Variations in Strategy Perception among Business and Military Managers

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Abstract

The paper aims to identify the similarities and differences in the emphases and patterns that military and civilian managers attribute to strategy. Two different analysis methods were employed in order to achieve abovementioned research objective. In the first method, the aim was to reveal and compare strategy understanding of the sample groups. Towards that end, ten different strategy definitions and nine different necessity statements compiled from various definitions/statements in the existing strategic management literature were provided to the samples. Then, the samples were requested to consider how strategy and necessity of strategy is formed in their minds, and then to choose top three definitions out of 9/10, and finally rank them in preference order, from one to three. Lastly, we counted the ranks/perceived importance of the various strategy definitions and necessity statements that which statement is ranked to which place. Using mean rank assessment by nonparametric comparison method the study shows differences between military and civilian managers in following aspect: the comparison of the emphases that are attributed to approach to strategy identified significant differences among business and military managers. Concisely, the paper reveals the varying perceptions of business and military managers on strategy based on their personal perceptions.

Keywords: *Strategy; Strategy Development; Managerial Perception; Strategy Mode.*

JEL Code: M10 and M19

1. Introduction

The behaviour of human beings is formed under the influence of numerous concrete and abstract factors. It is certain that the perception has a vital role among these abstract factors. Perception, as Young (1956) articulates it, refers to sensing, interpreting, and appreciating physical and social processes.

The critical role of managerial perceptions both in organizational decision making and strategy formulation processes has long been acknowledged also in the literature, and accordingly a large body of evidence exists in the literature supporting this argument. For instance, Child (1972) indicates that the managerial perceptions strongly influence responses by the organization to its particular environment; Duncan (1972) emphasizes that the organizational response is strongly influenced by the perceptual process, which, in turn, is affected by managerial characteristics; Anderson and Paine (1975) observe that strategy formulation is subject to many subjective (behavioural, emotional, political) forces, which influence its ultimate form and also contend that these various forces could best be dealt with in a perceptual framework; Snow (1976) reports that actions taken by the organization in responding to its environment are consistent with managerial perception; Smircich and Stubbart (1985) state that it is interpretive perceptions that render strategic actions by managers as they base strategies on their knowledge, on past events, and situations; Carpenter and Golden (1997) also stress that the organizational environment are influenced by the managerial perceptions; and finally in their relatively more recent research Collier et al. (2004) argue that perceptions are the basis of managerial behaviour and although perceptions may not always equate with reality, they recognize perceptions as important since they are likely to be the basis of behaviour. Therefore, the literature provides enough evidence for the crucial role of managerial perception as well as its influence on organizations.

As a corner base of the argument, they all agree that the way of thinking of the manager is prevalent to the realized strategy. All types of decisions, as well as strategic ones, are believed to be dependent on perception of the individual (manager) who makes the decisions. Consequently, the variations in perceptions make different organisations formulate miscellaneous strategies according to their individual needs. Therefore, the perceptual difference in turn affects the strategic thinking and as a result the entire strategic management process accordingly, as depicted in Fig 1.
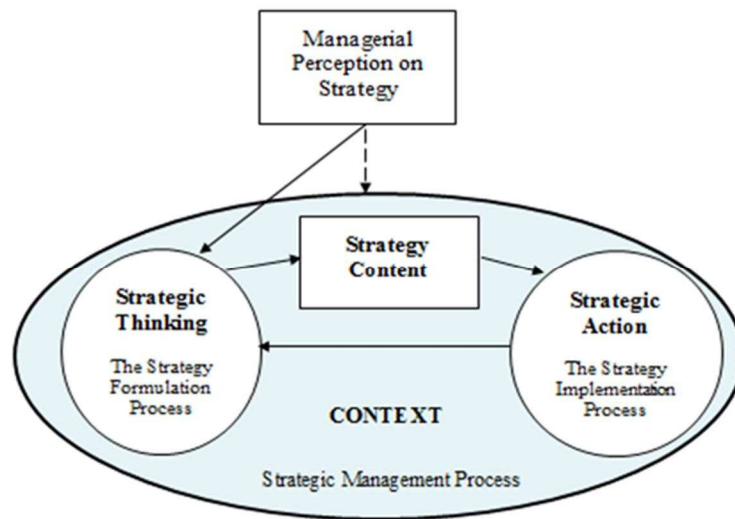
Fig. 1. The Role of Strategy Perception in Strategic Management Process (Adapted from Macmillan and Tampoe, 2000).

