The Effect and Measurement of Public Relations On Brand Equity

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Abstract

The present study examines public relations (PR), its impact on concepts such as corporate communications, and integrated marketing, and its role in creating, maintaining, and shaping brand equity. Also, the interaction between the company's reputation and brand equity is one of the other essential criteria examined in this study. After examining the techniques for measuring corporate reputation and brand equity, we used two models of Fombrun's Reputation Quotient and Aaker's Brand Equity to measure these two criteria. We have included GSM operators such as Turkcell, Vodafone, and Avea. Using questionnaires, end users and dealers (as the internal stakeholder) were asked about the brand equity and items related to the company's reputation. Interviews were conducted with 300 dealers as required by PR's "Stakeholder Theory" in-house staff study. We also surveyed 400 end users. Our research showed that public relations affect brand equity, and this effect varies based on stakeholders.

Keywords

Public relations, Brand equity, Reputation management, Marketing communication

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Halkla İlişkilerin Marka Değerine Etkisi ve Ölçümlenmesi

Öz

Bu çalışma, halkla ilişkilerin (PR), kurumsal iletişim ve bütünleşik pazarlama kavramları üzerindeki etkisi ve özellikle de marka değerini yaratma, sürdürme ve şekillendirmedeki rolünü incelemektedir. Ayrıca kurum itibarı ile marka değeri arasındaki etkileşim de bu çalışmada incelenen diğer temel kriterlerden biridir. Araştırmamızda kurumsal itibar ve marka değerini ölçme teknikleri inceledikten sonra, Fombrun'un İtibar Katsayısı ve Aaker'in Marka Değeri araştırmaları olmak üzere iki model kullanılmıştır. Turkcell, Vodafone, Avea gibi GSM operatörlerini dahil edilerek, anketler hazırlanmış, son kullanıcılara ve bayilere (iç paydaş olarak) marka değeri ve kurum itibarıyla ilgili sorular sorulmuştur. PR'ın "Paydaş Teorisi" kapsamında kurum içi personel çalışması gereği 300 bayi ve 400 son kullanıcı araştırmaya dahil edilmiştir. Araştırmamız, halkla ilişkilerin marka değerini etkilediğini ve bu etkinin paydaşlara göre değiştiğini kanıtlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Halkla İlişkiler, Marka Değeri, İtibar Yönetimi, Pazarlama İletişimi

Introduction

Public relations and branding efforts inevitably work in an integrated manner for institutions and brands to position themselves and reach their target audiences with the strategies and tactics they have determined. *Public relations* is defined as communication activities to maintain the organization's image and communicate with the general public (Algharabat et al., 2020:3). In recent years, the definition and role of organization public relations have been expanded to broader scopes such as public relations, marketing communication activities, and advertising. These communication activities' convergence is for responding to the changing business environment that has faced organizations with problems such as loss of shareholder value, reduction of customer trust, and organizational support, which has forced many organizations to review their communication process with customers (Chakraborty, 2019:7). In large organizations, this convergence of communication in public relations is manifested in response to the economic recession. Studies show that public relations can be influential in reducing advertising budgets in the short and long term (Ebrahim, 2020:15).

Another significant factor is the exponential growth of social media and consumer awareness. For example, Keller and Brexendorf (2019:16) believe that integrating marketing and public relations activities is due to the arrival and acceptance of media and increased consumer social awareness. Recent research also shows this issue. A study conducted on 100 large global companies showed that the impact of public relations could be more than advertising in acquiring brand equity (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019:21). These results indicate that in today's market, appropriate brand promotions and integrated programs are good options for contact points for the organization with the customers. PR brings to life the underlying brand attitudes and promises by telling authentic stories and supporting honesty in advertising images (Machado et al., 2019:18).

Although the primary purpose of public relations is organizational communication in line with the organization's goals, this concept is increasingly defined as influencing people. This has become a significant issue due to the transition of the market to a consumer-centered informal economy characterized by two-way conversations between consumers and between consumers and organizations (Ramesh et al., 2019:27). In addition, social awareness among consumers is increasing, and now they emphasize the nature of

the organization instead of simply paying attention to its products in the form of services or products (Shanahan et al., 2019:21). Also, extensive consumer pessimism and the waste of consumer confidence and trust by the last decade's events caused businesses to review their advertising communications and marketing strategies, one of the results of which has been the integration of the public relations department with corporate brand initiatives (Verčič and Ćorić, 2018:54).

