

# **Reflections And Effects Of Corporate Reputation Management On The Process Of Consumer Evaluation: An Application For Accommodation Enterprises**

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**Abstract:** *This study examines how corporate reputation and reputation management (RM) activities influence consumers' choice behaviors. The sample of the study constitute randomly selected customers of an international hotel group Best Western The President İstanbul and Best Western Hotel Oldentruper Hof Bielefeld. The main objective of reputation management activities of enterprises is to achieve a brilliant image and higher-level value for the customers. When customers have a positive attitude towards an enterprise and when the perceived risk is low, they probably will perceive the enterprise as trustworthy and choose to purchase its products or services. Interdimensional interaction analysis conducted on the sample seems to support the literature.*

**Keywords:** *Reputation Management, image, consumer trust, perceived risk, choice behavior.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the science of marketing, psychological processes behind consumer behaviours and choices, are accepted as the key reagents of many researches being realized in relation to products, brands, and company names. These researches reveal that general beliefs about a company can have an impact on the decisions consumers give with respect to that company. Furthermore, these researches specify that consumer confidence is another important factor in decision making process. (Moorman and others, 1992: 90; Chen and Tan, 2004: 74). If marketing players can manage the psychological process of consumers successfully, they will increase their chance to be selected by customers among many competitors. This viewpoint creates a practical question for the companies: Which strategies and activities improve the belief and confidence that the consumers have for the company in a positive way? This research tests the perspective of a company to improve consumer confidence in order to create a positive image and to cause choices to be made in favor of the company.

Reputation is defined as the spiritual value reflecting the evaluation of customer in the target market as regards to whether the company is good or bad. (Weiss and others, 1999: 75) and it reflects the information about organizations relating with their current activities and activities that were realized in the past. In today's markets with high competition, reputation is not an outcome that comes out on its own. Reputation is an organizational value that develops with long term management perspective strategies. In short, in order for a company to have a good reputation, it should have a strategic marketing management approach in order to convert these activities into reputation management. (Helm, 2007: 20).

Reputation which is obtained by a successful strategic marketing management, can come to an end if it is not sustainable. Even though reputation is an abstract value, if it is established successfully by a company, it has the potential to create concrete values.

Although there are many researches conducted in relation to reputation management (Weigelt and Camerer, 1988; Fombrun, 1996; Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Cretu and Brodie, 2007), resources are insufficient with respect to experimental studies testing whether reputation management activities could improve consumer confidence or not by creating a positive company image. The purpose of this study is to discover the relation between reputation management activities and consumer confidence, behaviour of consumers to make choices with respect to company image, and the risk foreseen by consumers being subject to reputation management activities. As the conclusion of study with the research model investigating reputation management activities as being the factors of behaviours for making choices, it is expected for the information generated as a result of this study to contribute to the competitive power heading of marketing sources.

### **1. Model and Hypothesis of the Research**

Some applied studies in the area of marketing reveal that long term reputation of seller is more important than short term product quality movements. (Landon and Smith, 1997: 289). Experimental researches

prove that (McKnight and others, 1998: 473), reputation of company provides warrant of integrity and respect for the consumers. Especially when the consumer does not have prior experience and as he does not have any first hand information, guarantee helps in improving confidence. For this reason, the more consumers think about a company positively, the more positive their approach will be with respect to the company image. As per these findings, below assumption has been proposed.

**H1:** There is a positive relation between IY activities and company image.

From the viewpoint of social shopping theory, (Blau, 1964; Cook and Emerson, 1978: 721) confidence is an important factor between consumer and the company. Researches have revealed that lack of confidence avoids for a relation to be established by the consumer. Therefore, confidence is defined as a psychologic factor with respect to consumer behaviour. (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999: 70; Ba and Pavlou, 2002: 243; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004: 37). According to many researches conducted, (Weigelt and Camerer, 1988: 443; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999: 70; Plank, Reid, and Pullins, 1999: 61) company reputation has an important role in reducing the indecision that the consumers have as they are evaluating the companies. As being based on this logic, below hypothesis have been established.

**H2:** There is a positive relation between IY activities and consumer confidence.

**H3:** There is a positive relation between company image and consumer confidence.

Risk factor which is perceived by consumers is an important topic in marketing discipline. Because it is believed to be leading component of human psychology at the stage of decision making. Risk has been defined as the foresight regarding uncertainty of an individual's or a group's participating in an activity. (Dowling and Staelin, 1994: 119). Some academicians (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard 1986, s. 109) see the risk being foreseen as the risk beliefs relating with purchasing of a product (service).

In marketing literature there is a classification which is widely accepted and which covers financial, physical, psychologic, performance and social risk as being based on the studies conducted by Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) and Kaplan et al. (1974). Grottoresk and Mitchell (1994), have defined social risk as social loss and they have added time risk to the sixth category. Confidence and risk that is foreseen are closely related. (Mayer et al., 1995). As regards to management perspective, consumer confidence and positive company image give way to more positive foresights with respect to product quality and company. Marketing literature which is mainly based on experimental evidences, asserts that the specified structures cuts the negative ties with the company while they encourage the consumers. (McKnight et al., 1998; Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004; Cretu & Brodie, 2007). In other words, by improving positive hints, they reduce the risk level that is foreseen. The higher the risk foreseen, the more confidence will be required to facilitate shopping. When there is a risk, in order to enable shopping to take place, more confidence will be needed. Thus, consumer confidence had for a product or an institution reduces the risk foreseen in relation to a proposal. As a result it is expected for companies being part of positive institutions to act well and to keep away from negative actions. This improves foresight of consumers against risk that is foreseen at a lower level.

As being based on this approach, below hypothesis have been established.

**H4:** There is a negative relation between company image and risk that is foreseen by the consumers.

**H5:** There is a negative relation between consumer confidence and risk that is foreseen by consumers.

Indications lying under psychologic discipline that emphasizes the relation between behaviour and relevant factors, explain that many human behaviors are under the control of conscious mind. (Ryan, 1970). There are various ways of testing choice behaviour of consumers in marketing sources. For examples, Bloemer and Odekerken-Schröder (2007) tests price insensitivity within choice behavior. Bansal, Irving, and Taylor (2004) makes research on choice behaviors of consumers as part of change of intention. On the other hand, Mittal, Kumar, and Tsiros (1999), makes calculation of inclination of consumers to give advice to people which could be considered as an indication of choice behaviors.

