

CONTENTS

MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, TOURISM

Defining factors affecting automobile owners through logistic regression analysis Aysan Şentürk	7
Reputation management in terms of tourism and customer attitudes Bayram Şahin, Hülya Kahveci, Burçin Sönmez	4
The role of touristic guide in travel agency's work process Goran Perić, Slađana Mušikić, Marko Gašić	24
The attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards the house-keeping department in hotel firms Gülay Ö. Yılmaz, Gülsüm Demir, Emirhan Yıkılmazpehlivan	30
The role of marketing information systems in enhancing the marketing efforts of hotels with municipal licence Oktay Emır, Sabri Celik	38
Leading virtual teams Radmila Micić	47
Quality management with different approaches and interpretations of the tqm concept Predrag Stamenković, Nemanja Gligorijević, Miloš Stojanović	55
International tourism and cultural identity in the context of globalization Bratoi Koprinarov	60
Motivation- factor to increase efficiency of the personnel of the trade enterprise Ventsislava Nikolova	66
Training of personnel - opportunity for increasing the competitiveness of trade enterprise Ventsislava Nikolova	76
Labor resources – the crucial factor for development of cooperative trade Diana Shopova	84
An attempt to systematize good investment practices in tourism Zlatina Karadjova	93
Possibilities of business process improvement in the organization Ivan Dimitrov, Petko Yangyozov	99
A buyer-supplier relationships assessment model in supply chains Ivan Dimitrov	106
Supply chain in tourism. Necessity and evolution Nadezhda Kraycheva	117



REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN TERMS OF TOURISM AND CUSTOMER ATTITUDES

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МЕНИДЖМЪНТ НА РЕПУТАЦИЯТА ПО ОТНОШЕНИЕ НА ТУРИЗМА И ПОТРЕБИТЕЛСКИТЕ НАГЛАСИ

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ABSTRACT: Reputation consists of perceptions related to businesses of internal and external stakeholders. It is not a result of its own accord, but an abstract value which can be developed by being managed. Reputation in businesses comes up as a result of the interactions between corporational values and social values. The corporations which place emphasis on their reputation are consistent and principled not only in their relations with their customers but also in relations with all their stakeholders. Constituting reputation encompasses a very long process; however it can be easily lost unless the protective measures are taken. The activities created within this framework are evaluated as "Reputation Management". Reputation Management is the groups', as business workers and customers and investors, activities of controlling and orientating of the information, thoughts and emotional reactions concerning business. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is a significant variance from the point of performance evaluation of the businesses. A satisfied customer can be evaluated as an important means for bringing new customers to business. A satisfied customer can exhibit behaviors that will affect the business reputation positively, as well. This study aims to determine the effects of the tourism managements' reputation management activities upon the customers' attitudes and expectations, by way of emphasizing the importance of reputation management for tourism businesses.

Key Words: Reputation, Reputation Management, Tourism Management

Introduction

Reputation is an abstract concept, which demonstrates how a corporation is perceived by employees and customers [1]. Reputation is also defined as a sentimental value that shows the evaluation of the customers of target market about the company's good or bad profile [2]. It concretizes the position of the corporation within the industrial social system [3].

Critical criterion for the reputation evaluation is the stakeholders. David L. Deephouse indicates that reputation occurs in the course of time with the complex social process that involves internal and external stakeholders of the company [4]. Reputation, as a result of swift alteration experienced in business circles recently, has become a concept whose importance has been increasing day by day and this concept is also assumed to play a determinant role in sustaining the corporations' existences.

As a result of globalization, in an environment where the competition enhances, length of life shortens, and the differences among the products decrease, the customers in order to make preferences and the corporations in order

to be successful seek standards that can create differences for products and services and can add values to them. Corporate reputation in a business world where radical changes and great competition are experienced is an effective way in order to be supracompetitive by presenting value to target groups [5]. When we analyze reputation concept from the point of all these businesses and stakeholders, we come across the concept of corporate reputation. Corporate reputation can be thought as the whole of value judgments, which is generated by a business in the eyes of the stakeholders by meeting the expectations of the stakeholders successfully and consistently [6]. The businesses which give importance to corporate reputation are consistent and principled in the relations with their customers and all their stakeholders. A set of necessary measures should be taken because it takes a long period to establish reputation. The activities to provide these measures are evaluated as reputation management.

