

The Relationship Between Strategic Management Approach and Innovation in Fitness Centre Managers

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Abstract

This study aims to examine whether fitness center managers' perceptions of innovation and strategic management differ statistically based on demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, and professional experience) and the relationship between innovation and strategic management. The research was conducted using a survey model, and the data collected from 154 participants were analyzed using SPSS. The findings show that male participants scored higher in innovation and strategic management than female participants, and as professional experience increased, these perceptions developed significantly. Although the effect of marital status remained limited, a strong positive correlation was found between innovation and strategic management ($r= 0.844$). This relationship indicates that integrating innovative approaches with strategic processes is critical for organizational success. This study proposes strengthening women's leadership roles by promoting equal opportunities in the workplace, and developing strategic mechanisms to support the development of less experienced employees. Future research should test these findings in various sectors and cultural contexts. The results emphasize that innovation and strategic management are fundamental building blocks for both individual and organizational development.

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Keywords: Innovation, Strategic Management, Sport Management, Fitness Centre

Fitness Merkezi Yöneticilerinde Stratejik Yönetim Yaklaşımı ve İnovasyon Arasındaki İlişki

Öz

Bu çalışma, fitness merkezi yöneticilerinin inovasyon ve stratejik yönetim algılarının demografik özellikler (cinsiyet, medeni durum ve mesleki deneyim) açısından istatistiksel olarak farklılık gösterip göstermediğini ve inovasyon ile stratejik yönetim arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, tarama modeliyle yürütülmüş ve 154 katılımcıdan elde edilen veriler SPSS ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, erkek katılımcıların inovasyon ve stratejik yönetim puanlarının kadınlara göre daha yüksek olduğunu ve mesleki tecrübe arttıkça bu algıların anlamlı şekilde geliştiğini göstermektedir. Medeni durumun etkisi sınırlı kalırken, inovasyon ile stratejik yönetim arasında güçlü bir pozitif ilişki bulunmuştur ($r= 0,844$). Bu ilişki, yenilikçi yaklaşımların stratejik süreçlerle entegre edilmesinin organizasyonel başarı için kritik olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, iş yerlerinde fırsat eşitliğini teşvik ederek kadınların liderlik rollerini güçlendirmeyi ve deneyimsiz çalışanların gelişimini destekleyecek stratejik mekanizmaların oluşturulmasını önermektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bu bulguların farklı sektörler ve kültürel bağlamlarda test edilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, inovasyon ve stratejik yönetimin, hem bireylerin hem de organizasyonların gelişimi için temel yapı taşları olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İnovasyon, Stratejik Yönetim, Spor Yönetimi, Fitness Merkezi

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, the significance of globalization and competition is continually increasing. To survive and compete with rival companies, existing businesses must adapt to changing conditions and renew themselves continually. Strategic management decisions are crucial for facilitating innovation and change within an enterprise. These decisions shape the future of organizations and are paramount across various domains. Innovation is a key aspect in such decisions. Although strategic management and innovation are distinct concepts, they are also closely interconnected. This interconnection stems from the creation of value through innovation followed by the establishment of objectives. Subsequently, developing a strategic plan and system aligned with these objectives underscores the dialogue between these two concepts. The concepts of strategic management and innovation are particularly vital for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Globally and nationally, the number of SMEs is increasing daily, with SMEs comprising 99% of the businesses in many countries. Strategy is the cornerstone of contemporary management practices and often replaces traditional planning functions (Carter, 2013).

Recent studies have highlighted the critical role of strategic management practices and innovation capacity in SMEs' ability to gain competitive advantage and achieve sustainable growth. Guo (2023) examined management innovation in SMEs from a strategic management perspective, emphasizing the positive impact of such innovations on organizational performance. Similarly, Okafor and Oluka (2024) investigated the effect of the strategic management of innovation on SME performance in Nigeria and found that innovative strategies significantly enhance business outcomes. Moreover, in an era of rapid digital transformation, enhancing digital competencies and adopting data-driven decision-making processes are essential for SMEs to bolster their competitive strength. Gonzalez-Varona et al. (2024) discussed the importance of building and developing organizational competencies for digital transformation in SMEs, highlighting how these capabilities are crucial for advancing digital maturity. Additionally, Tawil et al. (2023) analyzed 85 UK SMEs, demonstrating that the effective implementation of data-driven decision-making processes enhances innovation capacity and provides a competitive edge.

