

A REVIEW ON ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AND ONLINE REPUTATION COMPONENTS*

ÇEVİRİMİÇİ İTİBAR YÖNETİMİ VE ÇEVİRİMİÇİ İTİBAR BİLEŞENLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

Nefise ŞİRZAD⁽¹⁾

Abstract: Developments in communication and information technologies have obliged corporations to be aware of the importance of their reputation in the virtual world as well as the real world. Corporations with a robust reputation are more attractive to investors and customers. At the same time, corporations having a robust corporate reputation manages crises more successfully. Reputation management is among the primary functions of public relations practices. One of the essential purposes of public relations practices is to manage the relations between corporations and their audiences, develop and maintain a strong reputation both in the real and virtual worlds. In this paper, the definitions of corporate reputation, online reputation, online reputation management concepts and the importance of these concepts in customer relations, communication and public relations are explained. This study aims to define the components that create, develop and maintain a robust reputation in the virtual world, examine the relationship between these components and explain their functions with concrete examples. Search engine optimization, social media activities and consumer-generated content constitute online reputation management components. In order to embody the relations between these components, Turkey's two e-commerce websites were examined with the case study method.

Keywords: Reputation, Online Reputation, Social Media, Online Reputation Management, Consumer Generated Media

JEL: M39

Öz: İletişim ve bilgi teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler, kurumları gerçek dünyada olduğu kadar sanal dünyada da itibarlarının önemini farkına varmalarını zorunlu kılmıştır. Sağlam bir itibara sahip şirketler, yatırımcılar ve müşteriler için daha çekicidir. Aynı zamanda güçlü bir kurumsal itibara sahip olan kurumlar krizleri daha başarılı yönetmektedir. İtibar yönetimi, halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarının temel işlevleri arasında yer almaktadır. Halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarının temel amaçlarından biri, kurumlar ve izleyicileri arasındaki ilişkileri yönetmek, hem gerçek hem de sanal dünyada güçlü bir itibar geliştirmek ve sürdürmektir. Bu makalede kurumsal itibar, online itibar, online itibar yönetimi kavramlarının tanımları ve bu kavramların müşteri ilişkileri, iletişim ve halkla ilişkilerdeki önemi anlatılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, sanal dünyada olumlu bir itibar oluşturan, geliştiren ve sürdüren bileşenleri tanımlamayı, bu bileşenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemeyi ve bileşenlerin işlevlerini somut örneklerle açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Arama motoru optimizasyonu, sosyal medya faaliyetleri ve tüketiciler tarafından oluşturulan içerikler çevrimiçi itibar bileşenlerini oluşturmaktadır. Bu bileşenler arasındaki ilişkileri somutlaştırmak için Türkiye'nin iki e-ticaret web sitesi örnek olay incelemesi yöntemi ile incelenmiştir.

* This is a Ph.D. thesis article and was supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK).

⁽¹⁾ Çankaya Üniversitesi, İktisadi İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, Halkla İlişkiler ve Reklamcılık Bölümü; nefise@cankaya.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-3919-6974
Geliş/Received: 25-06-2021; Kabul/Accepted: 16-01-2022

Anahtar Kelimeler: İtibar, Çevrimiçi İtibar, Sosyal Medya, Çevrimiçi İtibar Yönetimi, Tüketici Oluşturulan Medya

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the widespread use of the Internet, mobile phones, PCs and tablets, consumers can share their thoughts, desires and complaints about the products and services they use. A growing number of people read, monitor and share the content that has the potential to damage the reputation of corporations and causes irrecoverable or irreparable damages. To gain a competitive advantage, a company would need to establish an online presence, monitor shared content regarding the company, and find answers and solutions to customers' questions and problems. It becomes necessary for companies to be aware of the importance of their reputation both in the virtual world and in the real world and perceive any comments, complaints and suggestions from customers as being of value and endeavor to create and develop a robust reputation. This paper will explain the definition and importance of corporate reputation, reputation management, online reputation management concepts and the factors affecting reputation, such as consumer relations management and complaint management in the virtual world. To that end, the Online Reputation Components relationships has been investigated and to provide a better understanding of these relations, two e-commerce companies in the fourth quarter of 2020 are examined as case studies. This study is important since the loss of reputation in the virtual environment can be instantaneous and the dynamics causing crises in this environment, such as speed, time and space, are boundless. Within the scope of this study, it is desired to find an answer to the question of whether search engine optimization, social media activities and user-generated content, especially complaints, are effective in online reputation management or not? This analysis provide applied and theoretical insights for scholars and sector professionals regarding their online reputation process. This study's limitations are concerned with the consumer-generated media (CGM) component. In this study, to embody the consumer-generated media (CGM) component, the Sikayetvar company's musterideneyimendeksi.com website is employed and the complaints of the corporate members of that company are examined. In the fourth quarter of 2020, only www.Trendyol.com and www.morhipo.com were the corporate members of Sikayetvar Company in the e-commerce sector, which was preferred to employ in this study. Therefore, it was impossible to select more than these two websites as case studies at the set time. Furthermore, it was desired to examine the chosen websites within an extended time, such as one year or six months. However, it was impossible as musterideneyimiindex.com provides only the data for a specific quarter of the year, e.g., the second, third, or fourth quarter of a year.

2. An Overview of Reputation and Corporate Reputation

Various definitions of reputation and corporate reputation have been proposed by several different academic and professional sources. According to Larkin (2003:1), reputation may be viewed as a "reflection of how well or how badly different groups of a stakeholder view a commercial name." Reputation "gauges a firm's relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders" (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997). "It is the most important asset of a company, an important factor in creating and increasing brand value. It is unobtainable, priceless,

intangible, and invisible" (Kadıbeşegil, 2006: 55, 61). "A corporate reputation embodies the general estimation in which a company is held by employees, customers, suppliers, distributors, competitors, and the public. The key point, of course, is that reputation consists of perceptions – how others see you" (Fombrun, 1996: 127). "Corporate reputation indicates a value judgment about the company's attributes. Corporate reputations, typically, evolve as a result of consistent performance, reinforced by effective communication" (Gray & Balmer, 1998: 69). As it is clear from the definitions, reputation reveals internal and external stakeholders' perceptions and emotional reactions toward a corporation. Even though there is no single definition of reputation, there is consensus that reputation is a company's greatest asset, and perceptions of customers and stakeholders are essential in obtaining a robust reputation. A robust reputation is acquired because of the consistent behavior of companies in their relationships with various stakeholders. Inconsistent behavior and loss of trust negatively affect reputation. Therefore, corporations should pay specific attention to their reputations for sustainable profitability. Repairing a damaged reputation is time-consuming, complicated, and for the most part, impossible.

2.1. Reputation Management and Public Relations

Reputation management is one of the essential facets of public relations. "Today, the practice of public relations focuses heavily on reputation management, maintaining an organization's reputation, and attempting to restore reputations, in an ethical and socially responsible manner" (Hagan, 2011). Corporate communication activities performed for public relations have a pivotal role in building corporate reputation. Changing the public's negative perceptions about an organization to positive, organizing social responsibility activities, which benefit society, identifying and managing crises, creating and developing a positive corporate image are corporate public relations departments' main objectives. Such objectives play a significant role in the building and development of corporate reputation. "Public relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say, and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline, which looks after reputation, to earn understanding and support and influence opinion and behavior" (Theaker, 2012: 6). In this context, it can be stated that one of the significant objectives of corporate public relations activities is to create, maintain, manage and protect an excellent reputation for a corporation. Corporations need to establish good relations with their stakeholders to gain a robust reputation. Corporate reputation is a valuable asset that comprises informing any partners about the corporation. Simultaneously, it consists of the thoughts, experiences, perceptions and demands of the corporate partners. Therefore, in reputable corporations, the corporation satisfies stakeholders and stakeholders' expectations being met by the corporation. The two-way symmetrical model of public relations explains this mutual situation best. The two-way symmetric model reveals a public relations model that uses communication to manage conflicts between the organization and its strategic public in addition to improving the understanding between them (Grunig, 2001). Strong reputation management can lead to mutual understanding, interaction, and thus a robust reputation if it benefits from the two-way symmetric model of public relations management. Mutual communication enables a corporation to convey information and messages to partners, receive feedback from stakeholders, and transfer any acquired information through this feedback to all

business processes. The contribution and sustainability of reputation achieved in this manner will be high.