Reputation management investigates a broad period which extends from how the corporations and institutions evaluate their eigenvalues to how

they save them. In relation to these developments, making innovations in management understandings of the organizations and enabling the reputation to be managed without leaving it to coincidence become unavoidable [7].

Reputation and Corporate Reputation

Origins of the reputation concept are based on two fundamental phenomena “reliability” and “faith”. Reliability is defined here as effectiveness strength which comes up in line with knowledge or abilities owned or assumed to be owned. Faith expresses the reliance placed towards accuracy or honesty of the actions realized by a person or a corporation. As a result of these, it is possible to express reputation as the collective output of gaining faith or reliability [8]. Reputation is defined as reflection of symmetrical relationship by James E. Grunig, the founder of modern paradigms within the area of public relations.

The most significant possessions of the people and corporations are their reputation. The ones who gain reputation in society take the opportunities to direct the society, to gain much more work, and to activate broader sources. Reputation is gained thanks to consistent behaviors in a long period, however can be lost within a short period. In other words, the consistency between the actions and discourses and ensuring the communication of the actions’ causes actively form the basis for gaining reputation. Reputation is reliance, being reliable [9]. Within this framework, the activities towards corporation’s reputation gain significance to be sustainable in businesses and provide advantages.

It can be seen that there are many different point of views related to defining the reputation and corporate reputation concepts and these concepts regarding each field are assessed within the framework of their own approaches [10].

Corporate reputation is a concept gaining popularity in recent two decades in the field of public relations. Primary reason for this situation is that reputation concept is a significant factor of businesses’ sustainability. Today’s companies and very few public corporations understand the importance of the reputation management and begin to need to take steps aimed at maintaining and enhancing their reputation [11]. Corporate reputation is a long-period combination of assessments of the stakeholders about what a corporation is, how the corporation fulfills its responsibilities, how it meets the expectations of

the stakeholders, and the assessments related to whole performance of the corporation to adapt to social political environment [12].

As part of many definitions specified, corporate reputation; is businesses’ qualities that are formed among the stakeholders of the corporation and bear sentimental elements [13]. When the concept is examined, it defines how the business is perceived for the ones who are in and out of the business. The reputations of the businesses involve the impressions of the activities between them and their stakeholders and the information obtained from the business itself and media [4]. Moreover, it is the collective judgment regarding the assessment of financial, social, and environmental effects referred to the corporation for a long period [14].

Corporate reputation in businesses; is the collective description of the results which are constituted from the ability to leave an impression that creates values upon the past actions of the corporations and different stakeholders. This measures the relative situations of the both internal and external stakeholders, is competition-based, and involves corporation circles [15].

Corporate reputation resulting from the swift changes in business circles in recent years comes into prominence as a pretty significant concept. A positive reputation more than anything is required in order for the corporations to obtain a competitive advantage and to maintain this in the markets shaped by the globalization. Corporations, in this period, [8] remain under the pressure of new trends such as;

- the swift change of the markets (nesting),
- the increasing impact of the media,
- the convergence of the qualities of the products and services to each other (there is no distinguishing quality-property difference among products any more) and,
- the change of the consumer’s nature; and at this point they begin to see increasing their corporate reputations as a powerful, effective and strategic gun.

Demonstrating consistent behaviors and explaining in a good manner what is done for what about each activity in order for the corporations to gain reputation, and making connections between these demonstrations, explanations and corporation’s mission, vision and values are necessary. The consistency of the communication means used by corporations while realizing the actions above is also significant. Issues such as workplace environment and working conditions

in a corporation, education opportunities provided for the corporation's employees and stakeholders, efforts for the development of the corporation culture affect the corporate reputation [2].

