

The Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management Among the Companies in Oman

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ABSTRACT

Crisis management has become increasingly important to any organization's ability to survive in the age of globalization. The purpose of this study is to present unique qualitative data on the function of public relations in Omani organizations' planning for crisis communication. This study's contribution is that it is based on research that offers a thorough examination of how strategic planning is used in Oman's governmental and private sectors for crisis communication. The theoretical framework of problem management is used by the researcher to examine the function of public relations in the communications strategy. From the perspective of public relations managers in Oman, the paper poses the question of what function public relations plays in the strategic communication of crises. The study clarifies the advantages and disadvantages of the practice of strategic communication planning for crisis circumstances in public relations departments in Oman. The article's conclusion is that Omani organizations should employ crisis communication planning more effectively and attach it to proactive public relations communication tactics rather than reactive methods. Research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve the study's objectives. The study's conclusion discusses potential challenges that public relations departments in the corporate and governmental sectors may encounter and suggests strategies to deal with these problems.

Introduction

The crisis is one of the unforeseen events that poses a threat to organizations and stakeholders with a variety of environmental, economic, and safety concerns that could have a negative impact on the organization and produce unfavorable effects (Coombs, 2017). For this reason, communication planning and analysis of its role in crisis management in institutions is done. Public relations' involvement in crisis management in institutions is rising and is crucial to their survival. By analyzing, gathering, and sharing information regarding the risks of crises and preparing the staff who will engage in the crisis management process, communication during crises helps decision-makers choose how to manage potential crises (Seeger & Ulmer, 2018).

For this part of the research, the secondary sources were data sources to review the previous literature on the role of public relations in crisis management. The paper contains a literature review that explores the findings of various researchers. The paper's outline is structured as follows: in section 1.1 background, while section present 2.problem statement, 3.aim of the research, 4.objectives of the study, in section5. Research questions, 6.literature review, 7.Research methodology, 8.Results, 9.conclusion and recommendations, 10.mooc reflection and 11.references.

Background of the Study

Public relations experts are crucial to the communication and crisis management processes. The main responsibility of PR in crisis management is to inform all interested parties of the current situation, potential risks, and action plans (Norton, 2022). Choosing the best spokespersons and providing them with a pre-briefing, developing crisis tactics, choosing the best channels of communication to reach your audience, and promptly analyzing and responding to your audience's feedback are all aided by crisis public relations management. Because it is challenging to forecast precisely what a crisis might involve, crisis preparation is complicated. As a result, public relations experts need to foresee future scenarios and create response plans for a variety of potential problems.

The research project's main goals are to determine the effectiveness of the role of public relations in crisis management within institutions and to provide a theoretical framework that is based on numerous reliable scientific foundations about public relations and crisis management tactics in a systematic way. Due to the significance of this study for all institutions, the ideas, findings, and recommendations will also be relevant to all interested parties, researchers, and experts in the disciplines of administration, public relations, and communication. In order to gather information and data for this study, a survey method based on a questionnaire was conducted given to the companies will be used. The sample size was determined and was 40 out of all the companies, which was defined as the population. The data were be analyzed using frequency distribution, correlations, and regression analysis. The gathered data was be examined using Microsoft Excel's statistics program. The study will used both descriptive and explanatory approaches to assess interview questions.

Problem statement

According to Botan & Taylor (2020), many different businesses experience crises in their various financial or administrative divisions, as well as other forms of crises that hinder organizations in some way. The higher departments in the institutions therefore turn to the Public Relations Department to do everything within their power to save the institution and solve or manage this crisis using the methods and strategies they take quickly and inexpensively, as well as in a scientific way to ensure that it does not recur. It is a specialist administrative division it can organizes and creates institutional management programs that are concerned with the interactions between the institution and the public people. It also examines the institution's policies and practices to determine whether they serve the interests of the public or the needs of the institution's audiences.

It is critical to have a thorough understanding of the role that public relation plays in organizational crisis management. This is because crises often come on suddenly. In order to grasp many communication responsibilities with significant parties, public relations has the capacity to gather information and be aware of what is happening within the organization. This is done both during the crisis and after it has passed by giving the required information about the organization and carrying out reviews, which helps the organization and improves its capacity to handle future crises.