It is stated that the origin of the word strategy comes from the Greek word 'stratejos,' meaning general (Paquette, 1991). On the other hand, the word strategy originated from the Latin word 'Stratum.' Latin, which is a different language, has meanings such as streams, rivers, lines, and roads. The meaning of the word in Turkish means reaching a goal, riding a horse, herding (Akgemci, 2015). Different definitions have been provided in the literature related to the concept. These definitions are generally within the scope of the business framework. According to Porter

(2011), strategy stems from the activities a company chooses to maintain its existence in the market and how these activities are carried out. According to Andrews (1997), it is the model of the goals, policies, objectives, and plans to achieve them, which are handled in a way that defines the areas in which the organization is or will be. Based on these definitions, innovation is another concept that is intertwined with strategic management and shows new ways of making different plans.

Innovation is the process of creating and adopting any structure or community over a wide range to make it better than its current state. Innovation can serve different products by reducing environmental impacts, increasing change, meeting needs, and providing competitive advantage (Derin and Tuğrul, 2015). Innovation generally consists of several stages. The most basic stage is to simultaneously generate and collect ideas at the same time. In the first stage, new ideas and potential innovative ideas from within and outside the group were identified. In the next process, the selected idea is identified and then selected idea is developed and started. After testing the selected idea, it was determined that it will meet the needs of consumers. In the next stage, it is tested and returned. The focus is on the usability of this service or product, the customer, and customer satisfaction. In the last stage, innovation is achieved by introducing successful innovation to the market or by obtaining it (Özcan, 2017).

It is known that fitness centers increased their popularity towards the end of the 1990s (Sarıçam and Öcal, 2023). Mumcu et al. (2019) found that Turkey is the fastest growing and developing country among the 48 countries in this sector. These centers close almost a large part of the deficit in Turkish sports. While these existing centers meet the employment requirements related to this field, they also offer a comfortable sports and recreation environment. Another reason for the increasing importance of these centers is that the environment for individuals graduating from the field of physical education is not sufficiently provided (Ziyagil, 2014). As a result, even though it is stated in the literature that innovation plays an active role in the development and growth of fitness centres, it is emphasised that it will be more robust with strategic actions in management-based management and that innovation and strategic management should not be considered independently of each other. From this perspective, the aim of our research is to examine the relationship between innovation and strategic management in terms of demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, and professional experience) of fitness center managers' perceptions of innovation and strategic management.

Materials and Methods

Research model

This quantitative study was conducted to determine the strategic management approaches and innovation levels of fitness center managers in terms of different variables and to reveal the relationship between these variables. Survey models are defined as research models that aim to express past or current situations. The object, individual, or event that is the subject of the research is defined in its own condition and as it is. No effort has been made to influence or change them in any way. What is desired to be known exists and exists there. Relational surveys aim to determine the existence or degree of change between two or more variables (Creswell and Plano-Clark 2007). ‘During the current research, the ‘Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions’ was followed.

Population and sample of the research/Study group of the research

The study population consisted of individuals working as managers in fitness centers. For the research, fitness centers were contacted and asked to complete the measurement tools created. In the study conducted on the basis of volunteerism, 250 fitness center managers were interviewed, and 36 women and 118 men in total 154 managers constituted the sample group for our study by removing the missing data among those who agreed to participate in the survey. A random sampling method was used to collect data (Karasar, 2015).

Data collection tools of the research

In this research, the ‘Personal Information Form’ prepared by the author by taking expert opinions, the Strategic Management Scale developed by Er (2017), and the innovation scale developed by Kılıç and Keklik (2012) were used.

The Innovation Scale

The Innovation Scale has 17 statements rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. As a result of the analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the ‘Innovation Processes Scale’ was found to be 0.86 and it was concluded that the scale was reliable.

The Strategic Management Scale

The Strategic Management Scale also has a 5-point Likert structure and includes 10 questions. In the analysis conducted to determine the reliability level of the ‘Strategic Management

Scale', Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated and found to be 0.91. According to Akgül and Çevik (2003), an alpha coefficient between 0.80 and 1.00 is an indicator of a highly reliable scale.