When the subject is approached from this aspect, it can be considered that the strategy perceptions of managers have a special place in the formulations of strategies to be applied. Therefore, the behaviour of managers, as different individuals, of various organisations, business or military, has a specific importance for the organisations. According to Ireland et al. (1987) individuals' basic cognitive properties result in perceptions. Managers are individuals with multiple characteristics (e.g. age, gender, personal history, values and education etc.) and these characteristics may vary significantly across managers (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). Given their different individualities, military and business managers' perceptions on strategy and strategic management may also vary. That is why; it is natural that the understanding and perceptions of business and military managers may have differences both in business and military fields. However, it should also be specified that at what areas those differences are cumulated and at what levels they are. Furthermore, our research motivation is also sustained by the fact that despite the acknowledged military origin of business strategy the previous researches focused on only perceptions of business managers. Besides, in written strategy and strategic management literature we were unable to find any research effort having focused exclusively on the subject from military managers' point of view.

Based on the discussion above, we have undertaken an open, broad-based exploration to identify differences between business and military approaches to strategy. The following proposition has guided this exploratory research: A comparison of the emphases that are attributed to strategy will identify significant differences among business and military managers. Consequently, the paper departs from a strategy as perceived perspective to investigate and to compare the strategy understanding among business and military managers.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research instrument - the survey questionnaire

A self-administered web based on-line questionnaire was applied in the research, mainly because it was the intention to reach two different widely geographically dispersed large samples. The questionnaire used for the collection of data titled "Strategy Perception Questionnaire" consists of four sections (A, B, C, D) and each of them was designed to serve a specific purpose. Section A (Understanding of Strategy) with 10 items and Section B (Necessity of Strategy) with 9 items were constructed from various strategy definitions from the extant literature and designed to reveal a respondent's strategy understanding as well as perception on the necessity of strategy. A header question was the hub of the sections that read as follows: 'Consider how strategy is formed in your mind and indicate the best description with a 1, the second with a 2, and the third with a 3.' Below this header statements were presented as items and the respondents were requested to choose three definitions within these statements and rank them accordingly. Section C, which is the main scale of the questionnaire aimed to reveal and categorize the managerial perceptions on strategy. The 34 items of the scale were constructed from the premises of Mintzberg et al. (1998)'s Ten Schools of Thought in strategic management. We decided to use *Mintzberg's Ten Schools of Thought* as an item pool for the questionnaire development, since it covers almost all developments in strategic management (Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2002), coalesces strategic thinking from 1960s into 10 broad schools of thought (Shekhar, 2009), and also clarifies on the most detailed level each school's specific contribution to the strategy field (Volberda and Elfring, 2001). The header question in this scale was framed as follows: 'Consider the below aspects of strategy in your mind and select the one choice in each line, which you feel best indicates your opinion to the relevant statement.' Below this header question were presented the items as statements. The 7 point Likert-type scale was used so that a respondent could choose one of the seven points for each item. For each statement, respondents had to point out the degree to which they agree or disagree with its content on a seven-point scale The scale points were anchored as 1-Strongly disagree and 7- Strongly agree in order to assist a respondent to perceive to what extent each of the items did form in his/her mind. Section D consists of questions related to the selected situational characteristics of the respondents.

2.2 Samples

A purposive sampling was utilized to define the samples, which means that the samples were "deliberately selected to sample a specific group with a specific purpose in mind" (Burns and Burns, 2008:206). The decision to use purposive sampling was driven by the fact that no single list was available in which all the managers with adequate strategy knowledge/background are listed. This method enabled us to use our judgement to select cases that will best enable us to answer the research questions and to meet our research objectives (Saunders et al., 2003).

The sampling frame for business managers was made up of the Top 500 Industrial Enterprises in Turkey specified by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ICI) for the year 2011. It provides sufficient information about a business such as its name, address, telephone number, fax number, email address (not in all cases), web site address (not in all cases), products and services, names of executives, annual sales, number of employees, export destinations and so on. We

focused on that Top 500 Industrial Enterprises for the reason that we believe this approach was the most adequate for the purposes of this research because, generally, it is the largest companies that invest more resources (time, money, and intellectual capital) in acquiring, implementing, and using strategy and strategic management.