As it is implied in explanations in the field of psychology, choice behaviors of consumers among offers of competitors arise with the aim to improve their own benefits. (Becker, 1990; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). A risk that is foreseen as lower by the consumers, is part of bigger benefits. In other words, minimizing the risk guarantees for the consumers to attain more satisfactory outcomes. A rational theory of consumer behaviors (Tversky and Kahneman, 1986, 1991) specifies that consumers use the risk level they foresee as a hint for getting positive satisfaction.

When it is looked from this perspective, risk that is foreseen by consumers is an important indicator about whether they will be interested in a brand or a company. In short, as the risk foreseen by consumers increases, their choice behavior is reduced. To make it more specific, if a high risk is foreseen in relation to a company, they have more tendency not to choose or to prefer and to show tendency to make negative remarks and price sensitivity. As being based on this view, below hypothesis has been developed.

**H6:** There is a negative relation between risk that is foreseen and choice behavior of consumers.

After examining above sources, for investigating six hypothesis which we have established, below hypothesis have been further created for examining the differences regarding nationality of customers, factors they

considered when choosing the enterprise, and the situation whether they have chosen the enterprise before or not.

**H7:**The fact that customers have different nationalities creates difference in their attitude towards reputation management activities.

**H8:**The factors which the customers have considered as they chose the enterprise, create differences in their behavior regarding reputation management activities.

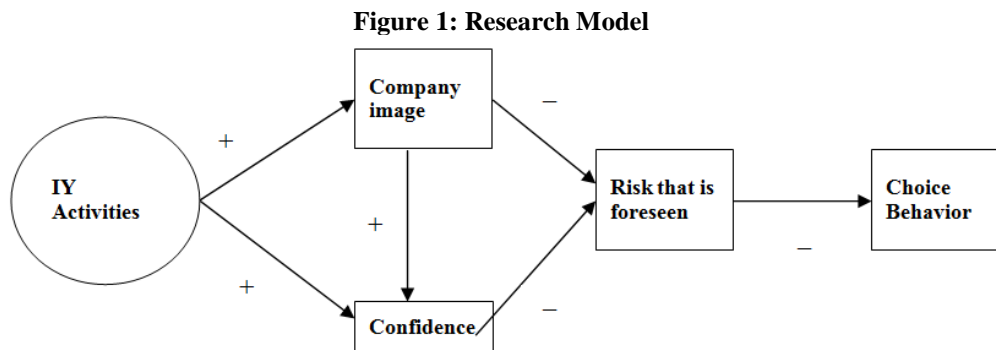
**H9:**Reputation management activities of customers show variations in relation to their image perception of enterprise, confidence they have for the enterprise, risk they perceived, and whether they have chosen the enterprise before or not.

Finally by considering the perceived service quality, below hypothesis has been formed.

**H10:** Scores which customers gave to service quality show variation depending on whether they have chosen the enterprise before or not.

Research model is a model which aims to gather information as being descriptive while investigating reason-outcome relationship. (Figure 3.1). This model which forms the basis of this research is a model which was developed by Kanibir and Nart (2009) and which was made subject to analysis in two different countries. Said hypothetic model has been tested on two groups being composed of only businessmen.(Look at: Kanibir, Nart, 2009).

In this study sample has been limited with a certain group and by targetting at a wider mass, existence and intenseness of hypothetic relations have been analysed. Research model which investigates the probable impact of reputation management activities on the choice behavior of consumers in line with the target of research are given below:



The model given above has been formed for the research. Hypothesis of research are given below:

## II. SAMPLE OF THE RESEARCH

In the research easy sampling method has been used. 400 hotel guests accomodating at the hotels of *Best Western* hotel chain which operate in İstanbul and Bielefeld have been selected randomly at certain hours and days of the week within the period of 15th of June-15th of August.385 pieces among 400 questionnaire forms that were answered and were deemed as being valid (%96) were taken within the scope of evaluation.

## III. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND TECHNİCS

This research study has developed a model theoretically regarding the evaluation of reputation management activities by customers and for analysing the impact of reputation management activities on the choice behaviors of customers andfor enabling this analysis to be carried out in a healthy way, expressions obtained from literature for measuring relevant dimensions were transformed into a scale.

This scale has been converted to a questionnaire as being a data collection method in the research. Design of questionnaire is established on 5 different structures which are tested in this research. Reputation management activities (IY) have been calculated by using the scale obtained from Fombrun (1998) and Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000). Particulars that are used to measure the customer confidence are obtained from Selnes and Sallis (2003). Company image structure is obtained from the study of Wu and Petroschius (1987). For the risk variable that is foreseen, definition of Engel, Balmer, (1986, s. 964) has been used and the well established classification of Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) for risk foreseen by customer has been used and finally, by using some factors obtained from Bansal et al, 2004; Mittal et al., 1999; Zeithaml et al., 1996, with respect to choice behavior, scale has been completed. In the replies given to explanations stated on questionnaire form, metric statements of likert type with five intervals have been used. For example for giving a reply to the statement of *"I think that this hotel keeps the promises they make to their customers"*, five choices are given as: *"1- I absolutely agree, 2- I don't agree, 3- I am indecisive, 4- I agree, 5- I absolutely agree"*. On the questionnaire form there are also 9 questions aiming to specify demographic features of customer groups.

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data which were obtained as a result of research were analysed by using SPSS 15.0 statistical package program. Accordingly, data were made subject to various statistical analysis with the purpose of testing research hypothesis. Before data were made subject to these analysis, in order for questionnaire replies to be more healthy, required conversions have been made with respect to the questions asked and then analysis was realized.

