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Mechanisms of Hotel Reputation Management Through Online Review Platforms

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Abstract

The article discusses a multidimensional model for managing hotel reputations via online review platforms, focusing on data collection, analysis, and responsive actions. The relevance of this study lies in the digital transformation of the hospitality sector, where user-generated content on platforms such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google, and other aggregators has become a key factor in guest decision-making, thereby reducing information asymmetry between hotels and consumers. The purpose of this work is to systematize and justify strategic mechanisms for managing digital reputation in terms of their impact on financial and operational indicators. The novelty lies in combining methodologies: econometric analysis of the effects of average ratings on profitability (increase in RevPAR and ADR with a one-point rise in the rating), a systematic review of multichannel tools for collecting reviews (e-mail, push notifications, QR codes), content analysis, and text mining of operational defects, as well as the study of changes in ranking algorithms on platforms like Booking.com, Tripadvisor, and Google Reviews. An integrated model is proposed that combines financial, marketing, and operational components of reputation management. The main conclusions show that online reputation is a full-fledged financial asset; an effective management architecture includes three complementary blocks: multichannel feedback collection, centralized analytical monitoring, and prioritized responsive actions within fixed time windows. A combination of reactive measures for defect elimination and proactive tools for creating positive experiences (loyalty programs, segmented communication, content marketing) ensures sustainable price premiums and shifts traffic to direct channels without the risk of losing market share. The article will be of interest to researchers in the field of hospitality, as well as to hotel managers, revenue management professionals, and marketing professionals.

Keywords: Reputation Management; Review Platforms; Hotel Industry; Digital Marketing; RevPAR

1. Introduction

One fundamental change brought about by the digitalization of the hospitality industry is the process by which accommodations are selected. Decisions are now based on publicly shared opinions across TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google aggregators, and several other third-party and fourth-party aggregators. In effect, information asymmetry between consumers and hotels is drastically reduced. With smartphones gaining increasing penetration and mobile access to price comparison being ubiquitously available, user-generated content has surpassed traditional advertising and star ratings as the primary indicator of actual service quality.

Empirical data confirm this trend: according to a sample from several major markets, 81% of travelers always or frequently read reviews before booking a room, and in 72% of cases, consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a hotel with a better rating, even if the alternative offers a discount or a well-known brand [1]. Thus, reviews not only affect platform traffic but also influence demand elasticity, shifting the focus from price to perceived quality.

The financial impact is also quantifiable: econometric analysis of TripAdvisor data and monthly revenue of hotels in Texas showed that a one-point increase in the overall rating leads to a 2.2–3.0% increase in revenue through signaling

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and reputation channels [2]. For properties with a high share of online sales, such an improvement translates into a comparable increase in average daily rate (ADR) and occupancy rate, maintaining advantages even amid an overall increase in customers' price sensitivity.

This makes the digital reputation management function a standalone strategic activity whose objective is not only to swing back the quality into positivity but also to preempt that trust which allows hotels to keep their price premiums without OTA's traffic loss, minimize promotion costs through organic ranking, build up a loyal guest base, and use review analytics as input for continuous service improvement. This means that reputation management tasks span the financial, marketing, and operational aspects of the business, consolidating them into a single system that can translate brand perception into tangible economic results.

2. Materials and Methodology

The research materials comprise 23 sources, encompassing statistical data, econometric models, industry reports, and publicly available platform documentation, which enabled a comprehensive assessment of the mechanisms for forming and managing hotel reputations. The theoretical foundation was based on works demonstrating the impact of user ratings on guest behavior and financial indicators: Hotel Tech Report statistics showed that 81% of travelers always or frequently read reviews before booking, and 72% are willing to pay a premium for a high rating [1], econometric analysis by Sayfuddin and Chen revealed that a one-point increase in TripAdvisor ratings raises revenue in Texas hotels by 2.2–3.0% [2], and reviews by ReviewPro, Hospitality Trends, and CoStar confirmed the linear relationship between ratings and key performance indicators (ADR, occupancy, RevPAR) [3–5]. Studies by Carrier, Rezvani, and Rojas, Sánchez-Pérez et al. showed the influence of reputation on the redistribution of traffic between OTAs and direct channels. At the same time, spatial-price analysis in Manhattan revealed the role of rating differentiation in pricing [6–9]. Industry benchmarks on feedback collection channels — including MailChimp for email, Airship for push notifications, and QR Code Kit for QR triggers — helped assess the effectiveness of multichannel engagement with guests [10–12]. Shiji's report provided consolidated metrics from 53 sources and managers' response times to reviews [13]. For an in-depth understanding of operational defects, content analysis and text mining methods were employed. Huang et al. conducted a nine-year text analysis, identifying six categories of failures [15], while Hu et al. applied structural thematic analysis to customer complaints [16]. Case studies on loyalty programs and their impact on guest advocacy were based on Zhang's publication [17]. Changes in platform algorithms — including those of Booking.com [18–19], TripAdvisor [20], and Google Reviews [21–22] — were analyzed through official releases and practical studies. Market forecasts helped account for future growth in the customer experience software market [23].