On the other hand, the military sampling frame for the research was composed of the 520 War College graduate military managers from different organisational and managerial levels as well as different services, functional areas, educational levels, work experiences and followed International Security Strategies master degree programme in the War College and received a diploma on this strategy, strategy making and strategic management orientated master degree programme.

2.3 Data collection

In this research, the data collection techniques were the web-based online method and the telephone questionnaire method depending on the particular circumstances of the participants and the participating organisations.

2.3.1 Business sample

The questionnaire link was addressed to either the chief executive officer or the managing director of the 500 firms identified from the Top 500 Industrial Enterprises. The chief executive officer or the managing director was requested to respond the questionnaire and also address it a 'key respondent', who has wide-range knowledge on strategy and strategy development process. No material inducements were provided for respondents to participate. A guarantee was given to the participating managers that on completion of the research, an executive summary would be sent to them. This was highlighted as an encouragement for participation. This value proposition made a positive impact on some executives motivating them to spend some ten minutes on the survey questionnaire. The target was to collect at least 100 completed questionnaires in the first wave. Initially, one week later on the closing date, only about 26 questionnaires were returned. Again following Saunders et al. (2003), two weeks after the first wave of the reminder follow up messages were e-mailed to the firms that had not participated. It seems the reminder follow up messages had some impact resulting in 17 more completed questionnaires. At this stage, it was realised that the number of completed and returned questionnaires was not even half of the target number. Therefore, the researcher decided not to send another follow up reminder, but to employ a more intensive approach by support of a professional research company. Executives representing the business organisations earmarked for the sample were contacted by telephone by the research company. Although the approach was slow and time-consuming, contacting by telephone was found to be highly effective in securing completed questionnaires. As weeks progressed, the number of returned questionnaires approached to a more satisfactory level. Over an extended period of about five months, most of the business organisations nominated in the sample was contacted via telephone. Finally, the number of returned questionnaires reached 184. 8 questionnaires were assessed as undeliverable. Thus, this data collection process resulted in 176 usable responses in total with a 35.2 % response rate.

2.3.2 Military sample

The survey link was sent to War College alumni communication e-mail groups of seven graduate groups (in total 520) and all members requested to participate to the survey. At the end of the first week 135 completed questionnaires were collected back. Even that number was already above the minimum adequate number of 100 for a factor analysis (Hair et al., 2006). However, in order to increase the cases in the sample one week after the first e-mailing questionnaire link was e-mailed again to all addresses this time with a 'thank you' message to early respondents and a 'reminder' message to non-respondents to answer. In order to warn the non-respondents to check their e-mails and prevent spam e-mail misunderstanding, a big part of the non-respondents contacted by telephone and requested to check their e-mail addresses and response the questionnaire. After this follow-up e-mail and personal telephone call reminders a total of 76 completed questionnaires were collected back. Following Saunders et al. (2003), the second follow-up reminder was sent to people who did not respond after three weeks. This time the reminder message was reworded to further emphasise the importance of completing the questionnaire. After the second follow-up reminder 32 completed questionnaires were received in the following two weeks. At the end of the process, 243 responses out of 520 were gathered in total. 12 questionnaires were assessed as undeliverable. Thus, this data collection process resulted in 231 usable responses in total with a 44.4 % response rate.

3. Analysis and Results

There are proper statistical tests for compering two or more groups and several dependent variables. Based on the sample population and the type of data, parametric or non-parametric statistical tests are usually employed. Numerous authors (i.e. Field, 2000; Burns and Burns, 2008; Corder and Foreman, 2009) suggest that nonparametric tests are more appropriate for analyses ordinal scales including Likert scales. Since the type of dependent variable of the research is in ordinal scale of measurement (7- point Likert scale), we employed nonparametric tests for data analysis.

Based on above guidance, two separate analyses were carried out. We used mean score comparison and Mann-Whitney U test (also called the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test) rank-based nonparametric independent groups test to compare the results obtained from two different samples.

3.1 Statement ranking results for "understanding and necessity of strategy" sections - assessing mean ranks

As mentioned earlier, the sample groups were provided 10 different strategy definitions in the Section A, and 9 different necessity statements in the Section B within the questionnaire. We requested respondents to consider how strategy and necessity of strategy is formed in their mind, and then to choose top 3 definitions out of 9/10, and finally rank them in preference order, from 1 to 3. For conducting the test we utilized SPSS 21 and included each item as a variable to test analysis. Then for the top 3 ranks, we allocated to the variables the numbers given by the respondents (1 to 3). For the unselected items we gave the same rank as 4th. The results are presented in following sections.