In the study conducted, with the purpose of finding out whether there is a relation between dimensions and to specify the direction and intenseness of this relation, statistical technics aiming to investigate the relations to derive meaning were used. In the research, for determining relations between dimensions, correlation analysis was used; for investigating the relation between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables, regression was used; for investigating the differences between groups, T-test (if there are two groups) and Anova (if there are more than two groups) tests were applied.

#### V. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this section, outcome of analysis of data obtained as a result of research, the findings and interpretations reached are given according to the ranking of statistical analysis. %41 of customers participating in the research are women and %59 of them are men. As the gender groups are almost equal, any differences that could arise due to genders are eliminated. When the ages of those participating in the research are investigated, it is found that small portion of %7 are from young segment ((18-25) , tht a big portion of %49 is from adult segment (26-40) , and that a high ratio of %44 represented individuals being aged as 41 or above. When education level of those participating in research are investigated, it is seen that a small portion of %17,1 are elementary and junior high school graduates and that a big portion of %79 are composed of individuals who have completed their associate and undergraduate educations and that only %3 of them have completed their postgraduation.As the ratio people having associate, undergraduate and postgraduate education is around %83, it is expected for level of importance given to the research to be higher and for the ratio of perception with respect to the statements to be higher. Another important factor that is considered to be significantly important for the research is the nationalities of customers. It is desired to learn whether the differences in nationalities of customers cause differences in the replies given to the research dimensions and this particular is important for an enterprise that needs to think globalwise. Nearly %38 of sample group is composed of Turks, %30 of it is composed of Germans and %32 of it is composed of English customers. As it can be seen the ratios are not too different from one another. In this respect, it can be stated that a healthy sample group is determined with respect to nationalities. According to the income status of those participating in the research, %5 of customers earn less than 1500 Euro, %30 of them earn between 1500-2500 Euro, %46 of them earn 2501-3500 Euro, %17 earn between 3501-4500 Euro and %1 earn 4500 Euro or more.

##### 5.1. Average of Perceptions relating with dimensions and Confidence coefficients

Average of answers given by customers participating in the research with respect to the scale of Reputation Management Activities being comprised of dimensions such as Product and Service Quality, Marketing Communication, Working Environment, and Social Responsibility and their perception with respect to Image, Confidence, Risk that is perceived, and Purchasing Behavior are given on below table.

##### 5.1.1. Scale for Reputation Management Activities

Average of perceptions relating with 15 statements as being part of scale prepared for determining perceptions regarding reputation management activities of enterprise for the sample group of research have been reviewed. Level of statistical meaning (p) proves that customers had a meaningful attitude with respect to the statements in the questionnaires directed to customers. (in positive/negative direction) and that they have given replies that were meaningfully different from level 3 (indecision). As it can be seen from table 4.6, customers' views regarding product/service quality, customers' views reflecting that marketing studies of enterprise are meaningful, customers' views about working environment at the enterprise, and customers' views about the social responsibility approach of enterprise have been found to be statistically meaningful in positive direction. Meaning that reputation management activities of enterprise are perceived by customers in a positive way.

**Table 1: Average Perception of Customers with respect to reputation management activities**

Codes of variables	Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Meaning (p)
<b>Product and Service Quality 1</b>	This hotel always provides high quality service.	3,9091	,85971	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Product and Service Quality2</b>	The opportunities provided by this hotel are always worth the money I pay for them.	3,9065	,83951	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Product and Service Quality3</b>	This hotel always provides new and innovative opportunities.	3,8260	,86202	<b>0,000</b>

<b>Product and ServiceQuality 4</b>	This hotel has belief in the products and services they provide.	3,9273	,87196	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Marketing Communiation 1</b>	The news published in the media show that this hotel belongs to the upper class.	3,6026	,93847	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Marketing Communiation2</b>	Famous people/famous guests stay at this hotel.	3,5584	,95870	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Marketing Communiation3</b>	This hotel gives the impression of a first class company with the advertisements/introductions made.	3,5610	,99846	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Marketing Communiation4</b>	This hotel hosts important art events and sponsorships.	3,5169	1,03599	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Marketing Communiation5</b>	This hotel hosts popular meetings.	3,5429	1,00719	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Working environment 1</b>	This hotel is managed well.	3,8701	,85010	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Working environment2</b>	This hotel provides an excellent working environment for its employees.	3,9091	,87770	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Working environment3</b>	The employees of this hotel have high qualities.	3,9429	,84586	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Social responsibility 1</b>	This hotel has high standard relations with its guests.	4,0545	2,74993	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Social responsibility 2</b>	This hotel supports and announces public projects.	3,8857	,95330	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Social responsibility 3</b>	This hotel is sensitive and responsible for the environment.	4,1195	,89922	<b>0,000</b>
<b>Sample: 385 Number of variables: 15 Alpha Value: 0,921</b>				

On Table 2 which is given below, dimensions of reputation management activities scale, number of questions that are in each dimension, and Cronbach Alpha confidence coefficients of dimensions are shown.

**Table2 : Cronbach Alpha confidence coefficients for dimensions**

Factors	No of questions	Cronbach Alpha
Product and service quality	4	,968
Marketing communication	5	,952
Working environment	3	,948
Social responsibility	3	,410

As it can be seen from Table 2, reliability situation regarding dimensions of reputation management activities are significantly high for the first three dimensions. (product/service quality ( $\alpha = ,968$ ), marketing communication ( $\alpha = ,952$ ), working environment ( $\alpha = ,948$ )). But the replies obtained from sample with regards to social responsibility dimension ( $\alpha = ,410$ ) were not deemed as being reliable.

### 5.1.2. Average of perceptions of customers with respect to the image of hotel

Opinions and perceptions of sample group, being the target mass of research, about the enterprise make up a dimension as being a subject of the research. In this respect, according to the findings relating with the feeling of confidence that is tried to be measures as per the eight statements given below, it is seen that customers have attitudes that are statistically meaningful in the positive direction.