On the one hand, public relation is vital in supporting the strength and value of an organization's brands to all stakeholders (Ebrahim, 2020:17). Therefore, it should establish effective relationships with key audiences such as customers and shareholders because they affect the business results by purchasing products and investing in the organization's development projects. According to Chakraborty (2019:46), companies in the top 200 of Fortune's Amazing Companies list have invested twice as much in their public relations departments as others. With its ever-expanding framework and task areas, public relations has an important place in terms of advising the management level of the institution, strengthening mutual communication with stakeholders, and adding value to the institution with corporate communication reflecting the corporate identity, especially creating a reputation (Hafez, 2018:15). Continuous updating of observable attitudes, behaviors, and ideas with a focus on communication between companies and stakeholders is one of the main goals of this area. Therefore, public relations provides significant benefits by creating initiatives during the "value creation" process.

The position of public relations has been discussed in the framework of management and communication for more than 100 years. With the role of public relations in supporting marketing, its impact on an enormous social scope is the focus of these discussions (Caywood, 2012:125). Public relation is a method a person or business uses to communicate more effectively and efficiently with the audience it serves or targets. It is the whole of the attitudes and behaviors applied systematically and in a specific direction to make a business or person respected and liked by its external and internal customers (Friend and Zehle, 2004:212).

In the definitions of public relations, strategic communication management, which constitutes the essence of public relations, is also included. Accordingly, modern public relations is seen as a "strategic communication management," aiming to improve not only the consumers related to an organization but also the relations of that organization with various internal and external target groups (Neal and Strauss, 2008:162). In the comprehensive literature research conducted by Porcu et al. (2019:76), it has been revealed that public relations are frequently used with the expressions of institution/organization, administration, and masses/public. However, in the same article, the dimensions of public relations are the area of interest, starting point, image, and interaction. In this context, the primary points of public relations are

persuasion, advocacy, informing the public, cause-effect relationships, image and reputation management, and relationship management. Public relations aims to strengthen the bond of an institution with the target audience and, if necessary, to manage relations with the target audience based on this bond. In this connection is established through communication, it tries to realize the organization's goals and convey its corporate philosophy and identity (Akcay et al., 2020:32).

For this reason, the function of public relations in management is crucial. Because public relations has a feature that increases the institution's effectiveness, it is evaluated as a form of management. One of the essential points that emerged as a result of studies is that public relation is the tool that provides emotional value and consultancy to the management at a point that conveys the ethical and social responsibility awareness of the institution (Juska, 2021:18).

On the other hand, communication plays a vital role in institutions in terms of creating a functional corporate culture, ensuring coordination between units, solving problems, providing motivation, and eliminating conflicts. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that all communication sectors within the institution are open (Friend and Zehle, 2004:116). Otherwise, the information belonging to the institution will reach the institution's stakeholders through different sectors and in different ways and may allow the formation of an undesirable corporate image (Karaosmanoglu and Salman, 2019:96). Another important issue for a brand is marketing, which is foreseen to be included in public relations. In particular, marketing, marketing communication, integrated marketing communication, advertising, and public relations are sometimes intertwined and sometimes separated (Kılıç and Yolbulan Okan, 2021:32).

Moreover, marketing communication components effectively bring the brand to a different position in consumer perception and create brand equity. In the communication process with the consumer, thanks to the feedback received from the consumer, it is ensured that the brand is shaped by their expectations (Kushwaha et al., 2020:55). In this process, the image and reputation of the organization and the brands gain importance. It can be said that preferences have changed because the brand means more than the product. Therefore, as well as the marketing communication process, public relations studies that support it are undeniably important regarding the perception of corporate power and trust (Llopis-Amorós et al., 2019:25).

Although public relations is a more comprehensive discipline than marketing communication, it can also contribute to marketing activities as an element of the integrated marketing concept (Maulana et al., 2021:43). However, this situation should not cause marketing activities to be seen above public

relations activities. According to new definitions, public relations and marketing can be seen as a single function (Nankali et al., 2020:156). Another interpretation that opposes this view is that they act separately from each other on their own (Caywood, 2012). Further, it is argued that the two functions have separate positioning or are even contradictory with each other (Öztürk and Batum, 2019:27). While marketing communication includes activities such as price, promotion, product, and positioning, the scope of public relations is quite different. Public relations consists of lobbying, corporate advertising, publicity, press advocacy, management consulting, and various public interest activities (Pinar et al,2020).

Marketing communication and public relations also contribute to communication through mass media. In parallel with today's technological developments, the number and qualities of mass media are changing. As well as the quality of media tools and forms of dissemination, the quality of the content of the media is also a factor in the formation of public opinion through public relations (Porcu et al., 2020:32). The effects of mass media on individuals in society have led those working in public relations to direct their attention to these tools. Because by making use of these tools, explanatory and guiding messages can be sent to broader masses instantly or in a very short time, with less effort. This type of communication focuses on the positive development of impersonal indirect communication between the target audience and the organization (Rodríguez-Molina et al., 2019:13).