2.2. Corporate Reputation and Consumer Relations Management

In fierce competition and dynamic market environments, customer satisfaction focuses on public relations and marketing activities. Customer satisfaction may be inspired by a corporate image, product and service quality, consumer perception, and any value given to customers and responses to customer complaints and demands. Customer satisfaction is closely related to customer expectations. "Customer satisfaction is the harmony/incompatibility between the expectations of a customer and the service performance they receive" (Akçay & Okay, 2009). To achieve a robust reputation, corporations must be well acquainted with their consumers, reach them in real and virtual environments, and consider their requests, thoughts and complaints. As satisfaction regarding the corporation increases, customers spread more appropriate content and comments. As any feedback apply offline through the power of word of mouth, the online viral distribution also affects a company's reputation and promotions positively. Wreden (2005: 24) believes that "customers who walk represent a threat. While satisfied customers tell 4-5 others about pleasant experiences, unhappy customers tell 8 -13 others. That number rises if they air their dissatisfaction on the Internet. Those they tell are twice as likely to believe 'negative' information as they are positive news. Most worrying of all: they will continue to discuss their dissatisfaction for up to 23 years." Long-term customer relationships are essential competitive tools for corporations. Therefore, customer relationship management (CRM) has become a valuable asset for large and small businesses. "Customer relationship management (CRM) is a broadly recognized, widely-implemented strategy for managing and nurturing a company's interactions with customers, clients, and sales prospects" (Zamil, 2011). The ultimate objective of corporations embracing CRM is dealing with unhappy customers, ensuring customer satisfaction, gaining more success, profit, customer loyalty, in addition to a robust reputation. The online environment has the potential for rapid transmission, so to gain a competitive advantage in market conditions; corporations must consider customer relationship management in the online environment as well as offline.

2.3. Corporate Reputation and Complaint Management

Customer complaints are one of the primary means of communication with customers. Customer complaints indicate insufficient customer satisfaction. Although it is not desirable to receive unfair customer feedback, complaints should be considered as gifts when forwarded directly to corporations (Barlow & Moller, 2009: 2,9). "Customer Complaint is important information reflecting customers' sound and is a primary measure of customer dissatisfaction. Effective and Efficient response to these complaints is an essential index of an organization's performance" (Afify, Hegazy & El Sayed, 2011). Complaints are expensive, both as direct and indirect costs. Nevertheless, for this price, companies can gain invaluable knowledge, as complaints are essentially the direct voice of the customer (Bosch & Enríquez, 2005). "Customers who make complaints provide the company with additional chances to identify internal deficiencies and to develop an appropriate recovery strategy" (Filip, 2013). Although several corporations consider customer complaints management as wasting time and money, the principal ways to retain existing customers, gain new customers, and increase customer loyalty and trust are to take customer complaints seriously,

analyze complaints carefully, and avoid the repetition of mistakes. Complaints represent opportunities and cooperation for corporations; unfair feedback can lead to crises for corporations, harm to image and reputation, and mistrust of a corporation. An unsatisfied customer is potentially an enormous threat to any business's reputation, especially in the online environment. Corporations can build a robust reputation by identifying and eliminating barriers to customer complaints and responding directly to dissatisfied customers' complaints. Claims written on virtual platforms are far more threatening than those presented in the real environment due to their viral dissemination potential. However, complaints resolved on digital platforms can create a sense of trust in potential customers. E-complaints are the main factors that may negatively affect the reputation and success of companies. To avoid any possible threat of e-complaints on digital platforms, such as on consumer complaints websites, company executives should immediately be aware of all written and spoken e-complaints, suggestions, and customers' thoughts. They need to build an online reputation by quickly responding to customers' comments and demands and consider customer satisfaction.

3. Online Reputation and Online Reputation Management

Tremendous technological advances have changed the way corporations communicate with their clients and each other. "By creating newly accessible channels of communication and organization, the Internet has shifted the balance of power of 'voice.' The result is that corporate reputations are increasingly defined not by what companies do or say, but by how others perceive and respond to their actions and words" (Bunting & Lipski, 2000). "An online reputation is the publicly kept social evaluation of an entity based on the entities previous behavior, what was posted by the entity, and what third parties share about the entity on the Internet." (Portamann et al., 2015). Customers share their thoughts and complaints about the products and services they use with each other and company executives. However, this sharing, which occurs between a few individuals in the offline environment, happens very quickly between one person and thousands, and even millions, of online people on social networks. Moreover, these shared experiences, complaints and comments are searchable on web search engines and eliminating them is very difficult and sometimes impossible. These online experiences may affect the decisions of other active or potential customers. According to Ivester (2011: 39), all online content created by an institution and its partners constitutes the institution's online reputation, the management of which aims to close the gap between where a company positions itself and how people perceive the company. "Online reputation is a strategic element of firms' competitiveness" (Díaz et al., 2018).

Company-related searches on search engines and social networks can reveal significant clues about a company's product and service quality, customer relations as well as corporate reputation. This research shows how institutions and people perceive corporations and brand names on virtual platforms. Online reputation management is the management of these perceptions. Online reputation management (ORM) consists of monitoring digital media, detecting relevant content, analyzing what people say about an entity and, if necessary, interact with customers. "Online reputation management - the monitoring of media and the detection and analysis of opinions about an entity is becoming an active area of research, and such systems have become a necessity for small companies, mid-size businesses, large corporations and

organizations alike" (Kempe et al., 2003). The online reputation management process's main principles are recognizing the target audience in the online platforms, intervening and responding to questions, problems and misleading information, interacting with existing and potential audiences, and leaving positive effects on them. "It is the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking, and listening as the organization engages in a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various online stakeholders." (Jones et al., 2009: 934). Sasko (2015) identifies online reputation management with search engines' reputation management. According to him, "Reputation management in the internet environment is often referred to as Search Engine Reputation Management (SERM) and includes several major activities such as (Sasko, 2015):

- *"Online monitoring of internet users,*
- *Communication with the public and clients*
- *Evaluation of results*
- *Crisis reputation management"*.

Social Media platforms help corporations reach out to their customers and manage their online reputations. "With the growing popularity of social media, the meaning of reputation management has shifted to online portals such as blogs, forums, opinion sites, and social networks. "Reputation management experts manually mine the social media repositories (in particular Twitter) for monitoring the reputation of a particular entity" (Qureshi et al., 2018). In addition to new media strategies determined by corporations, online audiences' positive and negative content regarding corporations significantly affects corporations' reputation. "The standard practice of determining the reputation of a seller is the aggregation of the feedbacks or the ratings reported by its buyers" (Tankur, 2019). In the online environment, the positive results concerning corporations affect customers' thoughts positively. Any negative, incomplete, indifferent, or dull content negatively affects reputation and decisions by creating a negative mindset about a subject. Even the absence of any content related to an organization on the Internet can affect its reputation negatively. Based on all these definitions and evaluations in this paper, the main factors for creating, developing and maintaining robust online reputation are explained.