Data analysis of the research

The valid questionnaire forms completed by students within the scope of the study were transferred to the SPSS 26 statistical package. After the normality assumption analysis of the data, it was determined that the data set had a normal distribution because the skewness and kurtosis values obtained in the sub-dimensions were in the range of -2.5~ to +2.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, parametric tests were used for the statistical analyses in this study. In the analysis of the data obtained, descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distribution), independent sample T Test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Gabriel multiple comparison tests were used to determine the differences between participants' strategic management approaches and innovation levels, gender, marital status, and professional experience. The results were evaluated at a significance level of $p < .05$ significance level (Büyüköztürk, 2018). Pearson Correlation (r) coefficient technique was used to reveal the relationship between the Strategic Management Scale and Innovation Scale scores of the participants. In the interpretation of the correlation coefficient, the result between 0.70-1.00 was considered as a high level relationship, between 0.70-0.30 as a medium level relationship, and between 0.30-0.00 as a low level relationship (Özdamar, 2004).

Ethics of Research

The scales in the study were approved by the Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Research Ethics Committee on January 31, 2023 with the decision number 2023/01-02 for data collection and implementation. Participation in the research is on a voluntary basis.

Results

Findings related to percentage and frequency values of personal information of the students participating in the study

Table 1
Personal (Demographic) Characteristics of Customers

Variable	Variable Levels	N	%
Gender	Female	36	23,4
	Male	118	76,6
Total		154	100,0
Marital Status	Married	61	39,6
	Single	93	60,4
Total		154	100,0
Professional Experience (years)	1-5 years	54	35,1
	6-10 years	72	46,8
	Over 11 years	28	18,2
Total		154	100,0

Table 2
Normality Test (Skewness and Kurtosis) Distributions of Scale Scores Used in the Study

Statistical analyses of the scores of the students participating in the study

Measurement Tools	Min	Max	Mean	Ss.	Skewness	Std. error	Kurtosis	Std. error
Innovation	29,00	100,00	87,4221	10,52385	-2,304	,195	1,770	,389
Strategic Management	25,00	100,00	87,9675	9,42989	-2,185	,195	1,772	,389

Table 2 shows the mean scores for Innovation and Strategic Management were 87.42 and 87.97, respectively, indicating a high level of perception. Both measures showed negative skewness values, suggesting that most participants scored high, and the distribution was skewed to the right. Additionally, the positive kurtosis values for both measures indicate that the distributions are close to a normal curve with few extreme values.

Table 3
t Test Results Showing Comparison of Mean Scores of Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction According to Gender

Measurement Tools	Gender	N	X	Ss.	t	p
Innovation	Female	36	82,916	17,390	-2,508	,013*
	Male	118	88,796	10,319		
Strategic Management	Female	36	83,027	16,912	-2,83	,006*
	Male	118	89,474	10,328		

*p<0,05

Table 3 shows that gender creates a significant difference in innovation and strategic management perceptions. Male participants scored significantly higher than female participants on both innovation (t= -2,508, p= 0,013) and strategic management (t= -2,83, p= 0,006) scales. This can be explained by the fact that men are more often in management positions in the business world and have more knowledge about strategic management and innovation or have higher self-confidence in these areas.

Table 4
t Test Results Showing Comparison of Mean Scores of Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction According to Marital Status

Measurement Tools	Marital Status	N	X	Ss.	t	p
Innovation	Married	61	88,590	11,213	,937	,350
	Single	93	86,655	13,316		
Strategic Management	Married	61	88,721	12,350	,608	,544
	Single	93	87,473	12,523		

p>0,05

Table 4 shows that marital status had no significant effect on either innovation or strategic management perceptions. Small differences in scores can be attributed to the structural characteristics of the sample or to individual differences.

Table 5
One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Gabriel Test Results Showing Comparison of Mean Scores of Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction According to Professional Experience (years)

Measurement Tools	Professional Experience	N	X	Ss.	F	p	Gabriel
Innovation	A 1-5 years	54	83,230	10,067	2,890	,003*	C-A
	B 6-10 years	72	88,041	13,863			
	C Over 11 years	28	88,571	11,682			
Strategic Management	A 1-5 years	54	84,740	9,192	3,156	,000*	C-A
	B 6-10 years	72	86,305	12,712			C-B
	C Over 11 years	28	89,464	9,833			

p>0,05

When Table 5 is analyzed, a significant increase is observed in innovation scores as the duration of professional experience increases (F= 2,890, p= 0,003), the scores of those with 11 years of experience and above ($\bar{X} = 88,571$) were significantly higher than those with 1-5 years of experience ($\bar{X} = 83,230$). Similarly, as professional experience increased, strategic management scores also increased (F= 3,156, p= 0,000), especially those with more than 11 years of experience scored significantly higher than those with 1-5 years of experience (C-A difference) and those with 6-10 years of experience (C-B difference). This shows that professional experience has a positive effect on both innovation and strategic management perceptions and that individuals with longer experience develop higher awareness or competence in these areas.