**Table3 : Average of perceptions of customers about the image of hotel**

	Variables	Average	Standard Deviation	Meaningfulness (p)
<b>Image 1</b>	This hotel has a pleasant atmosphere	3,9922	,88237	0,000
<b>Image 2</b>	This hotel is a well known brand in the sector.	3,9818	,85219	0,000
<b>Image 3</b>	Service standards of the hotel are high.	3,9506	,83551	0,000
<b>Image 4</b>	This hotel has polite employees.	3,9974	,78561	0,000
<b>Image 5</b>	This hotel has staff who are customer focused.	3,9688	,82542	0,000
<b>Image 6</b>	This hotel attracts customers of high level.	3,9195	1,64926	0,000
<b>Image 7</b>	This hotel provides prestige and respectability for its guests.	3,8130	,86080	0,000
<b>Image 8</b>	This hotel is a privileged company in the sector.	3,7091	,88597	0,000
<b>Sample: 385 No of variables: 8 Alpha value: 0,893</b>				

### 5.1.3. Average of reliability perceptions of customers with respect to the hotel

Another dimension that is the subject of this research is the dimension of confidence. In order to measure the feeling of confidence that the customers had for the enterprise, five statements have been defined. As a result of statistical analysis of these statements it is revealed that customers had confidence in the enterprises at a statistically meaningful and powerful level.

**Table 4: Averages of confidence customers felt for the hotel**

	Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Meaningfulness (p)
<b>Confidence 1</b>	I think that this hotel is expert in its field.	4,0987	2,21515	0,000
<b>Confidence 2</b>	I think that this hotel is reliable.	4,0779	,86552	0,000
<b>Confidence 3</b>	I think that this hotel fulfills the promises given to the customers.	4,0961	,84694	0,000
<b>Confidence 4</b>	I think that this hotel is sensitive towards its guests.	4,0519	,86144	0,000
<b>Confidence 5</b>	I think that this hotel has positive approach towards the problems of customers.	4,0390	,84843	0,000
<b>Sample: 385 No of variables: 5 Alpha Valuable: 0,781</b>				

**5.1.4. Averages of risk perceived by customers for the hotel**

As a result of statistical analysis of statements aiming to measure the dimension of risk that is perceived as being another dimension of the research, it can be concluded that customer don't have any risk perception for the hotel.

**Table5 : Averages of risk perceived by customers for the hotel**

	Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Meaningfulness (p)
<b>Risk perceived 1</b>	It is doubtful if the opportunities provided in this hotel are worth the money paid for them.	1,8961	,97340	0,000
<b>Risk perceived2</b>	It is doubtful whether physical opportunities provided by this hotel are sufficient.	1,8961	1,86514	0,000
<b>Risk perceived3</b>	It is doubtful if the services provided by this hotel will fulfill my expectations.	1,8208	,96910	0,000
<b>Risk perceived4</b>	I felt unhappy about staying at this hotel.	1,8260	1,40992	0,000
<b>Risk perceived5</b>	If I tell my friends that I stayed at this hotel, they may condemn me.	1,8468	1,46127	0,000
<b>Sample: 385 No of variables: 5 Alpha value: 0,798</b>				

**5.1.5. Averages of choice behavior of customers**

When the statements directed to the customers regarding their choice behaviors are reviewed, their attitude relating with their situation for choosing the relevant enterprise seems to be statistically meaningful in the positive direction.

**Table6 : Averages of Choice behaviors of customers**

	Variables	Average	Standard deviation	Meaningfulness (p)
<b>Choice behavior 1</b>	I would prefer to state at this hotel in the future.	3,9351	,88001	0,000
<b>Choice behaviour 2</b>	It is always my first preference to stay at this hotel.	3,9117	,85543	0,000
<b>Choice behavior 3</b>	I don't think that other hotels can provide better opportunities.	3,6701	,88845	0,000
<b>Choice behavior 4</b>	It is low probability that I will change this hotel for another one.	3,8909	,83138	0,000
<b>Sample: 385 No of variables: 4 Alpha Value: 0,940</b>				

**5.2. Findings regarding the hypothesis**

Findings regarding the hypothesis are investigated under two headings. In the first section findings relating with correlation analysis realized for the purpose of determining interdimensional relations and their directions are given. In the second section, findings regarding regression analysis that is realized with the purpose of determining which dimensions have impact on others are given.

Correlation analysis help us for testing whether there is a statistically meaningful existence of assumptions stated in our hypothesis and the relations which are assumed with respect to the institution that is within the scope of the research. Regression analysis will be used to determin which factors influence others and at what level .

**5.2.1. Findings regarding interdimensional correlation analysis**

Findings obtained as a result of pearson correlation analysis that is realized for determining the relations between dimensions of reputation management dimensions (product and service quality, marketing communicatio, working conditions, social responsibility) and image, confidence, risk that is perceived, and purchasing behaviour dimensions are given on the correlation matrix on table 7.

**Table7 : Interdimensional Correlation Matrix**

		Product and service quality	Marketing communication	Working environment	Social responsibility	Image	Confidence	Risk that is perceived	Choice behavior
Product and serviceQuality	P.	1							
	Anl.								
	N	385							
Marketing communication	P.	,683(**)	1						
	Anl.	,000							
	N	385	385						
Working environment	P.	,793(**)	,711(**)	1					
	Anl.	,000	,000						
	N	385	385	385					
Social responsibility	P.	,551(**)	,471(**)	,631(**)	1				
	Anl.	,000	,000	,000					
	N	385	385	385	385				
Image	P.	,724(**)	,645(**)	,789(**)	,562(**)	1			
	Anl.	,000	,000	,000	,000				
	N	385	385	385	385	385			
Confidence	P.	,659(**)	,531(**)	,718(**)	,461(**)	,727(**)	1		
	Anl.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000			
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385		
Risk that is perceived	P.	-,469(**)	-,347(**)	-,525(**)	-,334(**)	-,547(**)	-,498(**)	1	
	Anl.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	
Choice behavior	P.	,741(**)	,645(**)	,711(**)	,499(**)	,728(**)	,665(**)	-,514(**)	1
	Anl.	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385	385