Methodologically, the research combines several approaches: comparative analysis of ranking and review moderation mechanisms based on platform documentation and empirical data [18–22]; econometric analysis of the impact of average ratings on revenue and demand elasticity using panel data from TripAdvisor and the ReviewPro aggregator [2–3]; a systematic review of benchmarks on feedback collection channels — e-mail, push notifications, QR codes — to assess coverage and conversion of review requests [10–12]; content analysis and text mining of reviews using structural thematic models to identify typical operational defects and assess their frequency [15–16]; case studies on loyalty programs to understand the drivers of positive user content [17]; and synthesis of quantitative data on the customer experience software market to predict the impact of reputation management investments on hotel financial performance [23].

3. Results and Discussion

Online reputation has evolved from a secondary satisfaction indicator into a full-fledged financial asset, incorporated into revenue-management algorithms alongside classic demand and seasonality variables. Thanks to publicly available reviews, guests can promptly assess the price–value ratio; consequently, any change in the average rating is immediately reflected in an accommodation property's pricing capabilities.

The economic magnitude of this effect has been documented in several empirical studies: an analysis of the global ReviewPro index found that a one-point increase out of one hundred enables a hotel to raise its average rate by 0.89%, boost occupancy by 0.54%, and thus grow RevPAR by 1.42% without losing market share [3]. When using a five-point scale, the effect is even more pronounced: a one-point increase on Travelocity was associated with the ability to raise rates by 11.2% while maintaining the same room load [4]. Additional observations by CoStar confirmed a linear relationship between a one-percent increase in the composite rating and growth in key revenue metrics, embedding reputation metrics into the pricing models of major chains [5].

Beyond the direct impact on ADR and occupancy, a high rating reduces guest acquisition costs by encouraging a shift in bookings from commission-based OTAs to low-cost direct channels. Research by Kalibri Labs found that hotels with higher ratings secure a larger share of traffic via brand.com, and Net RevPAR after commission deductions is higher than that of competitors with comparable categories but inferior reputations [6]. This is particularly significant given that in the upscale segment, the total cost of acquisition ranges between 15–20% of revenue per room, and any shift of sales to direct channels frees up margin for service investments [7].

Reputation also serves as a key tool for product differentiation. In saturated urban clusters, where the physical attributes of rooms are standardized, it is online ratings that allow a hotel to distinguish itself from its nearest competitors on price: an analysis of Manhattan showed that segmentation by quality and location remains fundamental, but deviations in reputation additionally explain price stratification and reactions to neighboring properties' rates [8]. Similar conclusions arise from comparative analyses of vertical and horizontal differentiation: hotels that maintain ratings above the local average consistently realize a rate premium regardless of agglomeration density [9]. Thus, digital reputation becomes an intangible resource that not only enhances profitability but also preserves the uniqueness of offerings when physical attributes are difficult to differentiate.

Strategic reputation management begins with expanding the primary feedback dataset, since sample statistical power directly determines the reliability of subsequent analysis. Post-stay emails remain the baseline channel: the average unique open rate for a large Mailchimp sample is 35.6%, while only 2.6% of recipients click through such emails, which already sets the upper limit for potential review volume if other touchpoints are not used, as shown in Figure 1 [10].