4. Methodology

This study is a descriptive study and focuses on literature review, secondary sources and previous studies in the related literature. Descriptive research obtains a description of the subject or activities of interest. It is a very suitable type of research to gain an overview of the research topic. "It is a study of status and is widely used in education, nutrition, epidemiology, and the behavioral sciences. Its value is based on the premise that problems can be solved and practices improved through observation, analysis, and description" (Koh and Owen, 2000). "The aim of a descriptive research study is exploration: `to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve insights" (Kramer, 1985). Based on the described descriptive research definitions, literature on online reputation and online reputation management and the necessary elements to achieve a rebuts online reputation has been examined in detail (Portamann et al., 2015, to Ivester, 2011, Kempe et al., 2003, Sasko 2015, Jones et al., 2009, Qureshi et al., 2018, Tankur, 2019, Díaz et al., 2018).

In line with this literature review, to show the relations between the reputation components, two e-commerce websites are analyzed by the case study method. A case

study is best defined as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units (Gerrin, 2004). A case study consists of a detailed investigation of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study (Meyer, 2001). In this direction, www.trendyol.com and www.morhipo.com websites are examined as the cases to discuss the relations between online reputation components.

4.1. Online Reputation Components

Creating a robust reputation begins by observing when, how and why conversations about the company occur. These observations inform corporation executives whether consumers are satisfied with their products and services. User feedback and comments are of significant value for companies, even if some comments and feedback are unfair and malicious. The development of reputation and respectability in audiences presents success for corporations. To achieve a robust reputation in a digital environment, three factors are indispensable. These factors comprise search engine optimization (SEO) initiatives, social media activities and consumers-generated media (CGM) (Figure 1). Based on this figure, companies that consider SEO activities, use social media to interact with their audiences and pay attention to audience comments, thoughts, and complaints would be more successful in developing and maintaining their online reputation. Each of these components is necessary for an effective online reputation. These components are interrelated. User-generated content may be written on complaint websites, review websites, blogs, or social media platforms. As the audiences share corporation social media content, the traffic for that account improves and search ranking in search engines increases. The reviews and complaints written in review or complaint websites will also be displayed on the first pages of search

engines if they do SEO. The functions and the role of each component are given in this paper.

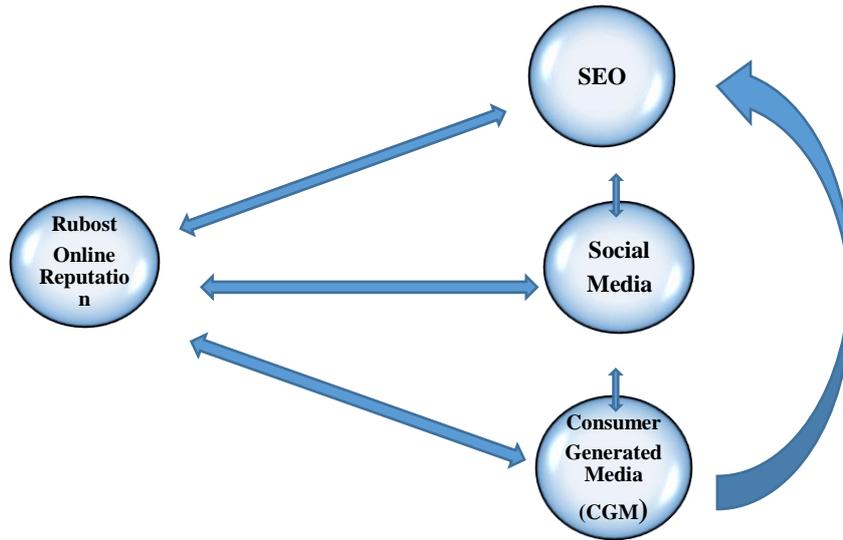


Figure 1. Online Reputation Components

4.2. Online Reputation Component: Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

A company's website is the online identity of that company. This identity is a principle resource that contains information about the company and its products and services. In the technology era, search engine websites are the leading source of information about individuals and companies. According to BrightLocal (2020) research, "97% of consumers search online for local businesses. 12% of consumers do so on a daily basis". Search engines enable users to find the information that is closest to what they are seeking. "Search engines aim to ensure that Internet users can access the content they seek between millions of web pages in the easiest and fastest way" (Aydemir, 2011:1). Of the well-known search engines (e.g., Google, Yahoo!, Bing and Yandex), the most developed and preferred search engine is Google. "Google now processes over 40,000 search queries every second on average, which translates to over 3.5 billion searches per day and 1.2 trillion searches per year worldwide" (Google Search Statistics, 2020). Internet users researching on the web usually examine websites found on the first pages of search engines. "75% of Internet users never scroll past the first page of search results" (Lieberman, 2020). As content is shared online, it becomes more visible in search engines. Negative messages spread rapidly and widely on social media (Tsugawa & Ohsaki, 2015). Since this content attracts more attention, it is clicked on more than the Internet's other content and is ranked higher on search engines. Therefore, search engines are considered some of the foremost factors affecting reputation in the online environment. It is suggested that companies attempt search engine optimization to make their products, services and activities more visible and avoid the information crowd in research on a particular company or companies. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) enables information about corporations or people to be listed in the top ranks on search engines and reach more relevant audiences. Such information would include personal and corporate websites, weblogs, pictures, videos, comments and complaints. "SEO is a long-term and least-cost promotional and marketing tool. It makes a great contribution to the visibility and traffic of the website" (Aydemir, 2011: 5). It increases awareness about a company's website(s) and provides visibility for company information in the online environment. "SEO is the art of reaching web popularity that websites cannot reach naturally by using natural-looking methods" (Gülten, 2014: 2). When searching companies that ignore the power of the online environment and do not try SEO, it is possible to encounter true or false information in the top ranks of the search results published by consumers or competitors instead of company officials. Negative news propagating in this manner may affect millions of users researching a company and its corporate reputation.

4.3 Online Reputation Component: Social Media

Nowadays, large and small companies use social media to promote their products and services, obtain any feedback, suggestions, and thoughts, and ensure customer satisfaction. Simultaneously, leaders, politicians and election candidates use social media to announce their ideas, activities and campaigns in addition to obtaining financial support and followers. Social media provides direct speaking and communication opportunities with audiences and always informs followers about corporations' products and services. This new media offers people opportunities to broadcast their thoughts, knowledge and experiences in a global environment. In

many cases, their voices are as influential as very famous and well-known journalists and experts (Solis & Breakenridge, 2008: 17). According to Stratten (2012: 45), "social media is a conversation between two or more people. Social media is not a website. Social media is not Twitter or Facebook. Social media is the ability to speak with other people over the Internet; they can be your market, your customer, your colleagues". Solis (2010: 37) defines social media as any tool or service that uses the Internet to facilitate conversation. Social media offers limitless opportunities for large and small corporations. However, social media can create significant dangers for businesses that cannot satisfy their customers and cause crises. Companies engage with their audiences through social media and immediately inform them about their products, services, and innovations. Some innovations and features which emerged with social media have brought new possibilities. "Companies now are able to follow their stakeholders through this environment and learn their wishes, complaints, satisfaction and strategies. Therefore, the effective use of social media is important in terms of reputation" (Aydın, 2015). Interacting with a target audience via social media platforms and answering their questions, complaints, and suggestions shows that audiences are of high value to the company and increase the company's importance and reputation among audiences. Safko and Brake (2009: 681) explain three rules to be considered regarding social media and reputation:

- "1- Social media enables companies to interact and have conversations with their audiences.*
- 2- On social media platforms, companies cannot control conversations about themselves. Only by observing these conversations can they intervene in these conversations when necessary.*
- 3- Consumer and user comments affect the economic conditions of companies."*

"It is considered that it will be possible to gain corporate reputation in a short time through social media, as it is easy to access social media and the content is permanent in this environment. Also, the corporate reputation that has been created over many years will be lost in a short time due to the shares made on social media" (San, 2020). Before the crisis, the impending crisis would be understood from content shared about it. With the rise of social media, companies have no advance notice or time to reflect on the range of people on social media. When traditional customer attacks were brewing, companies had at least a warning and a modicum of control over how events will unfold. However, nowadays, when a customer launches an attack on Social Media, companies have no control, and reputation damage can be the result (Dolle, 2014). Therefore, it can be claimed that social media increased reputational risk and risk dynamics. On social media platforms, users sometimes create unapproved information – both false and accurate information – about organizations. These thoughts put forward by users sometimes do not correspond to the ideas and goals that an organization would wish to share in its name. These issues lead to many problems regarding the reputation of companies.

