



The Role of the Public Relations Department in Managing Tourism Crises: A Field Study

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Received: 24/04/2026

Accepted: 19/06/2026

Published: 30/06/2026

Doi: 10.53284/2120-013-002-001

Abstract:

This study aims to highlight the role of public relations in managing tourism crises at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa. It adopts a descriptive approach, relying primarily on a questionnaire as the main tool for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed to a purposive sample of 30 employees working in the public relations unit and the human resources department. The findings indicate that the public relations department plays an effective role in managing crises both within and outside the tourism institution. However, the study also revealed certain shortcomings in public relations practices, particularly in their interaction with the media

Keywords:Public Relations; Crises Management; Tourism.

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1. Introduction:

The tourism institution operates within an environment characterized by dynamism, change, and cultural and technological diversity. The tourism sector is among the most sensitive to global stability and peace; therefore, it is frequently exposed to numerous internal and external risks and complex crises, varying in causes and consequences from one country, region, or organization to another. These challenges arise from the distinctive nature of each institution's operations, whether they are tourism-related, economic, political, security, social, environmental, or health-related. Effective crisis and risk management thus requires a scientifically grounded and well-structured approach that must continually evolve in line with the growing complexity of the issues faced. This adaptability is essential to maintain both current and future components of tourism supply and demand across different countries and to contribute positively to problem-solving through administrative thinking appropriate to each type of crisis, supported by adequate preparation and resources for effective response.

Among the most vital departments involved in crisis management is the public relations unit, as it serves as the essential link between the public affected by the crisis and the crisis management team. "Public Relations" is both an art and a science of communication with internal audiences namely employees and external audiences those who benefit from the institution's services or products both in times of prosperity and crisis. Its goal is to gain their trust and build a favorable institutional image and reputation. Moreover, it represents the first line of defense protecting organizations when crises occur

1.1. Research Problem:

The management of tourism crises within an institution is an inherently collective process that relies on teamwork and coordination. It necessitates integration and cooperation among the various departments within the organization. Among the key members who should be included in the crisis management structure is the Public Relations Department, which is expected to perform specific functions throughout all stages of the crisis. As the vital center of communication within the institution and with its publics, public relations play a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth flow of information and understanding between the organization and its internal and external audiences.

This role is manifested in the transmission and interpretation of information, opinions, and messages from the institution to its publics, as well as in conveying feedback and reactions from these publics back to the institution. Through this dynamic exchange, public relations help foster



an atmosphere of trust and stability within the organization, enabling it to avoid or mitigate many risks and crises.

In this context, the main research question is formulated as follows:

What role does the Public Relations Department play in managing tourism crises at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa?

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of this issue, the following sub-questions are also raised:

- **What is the significance of public relations within the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa?**
- **How does the Public Relations Department manage and handle the various crises faced by the Directorate?**
- **What communication tools are used in crisis management within the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa?**

1.2. Significance of the Study:

This study was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the Public Relations Department in managing tourism crises at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in the Wilaya of Tebessa. Its importance lies in the fact that conducting a field investigation allows for the identification of weaknesses and shortcomings, as well as the exploration of aspects through which public relations crisis management within this institution may be improved.

1.3. Objectives of the Study:

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of the Public Relations Department in managing tourism crises at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries. From this main objective stem a number of secondary objectives, which are addressed through answering the study questions, namely:

- To identify the importance of public relations at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries.
- To examine how the Public Relations Department manages and handles the various crises encountered by the institution.
- To identify the communication tools used in crisis management at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries.

1.4. Conceptual Definitions

1.4.1. Public Relations:



Public Relations refers to the set of efforts undertaken by an organization with the aim of securing trust and mutual understanding between the organization and the various publics with which it interacts; in this sense, it constitutes both an administrative and a communicative activity (Solaiman Fakhri, 1981, p. 34). According to the Dictionary of Sociology, public relations may also be understood as a body of theories and tactics useful for examining and defining the relationships between an institution and its publics (Laraba Soraya, 2008, p. 32). In the context of this study, Public Relations is defined as the art and science of managing reality and change particularly crises through the range of communications that the institution establishes with its internal and external publics.