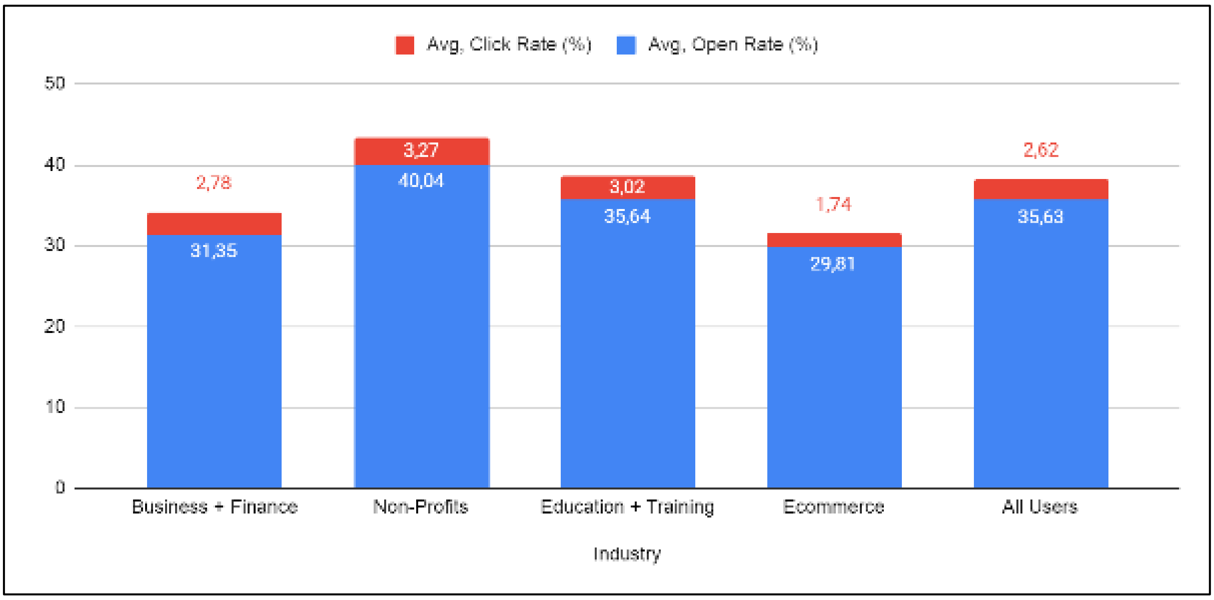

Figure 1 Cross-Industry Email Engagement Metrics [10]

Mobile push notifications lower this barrier: according to Airship's industry benchmark, direct opens of push messages more than double e-mail clicks, and recipients who receive at least one notification within the first 90 days demonstrate threefold engagement retention compared to a control group, making push mechanics an effective trigger for quickly soliciting stay ratings [11]. Additionally, offline channels such as QR codes drastically increase reach: replacing paper cards with QR forms in the field led to a 300% increase in surveys in a network operator's restaurants, demonstrating how critical it is to minimize friction when collecting guest feedback directly at the exit of the lobby or restaurant [12]. The combination of e-mail, push, and QR triggers reduces respondent motivation bias and enables faster detection of negative feedback before it becomes public.

After data collection, the key task is centralized monitoring. Modern aggregators, such as ReviewPro, consolidate reviews from 53 sources, processing tens of millions of text comments and producing a single Global Review Index, which simplifies benchmarking against competitive sets even for multi-property chains [13]. At the same time, the most significant decline in booking share occurred on Booking.com, whereas Google and Ctrip showed notable growth, as illustrated in Figure 2.