4.4. Online Reputation Component: Consumer Generated Media (CGM)

With the widespread use of new media platforms, corporations are not the only creators of company reputation. Consumers' experiences, comments and complaints shared online also play a significant role in creating a company's reputation. Before the emergence of the Internet, dissatisfied customers reported their anger to their relatives and friends after a few bad customer service experiences. Today, however, consumers share their reviews, ratings and negative customer service experiences with

millions of consumers globally through photo and video sharing sites, personal blogs, reviews and evaluation websites. Currently, the reputation issue is strongly linked to an increasing concern about the use and impact of online comments and reviews all over the web. Numerous consumers seek and accept these online recommendations (Stenger, 2014). The virtual world offers consumers unique platforms to share their experiences and ideas online in text, photos and videos. Complaint websites such as www.sikayetvar.com and product review websites such as www.yelp.com encourage consumers to share their product and service experiences and product reviews with other consumers worldwide. "Online product reviews affect the buying behavior of customers, as well as the volume of sales, positively or negatively. Similarly, user feedback on sites such as eBay and Amazon affect the reputation of online merchants and, in turn, their ability to sell their products and services" (Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2009). "The number of customer reviews is useful for identifying reputation" (Naem & Okafor, 2019). One of the essential concepts revealed by Web 2.0 technology is the content generated by Internet users. User-Generated Content (UGC) is digital content such as videos, blogs, podcasts and photos created and shared by non-professional online users. User-generated content is online content created by consumers to support or oppose a company's products and services. "This concept, which is one of the unique characteristics of social media, gained popularity in 2005 and has been carried out in various studies; it is used to define the content of public media produced by the end-user. These contents should be creative, public, and amateur" (Kara, 2013: 58).

User-generated content can reach a broad target audience within a short period, which is sufficient to damage corporations' image and reputation. User-generated content includes articles, videos and photos that contain complaints, satisfaction, discussion, questions, suggestions and information about corporations. The content created by Internet users often informs and entertains other users and acts as media. Pete Blackshaw (2008), the CGM concept pioneer, used the term "media created by consumers" to describe the online content that online consumers create and share among themselves. "It is the endless stream of comments, opinions, emotions, and personal stories about any and every company, product, service, or brand which consumers can now post online and broadcast to millions of other consumers with the click of the mouse. It is a never-ending consumer-to-consumer conversation – across blogs, wikis, message boards, video sharing sites, social networking pages, and more about the issues, topics, and experiences that matter to consumers themselves" (Blackshaw, 2008:3).

One-to-many practices, such as blog entries, consumer email feedback, message boards, forum comments, personal websites, personal emails, moblogs (mobile access blogs), photo sharing, tagging, vlogs (video-based magazines) and podcasts, are examples of consumer-generated media. Consumer-generated media (CGM) describes a new form of mouth-to-mouth behavior spreading on the Internet. "In contrast to paid media generated by marketers and advertisers, CGM is produced by consumers to be shared amongst themselves" (Gretzel et al., 2008). It is the currency of a new commercial relationship between corporations and consumers. "Consumer-Generated Media (CGM) describes a variety of new and emerging sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues" (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006). Shao (2009) explains that different individuals create

content for various purposes by associating their content with the theory of use and gratification. According to Shao, some individuals produce content to gather information and have fun, some to interact with others, and some others to express themselves.

With the significant increase in advertising and promotion campaigns, "consumers trust more on recommendations from people they know and consumer opinions posted online than on advertising messages" (Nilson, 2015). In this context, product and service complaints websites' and review websites' importance in the web environment emerges for both companies and consumers. Consumer opinions, thoughts and complaints provide valuable feedback for the development of corporations. These opinions have become a powerful marketing tool in today's conditions and have changed how other users think and make decisions. Complaints, negative comments and judgments affect purchasing decisions, solid reliability, image and reputation.

4.5. Turkey Online Complaint Platforms sample: www.sikayetvar.com

In Turkey, after the 1980s, the advent of the Internet and the establishment of consumer complaints platforms inspired audiences to forward their complaints directly to corporations and their potential customers. The feedback ensuing from these platforms is perceived as a warning system by a number of corporations. In contrast, for those not having understood these platforms' seriousness, there would be possible customer loss (Seyran, 2009: 80). Similar to complain platforms abroad having appeared, such as www.pissedconsumer.com, www.complaintsboard.com, www.consumeraffairs.com, www.complaints.com, some complaint websites appeared in Turkey, including www.sikayetvar.com, www.sikayetbank.com and www.sikayetim.com. Complaints published on these platforms reached company executives and millions of Internet users and informed active and potential customers about any deficiencies in companies' products or services. The well-known online complaint platform in Turkey, www.sikayetvar.com, was examined in this study to prove the effectiveness of online complaints on the corporate reputation management process. As the Şikayetvar company won the Golden Spider Web Awards in 2017, has a large number of users and has a detailed analysis index, musterideneyimendeksi.com, this website has been chosen to examine in this study. www.Şikayetvar.com was founded in 2001. There are complaints about 1,500 leading brands in various sectors on this platform, including banking, GSM, media, e-commerce, etc. The site has 1,800 corporate member brands, over 105,000 registered brands, a total of 4.6 million individual members, 15 million visitors, and 80 page views monthly (Sikayetvar, 2020). To point out the difference between the corporations resolving consumer complaints with those who ignore consumer feedback and encourage corporations to consider complaints, satisfied customers' appreciation messages are posted on the Sikayetvar website every day. The Sikayetvar platform analysis index musterideneyimendeksi.com provides real and perceptual data on the number of complaints, response rates, time of complaint and competitor analyses. Within this framework, to probe complaints, the complaint management overall success score, complaint rates, satisfaction Level and appreciation rate of two

e-commerce websites that were active members of Sikayetvar company in the fourth quarter of 2020 were analyzed.

5. Examination of Selected E-Commerce Websites

To embody the Online Reputation Components relations, Turkey's two well-known e-commerce websites are examined by the case study method. To represent this relationship, search engine optimization activities, social media activities and consumer-generated media components of the selected websites were observed. To determine the user-generated media component, Sikayetvar company's analysis index, *musterideneyimendeksi.com* website, was used in this study. This website presents a detailed analysis of the selected e-commerce websites' complaints and offers customer satisfaction information. It provides the success score of the e-commerce websites in the complaint management process, complaint rates, complaint response rates, and complaint satisfaction. *www.trendyol.com* and *www.morhipo.com* are the Turkish e-commerce websites selected as case studies in this article. These websites were corporate members of the Sikayetvar complaints Management Company on the dates specified. Search engine optimization, social media activities and complaint management processes for these websites were examined in the fourth quarter (October, November and December) of 2020.