1.4.2. Crisis:

Habermas defines crisis as a serious threat, whether anticipated or unanticipated, to the goals, values, beliefs, and assets of individuals, institutions, and states, one that constrains the decision-making process (Habermas, 1963, p. 643).

From an administrative perspective, a crisis is a situation confronting the decision-maker in which the ability to control events or their future direction is diminished, while events escalate rapidly and causes become intertwined with consequences (Al-Khediri, 1993, p. 53).

1.4.3. Crisis Management:

Crisis management refers to the set of practices that can be applied when a situation emerges that represents a radical disruption of previously stable and conventional conditions. These practices are formulated in the form of a plan whose preparation depends on the availability of relevant expertise and begins with the analysis, diagnosis, and careful examination of the crisis in order to identify its components, characteristics, and expected effects. Such analysis must be precise so that all subsequent actions are based on sound, accurate, and productive foundations (Sayed Moussa, 1998, p. 81).

In this study, crisis management is understood as the manner in which preparation is undertaken to confront a crisis through public relations and its core functions such as research, planning, and communication management within the institutional environment in order to adapt to the new reality imposed by the crisis

2. Theoretical framework:

2.1. Crises and Obstacles Facing the Tourism Sector:

Any changes that occur within global or local environmental systems may directly or indirectly affect the functioning of the tourism sector and the various activities operating under its



umbrella. The impact referred to here is primarily reflected in three main aspects (Fajwa, 2003, pp. 11–12):

- Global and domestic demand for tourism-related activities in the country concerned.
- The form, characteristics, and components of the country's tourism supply.
- The distinctive nature of the country's tourism sector and its competitive position on the global tourism map.

The changes and potential causes that may generate crises in the tourism field can be classified into the following groups:

Sudden and gradual natural disasters: such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, as well as pests, epidemics, and similar events. Such natural disasters may lead to crises in the tourism sector, particularly when they affect natural or human-made tourist attractions.

Human-induced disasters: such as environmental pollution resulting from industrial and technological progress, urban pollution, or excessive urban expansion that may lead to overcrowding or a heightened sense of congestion in cities. These conditions may produce crises in the tourism sector if they affect any component of tourism supply, as they negatively influence tourism demand.

International relations crises and wars: wars in all their forms, whether domestic or regional, generate crises in the tourism sector because of their negative impact on both tourism demand and tourism supply.

Terrorism as a manifestation of changes in the state's security environment: this phenomenon may also generate crises in the tourism sector because of its adverse effects on tourism demand and supply alike.

Crises related to the scarcity of natural resources: such as water shortages and the extinction of certain rare living species. These, too, may give rise to crises in the tourism sector due to their negative effects on both tourism demand and tourism supply.

2.2. Public Relations Roles During Tourism Crises:

Raising awareness of the crisis: This is achieved by disseminating media messages through various communication tools in order to inform the public about the nature of the crisis affecting the sector, its causes, and the different pieces of information that the institution seeks to communicate to its audiences. Effective crisis communication in tourism depends on timely, responsible, and audience-centered information management.

Strengthening ties with internal publics: All tourism establishments must seek to gain the support, trust, and understanding of their internal publics regarding the circumstances facing the



organization. Positive relations with employees during a crisis contribute to strengthening morale, particularly since public relations begins internally. Research on tourism crisis communication highlights the importance of internal communication, transparency, and employee engagement during crises.

Monitoring and analyzing media coverage: Public relations should follow what is published in various media outlets regarding the crisis affecting the tourism sector, analyze such coverage, and submit recommendations to the competent authority. Media monitoring is widely recognized as an essential element of crisis communication and informed response planning.