Aim of the Study

In order to address the difficulties, this study aims to establish the primary functions of public relations departments in both the public sectors and private sectors. This study intends to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect a range of data types. Public records, books, journals, newspapers, online journals, interviews, and literature reviews are a few examples of secondary data collecting, along with case decision search processes and interviews for primary sources. Develop a growth strategy, put it into action, and deal with any problems or crises that may result from it.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the main roles of public relations in crisis management among companies in Oman.
- To determine the different types of public relations strategies.
- To evaluate the processes carried out by public relations in crisis management within companies.
- To recommend solutions that in turn contribute to addressing crises among the companies in Oman.

Research Questions

- What are the main roles of public relations in crisis management among the companies?
- What are the most important types of public relations strategies?
- What are the most important processes carried out by public relations in crisis management within institutions?
- What are solutions that in turn contribute to addressing crises in organizations?

Literature review

Al Mashari (2022) stated that the public relations are an administrative discipline capable of serving a variety of critical roles in most organizations, services and production companies, and its interactions with senior executives are not significantly different from the interactions of the general management of any organization. The analysis of the literature will detail the many critical functions and tactics that public relations play in crisis management within Omani companies, as well as how these companies deal with crises and choose the best course of action.

The Main Roles of Public Relations in Crisis Management in Companies

Crisis Public Relations management experts assess the situation and give comprehensive recommendations on what the brand should do to hide the problem in companies and solve it among themselves at the very beginning. Public relations experts must assess the company's history as well as the type and context of the current disaster in order to provide step-by-step guidance for event management (Al-Badi, et.al, 2020).

For instance, a public relations expert might advise the CEO on which audiences to address first when making a public statement, what terminology to avoid using, and how to approach communicating with the appropriate audiences. Additionally, PR foresees potential issues and employs projection to manage the ones that are present. Analyzing the current state of the physical and human capabilities allows for the determination of the optimal course of action to achieve the organization's objectives. Planning is the institution's predetermined course of action during the decision-making process. It serves as the basis for building the various public relations activities the institution engages in, as well as a way to help the institution achieve its objectives within a specified timeframe and address problems (Andrew, 2022).

In order to achieve this objective, the Department of Public Relations collaborates with senior management, other organizational departments, and departments within the institution on both sides of the equation. The Department may use concrete phenomena that happen after the plan's implementation to explain the results of the plan's work to prevent a recurrence of the crisis in order to assess the effectiveness and success of the plan and its implementation by actively comparing the effects and consequences of crises.

The Different Types of Public Relations Strategies

The general plans that tackle the various stages of the conflict are public relations strategies. Researchers want to demonstrate public relations work processes. It is also a collection of significant and autonomous choices made by the organization to use various forms of communication to accomplish certain aims (Mozaan, 2022).

Some researchers and authorities in the fields of communication and public relations assert that it is difficult for public relations practitioners to adopt a single strategy in communication for public relations because it is possible to adopt the best strategy for each individual communication situation or to use a combination of strategies that the public relations department considers effective. Therefore, there are many public relations management strategies in crisis management, which are:

⇒ **Communication and media strategy**

The media is crucial during crises because it can accomplish two fundamental tasks: first, it must inform the public and the parties affected on the developments of the situation; second, it must shape, direct, and influence public opinion. It provides information to the general public, assisting in the formation of opinions and decision-making.

In particular for crisis management, this technique uses a variety of media and communication channels. Analysts believe it to be the most effective crisis management plan since it is the same media and communication channels that the Public Relations Department of any institution uses. The firm assumes complete responsibility for any crisis-related losses in order to protect its reputation built through prior efforts and its desire to maintain its moral capital, which is symbolized by the public's trust in it (Hasni,2019).

⇒ **Persuasion strategy**

One of the crucial techniques that public relations rely on in handling crises that hinder an organization's ability to function is this strategy, which occurs after the open and public admission that there is a crisis within the organization. The institution uses this method with the fundamental audiences in an effort to alter the intended knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of a specific audience, but it calls for clear and defined goals as well as a variety of persuasive messages (Hasni,2019).