The reputation of the corporation increases by remaining loyal to the promises given and the agreements done within and out of the corporation; it is important to be attentive to well-governance principles such as "transparency, obviousness, accountability, participation, effectiveness" [9].

The Value of Corporate Reputation

Four basic elements are significant for introducing (to all target groups) to corporation's stakeholders. These are [16];

- 1) Corporation culture, 2) Corporation identity,
- 3) Corporation image, 4) Corporate reputation.

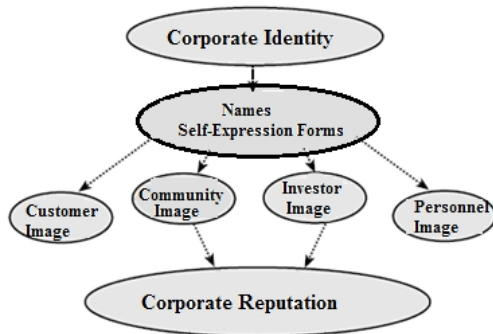


Fig. 1: Corporate Reputation

Corporate identity is shaped by the fundamental aims, vision and values that corporation wants to convey. In short, it is corporation's defining itself, determining who it is, and the means of transmitting this definition. Corporate image is the statement how the stakeholders see the corporation on the basis of its' defining itself. Corporate reputation is determined by the perceptions owned by different stakeholders and by fundamental images [16]. Reputation is invaluable, because while it has abstract values such as image, identity, it produces concrete values in the long term. The companies which have a good reputation can demand high prices for their products and services, can have loyal employees, can employ with lower prices, and overcome crisis periods easily.

A good reputation, create competition advantage towards the rivals since it is difficult to imitate and it also restricts what the rivals can do. Reputation value is the direct function of the public perceptions regarding a corporation or its

brands. It is related to product, service and company's performance solely by chance. Reputation is invaluable inasmuch as it informs us about which product we will buy, with which company we will work, and which stock certificate we will buy [5]. The customers choose the products by taking into account the reputation concept and thus it is apparent that a good reputation provides advantages for business.

It can be said that a good corporate image and corporate reputation add values to business from three aspects. These are [17, 5];

- i. Value added from financial aspect,
- ii. Value added from market aspect and,
- iii. Value added from the human resources aspect.

The Criteria That Constitute Corporate Reputation

Seven key concepts constitute the source of the corporate reputation. These are [18, 19];

- *Sentimental attraction* constitutes the customers' perception of culture and values of the business, and possessing good emotions, liking and reliance about the business.
- *Vision and Leadership* add high values to businesses' possessing leadership and vision. Motivation and visionary leadership influence the perceiving of business.
- *Quality* consists of high quality in products and services, innovation, being able to get money's worth and after sales support.
- *Financial Reliability* requires powerful performance as to rivals, strong profitability, and low-risk investment and growth signals.
- *Social Responsibility* comprises supporting the activities that are beneficial for society and ceasing the activities that are to the detriment of society.
- *Environmental Responsibility* consists of being conscious about environment.
- *Knowledge and Ability* require innovativeness and employees' being high-quality. Furthermore, awarding the employees regularly is an encouraging system to working.

The Advantages of Corporate Reputation

Reputation, an abstract value acquired by people, provides an important competitive advantage to businesses with differences it makes. Corporate reputation involves fame, respect, and reputation. While fame can be acquired in a short

term, constitution and acquisition of the reputation requires a long time period [20].

Corporate reputation increases the sales of businesses' products and services; makes them attractive and attracts skillful employees [19].

Corporate reputation provides differentiation in businesses. Not only that; however, a reputable corporate can get products with cheap prices from company's suppliers. It attracts qualified employees and thus qualified employees increase the reputation of corporation further. A reputable company becomes the idol of the youth and non-governmental organizations include reputable businesses in their projects. Local governments show a different approach and attitude towards reputable businesses. In this sense, corporate reputation carries with it many advantages that can provide for businesses with keeping ahead in competition [18].