\*\* Meaningful relation at a level of 0,01

According to the findings on Table 7, there are meaningful relations between the reputation management activities of enterprise and the image perception.(product/service quality:  $r=0,724$ ,  $p<0,01$ , marketing communication:  $r=0,645$ ,  $p<0,01$ , working environment:  $r=0,789$ ,  $p<0,01$ , social responsibility:  $r=0,562$ ,  $p<0,01$ ). There are statistically meaningful relations between the reputation management activities of enterprise and the confidence had for the enterprise in positive direction. (product/service quality:  $r=0,659$ ,  $p<0,01$ , marketing communication:  $r=0,531$ ,  $p<0,01$ , working environment:  $r=0,718$ ,  $p<0,01$ , social responsibility:  $r=0,461$ ,  $p<0,01$ ). There are statistically meaningful relations between reputation management activities of enterprise and the risk dimension that is perceived in the negative direction. (product/service quality:  $r=0,469$ ,  $p<0,01$ , marketing communication:  $r=0,347$ ,  $p<0,01$ , working environment:  $r=0,525$ ,  $p<0,01$ , social responsibility:  $r=0,334$ ,  $p<0,01$ ).

There are statistically meaningful relations in positive direction between reputation management activities of enterprise and the dimensions of choice behaviors relating with enterprise. (product/service quality:  $r=0,469$ ,  $p<0,01$ , marketing communication:  $r=0,347$ ,  $p<0,01$ , working environment:  $r=0,525$ ,  $p<0,01$ , social responsibility:  $r=0,334$ ,  $p<0,01$ ).

Besides these relations, there is a strong and statistically meaningful relation in positive direction between perceived image of enterprise and confidence felt for the enterprise ( $r=0,727$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), a strong and positively meaningful relation in negative direction between perceived image of enterprise and perceived risk ( $r=-0,547$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), a statistically meaningful relation in negative direction between confidence felt for the enterprise and perceived risk ( $r=-0,498$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), a strong and positively meaningful relation in positive direction between perceived image of enterprise and choice behavior of customer ( $r=0,728$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), a strong and statistically meaningful relation in positive direction between confidence felt for the enterprise and choice behavior of customer ( $r=0,665$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), and a strong and statistically meaningful relation in negative direction

between risk perceived by customers for the enterprise and their choice behaviors ( $r = -0,514, p < 0,01$ ).

Hypothesis accepted as per the findings of correlation analysis:

**H1:** There is a positive relation between IY activities and company image.

**H2:** There is a positive relation between IY activities and consumer confidence.

**H3:** There is a positive relation between company image and consumer confidence.

**H4:** There is a negative relation between company image and risk that is foreseen by consumers.

**H5:** There is a negative relation between consumer confidence and risk that is foreseen by customers.

**H6:** There is a negative relation between risk that is foreseen and the choice behavior of customers.

**5.3.1. Findings with respect to interdimensional regression analysis**

Regression analysis is used to investigate the variables or the impact of variables on other variables by reason-outcome relations between the variables .

As it is seen in the research model, it is assumed that reputation management activities have impact on the image of enterprise and the confidence felt for the enterprise, that image of enterprise and confidence felt for enterprise have impact on the risk that is perceived, and that the risk perceived has impact on the purchasing behavior. Existence of interdimensional relations has been determined by correlation analysis. On the other hand, correlation analysis is related with the degree and direction of of interdimensional relation. It does not reveal which dimension influences the other at what degree. For this reason, in order to explain the quality of interdimensional relations specified as the outcome of correlation analysis, regression analysis has been used. Accordingly, first of all it was aimed to determine the impact of reputation management activities on the image of enterprise and the confidence felt for the enterprise. Outcome of multi-regression analysis that was realized to investigate the impact of reputation management dimensions on the perception of image of enterprise by the customers are given on Table 4.13 as a summary.

**Table8 : Regression analysis between dimensions of reputation management activities and dimension of image of enterprise**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Product and service quality	Image of enterprise	,659	,217	,000
2	Marketing communication			,113	,011
3	Working environment			,484	,000
4	Social responsibility			,083	,032
ANOVA test: F= 183,258; p<0,001					

According to the summary table of multi-regression analysis given on Table 8, all of the dimensions of reputation management activities can explain the variation in the perception of customers with respect to the image of enterprise to a certain extent. In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that %65,9 of variation regarding the perception of corporate image can be explained with reputation management activities. A one unit increase in the perception of customers with respect to the quality of product and services causes a 0.217 unit increase in the perception of corporate image, a one unit increase in their perception of marketing communication causes 0,113 unit increase in the perception of corporate image, a one unit increase in the perception of working conditions of enterprise causes 0,484 unit increase in the perception of corporate image, a one unit increase in the perception of customers regarding social responsibility activities of enterprise, causes 0,083 unit increase in the perception of corporate image. As it can be seen from the table, all of these impacts are statistically meaningful. ( $p < 0,05$ ) Among reputation management activities, dimension of working environment is seen to be the most effective factor regarding perception of corporate image.

Outcome of multi-regression analysis which is realized to investigate the impact of reputation management activities on the confidence felt for the enterprise, are given on Table 9 as a summary.

**Table9 : Regression analysis between reputation management activity dimensions and confidence dimension**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Product and service quality	Confidence felt for the enterprise	,538	,246	,000
2	Marketing communication			-,017	,735
3	Working environment			,540	,000
4	Social responsibility			-,007	,872
ANOVA test: F= 110,416; p<0,001					



According to the summary table of multi-regression analysis given in Table 9, only product/service quality dimension and working environment dimension of reputation management activities can explain the variation in the confidence felt for the enterprise by the customers to a certain extent. In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that %53,9 of variation in the confidence felt for the enterprise can be explained by the product/service quality and working environment dimensions of reputation management activities .