Furthermore, brand equity is a concept that is frequently discussed and emphasized within the framework of marketing, public relations, and management (Schultz, 2020:69). Regarding brand equity, besides the financial savings of the brand, the emotional dimension in the consumer perception is also taken into account (Šerić et al., 2020:7). Brand equity is the increased or decreased value offered to an institution or its customers through a product or service, an intangible and tangible asset connected to a brand, its name, or its symbol (Friend and Zehle, 2004:315). This concept includes brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, and associations. According to another expression, the concept of brand equity is the additional value added to the product and the consumer by the positive impressions created by a strong brand name and symbol in the mind of the consumer (Sezgin et al., 2019:34). The abovementioned value makes the market value of the product and the business more valuable than the business's assets due to positive impressions.

A corporate reputation is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals. The reputation that constituents ascribe to a company is the aggregate of many personal judgements about the company's credibility, reliability, responsibility, and trustworthiness (Fombrun, 1996:72). On the other hand, it is also possible

to evaluate the reputation as a brand image in the marketing literature. Accordingly, the perception of the services and products of the institution or brand is at a point that reflects on its general reputation. According to Schultz (2020:97), it can also be said that the concepts of brand equity and equivalence impact the formation of a strong reputation. Reputation is a perceptual concept that builds customer loyalty and is an asset often emphasized in the marketing discipline. Companies with a strong reputation find the opportunity to further expand their market share by being quickly accepted by the target audiences. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:112) reveal that reputation is indispensable in creating brand equity. According to them, a positive reputation is the sum of positive images that will provide a competitive advantage to the organization and brand equity. Therefore, similar strategic ways should be followed to build brand equity. From a marketing point of view, reputation generally includes a structure that includes the consumer's knowledge of the institution or brand, the performance, and actions of the institution or brand, and gives equivalence to brand equity. From this perspective, reputation can be used to build 'value.' It would be correct to see reputation as a marketing tool to build trust and loyalty through long-term and continuous persuasive communication efforts (Sezgin et al., 2019:13).

Marketing communication and public relations must work in a common platform and strategic framework when the product or brand is mentioned. Therefore, in this study, when the GSM brands are considered, the information given at the point of sale, sufficient and detailed information obtained from the call centers, and the contribution of these brands to society in terms of social responsibility, become essential criteria in creating brand equity.

Method
Purpose of the research
The primary purpose of this research is to prove the existence of the relationship between reputation management and brand equity concerning the expanding functions of public relations and to demonstrate that communication studies are mutually supportive in an integrated platform. Apart from the public relations reputation management components, *the relationship between sponsorship, corporate advertising, crisis management, other public relations activities, and value creation is also intended to be handled as a separate section.* Based on these arguments, two hypotheses are put forward in the study:

H1= *Reputation management and brand equity factors differ according to consumer and dealer sectors.*

H2= *Public relations, especially reputation management, have an impact on brand equity and its sub-elements.*

Research Model

The models that form the basis of the research are the Consumer Based Brand Equity Model developed by Aaker (2012) to explain brand equity and the Reputation Coefficient Model, a reputation measurement technique developed by Fombrun (2005) to understand public relations functions. Aaker's Brand Equity Measurement Model and the Reputation Coefficient Model developed by Fombrun is introduced in the following.
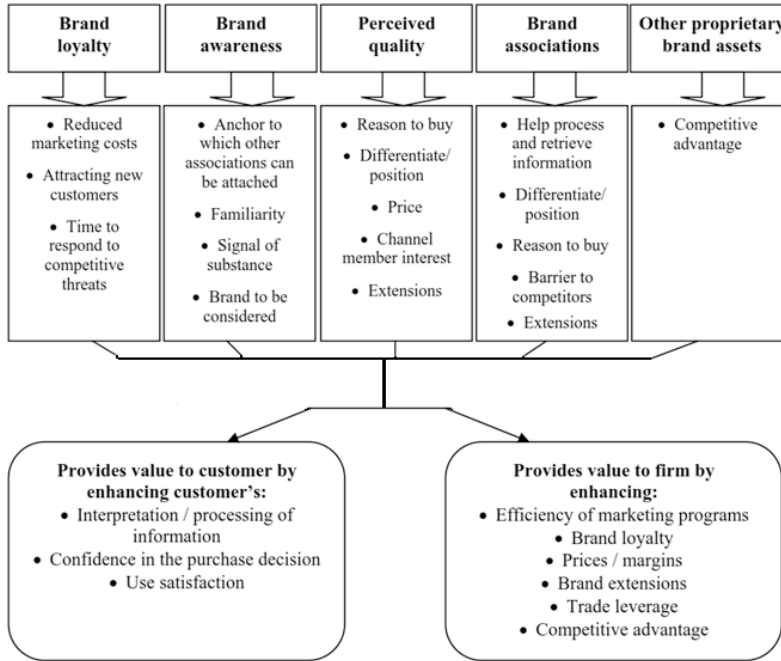