⇒ **Committee formation strategy**

Committee formation strategy this tactic is used by the public relations department when the crises' actual cause is sufficiently disguised. To identify the key elements of the crisis's start, teams or committees of public relations specialists are formed. It is a concept that helps to identify side approaches to the crisis, away from tension and confusion, so that the conversation passes calmly (Hasni,2019).

The Processes Carried out by Public Relations in Crisis Management Within the Companies

According to Hali (2022), The Crisis Public Relations Department performs several operations, which include many activities and tasks related to preparing and preparing for crises in companies in Oman. These operations include research conducted by the Public Relations Department that aims to gather data and facts in order to anticipate or avoid a crisis. This research reduces the likelihood that a crisis will occur and has the ability to dispel rumors that the institution is exposed to or to spot issues in the organization's relationships with its internal and external audiences. As this phase is regarded as a fundamental guideline for taking preventative measures in preventing the occurrence of crises, public relations can manage relations this through research to safeguard the institution from crises and prevent them from arising.

One of the most significant tasks that public relations is eager to do is risk analysis, which entails recognizing potential scenarios that the organization may face. A more detailed knowledge of these probable occurrences will direct the department's strategy. Not all potential risks must be addressed, but a wide range of crises are, including natural disasters, technical setbacks, financial crises, operational mishaps, and product failures (Hali , 2022).

Companies in Oman establish a chain of command that includes the crisis management organizational structure into a plan so that everyone is aware of who has the last say and who is in charge of what. Along with creating a well-defined structural framework, this also promotes consistency and collaboration, two things that companies in Oman struggle to accomplish. The plan can need extra layers of instructions, depending on how bad the situation was. A crisis at the corporate level, on the other hand, would require the establishment of a crisis team at headquarters with regional teams reporting to it. For instance, an occurrence at one of the company's own facilities may reenergize the reaction team and leader there (Hali , 2022).

The Solutions Addressing the Gaps in Crisis Management Among the Companies in Oman

⇒ Focus on long term goals

Although the difficult times and crises will soon come to an end, they should be dealt with long-term. It turns out that keeping an eye on long-term objectives not only gives people something to look forward to, but also keeps customers and staff confident (Torossian, 2018).As third-party resources, such as loans and bank investments, may falter in crises, the operating monetary balance must be maintained. As a result, planning for the worst-case scenarios must be undertaken, and a survival strategy must be decided in those circumstances.

⇒ Staff selection

The success of public relations for crisis management in Omani businesses depends on choosing the right employees to handle the situation. In order to tackle the issue and come up with a solution, it will take energizing and creative individuals, so these individuals must be chosen based on their technical expertise and relevant experience (Hawes, 2022).

⇒ Build positive networks

According to a Prover (2018), the greatest resource is people. Why not utilize them in the procedure then? It is vitally essential to seek the advice of coworkers, other executives, mentors, business leaders, and even beginners if necessary. There will be no requirement to share all of the inside information, and any party can provide original solutions. All information must be true. According to research, consulting the team on crucial issues promotes employee empowerment, extends job happiness, and enhances job longevity (Prover, 2018). If the crisis, with all of its repercussions, reveals flaws here and there and gaps that need to be filled, then the role of public relations goes beyond the crisis and entails looking for ways to prevent these flaws in the future, correct past errors, and draw on the experiences of others to face the potential of the crisis in the future with fewer losses.

Given that it is one of the key pillars in predicting and sensing the signs of crises and must be utilized, the crisis is therefore seen as a motivator for all departments to avoid all the mistakes that led to the occurrence of the crisis. As a result, the employees in the Department of Public Relations within institutions gain experience in crisis management, which is by sound, fast, scientific, and non-costly as well.

Companies need to analyze past crises objectively and keep track of any mistakes that led to crises of a similar sort. This will help in developing the best strategies for any impending emergencies and reduce the potential harm they might cause.

Research Methodology

The study is based on a quantitative research approach that prioritizes regression analysis, frequency distribution, correlations, and descriptive statistics. The reason for choosing a particular study design, the information to be used, the data to be collected, the analytical tools and expertise to be used, the resources available, and other critical elements are all determined by the nature of the research purpose and issue. (Creswell & Leguse, 2020).