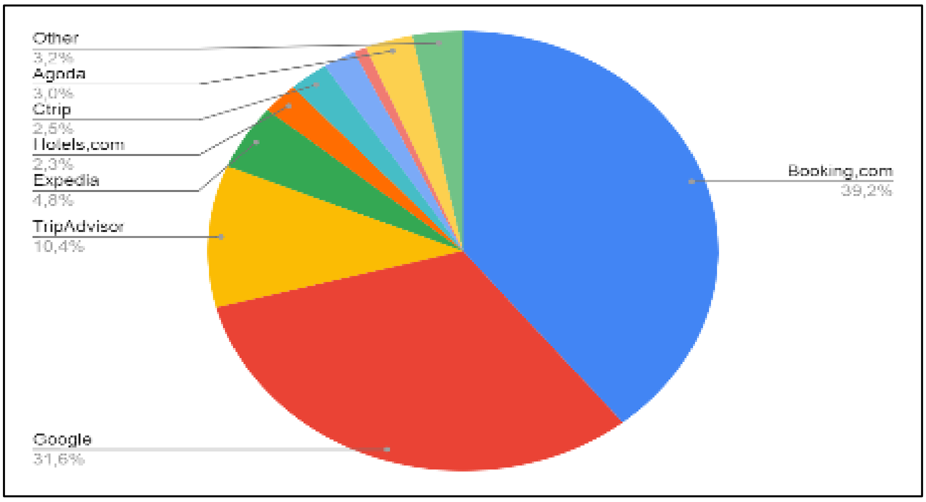

Figure 2 Online Travel Channel Share [13]

In a global sample of 9,500 hotels in the Q2 2023 report, managers responded to 61.6% of reviews; positive messages received responses in 63.5% of cases with an average lag of 3.6 days, whereas negative ones were addressed in 53.7% of cases with a delay of 4.3 days, indicating that negative feedback remains a riskier area with a reaction delay nearly one day longer [13]. Integrating such aggregated metrics into BI dashboards of PMS or CRM systems enables the real-time linkage of specific guest comments to operational units and the automatic creation of tasks for the front office or engineering service, thereby closing the PDCA loop without manual routing. The customer experience management software market was valued at USD 14.07 billion in 2024 and is forecast to reach USD 45.71 billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 17.50% from 2026 to 2032, as shown in Figure 3 [23].

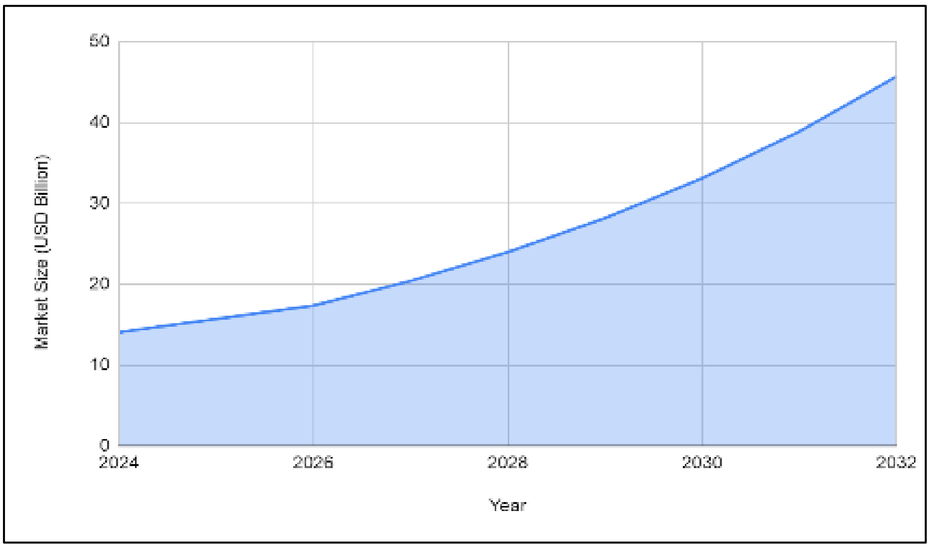

Figure 3 Customer Experience Management Software Market Size [23]

The third mechanism — prompt and substantive response. Cornell's study demonstrated that publishing managerial replies correlates positively with OTA sales up to a response-rate threshold of approximately 40%; beyond this point, additional replies yield diminishing—and occasionally negative—marginal returns, underscoring the importance of a selective approach: priority should be given to negative and constructive feedback rather than to every compliment in sequence [14]. ReviewPro's practical benchmarks confirm this strategy: an excessive lag of more than four days in replying to negative reviews is accompanied by a noticeable decline in the room-value index, whereas responses within the first 24–48 hours can offset up to 30% of potential rating loss—particularly on Booking.com and Google, whose algorithms are sensitive to response speed [13]. Accordingly, an effective reputation-management architecture comprises three complementary blocks: multichannel feedback collection, end-to-end analytical monitoring, and contextually prioritized responses within a defined temporal window, which together ensure sustained rating retention and generate a price premium in a fully transparent market.