3.1.2 Results for "understanding of strategy" section

It is evident from Table 1 that **"competitive advantage and external environment"** dimensions of strategy were found more emphasized by the business sample based on mean scores. As depicted in Table 1, the two definition statements related with "competitive advantage and external environment" dimension, namely items #7 and #9 were ranked in the 1st and 2nd places by having the top two ranks by far (Mean Scores: 3.51 and 4.53 respectively). For the military sample, as we see from Table 1 the **"long term goals and objectives"** dimension of strategy undoubtedly was emphasized much more than the others. The three definition statements associated with this dimension, namely items #2, #1, #3 were ranked in the top places. The results, as highlighted in Table, 1 conclude that out of outlined ten strategy definition statements, the items stressing the "long term goals and objectives" dimension of strategy have the highest ranks with lowest mean scores (Mean Scores = 3.15, 3.99, 4.44 respectively).

Table 1. Comparison of Mean Score Based Ranks for Understanding of Strategy Section

St. No.	Strategy Definition	Business		Military	
		Mean Scores	Rank	Mean Scores	Rank
7	Strategy is being different and deliberately choosing a different set of activities to **achieve competitive advantage.**	**3,51**	**1**	6,05	6
9	Strategy is to create a road map by determining internal strengths and weaknesses against **external opportunities and threats.**	**4,53**	**2**	5,50	5
4	Strategy is about developing the organization from its present position to the **desired future position.**	5,12	3	**4,44**	**3**
1	Strategy is the determination of basic **long-term goals and objectives** of an organization.	5,19	4	**3,99**	**2**
10	Strategy is to analyse the current situation and changing it if necessary.	5,32	5	6,64	8
8	Strategy is a framework, which guides those choices that determine the nature and direction of an organization.	5,93	6	5,27	4
2	Strategy is about determining the courses of action to attain the predetermined *goals and objectives.*	6,08	7	**3,15**	**1**
3	Strategy is about allocating the necessary resources for implementing the course of action.	6,20	8	6,34	7
5	Strategy is about managing the future based on estimates for the future.	6,49	9	6,66	9
6	Strategy is a pattern in actions over time.	6,64	10	6,96	10

3.1.3 Results for "necessity of strategy" section

It is apparent from Table 2 that **"competitive advantage and external environment"** dimensions for necessity of strategy were found more stressed by the business sample based on mean scores. As depicted in Table 2, the results determined that out of nine necessity statements, the three items emphasizing the "competitive advantage and external environment" dimension of strategy (items #5, #8, #9) took places in the first four rows. (Mean Scores = 3.32, 4.15, 4.88 respectively). From military sample point of view, **"to determine a consistent direction towards objectives"** item for necessity of strategy was certainly much more strongly highlighted than the others by the military sample.

The statement, namely item #2 reached absolute importance and emphasis by the military managers by having the highest rank score by far (Mean Score = 2.40).

Table 2. Comparison of Mean Score Based Ranks for Necessity of Strategy Section

St. No.	Strategy Definition	Business		Military	
		Mean Scores	Rank	Mean Scores	Rank
5	To adapt to the changes taking place in the **external environment**	**3,32**	**1**	5,84	7
8	To achieve **competitive advantage** and overcome the rivals	**4,15**	**2**	5,68	6
2	To determine a consistent **direction towards objectives**	**4,67**	**3**	**2,40**	**1**
9	To recognize which **competitor's actions** needs critical attention	**4,88**	**4**	6,23	9
1	To take high quality decisions	5,03	5	4,93	5
3	To have an assurance that the organization's overall resource allocation pattern is efficient	5,62	6	4,89	4
4	To have and develop internal ability to anticipate change	5,64	7	4,50	2
7	To identify, develop and exploit potential opportunities	5,83	8	4,52	3
6	To save time, resource and executive talent	5,87	9	6,00	8

3.2 Comparing "approach to strategy" scores

The Mann-Whitney U non-parametric statistical test was used to check for significant differences between two samples to locate such differences. The Mann-Whitney U test is a rank-based nonparametric independent groups test that can be used to determine if there are differences between two groups on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable. This test ranks scores from the two samples into one set of ranks and then tests to determine whether there is a systematic clustering into two groups paralleling the samples (Burns and Burns, 2008; Corder and Foreman, 2009).