A business' having a positive reputation in society results in these following: the organization's scale is large; it is reliable because it is active in sector for a long time, it has a good quality of management, it is successful in product and service presentation (its main area of activity), assumptions are made about its being open and honest to the society. Common opinions in question have the edge over the rivals towards business especially in market activities [21].

It is indicated that corporate reputation is a strategic potential and it ensures that corporation maintains its superior position; because of its capacity to create value that is difficult to be replicated by opponents and because of its abstract character [22].

Reputation Management

Reputation Management is newer as compared with the other service sectors, and it is a professional service that helps and supports the businesses. Reputation management was firstly developed in USA in 1990. The issue of reputation management was later touched upon in the other researches relevant to websites, and then it started to catch the attentions in the global market with the research called "Most Admired Corporations" – in Turkish "En Beğenilen Şirketler" done by Fortune Magazine. Capital Magazine in Turkey put forward the Reputation management concept in Turkey firstly in 1999 and it also brought up this issue to the agenda by researching "Most Admired Corporations" [1].

In general terms, reputation management can be defined as the controlling and orientating process of thoughts, knowledge and emotional reactions of the internal and external stakeholders, i.e. organization's employees and customers, investors, shareholders, suppliers and groups etc. related to organization [1]. Reputation management which has great value from the point of business should have an equal importance with business' marketing, production, legal and sales functions [5].

It can be expressed that the aim of reputation management activities in businesses is to revise organizational process against negative situations that can damage the reputation of business and to predetermine and remove the events that can threaten it [1].

The corporations that can successfully apply reputation management differentiate in the aspects of reputation management within all fields of their organizations. For instance, it can be ensured that the steps to move the corporation to the best level are carried out effectively thanks to great leaders. These steps support the people within corporation through always attempting effectively and creating motivations in this direction in favor of improving and developing their duties and the quality of the works done and developing new aspects (product, customer, approach, service type). They both benefit from for the sake of increasing excitement; whim and loyalty towards company's mission through presenting vision to the corporation, and lead these approaches to sprawl out of the corporation [23].

Reputation management in corporate sense; can be defined as a communication process which involves both corporate identity factors and corporate image and which aims to create a positive perception and impression towards corporation upon the positive target group [8].

For an effective reputation management in corporations [23];

- i. The first step comprises of determining for which minds management has great significance in the process.
- ii. Second step is to demobilize realistically the existing visibility and reliability against the rivals of company or work unit.
- iii. Third step is to decide on which factors under the control of company are to use in order to create position.
- iv. Forth step involves determining whether or not the corporation has reached to a differentiated position and whether or not there are posi-

tions that carry value with regards to target market rounds.

v. As fifth, it is required to benefit from the broad communication tactics range so as to designate the effective ways that lead on target customers' minds and hearts. Finally, effective management of different, consistent and holistic corporate applications is required.

One of the most significant reasons of the increasing interest towards corporate reputation management in the field results from that reputation management is an important part of the crisis management applications that gained much success especially in 90's. Corporations are no more subjected to national impacts in an environment where globalization gains speed; in addition to this their activities create tremendous impression in global extent [8].

The Components of Corporate Reputation Management

Having a corporate reputation has a vital significance in terms of business in every extent. The basic factor required to reach to a positive corporate reputation, which ensures that corporations thrust themselves to the forefront among the rivals is that corporate reputation components are realized successfully in all processes of organization. The followings are the fundamental components of corporate reputation;

- **Awareness Level Towards Visibility, Business and Its Products:** One of the most important acquisitions to obtain by assigning activities such as commercials towards corporations and its products, promotional activities, public relations applications, marketing campaigns etc. is the development of the awareness level of public towards corporation. As a result of this, some positive or negative perceptions towards corporation are in question in the minds of consumer groups and even broad public groups. At this point, the level of positiveness or negativeness of the perceptions depends largely on the success level of the communication activity. When the activities realized are examined from the reputation perspective, the prominent fundamental factors are that public perceive the corporation in a positive manner and furthermore it is ensured that corporation is "visible" and "recollective" in the eyes of the society [8].