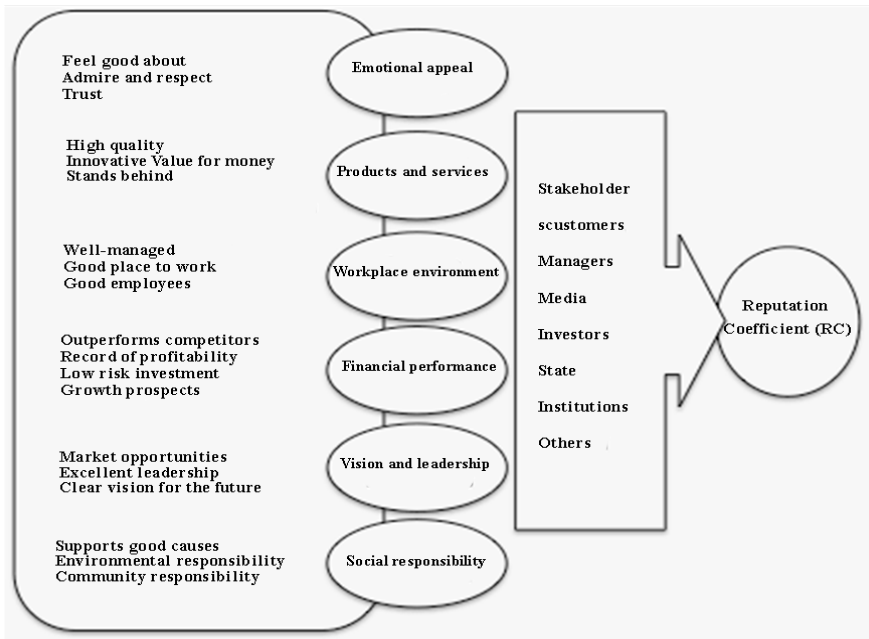**Figure 1:** *Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model*

Figure 2: *Reputation Coefficient Model*

In the present research, 410 end consumers and 300 dealer employees were interviewed. Turkcell, Avea, and Vodafone consumers participated in the study equally regarding the socioeconomic distribution, and a non-random sample, quota sampling, was used. In the quota sampling, the socioeconomic status distribution of Turkey is taken as a basis.

The research was carried out within the provincial borders of Istanbul. GSM users and dealers in different Istanbul districts were included in the study as the SES distribution was taken as a basis. In order to obtain statistically significant results, 100 dealer employees belonging to each brand were interviewed. While some of the dealers are corporate dealers that sell single brands, some of them are dealers that represent more than one brand. On the other hand, these dealers are based on the brand they sell primarily and are included in the research.

Data Collection
A face-to-face survey technique was used in this study. The research was conducted with Turkcell, Avea, and Vodafone dealer employees and end consumers who are users of these brands in the GSM sector, a sector with high brand awareness. Based on the stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2010:134), the brand perceptions of the service or product consumer of an institution/brand and the people working in that institution, their love for

the institution, loyalty, and the like could be different from each other. For this reason, it was considered correct to examine the point of view of these brands from different perspectives. The same questionnaire was used to understand the difference in perception among the consumers. Since the dealer employee is considered an in-house employee, their socioeconomic status has not been considered.

Analysis

First of all, descriptive statistics are given. Then, the scales of reputation and brand equity, which are the subject of the research, are discussed, and the mean and standard deviations of these scales are presented. In order to answer the first hypothesis, firstly, consumer and dealer averages of reputation management and brand equity scales were taken, and the significance tests of these average differences were made with a t-test. To answer the second hypothesis, correlation analysis was made between the scales, and then, the extent to which reputation management explained brand equity was revealed by regression analysis based on dealers and consumers.

Regressions include an analysis of the perceived quality in the general framework and the consumer and the dealer, an analysis of brand loyalty in the general framework and consumer and dealer, and a consumer and dealer sector analysis of brand association and brand awareness titles. Demographic information was also presented with frequency tables.

Findings

Considering the market shares of the brands for the dealers, it was decided to negotiate with the dealers on an equal basis for each brand since low numbers that were not significant for the research were revealed. With this distribution, 58% of the study consists of the final consumer and 42% of the dealers. The demographic information of the study participants is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Demographic information of the study participants