5.1. Review on Search Engine Optimization of Selected E-Commerce Websites

Search engine optimization is regarded as one of the online reputation components that create, improve and provide visibility to a company. To examine the visibility of selected websites on search engines and to recognize their search engine optimization activities, keywords such as "online shopping," "e-commerce websites," "online stores," and "Online clothes shopping websites" in the search boxes of Google, Bing and Yandex search engines were explored. The results related to e-commerce websites' existence in the first three pages of the search engines are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Search Engine Optimization for selected e-commerce websites

	Google Page	Yandex Page	Bing Page
<i>www.trendyol.com</i>	1	1	1
<i>www.morhipo.com</i>	1	1	1

According to Table 1, the www.trendyol.com and www.morhipo.com websites appeared on the Google, Yandex and Bing search engines' first page. The selected websites' appearance on the search engines' first pages demonstrates that these websites are aware of the importance of search engine optimization activities. Research regarding SEO activities of the case study websites was conducted on 30 December 2020.

5.2. Review of Social Media Activities of Selected E-Commerce Websites

To review selected websites' social media activities, the chosen websites' Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube accounts were examined. Some of the gathered information included the extent to which these platforms share content daily, the number of people viewing the content, the number of people liking the content and the content type. The tables below consist of the numbers displayed on the selected websites' social media platforms in the fourth quarter of 2020.

5.3. Social Media Activities of the Trendyol and Morhipo Websites

Examining the morhipo.com and trendyol.com websites' social media platforms, it was observed that these e-commerce companies are active on the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube platforms. While the Trendyol company utilized Instagram more and shared at least two or three pieces of content throughout the day, the Morhipo company was more active on Facebook and Twitter, sharing two or three content items daily. Customer questions and comments were answered without delay through these platforms in the specified time. On both selected websites' Instagram account¹, the most shared content format were photos; however, video sharing in the Trendyol account was nearly equal to photos sharing. The photos shared from both accounts were mainly aimed at drawing attention to the products, product purchase and motivate followers. The video contents in Trendyol were concerned with enjoyable conversations with celebrities, training workshops on sport and beauty, combination suggestions and advertising films of the company. However, Morhipo only shared videos regarding the company's advertisement and promotional films. The shared videos were in the format of Instagram 59-second videos, IGTV videos, or live broadcasts. Based on tables 2,3 and 4, it has been determined that these websites actively used social media platforms to interact with their current and potential

¹ Only the Content types of the Instagram platform were examined in this study. Because there was not content variety on Facebook and Twitter accounts and the shared content was photos with a caption.

customers and most of the time, used photos to interact with their audiences in October, November and December 2020.

Table 2. Social Media Activities of www.trendyol.com (Follower, Shared Content, Views)

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube
Likes, Followers, Following	2,620,153	3,894,080	190,148	176,000
Shared Content, Views	36	337	14	28

Table 3. Social Media Activities of www.trendyol.com (Content Type)

Content Type	Frequency	Percent
Photo	154	45%
Video	183	55%
Total	337	100%

Table 4. Social Media Activities of www.morhipo.com (Follower, Shared Content, Views)

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube
Likes, Followers, Following	1,075,617	755,470	98,773	3,82000
Shared Content, Views	370	134	348	12

Table 5. Social Media Activities of www.morhipo.com (Content Type)

Content Type	Frequency	Percent
Photo	125	93%
Video	9	7%
Total	134	100,0%

5.4. Review on Consumers Generated Media of Selected E-Commerce Websites

In this paper, the complaints, suggestions, and comments shared by consumers in the form of text, photos, and videos were defined as one of the essential factors that positively or negatively affect companies' and individuals' reputations. This content created by consumers and stakeholders reaches thousands and even millions of people quickly. In this part of the study, the data regarding the complaints management success ranking, complaint rates, complaint satisfaction and appreciation rates regarding the selected websites are presented by the Sikayetvar company's customer experience analysis index www.musterideneyimendeksi.com. This website enables

companies to obtain up-to-date data on their respective brand's complaints rate and satisfaction with responses to complaints. It allows brands to analyze competitors' complaints data, compare their particular brand's complaints management success in comparison with their competitors, and use these data to develop strategies for future customers. This customer satisfaction index paves the way for focusing on the correct points and determining brands' approaches. The home page of the www.musterideneyimendeksi.com² website consists of the Customer Experience Score, Satisfaction Level Index, Thanks Rate Index and Complaint Rate Index segments. This part of the study includes examining e-complaints about the www.Trendyol.com and www.trenyol.com and www.morhipo.com websites in October, November, and December of 2020.

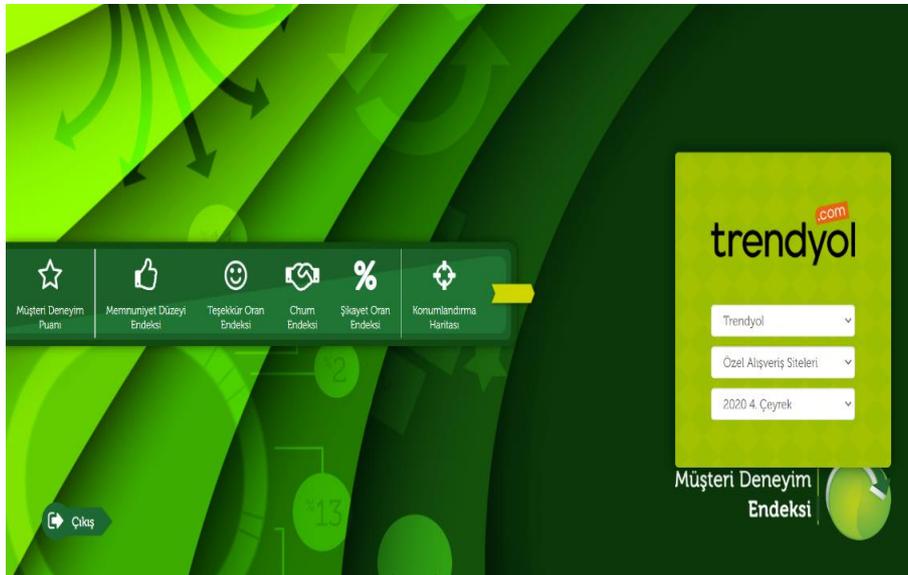


Figure 2. Home page of the customer experience index, (<https://www.musterideneyimendeksi.com>, Access Date: 01.07.2021)

5.5. Complaint Management Overall Success Score Ranking

The first section in the Sikayetvar company's customer experience index, www.musterimemnniyeti.com, is the customer experience score page. This page consists of the "complaint management overall success score ranking" of the selected websites. The success ranking section lists the companies that are successful in the complaint management process. According to the success score ranking of the chosen online shopping websites, the Morhip success score was 52.6 and the Trendyol success score was 38.9 in the fourth quarter of 2020.

² The language of the www.musterideneyimendeksi.com website is Turkish and there are no English language options for this page. Therefore the writings in figures are in the Turkish language.

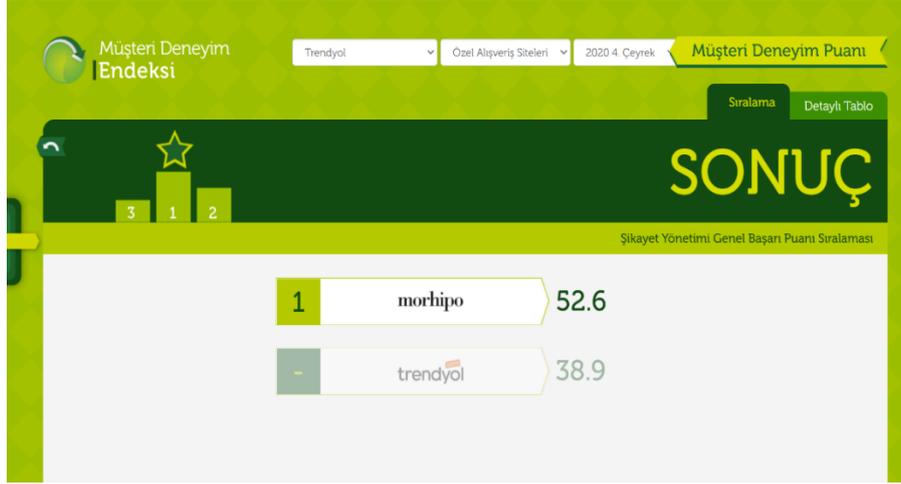


Figure 3. Complaint management overall success score of selected e-commerce websites (musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/total, Access Date: 25.01.2021).