- **Social Responsibility:** Corporate social responsibility is defined as measuring environmental, economic and social reactions of corporations towards social stakeholders of various

activities; reducing the negative impacts and realizing the operations that can contribute to develop the society and company at the same time [24].

Yılmaz Argüden states the model that is necessary to be applied related to corporate social responsibility as follows [9]:

- **Awareness:** Companies should be aware of how they influence the environment and society in which they are active, positively or negatively.

- **Policy:** Companies should determine their aims and restrictions that reflect their responsibilities towards social and environmental problems and direct their behaviors in this direction.

- **Management systems:** Processes and structures should be created for the application of policies and effective management of the risks.

- **Performance and monitoring:** Companies should continuously develop their social and environmental performances in line with their aims and targets with their policies and monitor their success in this field.

- **Reporting:** Companies should provide communications of their assessments about their effects, policies, management systems and performances by taking into account social and environmental issues.

- **Consultancy:** Companies should counsel to their shareholders about the issues of company's activities and effects. Opinions and priorities of the shareholders should provide input in the decision making process.

- **Financial performance:** It is about the ability of taking risks and competing with the aim of profitableness and investment. One of the reasons why the organizations cannot accomplish their objectives is inadequacy of technical and physical equipment. The organizations that strengthened their economic structures have much reputation compared to the other ones in global market and they are more successful than the others [24].

Moreover, according to Karaköse, a well-performance corporation [1];

- i. has strong profitableness dimensions,
- ii. does low-risk investments,
- iii. makes strong guesses about growth in future,
- iv. has a superior performance than its rivals.

- **Management and the quality of the employees:** Corporations are one step forward than its rivals in the market owing to its qualified

management and qualified employees. The importance of qualified work force increases still more especially in the processes of strategic decision-making (management) and application of these decisions (employees). When a company that has a high corporate reputation directly attracts qualified work force graduated from the best universities, it can be deduced that corporate reputation and the concept of employment of the qualified personnel support each other correlatively [8].

- ***The quality of products and services:*** Quality consists of high quality in products and services, innovation, being able to get money's worth and after sales support [18].

The products and services of the corporations are required to meet the expectations of the consumers. Having a good reputation in market is directly proportionate to the quality of the products and services. Especially the external stakeholders of the corporation exchange ideas regarding the quality of products and services in the business and they evaluate the reputation in this direction [21].

Corporations have to continuously increase the quality of the products and services and the customer satisfaction in order to create their own reputation and so as not to lose this reputation. The conditions of competitiveness require this situation [24].

- ***Being Reliable:*** It is possible to handle reliability concept within two fundamental aspects at the point of influencing the reputation of the corporations [8]:

- i. Reliance towards the products and services of the corporation,
- ii. Reliance towards the explanations made by corporation.

Being reliable is an important and hard-gained value for both the people and the corporations. Although it can be obtained through a long period, it can be lost in a short time. The basis of corporate reputation relies upon reliability. The corporation's reliance towards its product and service increases corporate reputation.

- ***Corporate Leadership (being strong-weak):*** The leader's role cannot be undermined in establishment and strengthening of the corporate reputation. The recent researches set forth that organization's managers are responsible for the reputation management. Thus, it is important for the managers to strengthen the reputation of the organization with the supports of the employees and to endeavor to achieve the aims. The organizations that own good reputation can be

effective and fruitful by demonstrating much performance compared to their opponents. At this stage, it is clear that their strong reputation is closely related to their managers' leadership qualities [1].

- ***Distinctness:*** The basic benefit of being perceived as a different corporation is that the products and services can be differentiated from their rivals and the products and services of the different corporation are preferred [8].