Identifying public attitudes: It is necessary to understand public attitudes, as well as the motives and expectations underlying them, so that media and communication plans can be developed in an accurate and effective manner. This process should continue throughout the crisis and in the post-crisis period. Crisis communication guidance in tourism emphasizes ongoing stakeholder assessment and message adaptation before, during, and after crises.

Examining tourists' and clients' complaints and attempting to address them: Public relations should investigate the complaints of tourists and those dealing with the institution, while working to resolve them and eliminate their causes wherever possible. In hospitality and tourism, timely and empathetic responses to customer concerns are considered central to crisis response and reputation protection.

2.3. Reasons for the Public Relations Department's Interest in Crisis Communication:

The public relations department's interest in crisis communication can be explained as follows:

Crises attract intense media attention: Crises are considered highly newsworthy content for all types of media. They typically receive extensive coverage, as media outlets seek to satisfy their audiences' demand for information. The need for information is deeply rooted in human nature; people have a strong desire to know the news, especially unfavorable news. In fact, media coverage often centers on negative events, accidents, and scandals occurring within society, since such stories stimulate public curiosity and encourage audiences to seek further information about human error and unexpected developments. Scientific research has shown that people tend to pay greater attention to bad news than to other types of news. Thus, events regarded as negative by public relations officials such as explosions, collisions, disasters, and other unforeseen incidents are often considered valuable or attractive news material by the media. Accordingly, public relations management must be prepared to deal with media organizations that show considerable interest in crises.



Public relations practitioners are an important source of information for the media: Providing information and support to the media constitutes an essential part of public relations practice. Depending on the quality and effectiveness of this service, an institution may develop either a positive or a negative relationship with the media. If public relations practitioners serve as a regular point of contact for the media under normal circumstances, crises place even greater pressure on them. Burton argues that all public relations practitioners may, at some point, face a crisis that places them under media scrutiny in their capacity as spokespersons for their organizations. The greatest challenge for public relations professionals, therefore, lies in how effectively they manage media relations during times of crisis (Zoch & Duhe, 1997, p. 16).

The way public relations practitioners deal with journalists influences the nature of crisis media coverage: During a crisis, public relations officials must cooperate with the media and make every effort to respond to journalists' inquiries by providing accurate facts promptly and continuously. When media coverage is grounded in verified information, the institution's position is more likely to remain strong. Public relations practitioners should therefore seek the most effective ways of addressing the needs of the media, viewing them as a distinct and strategic audience that, in turn, communicates with wider publics. They are expected to gather relevant information, make it available to editors whenever requested, and respond quickly to journalists' demands. The information provided should be timely and regular. In addition, maintaining professional and constructive relations with journalists may enable public relations officers to contribute to shaping and framing the media coverage of the institution's crisis (Mahmoud Youssef, 2002, p. 99).

The profound and potentially destructive impact of crises on institutions: Crises can have severe consequences for institutions, particularly by damaging the organization's image and reputation. In many cases, this may determine whether the institution or some of its divisions can continue to operate. Recent years have also demonstrated that the negative effects of a crisis do not always remain confined to the institution itself; rather, they may extend beyond it and affect an entire sector (Othman Al-Arabi, 1992, p. 96).

3. Methodology:

3.1. Study approach:

This study adopted the descriptive approach, as it was considered the most suitable for the nature of the topic under investigation. The descriptive method is particularly appropriate for studies concerned with examining audiences, identifying existing practices, and describing the roles performed by organizational actors in a given institutional setting.



The choice of this approach was intended to provide a systematic understanding of the role of public relations in crisis management within the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa.

3.2. Sampling:

The study relied on purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are intentionally selected on the basis of characteristics directly relevant to the research objectives. In this case, the purposive sample consisted of all employees in the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa.

The selection of these participants was justified by their direct or indirect involvement in public relations activities within the institution. The total number of participants included in the study was 30 employees. Purposive sampling is particularly appropriate when the researcher seeks informed participants who can provide data closely connected to the phenomenon under study.