5.6. Satisfaction Level Index

The complaint satisfaction score is obtained from the sum of points given to the complaint satisfaction process, solution satisfaction and complainant loyalty. In this study, the complaint satisfaction score for mrhipo was 77.7 and for the Trendyol website, it was 58.1. These scores are lower than the average sector score, which was 67.9.

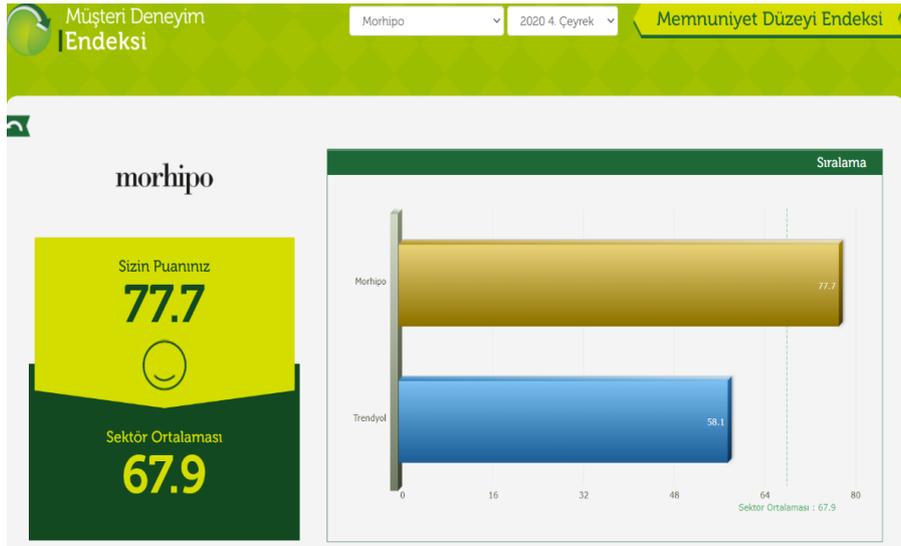


Figure 4. Satisfaction level score for www.morhipo.com, (musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/solution, Access Date: 25.01.2021).

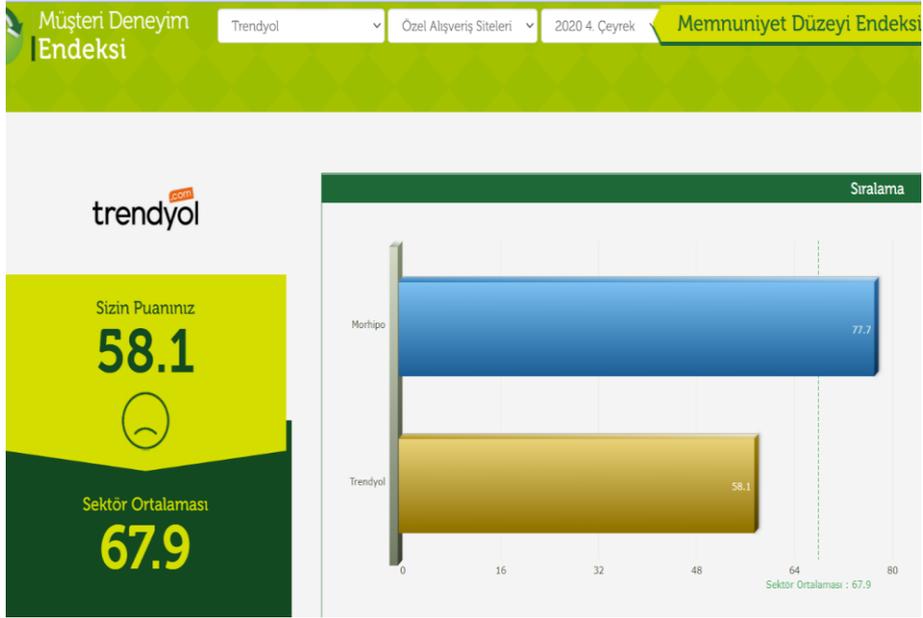


Figure 5. Satisfaction level score for www.trendyol.com, (musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/solution, Access Date: 25.01.2021).

5.7. Complaint Rates of Selected E-commerce Websites

The complaint rate explains a corporations' complaints share relative to the total number of complaints in the same sector. The complaint rates for www.morhipo.com and www.trendyol.com are 64.7 and 75.4, respectively, as presented in Figures 6 and 7.

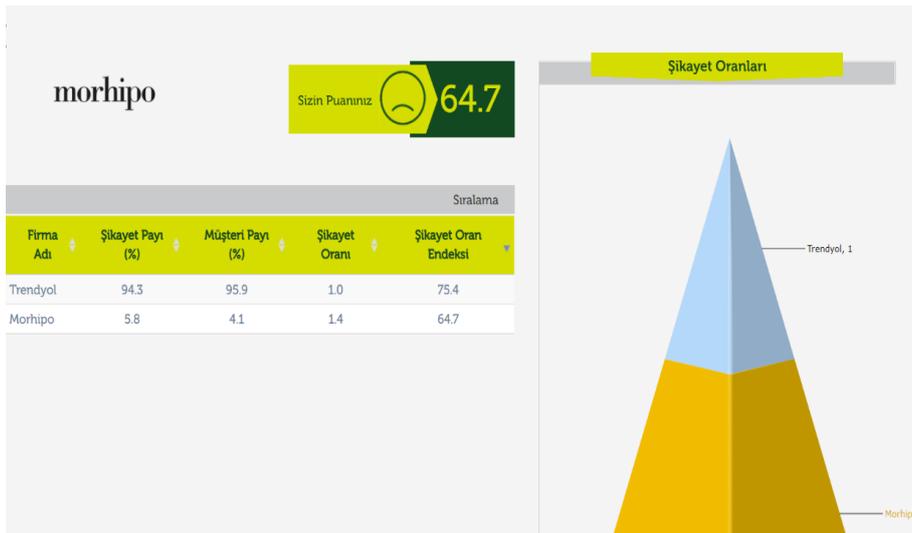


Figure 6. Complaint rates for the Morhipo e-commerce websites (https://www.musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/complaint, Access Date: 25.01.2021)

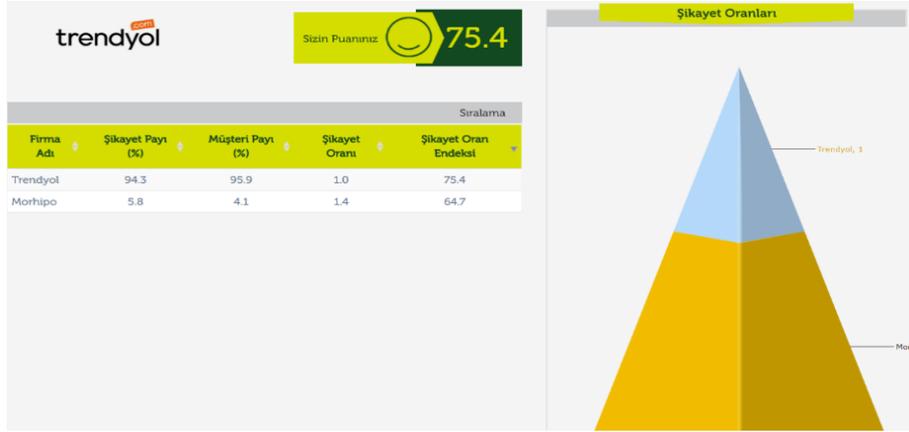


Figure 7. Complaint rates for the Trendyol e-commerce websites
(<https://www.musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/complaint>, Access Date: 25.01.2021)

5.8. Appreciation Rate Index for Selected E-commerce Websites

The appreciation rate explains a corporations' share relative to the total number of acknowledgment messages. As presented in Figures 8 and 9, the appreciation rate for www.morhipo.com is 22.1 and for www.trendyol.com is 6.0, while the appreciation messages average for the e-commerce sector is 14.1.