Demographic features	Consumer		Dealer		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
The population of the study	410	57.75	300	42.25	710	100
Operators						
Turkcell	151	36.83	104	34.67	255	35.92
Vodafone	124	30.24	104	34.67	228	32.11
Avea	135	32.93	92	30.67	227	31.97
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100
Age						
Under 25	96	23.41	144	48.00	240	33.80
26-35 years	136	33.17	124	41.33	260	36.62
36-45 years	102	24.88	22	7.33	124	17.46
46-55 years	40	9.76	8	2.67	48	6.76
56 years old and more	36	8.78	2	0.67	38	5.35
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100
Gender						
Male	207	50.48	230	76.67	487	68.59
Female	203	49.1	70	23.33	223	31.41
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100
Education Status						
Illiterate- Primary Education	132	32.2	9	3.00	141	19.86
Secondary- College	186	45.6	241	80.33	428	60.28
University-Doctorate	92	22.2	50	16.67	141	19.86
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100
Marital status						
Single	206	50.24	207	69	413	58.17
Married	204	49.76	93	31.00	297	41.83
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100
Occupation Status						
Unemployed	99	24.15	19	6.33	118	16.63
Housewife	42	10.24	1	0.33	43	6.06
Occasional work	30	7.32	1	0.33	31	4.37
Employee	124	30.24	192	64.00	316	44.51
Self-employed	30	7.32	8	2.67	38	5.36
Specialist	34	8.3	15	5.00	49	6.91
Manager	13	3.18	27	9.00	40	5.63
Business owner	21	5.12	37	12.33	58	8.16
Freelancer	17	4.15	0	0.00	17	2.39
Total	410	100	300	100	710	100

According to Table 1, the majority of the study participants were between 25-35 years old (36.62%), male (68.59%), secondary-college education (60.28%), single (58.17%), and employee (44.51%).

In our research, the socioeconomic status (SES) distributions of consumers were examined. The distribution of SES was not considered because we considered the dealers as internal stakeholders of the institution. The AB group had a rate of 22% in the study. The rate in the C1 group was 41%. There were 24% of participants from the C2 group and 13% from the DE group.

In the first part, questions based on the corporate reputation components of public relations developed by Fombrun and other public relations activities that we have added to our research, the overall average is relatively high. These results reveal the positive impact of public relations activities on corporate reputation. Table 2 shows the public relations corporate reputation details:

Table 2: Public Relations Corporate Reputation

Public Relations Corporate Reputation						
	General		Consumer		Dealer	
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev
I have good feelings about the institution	4.18	0.862	4.03	0.850	4.39	0.834
I trust the institution	4.12	0.891	3.97	0.895	4.33	0.843
I admire and respect the institution	3.96	0.959	3.80	0.985	4.19	0.873
Offers high-quality products and services	4.19	0.845	4.07	0.845	4.36	0.817
Develops innovative products and services	4.21	0.771	4.08	0.756	4.39	0.757
Stands behind its products and services	4.14	0.864	4.01	0.863	4.33	0.831
The products and services are worth the money I paid	4.09	0.902	3.93	0.914	4.32	0.838
It is a financially strong company	4.44	0.724	4.32	0.738	4.60	0.675
It is an institution that makes correct and sound investments	4.24	0.724	4.11	0.737	4.42	0.668
Promises future growth	4.27	0.762	4.12	0.770	4.48	0.703
Outperforms its competitors financially	4.22	0.815	4.08	0.847	4.41	0.730
The company clearly communicates the vision	4.31	0.721	4.19	0.751	4.49	0.641
Has excellent leadership qualities	4.12	0.792	4.03	0.816	4.23	0.744
Recognizes and evaluates advantages in market opportunities	4.20	0.771	4.11	0.762	4.32	0.768
It is the leading institution in its sector	4.18	0.840	4.13	0.810	4.25	0.877
It is an institutionalized institution.	4.41	0.721	4.27	0.745	4.61	0.638
well managed	4.22	0.847	4.11	0.796	4.35	0.891
It has the characteristics of being an institution to work with	4.17	0.854	4.04	0.852	4.34	0.826
It has good employees	4.16	0.898	4.04	0.863	4.31	0.920
Does good work for society	4.16	0.809	4.05	0.745	4.31	0.865
The company contributes the most to different fields, such as education	4.05	0.937	3.99	0.894	4.13	0.987

The company provides employment and job opportunities in Turkey.	4.17	0.791	4.03	0.778	4.36	0.771
I saw advertisements reflecting the institution's power in the press.	4.35	0.725	4.23	0.742	4.52	0.667
It is an institution that manages the process well in case of any problem	4.10	0.792	4.03	0.785	4.19	0.794
Engages in effective sponsorship activities	4.21	0.806	4.07	0.796	4.39	0.785

Among the corporate reputation components, the most significant factor in the general sector is the expression *'financially strong organization'* with an average of 4.44. In the dealer sector, this average is even more, with an average of 4.60. For the consumer part, this feature ranks first with the highest average. The importance of this feature comes to the fore even more in evaluating dealers as internal stakeholders. Therefore, being an employee in financially strong organizations gains importance in terms of trust and reputation. The averages of brand equity are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Brand Equity Averages