3.3. Data collection tool:

The study used the questionnaire as the main tool for data collection. Its items were designed in direct relation to the research problem and the study questions in order to ensure alignment between the empirical tool and the objectives of the investigation. Questionnaires remain a widely used method for collecting structured data from targeted participants in descriptive studies. The questionnaire included a variety of question types, namely closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, in order to obtain both structured and explanatory responses.

4. Discussion:

Axis One: The Importance of Public Relations at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa

Table 1. Respondents' Understanding of the Public Relations Function

Question: What does the profession of public relations mean to you?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Planned and continuous administrative efforts	13	43.33%
The body that links the institution with its internal and external publics	22	73.33%
An advisory function	2	6.66%
Advertising, activities, and services provided by the institution	4	13.33%
Other	0	0%
Total	41	136.65%

Source: By the Author



Note: *The total number of responses in this table exceeds the actual sample size because respondents were allowed to choose more than one option. The same observation applies to all tables in which the total frequency exceeds the sample size.*

The table above illustrates the concept of public relations as understood by the study sample. The response “the body that links the institution with its internal and external publics” ranked first, accounting 35.65%. This result reflects the importance of the relationship between the institution and its publics, both internal and external, since no institution can continue performing its functions effectively without securing the trust and support of its audiences. Public Relations represents the administrative means through which this trust and support are built, by identifying the institution’s publics and informing them about its activities and programs.

The second most frequent response was “planned and continuous administrative efforts,” representing 25.21%. This is consistent with Jaber Mohammed Al-Tamrawi’s definition of public relations as the intentional, continuous, and planned efforts undertaken by an institution’s management with the aim of achieving mutual understanding and sound relations between the institution and the publics with which it interacts internally and externally (Jaber Al-Tamrawi, 2005, p. 15).

This was followed by the response “advertising, activities, and services provided by the institution,” at 22.60%, while “an advisory function” came last with 16.52%. These findings indicate a degree of fluctuation in understanding and a blending of concepts regarding the profession of public relations. At the same time, they underscore the importance of the public relations department and the multiplicity of its roles, as all of the aforementioned notions may be considered part of its functions.

Table 2. Administrative Level of the Public Relations Department at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa

Question: What is the administrative level of the public relations department in your institution?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Top management	0	0%
Middle management	30	100%
Lower management	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

As shown in Table 2, the public relations unit is positioned at the level of middle management within the organizational structure of the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional



Industries in Tebessa, as indicated by the 100% response rate. This suggests that the public relations function occupies an intermediate administrative position within the institution.

Public relations should be placed at an administrative level that enables it to perform its role effectively and efficiently. In particular, it should be situated close enough to the decision-making process to facilitate the execution of its tasks, ensure flexibility in decision-making, and allow for the rapid and immediate receipt and communication of instructions and decisions. Such a position also helps ensure the prompt transmission of important information to senior management without administrative barriers or constraints that might hinder the department's performance.

Table 3. Tasks Assigned to the Public Relations Department

Question: What tasks are assigned to the public relations unit in your institution?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Advisory	9	30%
Communication-related	27	90%
Marketing-related	12	40%
Advertising-related	12	40%
Total	60	100%

Source: By the Author

This table presents the range of functions performed by the public relations department. The results show that the communication function ranked first, with 90%, indicating that public relations is primarily a communication-oriented activity. One of its central responsibilities is to inform the public about matters of interest and concern. The internal public, for example, needs to be informed about institutional regulations, ongoing developments, as well as existing problems and crises. Such communication is essential for ensuring a proper understanding of the decisions issued by management, and it is the responsibility of the public relations officer to present this information in its appropriate context.