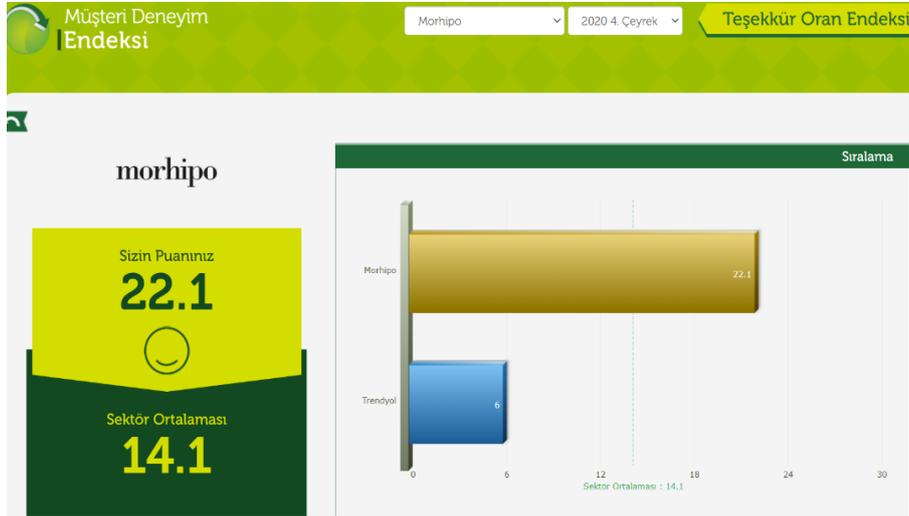


Figure 8. Appreciation rate index for Morhipo e-commerce websites
(<https://www.musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/thank>, Access Date: 25.01.2021)

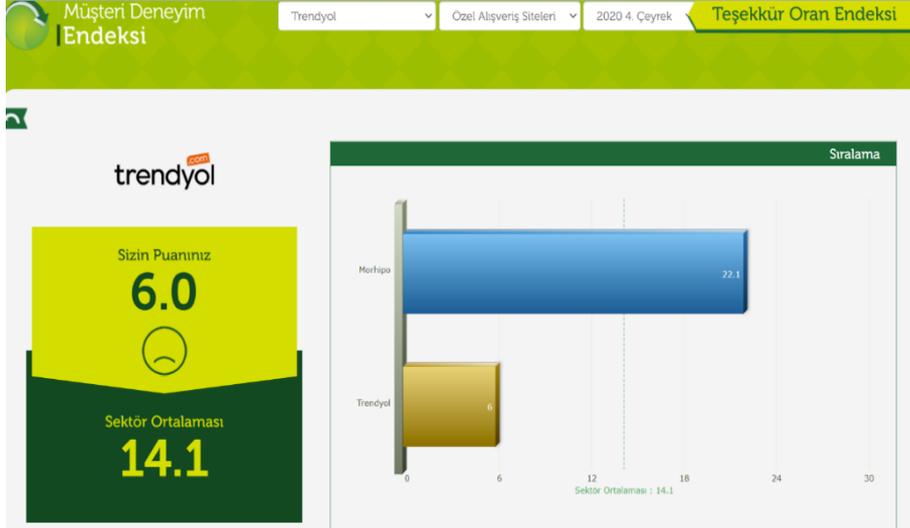


Figure 9. Appreciation rate index for Trendyol e-commerce websites
(<https://www.musterideneyimendeksi.com/score/thank>, Access Date: 25.01.2021)

5.9. Findings on Online Reputation Components of Selected E-Commerce Websites

In this study's scope, the search engine optimization activities, social media activities and complaint management processes of Turkey's two e-commerce websites were examined. As a result of these reviews, it was observed that these websites were aware of the importance of search engine optimization activities as these websites were accessible on the first page of acknowledged search engines such as Google, Bing and Yandex. It was ascertained that the Morhipo and Trendyol websites adopted social media platforms as a means of promotion and interaction, they have utilized social media as a useful tool to communicate with current and potential customers and respond to their questions. They have shared at least two or three content every day on their social media accounts and have employed photos more than other kinds of content to interact with their followers. Within the specified timeframe, the case study websites' scores in complaint management, complaint rates, appreciation rates, and satisfaction levels, by Sikayetvar Company's customer experience index, www.musterideneyimendeksi.com, were observed. Selected websites prefer to benefit from one of Turkey's notable complaint management platforms, www.sikayetvar.com, to monitor their customers' complaints and dissatisfaction and take control of unfair or negative comments. Therefore, they are aware of the importance of the complaints, negative thoughts and appreciation about themselves in the online world.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

The adaptation of corporations to new technologies, internalization of these technologies, and their placement in corporations' culture and policies are presented as the sine qua non for successful public relations practices and customer satisfaction. Reputation management is one of the principal functions in the public relations discipline. Reputation is the most valuable asset of a company and reveals internal and external stakeholders' perceptions and emotional reactions toward a corporation.

Customer satisfaction, customer relationship management, and complaint management are essential factors affecting corporate reputation. Reputation management is the strategic management of the communication process. Since time and space in the online world are boundless, online reputation management becomes more critical in the online world. To minimize the risk of reputation damage in the online environment, corporations should manage their relationships with their customers in the virtual world as well as the real world, consider the feedback and thoughts of customers and consumers, interact directly with them, and eliminate any dissatisfaction immediately. The effect, accessibility, and level of trust in the content created by Internet users necessitate the monitoring, control, and orientation of this content and, therefore, to build a robust reputation for corporations. To build a robust online reputation, develop, and maintain this reputation, it is recommended for corporations to be visible in Internet networks, take advantage of new technologies and online social platforms, be aware of all online complaints, comments and thoughts about their product and services and consider customer satisfaction. Some studies and statistics in the literature about online reputation management support the relations between online reputation components proposed in this study. According to Vartiak (2015), "the online reputation of every organization can be managed. Online reputation management (ORM) combines marketing, public relations and search engines. ORM enables organizations to protect and manage their online reputation by becoming actively involved in the outcome of search engines results. The goals of ORM are high rankings in the search engines and appearance on all positively associated websites".

Bilibir & Güler (2017) listed the factors affecting reputation in the digital environment as SEO and Communication Channels in the Internet Environment. They determined search Engine Optimization (SEO) as the technique to increase the company's visibility in search engines at a low cost and provide the opportunity to collect data about visitors. Wijngaard and Boermans (2015), point out that not every organization has an online reputation, but it can have one. They defined ORM as any content that a consumer can write about the organization. Another research conducted by BirghtLocal (2017) shows that "83% of the people thought the business with the user-generated review on the landing page was trustworthy. 74% of people who saw reviews on a landing page said they would contact the business." In a survey conducted by Dijkemans et al. (2015) among 3531 customers and non-customers of an international airline, consumers' engagement in the airline's social media activities and perception of corporate reputation have been measured. Results indicated that consumers' intensity of social media use is positively related to their engagement in the airline's social media activities, especially among customers. Engagement in social media activities, in turn, was positively associated with corporate reputation, especially among non-customers.