A one unit increase in the perception of customers regarding the quality of product and services causes 0,246 unit increase in the confidence felt for the enterprise, and a one unit increase in the perceiton regarding working conditions of enterprise causes 0,484 unit increase in the confidence felt for the enterprise. As it can be seen from the table, these influences are statistically meaningful (p<0,05). It is seen that among reputation management activities, dimension of working environment is the most effective factor on the perception of confidence felt for the enterprise. Findings obtained as a result of regression analysis that is realized to investigate the impact of perception of corporate image of the confidence felt for the enterprise, are given on Table 10 as a summary.

**Table10 : Regression analysis between corporate image dimension and confidence dimension**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Corporate image	Confidence	<b>,529</b>	<b>,727</b>	<b>,000</b>
ANOVA test: F= 430,563; p<0,001					

According to the summary table of regression analysis given on Table 10, dimension of perception of corporate image can explain the variation in the confidence felt for the enterprise to a certain extent. In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that %53,9 of variation in the confidence felt for the enterprise can be explained by corporate image dimension. A one unit increase in the perception of customers regarding corporate image causes 0,727 unit increase in the confidence felt for the enterprise and this ratio is significantly high. Findings obtained from regression analysis realized to investigate the impact of corporate image perceived for the enterprise by the customer on the risk perception of customers regarding the enterprise are given on Table 11 as a summary.

**Table11 : Regression analysis between company image dimension and the risk dimension that is foreseen**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Corporate image	Risk that is foreseen	<b>,299</b>	<b>-,547</b>	<b>,000</b>
ANOVA test: F= 163,506; p<0,001					

According to the summary table of regression analysis given on Table 11, dimension of perception of corporate image can explain the variation in the risk perceived by the customers for the enterprise at a significantly meaningful level (p<0,01). In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that %0,299 of variation in the risk perceived for the enterprise can be explained by the dimension of perception of corporate image. A one unit increase in the perception of customers with respect to corporate image causes 0,547 unit decrease in the risk perceived for the enterprise.

Findings obtained as a result of regression analysis realized to investigate the impact of corporate image that is perceived for the enterprise by the customer on the risk perceived for he enterprise are given on Table 12 as a summary.

**Table 12: Regression analysis between confidence dimension and the dimension of risk that is foreseen**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Confidence	Risk that is foreseen	<b>,248</b>	<b>-,498</b>	<b>,000</b>
ANOVA test: F= 126,149; p<0,001					

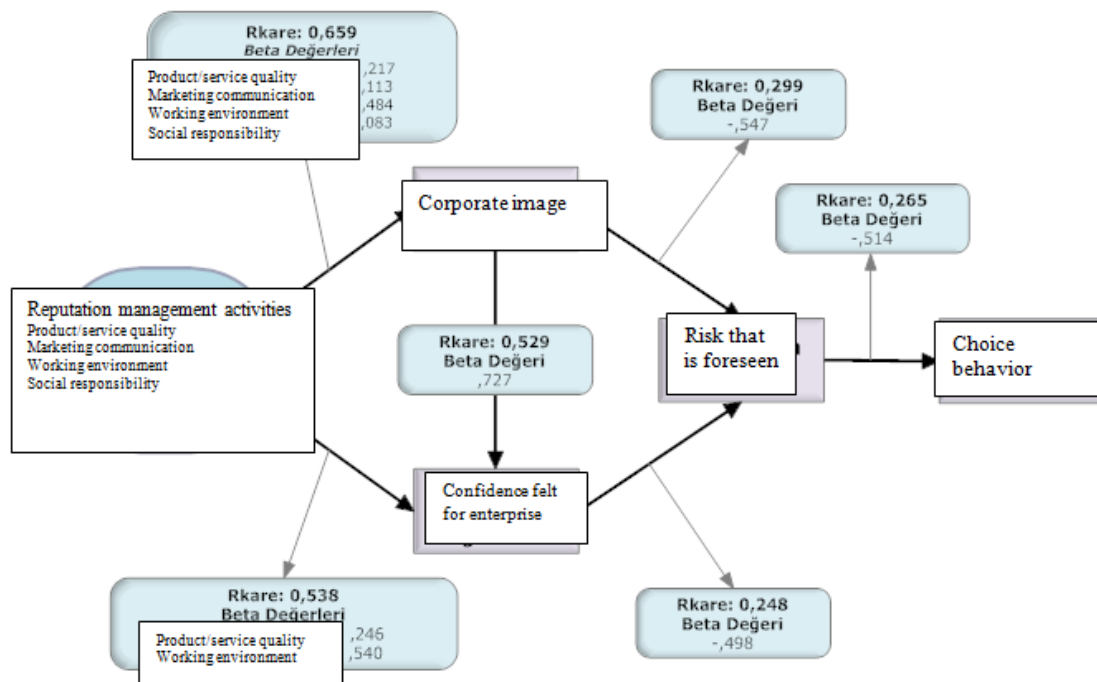
According to the summary table of regression analysis given on Table 12, dimension of confidence felt for the enterprise can explain the variation in the risk perception regarding the enterprise at a significantly meaningful level (p<0,01). In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that %2,248 of variation in the risk perceived for the enterprise can be explained with the dimension of confidence felt for the enterprise. A one unit increase in the confidence customers had for the enterprise causes 0,498 unit reduction in the risk perceived for the enterprise.

Findings obtained as a result of regression analysis realized to investigate the impact of risk perceived for the enterprise by the customers on the purchasing behavior of customers (preferring the enterprise) are given on Table 13 as a summary.

**Table 13: Regression analysis between dimension of risk that is foreseen and the dimension of choice behavior**

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β	Meaningfulness
1	Risk that is foreseen	Choice behavior	,265	-,514	,000
ANOVA test: F= 137,834; p<0,001					

According to the summary table of regression analysis given in Table 13, dimensions of risk perceived by customers for the enterprise can explain the variation in the choice behaviors regarding the enterprise at a statistically meaningful level ( $p < 0,01$ ). In this respect, R<sup>2</sup> determination coefficient shows that % 0,265 of variation in behavior of choosing the enterprise can be explained by the dimension of risk that is foreseen. A one unit increase in the risk perceived by customers for the enterprise causes 0,498 unit reduction in the choice behaviour regarding the enterprise. As long as customers don't perceive the negativities regarding the enterprise, their behaviour to choose the enterprise gets improved.



