, but this finding also points to an area of expertise that hospitality strategy researchers may have to contribute to general strategy and marketing strategy research.

Much of the hospitality research in this area looks at activities that contribute to an organization's strategy such as a resource-based view (RBV), mission and vision development, organizational values, strategic choice, strategy marketing plan issues, and strategy evaluation or control. Not surprisingly, many of the articles defined as fitting in this topic area focused on strategic marketing plans such as pricing, revenue management, strategic means, corporate menu engineering, and the like.

An appropriate expansion of research in hospitality strategy could relate to not only what people do in businesses, but also the role of hospitality consulting firms, governmental agencies, and universities in planning, developing, and implementing strategies. Additionally, research questions to move this area forward include:

- How and by whom are strategy problems identified and conceptualized in hospitality firms (organizational levels, franchisee/franchisor, and the impact of an uncertain world)?
- How are potential solutions generated, evaluated, and decided on?
- What tools and tactics are useful to individuals whose organizational and institutional contexts are uncertain?

Entrepreneurship and strategy
Seizing the opportunities created by an uncertain and changing world is the core of entrepreneurship; this concept is no less true for hospitality firms. Due to the diverse structural differences across the hospitality field, entrepreneurial thinking and strategy is applicable for small business owners, franchisees of all sizes, and general managers at geographically dispersed business units. As stated above, the centrality of uncertainty and change to the notion of entrepreneurship gives rise to numerous questions of interest, including:

- Are there types or levels of uncertainty that are beneficial to new hospitality ventures compared to incumbents?
- How do various categories of "entrepreneurs" conceptualize and operationalize uncertainty or the need for change in the hospitality field?

Uncertainty has been conceptualized in many ways (Harrington and Kendall, 2005); the early economist Frank Knight (1921) distinguished risk from uncertainty and his concept of uncertainty is often described as "Knightian" uncertainty. Where risk is generally quantifiable with an ability to assess a measurement, uncertainty is defined as a distinctly different phenomenon and may operate as either a measurable uncertainty or in an immeasurable form. This follows Schumpeter's (1950) description of entrepreneurship as a center role in capitalism as a "continual process of creative destruction". Incremental uncertainty that drives changes in the environment creates a continuous change in the nature of competition with a constant series of competitor actions and reactions, innovations and entrepreneurial opportunities. As Schumpeter (1950) suggests, this change can be evolutionary (i.e. incremental) or revolutionary (i.e. radical and quantum changes in the competitive landscape). Therefore, in the entrepreneurial research arena, it is important to define and evaluate potential benefits or opportunities for the sectors of the hospitality field. For instance, how do the strategies undertaken by hospitality entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs, and managers differ in the face of uncertainty and change? Does this vary by type of uncertainty (e.g. pandemics, political, economic, or new entrants)? And, is entrepreneurial success in the hospitality field based primarily on vision, flexibility, or luck?

Conclusions

The importance of strategic management and strategic thinking in hospitality and hospitality research has never been greater (Enz, 2010). With increasing turbulence in the global environment, the field of hospitality (and its related research) must assess and provide strategic approaches that address challenges and opportunities into the future. About one-quarter of all the hospitality articles analyzed in this study have strategic implications. While the definition of strategic management for this study is consistent with earlier work, many of the characteristics of the field that make it unique creates a need to view strategic issues in line with the ideas of Quinn (1980) and a more process-based approach across business units as well as at the corporate level.

The strategy literature in hospitality demonstrates strengths in analyzing the practice of strategy and more emphasis on strategy implementation issues. These areas in particular provide opportunities for hospitality researchers to share this expertise in general business journals in addition to hospitality. As this study points out, there are numerous gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. Given the uncertain and volatile nature of the current economy, many of these gaps were framed around the issue of uncertainty due to its substantial implications if we are entering an era of greater uncertainty as some experts suggest.

This review provides a starting point to build a broader range of topics related to strategy in hospitality and address the unique issues associated with the field. This broader range of topics related to strategy in hospitality should be applied to both hospitality research and in the classroom.

Limitations and future research
This paper proposed that an academic field is socially constructed and exists when a critical mass of researchers adopt a shared conception of its meaning (e.g. Nag *et al.*, 2007). Key texts and articles from mainstream strategic management and hospitality strategic management scholars were utilized to establish a working definition of strategy and key topic areas to organize articles by type. While this approach allowed this study to tap into the collective consensus regarding the essence of the field of strategy in hospitality, a weakness is that the approach does not fully extract a definition across the collective group of scholars in hospitality and practitioners in the field. Therefore, future research should address this limitation by using a more empirically driven strategy definition and defining characteristics of what is and what is not strategic management in a hospitality context. For example, a panel of strategic management scholars in hospitality could be utilized to rate abstracts of articles appearing in hospitality journals for strategy content and derive a shared lexicon. This process should also include a panel of industry representatives involved in strategy and "boundary-spanners" working in fields adjacent to hospitality or hospitality strategic management.

Further, a limitation of this study is the determination of what articles were defined as strategy-related. This process followed earlier methods that categorized articles as strategy-related when evaluators described them as being probably or definitely strategy in nature; in this case, this determination was made by the authors. While the authors have a strong background in the strategy field, this method may be biased by the beliefs of the authors in this study and future research should determine whether or not this represents a collective identity of strategy articles for hospitality. Our belief is that this suggested process will provide a strong consensus for essential characteristics of the field but there may still be substantial ambiguity in identifying a formal definition and categorization of articles. This issue may be redolent of the US Supreme Court's 1964 quote: 'I'm not sure how to define pornography, but I know it when I see it"[1]. For most researchers in hospitality strategy, it may seem clear to an individual researcher what strategic management "is" when he or she sees it, but it remains to be seen whether we can collectively define it.

To maintain a manageable amount of articles to assess, this study focused on four of the top hospitality journals, recognized texts on strategy, the top-rated general strategy journal, and the largest international society of strategy professionals for the 2005-2009 time period. While this approach provided a manageable method of defining and categorizing strategy in hospitality, future research should expand this assessment process over a longer time period and to include additional journals.

As described in the opening boundary conditions, the articles identified as strategy-related and topic areas were determined by the authors using a more liberal definition based on learning school approaches to strategy (e.g. Quinn, 1980) as well as including articles defined as probably strategy; this inclusion was based on key words in article titles, abstracts and keywords. Therefore, future research might utilize a more conservative approach to defining strategic management in hospitality and to create a definition of its boundaries, breadth and depth. In addition, some might question the appropriateness of comparing the mainstream strategy domain with that of hospitality strategy issues. Do the two areas have differing types of journals and objectives? Does the research approach used in hospitality journals limit the rationale for comparing

hospitality strategy with generic strategy literature? These questions also provide fertile ground for future research.

Finally, future research might focus on immediate influences of mainstream strategy topics on those researched in hospitality journals. Specifically, a question could be asked as to whether there is an immediate relationship, a lag effect, or even if the two literature streams operate relatively independently?

Note

1. *Jacobellis* v. *Ohio*, 378 US 184 (1964), Cornell University Law School, Legal Information Institute, available at: www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0378_0184_ZC1.html (accessed March 30, 2010).

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