Brand Equity Averages						
	General		Consumer		Dealer	
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.
This brand is my first choice	4.20	0.964	4.15	0.876	4.27	1.071
I recommend this brand to others	4.18	0.806	4.06	0.789	4.34	0.801
If I were to buy this service again, I would choose this brand again	4.10	0.868	4.06	0.799	4.14	0.953
Even if I have problems with this brand, I would not buy another brand	3.83	1.134	3.76	1.093	3.92	1.184
Even if other brands offer better offers, my decision about this brand will not change	3.80	1.117	3.76	1,085	3.85	1.159
It's a brand I identify with	3.93	1.025	3.86	0.964	4.02	1,097
It is the first brand that comes to mind when it comes to the GSM sector	4.12	0.946	4.05	0.923	4.20	0.970
I know the tariffs and campaigns well	4.20	0.856	3.95	0.905	4.54	0.652
I am aware of advertisements and promotions	4.25	0.782	4.03	0.788	4.54	0.671
Overall I am satisfied with using this brand	4.28	0.775	4.18	0.747	4.42	0.793
I am satisfied with the service I received for the price I paid for this brand	4.10	0.880	4.00	0.863	4.24	0.885
Customer service provides quality service	3.90	0.963	3.87	0.928	3.94	1.008
It offers its customers advantages in many areas with various offers	4.16	0.800	4.05	0.790	4.30	0.793
There are dealers everywhere.	4.34	0.719	4.21	0.725	4.53	0.667
It offers its customers the latest technological products	4.27	0.724	4.16	0.737	4.42	0.679
Turkey's leading GSM operator	4.14	0.942	4.08	0.935	4.22	0.946
It is a reliable brand	4.24	0.747	4.11	0.759	4.41	0.692
It is an innovative brand	4.25	0.748	4.14	0.749	4.39	0.722
It is a prestigious brand	4.33	0.728	4.22	0.739	4.48	0.687
It is the most popular brand among operators	4.20	0.839	4.12	0.815	4.31	0.859
It is the operator that best understands, listens, and offers solutions to its customers	4.12	0.818	4.01	0.782	4.28	0.841

Considering the averages of brand equity, the highest values in the general sector are the values of *'the presence of a dealer everywhere,' 'prestigious brand,' 'offering the most innovative products to its customers,'* and *'being satisfied with brand use in general'*. In the Brand Equity values, the average of the dealer sector is similar to the reputation components. In the consumer part, the highest average belongs to the *'prestigious brand'* and *'dealers' ubiquity'.* In addition, providing the latest technological services to its customers and being innovative are among the significant values. Looking at these features, it is not surprising that the main features that primarily constitute brand equity in the GSM sector for the consumer are performance and distribution, such as product performance and distribution power.

The correlation study, which is one of the main points of our research, to see the relationship between public relations, reputation management, and brand equity, is given in the table below in general terms. In the next tables, the most interactive points are marked by considering the brand equity components and reputation factors separately. These tables have been examined on the basis of consumers and dealers, and general.

When the tables are examined, it is revealed that the values with the highest correlation with each other are *brand equity - brand association*, and *corporate reputation - vision and leadership, with a rate of 77%*. Another correlation at the same rate is between *brand equity – perceived quality and corporate reputation – products and services*. Another correlation is seen between brand-perceived quality and corporate reputation products and services. It is possible to say that there is a similar link between perceived quality and vision and leadership. In this correlation of 75%, it would be appropriate to say that the perception of quality in the brand has increased in connection with the vision of the institution. In the overall picture, the lowest correlation is between brand equity – brand loyalty and corporate reputation – financial performance. The order and sequence of consumer correlation is shown in the table 5 which is placed at appendix.

In the consumer sector, it is seen that there is an 80% correlation between public relations, reputation management, and brand equity, between brand equity - *perceived quality and corporate reputation - products and services*. It is quite natural that these headings appear in relation to an important consumer expectation, such as the innovation and penetration of products. Apart from that, there is a similar correlation with a percentage of 80% between *brand association and vision and leadership*. In terms of brand equity associations, brand equity features such as being Turkey's leading GSM operator specifically for the GSM sector, having a reliable brand identity, being innovative and prestigious, and being popular among operators create parallelism with the innovative vision and leadership of the institution.

In the dealer sector, the highest correlation is seen between *brand equity – brand association and corporate reputation – vision and leadership*. The brand association includes the associations of the brand towards emotions and attitudes and the brand's prestigious and innovative features. In this title, there is also a feature that gains importance for internal stakeholders, such as being in the leading brand position. Likewise, vision and leadership reveal the vision and strength of the organization.

In terms of the dealer sector, the interaction of these two features means that the institution, in a sense, represents its own employees. The title of perceived quality that follows has interactions with products and services and vision and leadership. In the dealer sector, brand loyalty and financial performance are minimally correlated with the consumer. To evaluate this in general, it is possible to say that brand loyalty is not related to the financial structure, but to the general point of view of the brand. Among the reputation components, the working environment, which gains importance especially for the dealer sector and has a very high average for the dealer sector apart from correlation, is not very high in brand correlation. Brand association and corporate reputation - public relations, which are not important in the consumer sector, are moderately interactive for the dealer sector. The sponsorship activities of the institution can be effective in points such as its attitude during the crisis, corporate advertisements, the prestige and innovation of the brand according to the dealer sector, and emotional attitudes. The regression overview is shown in table 7.