3.2.1 Comparison of "characteristics of strategy" scores

The results of the test of differences between mean ranks are presented in Table 3. They suggest there is big difference in the ranges of emphasis that military and business managers place on characteristics of strategy. The range of the military averages is from 222.81 to 149.04, while the range of business averages from 276.14 to 179.31. Table 3 also discloses important differences: 12 out of 14 items are statistically significant in their differences. The only two items, on which military and business managers do not differ are variable #7 (p=0. 988) and #11 (p=0.173).

The results suggest that military attention is relatively concentrated, placing more emphasis than the business on: **careful deliberation, consciousness and formal planning** in strategy development process, which receive strong

emphasis from military managers by being ranked in the first 3 positions. However, these items are relatively deemphasized by the business managers, ranking 11th, 13th, and 14th of 14 variables. The business managers place more emphasis on: **trial and error, pattern of past decisions and learning from experiences** in strategy formulation process. These aspects get strong emphasis from business managers by being ranked in the first 3 positions. In contrast, military managers relatively deemphasized these premises by ranking them in the last 3 positions, namely 12th, 13th and 14th of 14 items. They also place more emphasis on the all other items in the scale, such as stressing the effect of **competitive environment; importance of the leader; simple, explicit, and fully formulated nature of strategy**; and finally the **role of the interests of powerful groups and individual** in strategy development process than do military managers.

In a nutshell, business managers generally place a greater emphasis on all items in the scale than military managers do, but item number 1 and 9. As mentioned previously, these items stress the careful deliberation, consciousness and formal planning nature in strategy development process.

Table 3. Importance Attributed to Characteristics of Strategy

#	Variable	Military		Business		Mann-Whitney U Test sign.*
		Rank	Mean Rank	Rank	Mean Rank	
1	Strategy should be deliberate and responsible for consciousness.	(1)	**222,81**	(14)	179,31	P=.000<.05
9	Strategies should be developed after careful deliberation.	(2)	**220,29**	(13)	182,62	P=.000<.05
11	Strategy should result from a controlled, conscious process of formal planning.	(3)	197,46	(11)	212,58	P=.173>.05 (NS)
7	Strategies occur with the influence of the many individual, organizational and environmental factors, interacting each other in the same period.	(4)	204,07	(12)	203,91	P=.988>.05 (NS)
13	Strategies are generic, specifically common, identifiable positions in the competitive environment.	(5)	188,57	(10)	**224,25**	P=.002<.05
12	Strategy formation is a learning that takes place over a period of time.	(6)	186,60	(9)	**226,83**	P=.000<.05
4	Strategies should be simple, explicit, and fully formulated.	(7)	185,88	(8)	**227,78**	P=.000<.05
5	Strategy is a compromise, which accommodates the conflicting interests of powerful groups and individuals.	(8)	182,73	(7)	**231,91**	P=.000<.05
10	Strategy exists in the mind of the leader as perspective.	(9)	176,61	(6)	**239,95**	P=.000<.05
2	Strategy is a mental representation, created or expressed in the head of the leader.	(10)	175,77	(5)	**241,06**	P=.000<.05
6	Strategies should be unique for every organization.	(11)	175,18	(4)	**241,83**	P=.000<.05
14	Strategies should tend to emerge as the organization learns from its experiences.	(12)	173,92	(3)	**243,49**	P=.000<.05
8	Strategy emerges of actions from the pattern in past decisions.	(13)	169,46	(2)	**249,34**	P=.000<.05
3	Strategy is not a formulation, instead it emerges out over a period of time as a pattern based on trial and error.	(14)	149,04	(1)	**276,14**	P=.000<.05

* The significance level is .05

3.2.2 Comparison of "responsibility and participation" scores

The results of the test of differences between mean ranks are presented in Table 4. The results indicate that there is big difference in the ranges of emphasis that military and business managers' place on responsibility and participation scale. The range of the military averages is from 221.05 to 164.76, while the range of business averages from 255.51 to 181.63.

Table 4 also shows important differences: 8 out of 11 items are statistically significant in their differences. This result suggest that military focus is quite concentrated, placing more emphasis than the business on: **collaboration and wide participation** in strategy development process, by receiving strong stress from military managers and ranked in the top 3 positions. However, these items are relatively deemphasized by the business managers, by being ranked at the last 3 positions. This means that, in an opposite way the business managers place more emphasis on: **autonomous or individual behaviour and the role of leader as well as top management** in strategy formulation process. These aspects get strong emphasis from business managers by being ranked in the top 5 positions.