- ***Sentimental Attraction:*** Sentimental attraction reflects that how much the products and services of the corporation are liked, respected, and appreciated. Sentimental attraction that comprises the reputation comes to mean [25];

- having good feelings about the corporation,
- appreciating and respect to the corporation,
- relying on the corporation when major agreements are in discussion.

Reputation Management in Tourism Businesses

Tourists where an intense competition is experienced can make decisions among limited options. They may not have the enough research opportunities about the products and services. In such situations, corporate reputation steps in. It is natural that the tourists that have limited options prefer the corporations with high reputation [25].

Corporate image and reputation influence perceived quality and create a serious effectiveness upon the customer satisfaction. It has much importance on creating customer loyalty for the products and services that are complex and are not often bought [17].

Corporations gain their reputations with the efforts that last many years; however these reputations are the values that can be lost in a shorter time than guessed, thus this situation puts forth the difficulty to manage the reputation and retain it. A good reputation not only helps selling and marketing the products and services of the tourism businesses, but also keeps the employees within the corporation and keep them motivated [21] Public relations, communication and marketing departments of the corporations are the most important sections that contribute to management of the reputation. However, these should not be responsible by themselves for managing the reputation. Reputation management is a significant topic that must be handled at a level of executive board itself [2, 17].

Reputation management is accepted as a new concept in today's management understanding. The importance that should be given to this concept is understood by corporations as the days go on and studies about reputation management are concentrated on. It is apparent that the corporations that operate in tourism sector will attain a better point with regards to pecuniary and service quality by virtue of reputation management. Although professional applications about reputation management can be seen within corporate businesses, it is just optimism to mention about the existence of this understanding in many tourism businesses [25]. Corporations should exhibit behaviors in a consistent manner; explain well what is done why about every activity, and make connections of these with the mission, vision and the values of the corporation [2].

Taking one's position in the global competitive environment and having an international business identity are possible in cases of being different for stakeholders and promise to be different. Corporate reputation provides this differentiation in question for tourism businesses. In this framework, an obligation is presented from now on to develop businesses' own reputation management systems for them, which operate in tourism sector. Therefore, this strategy will provide a competitive advantage for tourism businesses [21].

Reputation management is accepted as a phenomenon that professionalizes the management for tourism businesses, provides financial advantage, and increases the sales, adds corporate value which will help to fulfill social responsibility duties. Ensuring the investor's reliability, corporate growth, and corporate stakeholders' loyalty are the discernible qualities in high-reputable corporations. Developing a plan that explains codes of conduct and unethical behaviors for internal and external stakeholders in tourism businesses and sharing this plan with all social stakeholders are significant strategies in the sense of corporate reputation [25].

Analysis of The Studies towards The Relationship between Reputation Management Activities in Businesses and Customer's Attitudes and Expectations

Corporate image is the conception of a corporation or institution in society. It is closely related with the physical and behavioral qualities of the company; and company's name, architec-

ture, its product's variety, catering service, traditions and strong communication are important from the point of a good perception of the business by the customers [26].

Corporate reputation influences perceived quality and create a serious effectiveness upon the customer satisfaction. It has much importance on creating customer loyalty for the products and services that are complex and are not often bought. Interaction between a good image and a good reputation paves the way for customer loyalty. Corporate reputation, by the reason of competition's becoming relentless, is ranked among the duties of top managements as the concepts which must be managed excellently especially in global business world where the borders disappear swiftly [17, 2, 25].

According to Argüden (2003), the corporations which place emphasis on their reputation are consistent and principled in their relations with their customers and with all their stakeholders. In other words, actions' consistency with discourses and providing connections of the actions' reasons form the basis of gaining reputation. Reputation is reliance, being reliable. The customers buy the products they place reliance on and this point enhances the sustainability of the business. Satisfaction of the customers ensures increase in loyalty to business.

Businesses ensure customer loyalty when they ensure customer satisfaction by evaluating preferences and expectations of customers. Satisfied customer will want to buy the product again with which he is pleased. At this stage, the loyalty of the satisfied customer will be a matter in question in the sense of business. Particularly the tourism businesses operate so as to aim customer loyalty by ensuring customer satisfaction with a good service quality.