In summary, when looking at the general regression analysis, it is revealed that the strongest interaction between reputation values are public relations vision and leadership expressions, and brand association expressions from brand equities expressions. As seen in the previous correlation analysis, it is obvious that these two expressions are meaningful data on both general, consumer, and dealer basis. However, in the dealer sector, the emotional expression of public relations is high, based on the fact that other subjects with the highest interaction are evaluated as internal stakeholders. This expression is also high in consumer expressions. The expression of an ineffective working environment in the consumer sector is highly effective for the dealer sector. Because the in-house working environment is naturally important for the dealers to be considered as internal stakeholders of the institution. Another important point is that the expression of brand loyalty, which is not meaningful for the consumer in the brand loyalty part, is meaningful for the dealer sector.

Conclusion

In this study, the financial, emotional, and functional components of the institution are examined. In our research, in addition to the reputation criteria that support the public relations dimension, other activities such as corporate advertising, crisis management, and sponsorship are also compared with the

brand equity criteria. Our research covers three institutions in the GSM sector and was conducted to understand the perceptions of different stakeholders, including the final consumer and dealer. As a result of the research, both reputation values and brand equity criteria were evaluated within themselves, the two values were compared with each other by correlation analysis, and finally, the accuracy and power of these data were proven by performing regression analyses.

Our results supported the hypothesis that *public relations has an effect on brand equity and this effect differs on the basis of stakeholders.* In the averages of both models, the averages of the dealer sectors are higher, being close to or above the general averages. The reason for this is that more than the relationship or expectation that consumers establish with the brand or institution, the dealer sector, that is, the employees of the institution, are internal stakeholders. Dealers naturally have more information and communication about the institutions they work with. On the other hand, the general image and perceptions of the consumers, apart from the knowledge and experience they have in the name of the institution and the brand, are more prominent.

The main focus of the research data was to analyze how the components of public relations and brand equity are distributed among themselves. Among the components of corporate reputation, the most important factor in the general sector was the statement 'financially strong organization'. This average has come to the fore in the dealer sector even more. For the consumer part, this feature ranked first with the highest average. Based on this, it is seen that the financial performance of institutions is a very critical element in terms of maintaining their reputation. The fact that 'financial performance' has the highest average among these values, which includes corporate reputation and other factors, is also supported by the theoretical literature. Corporate advertisements, annual reports, and employment and investment news prepared by institutions are also important in terms of feeding this value.

When the brand equity components are evaluated in themselves, the most important criterion is the 'brand association' in terms of both the general consumer and the dealer. Every brand has different connotations. One brand may be conservative, another reliable, and another innovative. This separation in the minds can be considered as the first step of whether or not to classify the person according to their own tendencies and prefer the brand. For this reason, the fact that the most prominent criterion among the brand equity criteria is 'brand association' is also consistent with the theoretical framework. In our research, under the brand association criteria, there are sub-explanations related to the GSM sector, to be the leading GSM operator, to be a reliable brand, to be innovative, to be a prestigious brand, to be popular, and to offer the best service to its customers. It is natural that these associations regarding the sector and products come to the fore in the consumer part among the

brand equity criteria. In the dealer section, it would be correct to assume that brand associations stand out because they make a difference in perception.

It is also an important result that different stakeholders have different perceptions, which is the second hypothesis of our research. The working environment, which is not an important factor for consumers, turned out to be meaningful in terms of brand loyalty in the dealer sector. The opportunities that an institution provides to its internal stakeholders emphasize the importance of building corporate identity and culture.

One of the striking results of the research is that *social responsibility* is meaningful data only on the basis of perceived quality. Brand equity includes both functional and intangible values of perceived quality, product, and service. The identification of social responsibility with perceived quality is actually meaningful in terms of both functional and emotional dimensions. It is possible to talk only about the conclusion that social responsibility is not important enough to create brand awareness, does not affect brand loyalty, does not take place in associations, the effect of the conditions of social responsibility, and the process of announcing them to the masses. Social marketing can be done with advertising activities as well as social responsibility expenditure. This can make the social responsibility 'sincere' phenomenon questioned. Also, it is also possible that the social responsibility activities are not sufficiently announced.

As a result of our research, it can be summarized that public relations have an effect on brand equity, and this effect varies on the basis of stakeholders. Accordingly, it can be said that public relations is a communication activity that should be evaluated from a broader perspective. Due to the constructivist approach, it is argued that public relations is the most effective force in the process of creating the desired reality. It can be predicted that public relations will gain more importance in the future and become more effective in strategy and implementation.