Analysis of recurring complaints transforms disparate negative signals into a measurable—and thus monetizable—map of persistent operational defects. Text mining of a nine-year corpus totaling 73,622 words identified 26 typical failures, which cluster into six categories [15]. Similar results on a broader sample confirm that complaint distributions remain stable across markets, enabling the standardization of regulatory thresholds beyond which each category is automatically assigned priority status before any actual rating decline occurs [16].

When a hotel deliberately rectifies its two most frequent sources of dissatisfaction, transformational effects emerge within the first quarter: mention frequency declines, and the whole RevPAR recovery period following a public reputational shock shortens. However, process correction alone is insufficient if not accompanied by a publicly documented service-recovery effort.

At the next stage, the key lever shifts from preventing negativity to building advocacy and positivity through loyalty programs. The perceived value of a program explains dispersion in affective commitment—that is, the emotional bond that motivates guests to recommend the property and leave extended, positive reviews voluntarily. Reward type exerts a subtle yet significant effect: highly engaged customers respond more favorably to intangible status preferences, whereas low-engagement segments are more responsive to instant material bonuses. Deviation from this reward matrix reduces satisfaction gains by a factor of 1.5 [17].

This yields a symmetric model: systematic corrective actions reduce the baseline flow of negativity. At the same time, a well-designed loyalty program expands the upper tail of the rating distribution, creating a stable reputational buffer that enhances pricing power and decreases dependence on costly acquisition channels.

Ranking algorithms of major review platforms are proprietary; however, published updates and empirical studies allow for the reconstruction of their key emphases, thereby linking tactical hotel actions to how platforms convert guest text into economic outcomes. Following its January 2025 update, Booking.com adopted a recency-weighted calculation: ratings posted within the first year after stay receive maximal weight, whereas three-year-old reviews exert negligible influence on the final score. The platform's data indicate that, after a targeted guest-experience campaign, a median score improvement is achieved within 2.5 months [18]. Its internal moderation filter publishes only reviews from verified guests, automatically removes hate speech, and rejects content containing personal data, thereby maintaining a courteous corpus and mitigating the risk of abrupt tonal spikes that could disrupt rating dynamics [19]. This complex mechanism means that the cost of even a small wave of negative reviews exceeds previous levels. Each new complaint instantly recalculates the average score, forcing management to focus on quarterly rather than annual improvement cycles.

TripAdvisor employs similar but more multifactorial rules. Its official description of the Popularity Index emphasizes that ranking positions derive from a combination of review quality, quantity, and freshness; the system computes a confidence interval for a property's current experience, so small hotels must rapidly accumulate a statistically significant sample to exit the initial grey region [20]. An additional layer—termed thematic consensus—detects which aspects (typically cleanliness, location, and cost) are most consistently mentioned, and amplifies the weight of ratings supported by stable textual themes. The practical implication is clear: if a hotel resolves an issue that recurs systematically in reviews, the effect will manifest not only in scores but also in list rankings, where demand is distributed exponentially.

Google Reviews are integrated into the local-search graph, making their logic closely tied to SEO signals. Field tests show that a five-star rating increases click-through rates in the Local Pack by 25%, and 56% of users prefer businesses with a high average rating when choosing among nearby options [21]. Moreover, search results themselves strictly filter profiles: queries marked as 'best' or 'top' display only profiles rated 4.0 or above, so every tenth negative review that lowers a score below this threshold instantly removes the property from high-traffic map positions [22]. The most relevant algorithm sorts reviews by usefulness—prioritizing detailed posts with photographs—and, since 2024, the Gemini AI–based module has removed 40% more spam than the previous year, further enhancing the value of organically obtained mentions. Collectively, the volume, frequency, and sentiment of comments serve as triggers for local ranking, making a steady flow of textual, context-rich reviews a technical requirement for visibility rather than merely a reputational goal.

Thus, the three platforms converge on the principle that signal freshness and authenticity outweigh a static archive of praise, although they emphasize different facets: Booking.com instantly recalculates the overall score; TripAdvisor rewards consistent focus on key service aspects; and Google converts sentiment into map position and high-intent query filtering. Reputation management must account for these differences by maintaining a regular stream of verified reviews, addressing recurring thematic defects, and encouraging guests to leave informative, visually supported messages that simultaneously improve ratings, trust indices, and SEO visibility.