With regard to the external public, the public relations department communicates the institution's activities with the aim of securing public trust and support. The marketing and advertising functions came next, each accounting for 40%. Although Public Relations does not, in essence, focus primarily on promotional objectives since it is fundamentally concerned with information dissemination, knowledge sharing, and the exchange of views it nevertheless contributes indirectly to the promotional efforts of the institution or the marketing department. In this respect, Public Relations helps create a favorable environment for the acceptance of



advertising messages and enhances the effectiveness of service promotion. Finally, the advisory function ranked last, at 30%.

Table 4. Perceived Importance of Public Relations in the Institution

Question: How do you assess the importance of public relations in your institution?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Preventive	26	86.66%
Remedial	4	13.34%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

As shown in the table above, the majority of respondents consider public relations to have a preventive importance for the institution, with a proportion of 86.66%. By contrast, 13.34% of respondents believe that Public Relations has a remedial importance within the institution.

According to the data presented in the table, and from the respondents' perspective, the importance of public relations lies primarily in its preventive role, which is reflected in the various plans and procedures adopted to prevent the occurrence of problems or crises within the Directorate. This may be attributed to the significance of public relations activities in providing the institution with protection both before and during crisis situations.

It can therefore be concluded that the importance of public relations at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries is most evident in its preventive role, that is, prior to the occurrence of a crisis. At the same time, its role in addressing the institution's internal and external situation should not be overlooked. This dual function helps ensure that those responsible remain in a constant state of readiness to confront crises, regardless of their severity or complexity.

Axis Two: How the Public Relations Unit Manages and Handles the Various Crises Encountered by the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa

Table 5. Nature of Communication Applied by the Public Relations Department During a Crisis

Question: What is the nature of the communication adopted by the public relations department during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
One-way communication	8	26.66%
Two-way communication	22	73.33%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author



As can be observed from Table 5, the majority of the respondents, representing 73.33%, believe that the institution adopts two-way communication during crises, that is, communication flowing both from and toward the institution. This approach helps create a climate of mutual communication that enables the public to gain accurate knowledge and receive the information it seeks about both the institution and the crisis. Such a process contributes to reducing negative attitudes and hostility, preventing confusion, and limiting the intervention of other parties whose involvement might have adverse consequences for the institution. By contrast, 26.66% of respondents indicated that communication during crises takes the form of one-way communication, that is, from the institution to the public.

Table 6. Types of Strategies Used by the Public Relations Department in Crisis Management

Question: Which of the following strategies is most often used by the public relations department in managing crises?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Transparency strategy	26	86.66%
Reservation strategy	8	26.66%
Secrecy strategy	4	13.33%
Justification and apology strategy	13	43.33%
Total	51	169.98%

Source: By the Author

Table 6 shows that the public relations department relies primarily on the transparency strategy in addressing the crises faced by the institution, as indicated by 86.66% of responses. In effective crisis management, the administration seeks to resolve crises by narrowing differences in viewpoints and managing purposeful communicative dialogue. This is achieved through what may be described as a transparency strategy, based on discussion, dialogue, and two-way communication. Such a strategy is essential for countering harmful rumors, which often generate mistrust and further intensify the crisis. The justification and apology strategy ranked second, with 43.33% of responses. This was followed by the reservation strategy at 26.66%, while the secrecy strategy came last, with 13.33%.

Table 7. The Contribution of Public Relations to Preserving the Institution's Positive Image During a Crisis

Question: Did your communication efforts contribute to preserving the institution's positive image during the crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage



Yes	30	100%
No	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

As shown in the table above, all respondents agreed that the communicative action undertaken by public relations contributed to preserving the institution's positive image during the crisis, with a response rate of 100%. Effective crisis communication is commonly associated with protecting organizational reputation through transparent, timely, and credible messaging directed at stakeholders and the wider public.

The high percentage of respondents who believe that communication efforts helped maintain the institution's favorable image during the crisis may be attributed to the objectives pursued by public relations practitioners in such situations, particularly the achievement of effective communication and the protection of the institution's image and reputation, especially at the external level. It may also be explained by the transparency and credibility with which the institution's administration communicates information to external publics, thereby securing their trust and helping preserve the institution's positive image throughout the crisis. Therefore, communicative action plays an important role in preserving the institution's positive image during times of crisis.