Appendix

Table 4: Order and sequence of General Correlation

Brand equity	Corporate reputation	Correlation*	N	Correlation sequence
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.771	707	77%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.766	708	77%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.750	708	75%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.710	704	71%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.702	707	70%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.692	708	69%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.692	707	69%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.691	703	69%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.690	705	69%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.666	708	67%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.661	708	66%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.656	708	66%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.651	705	65%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.650	702	65%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.649	708	65%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.649	705	65%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.648	707	65%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.644	707	64%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.635	706	64%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.623	704	62%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.619	708	62%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.609	707	61%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.599	703	60%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.595	705	60%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.593	703	59%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.590	705	59%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.581	708	58%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.558	705	56%
P<0.01				

Table 5: Order and sequence of Consumer Correlation

Brand equity	Corporate reputation	Correlation*	N	Correlation sequence
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.800	409	80%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.800	408	80%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.772	409	77%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.749	406	75%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.729	407	73%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.720	409	72%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.715	409	72%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.706	409	71%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.703	404	70%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.702	408	70%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.701	409	70%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.689	409	69%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.686	409	69%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.682	407	68%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.673	409	67%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.661	408	66%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.655	403	66%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.652	407	65%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.646	409	65%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.646	406	65%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.644	407	64%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.644	409	64%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.643	408	64%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.634	404	63%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.626	407	63%
Brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.625	404	63%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.618	407	62%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.616	409	62%
P<0.01				

Table 6: Order and sequence of Dealer Correlation

Brand equity	Corporate reputation	Correlation*	N	Correlation sequence
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.695	299	70%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.689	299	69%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.688	299	69%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.647	299	65%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.643	299	64%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.639	298	64%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.624	299	62%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.611	299	61%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.606	298	61%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.606	298	61%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.602	299	60%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Products and Services	0.601	299	60%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Vision and Leadership	0.597	299	60%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.585	298	59%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.578	298	58%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.578	299	58%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.574	298	57%
Brand equity - Brand Association	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.558	298	56%
brand equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.553	298	55%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.550	298	55%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.541	299	54%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.535	299	54%
Brand equity - Perceived Quality	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.533	299	53%
Brand Equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Social Responsibility	0.511	299	51%
Brand Equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Working Environment	0.509	298	51%
Brand Equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Public Relations Other Activities	0.501	299	50%
Brand Equity - Brand Awareness	Corporate Reputation - Emotional Bond	0.463	298	46%
Brand equity - Brand Loyalty	Corporate Reputation - Financial Performance	0.447	298	45%
P<0.01				

Table 7: Regression Overview

Model	General				Consumer				Dealer			
	Perceived quality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Association	Brand Awareness	Perceived Quality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Association	Brand Awareness	Perceived Quality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Association	Brand Awareness
	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET	SET
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Public relations / emotional bond I have good feelings about the institution. I have confidence in the institution. I admire and respect and appreciate the institution.	0.154	0.274	0.091	0.11	0.124	0.316	0.09	0.197	0.172	0.24	0.091	(-) 0.060
Public Relations / products and services It offers high quality products and services. Develops innovative products and services. It stands behind its products and services. Their products and services are worth the money I paid.	0.249	0.078	0.011	0.15	0.31	0.043	0.084	0.084	0.168	0.118	0.131	0.251

Public Relations / financial performance It is a financially strong company. It is an institution that makes correct and sound investments. It promises future growth. It shows superior financial performance than its competitors.	0.055	0.067	0.157	0.138	0.067	0.04	0.206	0.091	0.047	(-) 0.125	0.082	0.108
Public Relations/vision leadership The institution clearly announces the vision. It has excellent leadership qualities. Recognizes and evaluates advantages in market opportunities. It is the leading institution in its sector. It is an institutionalized institution.	0.235	0.278	0.364	0.242	0.207	0.299	0.404	0.237	0.258	0.224	0.317	0.29
Public Relations / social responsibility It does good work for society. It is the company that contributes the most to different fields such as education and sports. It is the company that provides employment and offers job opportunities in Turkey.	0.120	0.08	0.044	0.018	0.096	0.081	0.018	0.041	0.171	0.073	0.112	0.022

Public relations/ work environment It is well managed. It has the characteristics of being an institution to work for. It has good employees.	0.059	0.105	0.048	0.059	0.072	0.089	0.082	0.091	0.052	0.109	0.019	0.053
Public Relations/other factors I come across advertisements reflecting the power of the institution in the press. It is an institution that manages the process well in case of any problem or crisis. Engages in effective sponsorship activities.	0.096	0.105	0.115	0.156	0.12	0.042	0.091	0.15	0.055	0.196	0.158	0.123

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