An effective reputation-management strategy begins even before a guest's arrival. Personalized reservation confirmations—featuring concise information on hotel amenities and a convenient direct-contact channel—set expectations and allow preferences to be clarified in advance. During the stay, the front office should proactively offer assistance. On departure day, a discreet request for feedback should be sent. Such a cycle transforms communication from reactive to preventive, as potential issues are identified and addressed before they become public.

Practical implementation requires delineated roles. This role assigns one person the responsibility of monitoring reviews, tracking response times, and referring complex cases to the appropriate team. Chatbots handle technical daily tasks. They talk to people all day and night, providing standard information, and also note any signs of unhappiness. By splitting human work in this way, staff can pay more attention only when feelings and custom touches matter most.

Select communication channels tailored to the audience. International travelers use TripAdvisor and Booking.com more frequently, while locals tend to prefer Google and map services. The youth segment responds more actively to push notifications in mobile applications, whereas family travelers find electronic mail more convenient. Flexible segmentation enhances the relevance of outreach, thereby increasing the response rate.

Use content marketing as social proof. Publishing improvement stories, video tours of renovated areas, and user-generated photo reposts builds trust by demonstrating transparency and openness to critique. The key to success is ensuring that published content accurately reflects guests' actual experiences; otherwise, discrepancies between expectations and reality can rapidly lead to negative rating adjustments.

Every strategy faces ethical risks. Artificially inflating reviews produces only temporary rating increases, as platforms increasingly deploy anomaly-detection algorithms that may hide or remove suspicious profiles—and the reputational damage from exposure is almost impossible to repair. When replying to comments, it is crucial to refrain from disclosing guests' data, in compliance with confidentiality requirements. A multilingual audience obliges the maintenance of high standards of style and translation accuracy in each major language.

The conclusions can be distilled into several principles. Response speed remains the primary factor driving trust; therefore, automating monitoring and intelligently prioritizing complaints enables concentration of effort on critical issues. Honesty in all communications reduces long-term risks, and integrating reviews into quality management systems helps close the cycle of continuous improvement. A service-oriented culture, supported by staff training and fair incentives, transforms digital tools from an external market requirement into an intrinsic element of corporate DNA, thereby securing a sustainable competitive advantage.

4. Conclusion

The conducted research confirms the pivotal role of a managed online reputation in creating a competitive advantage for hospitality enterprises. User-generated content on review platforms constitutes a full-fledged financial asset capable of influencing profitability through dynamic pricing and demand elasticity. Empirical data analysis revealed that even minor increases in average ratings result in tangible gains in RevPAR and ADR. At the same time, a rapid response to reviews strengthens trust and reduces the risk of market-share loss.

An effective reputation-management architecture is based on three complementary mechanisms: multichannel review collection, centralized analytical monitoring, and prioritized responses within strictly defined time windows. The integration of e-mail, push notifications, and QR triggers increases the volume of collected data. Aggregators consolidate reviews from dozens of sources, and PMS or CRM BI dashboards enable the automatic linking of negative signals to operational units, thus closing the PDCA loop without manual intervention.

Strategic reputation management must encompass not only reactive measures to eliminate operational defects but also proactive tools for generating positive experiences: loyalty programs, segmented communication, and content marketing turn guests into brand advocates and expand the upper tail of the rating distribution. Clear role delineation between the Guest Experience Manager and technical solutions, such as chatbots, ensures a balance between personalization and automation. Meanwhile, flexible channel segmentation maximizes outreach relevance for different target audiences.

Equally important is the ethical dimension of review management: artificial review inflation and unethical practices can result in long-term reputational harm; therefore, upholding transparency, personal data protection, and translation accuracy remains a fundamental principle. Implementing automated prioritization algorithms and analysis of recurring complaints ensures systematic service improvement and reduces recovery time following reputational shocks.

Thus, digital reputation management in the hospitality industry emerges not as an ancillary function but as an integral strategic element that unites the financial, marketing, and operational contours of the business, capable of transforming user perception into measurable economic outcomes.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no financial or non-financial interests that could have influenced the results or interpretation of this research

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