The quantitative approach analyzes evidence at several levels by assigning numerical values based on predetermined rating criteria for the outcomes of participants' opinions rather than the qualitative approach. The quantitative approach turned out to be the most effective method of data collection and analysis for this study because it is often difficult to distinguish between cause and effect in assessing outcomes. The key objectives of the study are to investigate the roles of public relations departments in the public and private sectors using a longitudinal design.

In the research, both primary and secondary data sources will be employed. The key data sources will be selected participants who will respond to a questionnaire, including firm boards of directors, managers, and employees. To obtain secondary data, previous polls, research, policy documents, journal articles, and e-books were employed. Public relations techniques were utilized as an outcome measure, while firms performance in Oman was used as a predictor variable. The research methodology heavily relies on the analysis of descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, correlations, and regressions. Quantitative methods can also be employed to raise the validity and legitimacy of this investigation. Demographic questions will also be added to prevent the findings from favoring a small group of people in particular. The foundation of numerical design is measurements and numerical analysis of raw data (Kanat, 2022).

Research Instruments

The first research tool is a questionnaire with 8 questions (see Appendix A). The survey tool is excellent for getting data from employees in businesses. Additionally, the questions ensure that data are collected from a variety of age and gender groups, which is crucial for the validity of the study. In order to engage participants, information was gathered using an online questionnaire tool. Other choices included sending the chosen demographic sample an email with the survey URL. Data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel.

Quantitative research data was gathered and analyzed using a questionnaire, and the effectiveness of the findings was evaluated using descriptive statistical tests. Using graphs based on data from the closed questions, the researcher was able to concisely explain the results using descriptive statistics. The study's findings allowed for the identification of the function of public relations in crisis management using descriptive statistics. Finding information and organizing it into tables made it simpler for the study to pinpoint the issues and difficulties the organizations faced. The data was turned into tables, which made it easier to spot issues and barriers.

Population , sampling size, sampling technique

Public and private companies in Oman formed a sample of the population. A sample of 40 participants was created after collaborating with these companies. As a result, not everyone completed the survey questions (see Appendix A) even though the survey instructions were sent to the participants. To analyze the survey results, a sample size of 33 individuals was chosen.

Instead of asking for feedback on potential outcomes or future experiences, participants were invited to discuss their current experiences. It was necessary to use a straightforward random sampling approach to choose the participants. Private user information, such as email addresses and phone numbers, is never gathered during data gathering in order to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Additionally, participants voluntarily took part in the study to gather information and data in accordance with a non-disclosure or rights limitation agreement.

Data collection technique

Investigating the practices of the companies involved (case study) and the opinions of the participants on participating in the research project are necessary steps in determining data collection alternatives. The structured research employs a survey to gauge employee perception. Data was gathered using the online survey platform “Google forms”. Participants have received an email with the survey link that has been produced. Even though the questionnaire (see Appendix A) was helpful for organizing data for practical analysis, the survey items were given out in a random order to participants.

Data analysis technique

In order to expedite the analysis process, numerical values were assigned to the quantitative data using a 7-point rating system. After data collection, the results were downloaded as an Excel file and examined using the spreadsheet. The quantitative data could be simply transformed into numbers by the researchers without sacrificing context. Graphs were required to visually display the results for easy comprehension. Descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, correlations, and regression analysis were all used in adequate interpretation.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

40 participants (N = 40), 61% of whom were female, and 39% of whom were male (Figure 2). Age groups 20–30 years old made up 16% of the population, 30 years and over made up 53%, 35–44 years old made up 26%, and 45 years and beyond made up 5%. As a result, there were more men than women working there, and 53% of them were between the ages of 25 and 34. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of employees are between the ages of 25 and 34: a relatively young and tech-savvy generation. This is because the majority of public and private companies in Oman are mixed companies with experience regarding the impact of crises on organizations and the roles of public relations in reaching solutions.