A satisfied customer [27];

- resorts to buying more products.
- buys the other products of the business.
- contributes to provide a positive image for the business because positive thoughts about the business and its products are cultivated.
- are less sensitive towards the brands and products of rival businesses.

According to European Customer Satisfaction Index Model, business reputation, customer expectations, perceived service quality, perceived product quality, perceived value and customer satisfaction are ranked as the factors that have influence upon creating customer loyalty [27, 28].

Positive impressions owned by businesses which are well-managed, well-planned, sensitive to art and culture issues, participative, helpful; and do business for the benefit of society; will turn into a good corporate reputation for them within time [29, 2]. This reputation will bind the consumers to corporation and its products protect the business or the brands from all kind of difficulties and help to resolve the problems in crisis periods more easily and fast.

Within this scope, reputation management activities in businesses play an important role in customers' preferences and expectations. Thanks to the increasing competition and profound technology, the customers can investigate and assess the businesses they prefer. They expect a good-service quality and prefer the businesses with good corporate reputation. Hence, reputation management activities in businesses are effective in providing advantage in businesses when compared to the others in market by ensuring customer loyalty. Creating a good corporate reputation has great importance in the sense of affecting customers' preferences due to the fact that tourism businesses are labor-intensive businesses and these businesses produce service predominantly. Having a strong brand from the point of competition in the booming tourism sector is pretty significant continuousness sense of corporation's existence. In today's tourism conditions, it is possible that businesses can attract more tourists with corporate reputation that comprises both the variety and the quality of the products and services presented to the customers.

Conclusion

Corporate reputation comes into prominence gradually because of the fact that it provides sustainability and competitive advantage in businesses. Discussions about who should be responsible for this work with growing importance of corporate reputation and its coming into the picture as a modern management has begun. Public relations, communication, and marketing departments of the corporations are the most important sections that contribute to management of the reputation. However, these should not be responsible by themselves for managing the reputation. Reputation management is a significant topic that must be handled at a level of executive board itself. Public relations experts, advertisers and communication advisors who carry out their business in different fields of communication for effective management of

reputation can give performance feedback and consultancy service to the model developed within corporation. Management consultants can provide that organization is shaped about the reputation management that will be formed appropriately to the corporation's culture. The first actor, who will provide that all these departments work cooperatively for the reputation management, must be the top manager and executive board.

Reputation management involves the attempts to determine the ideas and expectations of all the stakeholders - who are the target group- regarding the business in order to achieve its objectives and the attempts to guide these ideas and expectations in direction of the said objectives. Reputation management comprises not only the management of the perceptions related to the stakeholders of the business; but also development of the organizational process through renovating it. Perceptions of the internal and external stakeholders concerning business should be endeavored to be managed by being monitored by the top management.

Reputation management appears as a considerable new concept for today's tourism sector. Therefore, the studies in this field are not enough yet. Reputation management in the businesses that operate in tourism sector is under the responsibility of the managers. The managers in tourism businesses should be equipped with all kinds of technical abilities and talents as in every corporation.

Tourism businesses should do a research towards internal and external stakeholders for a successful reputation management. They should follow through a proper planning in order to determine strong and weak points, and then remove these in consequence of this study. The person, corporations and institutions that will help to overcome the deficiencies should be determined and an appropriate strategy should be developed. Necessary measures to create corporate reputation with this strategy and to save it should be taken. Since the reputation created over all the stakeholders will be managed effectively, it can provide significant competitive advantages for business.

Reputation concept, an abstract value that affects the customers' preferences provides advantage when it is perceived as a modern management system by tourism businesses in a time when globalization progress rapidly. They will obtain competition superiority by influencing the customers' preferences against the opponents in

the market. Reputation management activities should be handled by tourism businesses in a planned way and the businesses should be managed efficaciously by the top management in order to provide sustainability.

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