To sum up, business managers largely place more emphasis on autonomous/individual behaviour and the role of leader as well as top management; while military managers advocate of collaboration and wide participation in the process.

Table 4. Importance Attributed to Responsibility and Participation

#	Variable	Military		Business		Mann-Whitney U Test sign.*
		Rank	Mean Rank	Rank	Mean Rank	
2	Strategy should be formulated by specialists.	(1)	**221,05**	(11)	181,63	P=.000<.05
4	Strategy formation is a product of not a single architect but of a homogenous strategy team.	(2)	**217,79**	(10)	185,91	P=.003<.05
8	Strategy should be generated through wide participation process.	(3)	**213,69**	(9)	191,28	P=.000<.05
11	High degree of participation and empowerment should be prevalent in strategy formation process.	(4)	209,00	(8)	197,44	P=.308>.05 (NS)
5	Strategy is based on negotiation process among all the key players.	(5)	201,07	(7)	207,85	P=.548>.05 (NS)
6	The top management should determine the strategy.	(6)	195,60	(6)	215,03	P=.098>.05 (NS)
3	The top-management holds the responsibility for the formulation of the overall process, only the execution rests with the staff planners.	(7)	187,89	(5)	**225,14**	P=.001<.05
9	Strategy should be developed through a process of bargaining and negotiation between groups or individuals.	(8)	182,97	(4)	**231,61**	P=.047<.05
10	Strategy has a close association with leadership so that setting strategy is responsibility of leaders.	(9)	180,21	(3)	**235,22**	P=.000<.05
7	Primarily autonomous or individual behaviour should be preferred in strategy development.	(10)	165,69	(2)	**254,28**	P=.000<.05
1	There must be only one strategist, and that must the manager who sits at the apex of the organizational pyramid (rather than consulting the top management team).	(11)	164,76	(1)	**255,51**	P=.000<.05

* The significance level is .05

3.2.3 Comparison of "actual factor influencing strategy" scores

The results of the test of differences between mean ranks for "Actual Factor Influencing Strategy" scale are presented in Table 5. Just like the other two scales, results reveal big difference in the ranges of emphasis that military and business managers place on actual factor influencing strategy. The range of the military averages is from 195.51 to 175.64, whereas the range of business averages from 241.23 to 215.14.

Table 5 exposes important differences: 8 out of 9 items are statistically significant in their differences. In this scale business managers place a greater emphasis on all items than military managers do. The results have a strong consistency with the results of two previous comparisons presented earlier. Business managers higher mean rank scores indicate more emphasis on: pattern of the past decisions, role of leader and top management, internal dynamics, external and competitive environment in strategy development process. Although military sample strongly emphasis some of the items by placing them to the top, the business sample's mean rank scores for these top ones are still higher than the military sample's scores, indicating a greater emphasis on every single aspect than military managers.

Table 5. Importance Attributed to Actual Factor Influencing Strategy

#	Variable	Military		Business		Mann-Whitney U Test sign.*
		Rank	**Mean Rank**	**Rank**	**Mean Rank**	
2	Personalized leadership based on strategic vision is the key to successful strategies.	(1)	195,51	(9)	215,14	P=.087>.05 (NS)
9	The attitudes, behaviours, rituals, and stories of the organization (organizational culture) have the main effect to strategy.	(2)	193,02	(8)	**218,41**	P=.027<.05
1	Structure of the competitive environment derives strategies.	(3)	191,36	(7)	**220,59**	P=.011<.05
6	The vision of the leader has the main effect to strategy.	(4)	188,87	(6)	**223,86**	P=.001<.05
5	Internal dynamics of the organization is the central actor for strategy.	(5)	188,24	(5)	**224,69**	P=.001<.05
7	The role played by managerial values is the most important in the process of strategy making.	(6)	185,94	(4)	**227,71**	P=.000<.05
4	The environment as a set of external forces is the central actor for strategy.	(7)	185,91	(3)	**227,74**	P=.000<.05
8	Interest of the most powerful group in the organization has the main role in strategy.	(8)	180,30	(2)	**235,11**	P=.000<.05
3	The pattern in past decisions has the main role in strategy.	(9)	175,64	(1)	**241,23**	P=.000<.05

* The significance level is .05

4. Conclusion and Implications

4.1 Conclusion

The mean scores and the emphases attributed to strategy definitions and necessity statements served to understand and describe how strategy is formed in the minds of two different respondent groups. The mean score analysis revealed that **"competitive advantage and external environment"** dimension of both strategy definitions and necessity statements received the main emphases from business sample by far. For the military sample, the main emphases obviously focused on **"long term goals and objectives"** dimension both for the strategy definitions and the necessity statements.