**Figure2 : Summary of research model as per analysis**

One-way Variance analysis (ANOVA) with single direction aiming to determine whether nationalities of customers participating in the research causes any differences in their perceptions of reputation management activities is expressed statistically on Table 14.

**Table14 : Anova Test showing the differences in perception of customers as per their nationalities with respect to reputation management activities**

	Nationality	N	Average	S.S.	F	Meaning (p)	Statistically meaningful difference
Reputation management activities	Turkish	145	4,0310	,71981	13,872	,000	Turkish-English German-English
	German	117	4,0470	,73837			
	English	123	3,5813	,91856			

As it can be seen from table 14, nationalities of customers participating in the research caused differences in their perception of reputation management activities. As per the findings, Turkish customers perceive reputation management activities more at a statistically meaningful level ( $F=13,872$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ) and they have a positive view with respect to these activities when compared with German and English customers. As German and English customers are compared, it is seen that German customers have more positive opinions about reputation management activities. H7 hypothesis that is established as based on this finding, has been accepted. Customers' having different nationalities caused differences to arise in their perceptions of reputation management activities of enterprise and for them to have positive attitude towards them.

Findings and interpretations obtained as a result of ANOVA test that was realized to determine whether attitudes of customers with respect to IY activities showed variations as per the nationalities of customers are given below.

**Table15 : Milliyet – ANOVA test table for İY Activities**

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. This hotel always provides high quality services	Between Groups	16,994	2	8,497	12,165	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	266,824	382	,698		
	Total	283,818	384			
2. The opportunities provided by this hotel are always worth the money I pay for them.	Between Groups	17,754	2	8,877	13,410	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	252,880	382	,662		
	Total	270,634	384			
3. This hotel always provies new and innovative opportunities.	Between Groups	15,308	2	7,654	10,828	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	270,032	382	,707		
	Total	285,340	384			
4. This hotel has belief in the products and services they provide.	Between Groups	22,312	2	11,156	15,804	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	269,651	382	,706		
	Total	291,964	384			
5. News published in media reveal that this hotel has high classification.	Between Groups	15,204	2	7,602	8,991	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	322,993	382	,846		
	Total	338,197	384			
6. Famous people/famous guests stay at this hotel.	Between Groups	11,890	2	5,945	6,659	<b>,001</b>
	Within Groups	341,045	382	,893		
	Total	352,935	384			
7.This hotel gives the impression of a first class company with the advertisements/introductions it makes.	Between Groups	20,765	2	10,383	10,955	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	362,050	382	,948		
	Total	382,816	384			
8. This hotel hosts important art events and sponsorships.	Between Groups	26,777	2	13,388	13,272	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	385,364	382	1,009		
	Total	412,140	384			
9. This hotel hosts popular meetings.	Between Groups	17,443	2	8,722	8,954	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	372,099	382	,974		
	Total	389,543	384			
10. This hotel is well managed.	Between Groups	5,403	2	2,702	3,793	<b>,023</b>
	Within Groups	272,103	382	,712		
	Total	277,506	384			
11. This hotel provides an excellent working environment for its employees.	Between Groups	6,258	2	3,129	4,128	<b>,017</b>
	Within Groups	289,561	382	,758		
	Total	295,818	384			
12. The employees of this hotel have high qualities.	Between Groups	8,126	2	4,063	5,821	<b>,003</b>
	Within Groups	266,617	382	,698		
	Total	274,743	384			
13. This hotel has high standard relations with its guests.	Between Groups	42,121	2	21,060	2,811	<b>,061</b>
	Within Groups	2861,734	382	7,491		
	Total	2903,855	384			
14. This hotel supports and announces public projects.	Between Groups	35,668	2	17,834	21,744	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	313,303	382	,820		
	Total	348,971	384			
15. This hotel is sensitive and responsible for the environment.	Between Groups	19,520	2	9,760	12,813	<b>,000</b>
	Within Groups	290,984	382	,762		
	Total	310,504	384			

As it can be seen from Table 4.20, except for one article (article no 13), attitudes of customers showed variation with respect to IY activities depending on their nationalities.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. Conclusions**

In an environment where lifetime of products and renewals get shortened as a result of rapid changes and increased competition, certain applications are realized for adding value or creating difference in the activities by the enterprises for being successful and by the customers for making choice. Rapid changes and developments lived through in every field, is making customers become more tasteful and sophisticated in our time. If the activities realized at an enterprise can not create a value perception in customers in the relevant market, it can not be possible for the activities and efforts realized to be successful. This value which can not be established by the enterprise or which can not be correctly perceived by the customers, influences the choice behavior of customer causing the attention to shift towards another point of preference in the market.

As the importance of value economics improved, significant importance began to be attached to the efforts regarding reputation management of enterprises. In order for reputation of enterprises to be positively and clearly perceived in their markets/sectors, first of all internalized and sincere policies should be developed and then these policies should be actually implemented as being adopted by all of the employees.

This study aims to understand the role of reputation management activities on the choice behaviours of consumers. It was approached to literature with respect to reputation management and behavioural choices of consumers. In order to analyse the impact of reputation management activities on the consumer choices during customer evaluation process, a model has been developed theoretically and statistical data are analysed experimentally. In this study, it is questioned whether the reputation management activities which are realized in two hotel enterprises are perceived positively by the customers.

By reviewing relevant literature, the dimensions under which reputation management activities required to be investigated have been determined. In this respect, first one of these activities is product and service quality. In the hotel, customers look to be content from quality of product and services at a meaningful level. This is an important indicator for reputation to be perceived positively. Another measurer of reputation management has been specified as marketing communication. As it is understood from the replies given by customers to the statements, marketing activities of enterprise are being perceived by the customers. Meaning that customers are aware of marketing activities of enterprise and that they evaluate these activities to be positive. When replies given to statements regarding working environment as being another dimension, it is determined that customers stated as perceiving that within the enterprise managers had positive attitude towards employees working at the enterprise and that employees were qualified and that there was a peaceful working environment. Finally it was specified that social responsibility aspect of enterprise was positively perceived by the customers with a high ratio.