In this study's scope, to achieve a robust reputation in the virtual world, the online reputation components relationship are examined. Search engine optimization, social media activities and user-generated media are identified as the main components of building a robust reputation. Turkey's two well-known e-commerce websites are selected as samples and SEO activities, social media activities, and complaint management process of these websites are examined to embody this relationship. In light of all these components, corporations that consider search engine optimization,

use social media to interact with their audiences, and provide solutions and feedback to customers' comments, thoughts, and complaints are more successful in developing, managing, and maintaining their online reputation. It is recommended to research factors affecting online reputation from the customer perspective in future studies. It can be quantitative research and would provide new knowledge in this field of study.

References

- Afify, E., Hegazy, A.E., & El-Sayed, M.A. (2011). A model for customer complaint management system using SOA. In *Proceedings of the 15th WSEAS International Conference on Computers* (pp. 291-296).
- Akçay, M. & Okay, Ş. (2009). Otomotiv yetkili servislerinde dış müşteri memnuniyetine etki eden faktörler üzerine bir alan araştırması, *Selçuk Teknik Dergisi*, 8(1), 30-47.
- Aydemir, M. (2011). *Seo: search engine optimization*. İstanbul: Kodlab.
- Aydin, A. F. (2015). Kurumsal itibar açısından sosyal medyaya ilişkin bir değerlendirme. *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5 (1), 78-92.
- Barlow, J., & Moller, C. (2009). A complaint is a gift: recovering customer loyalty when things go wrong. İstanbul: Rota.
- Blackshaw, P. (2008). Satisfied customers tell three friends, angry customers tell 3,000. New York: Doubleday.
- Bosch, G.V., & Enríquez, T.F. (2005). TQM and QFD: Exploiting a customer complaint management system. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 22(1), 30-37.
- Bright Local. (2021). Local consumer review survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey>.
- Bunting, M., & Lipski, R. (2000). Drowned out? Rethinking corporate reputation management for the internet. *Journal of Communication Management*, 5(2), 170-178.
- Dolle, R. T. (2014). Online reputation management. In *4th IBA Bachelor Thesis Conference*. Enschede, Netherlands.
- Díaz, M.R, Voltes, C.I.R & Voltes, A.C.R. (2018). Gap analysis of the online reputation. *Sustainability Journal*, 10(5),1603.
- Filip, A. (2013). Complaint management: A customer satisfaction learning process. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 271-275.
- Fombrun, Ch. J. (1996). *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Fombrun, Ch & Van Riel, C. (1997). The reputation landscapes. *Corporate Reputation Review*. 1(1), 5-13.
- Google Search Statistics, (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.internetlivestats.com/google-search-statistics>.
- Gray, R.E., & Balmer, J.M.T. (1998). Managing corporate image and corporate reputation. *Long Range Planning*, 31(5), 695-702.
- Gretzel, U., Kang, M., & Lee, W. (2008). Consumer-Generated media adoption and use: A cross-national perspective. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 17(1-2), 99-120.
- Grunig, J.E. (2001). Two-Way symmetrical public relations past, present and future, Health. R.L (Ed.). In *Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 11- 30), USA: SAGE Publications.

- Fireman K. R. (1985). An overview of descriptive research. *Journal of the Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses*, 2(2), 41-45.
- Meyer CB. (2001). A case in case study methodology. *Field Methods*. 13(4), 329-352.
- Portmann, E., Meier, A., Mauroux, P,C & Pedrycz,W. (2015). FORA – A fuzzy set based framework for online reputation management, *Fuzzy Sets and Systems*, 269, 90-114.
- Qureshi, M.A, Younus. A, O'Riordan, C· & Pasi, G. (2018). A Wikipedia-based semantic relatedness framework for effective dimensions classification in online reputation management, *Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Humanized Computing*, 9, 1403–1413.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-354.
- Ghose, A., Ipeirotis, P.(2009). The EconoMining project at NYU: Studying the economic value of user-generated content on the internet. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, 8, 241–246.
- Gülten, K. (2014). *Uzmanından SEO*, İstanbul: Dahi Yayıncılık.
- Hagan, L. M. (2011). Building the case for educating business leaders on the importance of public relations. *American Journal of Business Education (AJBE)*, 4(8), 43–48.
- Jones, B., Temperley, J., & Lima, A. (2009). Corporate reputation in the era of 2.0: The case of Primark. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25(9-10), 927-939.
- Kadıbeşegil, S. (2006). *İtibar yönetimi*. İstanbul: Media Cat.
- Bilbil, E. K., & Güler, Ş (2017). Dijital ortamda kurumsal itibar yönetimi ve viral uygulamalar ilişkisi, *Global Media Journal TR Edition*, 7(14), 379-402.
- Kempe, D., Kleinberg, J. & Tardos, E. (2003). Maximizing the spread of influence a social network. In *KDD'03: Proceedings of the Ninth ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining* (pp. 137-146).
- Koh E.T. & Owen W.L. (2000). *Introduction to nutrition and health research*. Boston: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Larkin, J. (2003). *Strategic reputation risk management*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lieberman, M. (2020). 10 Stats about inbound marketing that will make your jaw drop, Retrieved from: <https://blog.hubspot.com/insiders/inbound-marketing-stats>.
- Naem, M., & Okafor, S. (2019). User-generated content and consumer brand engagement. In *Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments* (pp. 193-220). IGI Global.
- Nielsen. (2015). Global trust in advertising. Retrieved from <https://www.nielsen.com/wpcontent/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/global-trust-in-advertising-report-sept-2015-1.pdf>.
- Sasko, J. (2014). Observe the value of your brand?. Retrieved from: <https://www.podnikajte.sk/marketing/online-reputacny-manazment>.
- Safko, L., & Brake, D. (2009). *The social media bible*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Seyran, D. (2009). *Sesimi duyan var mı?* İstanbul: Bamm.
- Shao, G. (2009). Understanding the appeal of user-generated media: A uses and gratification perspective. *Internet Research*, 9 (1), 7-11.

- Sikayetvar. (2020). Hakkımızda. Retrieved from: <https://www.sikayetvar.com/hakkimizda>.
- Solis, B. (2010). *Engage*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Solis, B., & Breakenridge, D. (2009). *Putting the public back in public relations*. New Jersey: FT Press.
- Stratten, S. (2012). *Unmarketing*. İstanbul: Media Cat.
- Subhasis Thakur, S. (2019). A reputation management mechanism that incorporates accountability in online ratings, *Electronic Commerce Research*, 19 (1), 23-57.
- San Sungunay, S. (2020). İşletmelerin itibar yönetiminde sosyal medya kullanımı: Türkiye'deki korona virüs salgını süreci. *Avrasya Sosyal ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7(7), 177-189.
- Stenger, Th. (2014). Social media and online reputation management as practice: first steps towards social CRM? *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction*, 10 (4), 49-64.
- Theaker, A. (2012). *The public relations handbook*. New York: Abingdon, Oxon.
- Tsugawa, Sh., & Ohsaki, H. (2015). Negative messages spread rapidly and widely on social media. In *Third ACM Conference on Online Social Networks (COSN 2015)* (pp.151-160).
- Vartiak, L.(2015). Benefits of online reputation management for organizations operating in various industries. In *Transcom Proceedings, Section 2: Economics and Management* (pp. 270-276).
- Wijngaard, K. & Boermans, P. (2015). Everything a hotel manager should know about: Online reputation management. Retrieved from: http://www.olery.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/Online_Reputation-Management_for_Hotels_pocket_guide.pdf.
- Wreden, N. (2007). Profit brand: how to increase profitability, accountability & sustainability of brand. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 16(4), 293-294.
- Zamil, A.M. (2011). Customer relationship management: A strategy to sustain the organization's name and products in the customers' minds. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(3), 451-459.