In the second method, the approach to strategy scores of business and military samples were analysed through the application of Mann-Whitney U test, and therefore strategy perceptions and understandings were furthermore explored, described and compared. The results specified that managers from both business and military samples placed different emphasis to the items in the scale. The 28 out of 34 items' mean ranks were found statistically significantly different between business and military managers.

Firstly, regarding approach to "characteristics of strategy" the results suggested that military attention is relatively concentrated, placing more emphasis than the business on: **careful deliberation, consciousness and formal planning,** while business managers placed more emphasis on: **trial and error, pattern of past decisions and learning from experiences** in strategy development process. Business managers also placed more emphasis than the military managers on the all other items in the scale, such as stressing the effect of competitive environment; importance of the leader; simple, explicit, and fully formulated nature of strategy; and finally the role of the interests of powerful groups and individuals in strategy development process.

Secondly, in terms of approach to "responsibility and participation" items, the results revealed that business managers largely placed more emphasis on **autonomous/individual behaviour** and **the role of leader as well as top management**; while military managers advocated of **collaboration and wide participation** in strategy development process.

Finally, the results have a strong consistency with the results of two previous comparisons presented earlier in the "actual factor influencing strategy" aspect. Business managers higher mean rank scores indicates more emphasis on: **pattern of the past decisions, role of leader and top management, internal dynamics, external and competitive environment** in strategy development process. Although military sample strongly emphasis some of the items by placing them to the top, the business samples' mean rank scores for these top ones were still higher than the military sample' scores, indicating a greater emphasis on every single aspect than military managers.

Based on the above results the approach to strategy or in other words strategy modes for business and military managers can therefore be described as depicted in Table 6:

Table 6. Strategy Modes of Business and Military Managers

<u>**Business managers;**</u>
Competitive advantage and external environment oriented.
Pattern of past decisions and learning from experiences are in the centre, autonomous/individual behaviour is preferred, and accordingly the role of leader and top management is crucial.

<u>**Military managers;**</u>
Long term goals and objectives oriented. Careful deliberation, consciousness and formal planning are in the centre, collaboration and wide participation is favoured.

In a nutshell, the mean scores and the emphases attributed to strategy definitions and necessity statements revealed different results in terms of how strategy is formed in the minds of two different respondent groups. Furthermore, the 28 out of 34 items' mean ranks were found statistically significantly different between business and military managers. These results provide support for our research proposition, in other words "**the comparison of the emphases that are attributed to approach to strategy has identified significant differences among business and military managers**".

4.2 Implications

Even though the main research focus of this paper is "what is perceived by strategy?" (Strategy as perceived) aspect, which may be assumed having less practical applications in real world, we believe that the findings of this study can still make immense useful practical contributions to organisations both within military and business environment. Taking all findings and conclusions into account we consider the findings have proved that the use of such kind of perception research may be utilized as an instrument to expose the strategy perceptions of firm individuals, particularly managers. As suggested by Keeton and Mengistu (1992) organizations need to analyse their subcultures and varying perceptions. Through this we think we have found that it is important not only to explore how an organisation's strategy (corporate strategy) is developed but also how strategy perception actually may vary within managers in the organisational structure. The results have shown different perceptions when concerning to strategy. This indicates that every individual is unique and has his/her specific understanding of the surrounding and the strategic instructions given to them. Therefore, we think it is important for managers and strategic decision makers that they should understand and take this reality under consideration in strategy development as well as implementation processes in their organisations. We would therefore like to suggest that organisations themselves can employ this or a similar methodology to develop an understanding of their own staff's strategy perceptions and modes, and act accordingly.

Although the number of studies aiming to explore managerial perceptions on strategy is increasing, hardly any studies aimed to focus and discuss the delicate differences in perceptions that accurately separate the managers in business and military sectors. This study is one among a few may be the only one that using data collected from managers in the field, identifies differences in emphasis and the patterns in these differences that differentiate business and military understandings as well as approaches to strategy and strategy development. More studies are required to reveal and

highlight the different understandings that managers of different sectors use to both rationalise and guide their organisations' strategy development process.

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