The main reason why enterprises realize reputation management activities is to create a value in the eyes of customers. Customers' having a positive view about the enterprise and their feeling confidence for the enterprise while the risk perceived is low, can influence behavior of customers to make choice in favor of this enterprise since they perceive these particulars as a value presented by the enterprise. Interdimensional relation analysis realized aiming to specify that relations in literature are also determined within the scope of chosen sample, supports the particulars in literature. Findings obtained as a result of regression analysis aiming to explain the quality of relations within the scope of research model, can be summarized as given below:

- Reputation management activities can explain %65 of variables created in the image that is perceived by customers. ( $R^2=0,659$ ). According to positive beta values, reputation management activities have a positive impact on the image perceived and they improve it.
- Reputation management activities explain %53 of variations relating with confidence felt for the enterprise. ( $R^2=0,538$ ). Reputation management implementations have a positive impact on the confidence felt for the enterprise and they improve it.
- Image of enterprises as perceived by customers and confidence felt for the enterprise cause decrease in the risk which is perceived. This has a positive impact on customers for preferring the enterprise.

Another outcome of findings obtained from research is that working dimension of reputation management activities is the dimension that is most related with image and confidence dimension. The fact that customers are contacted with qualified employees and that they perceive a peaceful working environment and as they think that the enterprise is well managed, these particulars cause the image of enterprise to be perceived more positively and for the confidence felt for the enterprise to be improved. Following the dimension of working environment, perception of customers with regard to the image and confidence with respect to the enterprise show variation as per quality of product and services. Findings relating with the dimensions of image of enterprise and confidence felt for the enterprise that are expected to have impact on reputation management activities, support the findings regarding interdimensional relation analysis which was conducted before. In this

respect, reputation management activities have greatest impact on the image of enterprise and then on the confidence felt for the enterprise. Therefore, in order to be perceived by customers as a value and to be recognized as a reliable enterprise, efforts regarding reputation management (relating with quality of products and services, marketing efforts, effectiveness of working environment, awareness for social responsibility and related activities) are needed. Enterprises must realize these efforts with a sincere and internalized awareness and not just as decorated written policies and mission or vision of the enterprise.

In line with the outcomes of research, risk that is perceived by customers is an important determinant. For this reason, attention should be paid with respect to reduction of risk that is foreseen by using reputation management activities. It is possible to state that reputation management activities influence decision making process of customers in an indirect way by developing company image and by creating confidence. The findings of this study reveal that by improving the positive image of enterprise and the customer confidence, the risk which is perceived can be reduced.

Besides the impact of reputation management activities of enterprise, it can be stated that customer's having preferred the enterprise before, also has a big impact. Current customers who have preferred the enterprise before have more positive view about the enterprise and they have more confidence in the enterprise and their tendency to prefer the enterprise is stronger. Another finding that supports this outcome is that as the customers were asked about the factors influencing their choices, they have stated that their own experiences created the biggest impact. When customers were asked to give a score to the enterprise, it is seen that those giving high scores to the enterprise were people who had preferred the enterprise before. The factor influencing the customers most afterwards was advertisement and introduction activities. But it is clearly seen that people rely on their experiences with respect to their behavior in choosing the enterprise and that they prefer enterprises which they know and which they have experienced before. As a result of hypothesis stating that perception of reputation management activities by customers could differ as per the variation in nationalities of customers, it can be specified that reputation management activities implemented by the enterprise are perceived more positively by Turkish customers when compared with German and English customers. Based on this finding, it could be stated that customers' having different nationalities could also differentiate the expectations relating with the enterprise.

The findings of this study should be evaluated within certain limits. First of all, the required data have been collected from actual customers of an important chain hotel as being an accommodation enterprise instead of a disconnected environment. Hotel enterprises of Best Western hotel chain in Germany and Istanbul have made significant contribution in the collection of data as being a difficult task in this area. Secondly, although all of the hypothesis are supported, findings of this study are obtained only from the customers of one enterprise. This kind of a research must be supported with the outcome of a different research investigating the situation of other enterprises. If determining the dimensions of reputation which can be managed more by the institutions or if the management of these dimensions change depending on conditions, efforts aiming to specify related particulars comprise an important potential for future researches. Thus, enterprises can use their resources to improve their reputation to higher levels.

Being an enterprise that has a good reputation in the area where it operates, can attract employees even if the salaries could be lower. In this respect, it would be more beneficial to realize future studies at the most attractive enterprises of the sector. At the same time, by determining the components of reputation from which partner groups in the sector are more influenced, in future studies it could be investigated in which direction and at which level the perception of reputation would be influenced. Finally the research model which is developed in this study could be widened with other possible premises and outcomes in order to create a more sophisticated approach. (for example like company identity, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty).

## **6.2. Recommendations**

Even though corporate reputation management is an abstract concept it is measurable. Therefore, in order for enterprises to manage their reputations, the first condition is to measure the reputation by considering all of the partners. Because without making measurements, it can not be known what partners think about the enterprise and it can not be possible to manage the reputation. For this reason, enterprises should add the measurement of reputation to their performance measurement systems by developing various criteria. Enterprises can realize these measures themselves or they could get service from consultancy companies. It is especially known that companies that are specialised in the field of public relations can provide professional support to corporations with respect to the measurement of reputation. Although all of the employees are responsible from corporate reputation, a reputation management coordinatorship could be established within the enterprise to monitor the reputation process and to report to the chief executive officer. With all of these works it should be aimed to incorporate reputation management as part of company culture. Institution should transmit the importance of corporate reputation to the employees and by providing trainings for them, it should create awareness and skills for them to contribute positively to the corporate reputation. The saying that reputation is

first gained within the enterprise is a meaningful expression. A good reputation is like a beautiful invitation. It invites and brings customers and investors to the enterprise. Reputation is a very important factor which differentiates the enterprise from the competitors. Therefore, reputation should be valued, followed up, measured, and managed.

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