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Test Results to Determine the Relationship Between Innovation Scale and Strategic Management Scale of the Participants

	Strategic Management		
	n	r	p
Innovation	154	,844**	,000

**p<0,01

There is a very strong and positively significant relationship between innovation and strategic management (r = 0.844, p = 0.000). This strongly indicates that increasing the level of innovation increases the level of strategic management (and vice versa). This reveals that the perception of innovation is closely linked to strategic management practices and that these two variables tend to act together. This relationship suggests that innovative approaches are critical for effective strategic management.

Discussion

The results show that male participants scored significantly higher than female participants on the innovation and strategic management scales. This may be due to the fact that men hold more management positions in the business world. For instance, Huang and Kisgen (2013) found that male executives engaged in fewer acquisition transactions and issued debt more frequently than female executives. This finding suggests that men tend to adopt a more competitive and strategic approach to financial decision making. Similarly, research by Faccio, Marchica, and Mura (2016) showed that female executives take fewer risks than their male counterparts, and firms led by women tend to operate longer. This supports the idea that men adopt a more aggressive approach to strategic decision making. Additionally, a study by Van Vugt, De Cremer, and Janssen (2007) demonstrated that men increased their contributions to the group under external competitive threats, whereas women's contributions remained relatively unchanged. This finding reinforces the notion that men tend to be more strategic and competitive in challenging environments than men. The literature supports the perception that men are generally more effective in competitive and strategic decision-making processes (Eagly and Karau 1991; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). However, it has been shown that women's participative and inclusive leadership styles can also increase innovation (Dezsö and Ross, 2012). This reveals the importance of linking gender awareness to innovation and strategic management in the business world. Marital status has no significant effect on perceptions of innovation and strategic management. This shows that individuals' perceptions of business life are affected by professional and individual qualities, rather than marital status. Studies supporting this finding indicate that individual differences and experiences are more determinant (Galbreath, 2018).

It was found that, as professional experience increased, both innovation and strategic management scores increased significantly. Individuals with ≥ 11 years of experience had the highest scores on the innovation and strategic management scales. This finding suggests that experienced employees have greater cognitive complexity and are more open to innovative ideas (Dalziel et al. 2011). The literature also shows that managers with more professional experience are more successful in strategic decision-making processes (Makri and Scandura, 2010). A strong positive relationship was found between innovation and strategic management. This shows that innovation strengthens strategic management practices, and that these two variables tend to act together. The literature also states that innovation is an integral part of strategic management, and leaders' capacity to develop innovative policies strengthens this relationship (Teece et al., 2018; Zhang and Bartol, 2010).

Conclusion

This study shows that perceptions of innovation and strategic management are significantly linked to individuals' demographic characteristics and professional experience. While gender differences reveal that men have higher perceptions in these areas, this may be related to the fact that men are more frequently in management positions in the business world and gain more experience in strategic decision-making processes. Considering that women also have unique leadership styles that can contribute to innovation, it can be emphasised that equal opportunities in the workplace should be increased. The effect of marital status was not significant, but it was determined that the perceptions of individuals changed depending on their experience. A significant increase was observed in the perceptions of innovation and strategic management of individuals with long-term professional experience. This situation supports the fact that experience increases knowledge and makes complex management processes more effective. Moreover, the strong positive relationship between innovation and strategic management reveals that these two concepts are inseparable from organizational success. Integrating innovative approaches into strategic management processes can enable organizations to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Future studies are recommended to examine these relationships in depth across different sectors, cultures, and types of organizational structures. It is important to develop various strategic support mechanisms that help integrate women leaders and less experienced employees into these processes. These findings emphasize that innovation and strategic management are not just business tools but essential foundations for employee growth and organizational transformation.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

Ethics Committee: Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Human Research Health and Sports Sciences Ethics Committee

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Approval Number: 01/02

Authors' Contribution Statement

Research Design: MÖ, MV

Data Collection: MÖ

Data Analysis: MV

Discussion and Conclusion: MV, MÖ

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest related to this research.

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