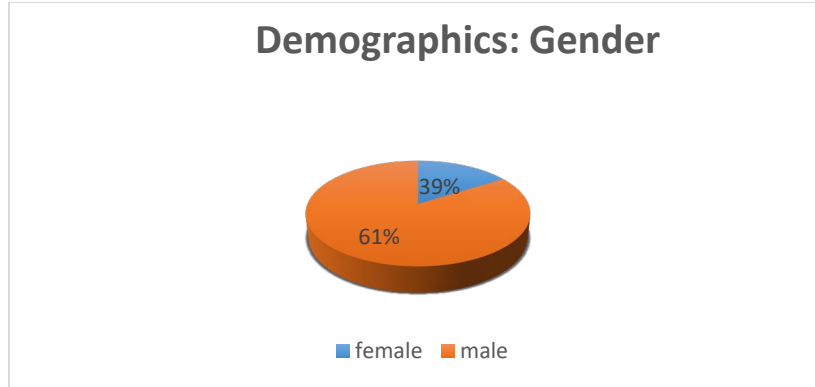


Figure 2. Gender of Respondents

Roles of public relations in crisis management among the companies

Public Relations management foresees possible issues and uses projection to manage the ones that are present. Analyzing the current state of the physical and human capabilities allows the determination of the optimal course of action to achieve the organization's objectives. Planning is the institution's intended course of action during the decision-making process, and it forms the basis for the establishment of the institution's numerous activities.

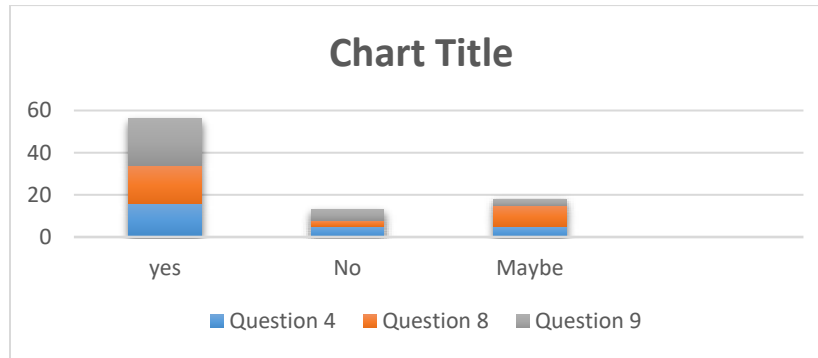


Figure 3. Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management Among the Companies

Based on this graph, 55% said yes on the importance of having public relations in crises and the need for Omani companies to cooperate with crisis communications specialists to resolve them while 15% of them, they said maybe and 11% answer no. This means that to achieve the goal that would achieve the success of the company, public relations must accurately determine the statistical measures of the effectiveness of campaigns, media programs and their various means. The cooperation of the Public Relations Department with senior management and other organizational departments on the one hand, and with other organizational departments on the other hand, contributes to the achievement of its objectives. The department may rely on the tangible phenomena that appear after the implementation of the plan to explain the results of the plan's work to prevent its recurrence. This will allow the department to assess the effectiveness and success of the plan and its implementation through effective comparisons of the impacts and outcomes of crises.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Public relations is a work that combines both science and art, and it is an administrative and informative one that combines all the necessary duties. It is typically characterized by speed and suddenness since the institution can only manage and correct it through a sound vision and strategy. Public relations is not confined to the corrective and instructive process of crises, but rather to the preventative function, to prevent their occurrence again. The researcher offers a set of recommendations, potentially to assist various institutions in resolving and managing crises that may come to them, following the scientific illumination on public relations tactics in handling crises that occur within institutions. Additionally, In order to adequately develop appropriate strategies for any future crises and prevent the potential for significant harm, objective reviews of prior crises among the companies in Oman and learning from the errors that caused such crises wherever they occur are necessary.

Limitations

Since the research included a survey of companies in Oman, the problem of limited access to the concerned persons in the company to agree on the subject needed to conduct the research arose. This limited access led to a slight delay in the initiation of the research to ensure the design and structure of the research and to produce valid and reliable results. On the other hand, the sample may be limited and insufficient for statistical measurements based on the information that will be included and extracted in the research, which will lead to difficulty in identifying important relationships in the data.

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