Table 8. Measures Undertaken by Public Relations Before a Crisis

Question: What measures does the public relations department undertake before a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Developing a guideline manual for anticipated crises	10	33.33%
Establishing prior policies and plans aimed at preventing crises	25	83.33%
Identifying the publics likely to be affected by the crisis and the means of contacting them promptly	10	33.33%
Training official spokespersons to deal with the media	16	53.33%
Reviewing bulletins and reports issued by and about the Directorate	6	20%
Conducting opinion and attitude measurement research	15	50%
Other	0	0%
Total	82	273.32%



Source: By the Author

As may be observed from the table above, 83.33% of responses indicate that Public Relations develops prior policies and plans aimed at avoiding the occurrence of crises. This suggests that the public relations unit adopts preventive planning measures intended to preserve a favorable mental image of the institution during crises. Such planning may take the form of long-, medium-, and short-term plans, which is consistent with widely recognized pre-crisis communication practice emphasizing advance planning, defined communication protocols, and preparedness.

The second most frequently cited measure was the training of official spokespersons to deal with the media, at 53.33%. This result reflects the importance of communication competence among public relations practitioners, particularly the ability to interact effectively with others through speaking, public presentations, writing, and media engagement. Crisis communication guidance commonly treats spokesperson preparation and media training as core pre-crisis requirements.

In third place, 50% of responses referred to conducting opinion and attitude research through the collection of information about the institution's environment, its publics, the institution itself, and the services it provides. This stage helps the institution achieve mutual understanding with its publics on the basis of shared interests through the exchange of facts, opinions, and viewpoints. It was followed by developing a guideline manual for anticipated crises and identifying the publics vulnerable to crisis effects, each at 33.33%, while reviewing bulletins and reports issued by and about the Directorate ranked last.

Table 9. Measures Undertaken by Public Relations During a Crisis

Question: What measures does the public relations department undertake during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Meeting with the crisis team	21	70%
Promptly providing crisis-related information to the media	18	60%
Managing the institution's image	16	53.33%
Maintaining harmony and solidarity within the institution	13	43.33%
Other	0	0%
Total	68	226.66%

Source: By the Author



As may be observed from the table above, 70% of respondents indicated that the first measure undertaken by the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries during a crisis is to convene with the crisis team. This step is essential for the rapid adoption of the necessary measures, coordination with the relevant parties, and consultation regarding the procedures to be followed. Crisis communication guidance commonly emphasizes the immediate activation of the crisis team and clear internal coordination structures at the onset of a crisis.

Furthermore, 60% of respondents considered it necessary to provide crisis-related information to the media without delay in order to ensure that such information reaches the largest possible number of publics. This helps prevent confusion and limits the intervention of parties whose involvement may have negative repercussions for the institution. Timely, accurate, and proactive media communication is widely regarded as a core principle of effective crisis response.

A closely related proportion, namely 53.33%, viewed the management of the institution's image during the crisis as an important task. Public relations communication, both internally and externally, contributes to shaping the impressions held by various publics about the institution, and during a crisis it seeks to preserve the positive character of those impressions so that the institution's image remains favorable. In addition, 43.33% referred to maintaining internal harmony and solidarity, which is also important because coherent internal communication helps sustain a unified organizational response and reduces confusion among employees.

Table 10. Measures Undertaken by Public Relations After a Crisis

Question: What measures does the public relations department undertake after a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Adopting horizontal communication instead of downward communication	23	76.66%
Building new relationships with the public in order to move beyond the crisis	7	23.33%
Supporting relations with the media	12	40%
Taking into account the actions of pressure groups or competitors	5	16.66%
Other	0	0%
Total	47	156.65%

Source: By the Author

Table 10 indicates that the principal role of public relations after a crisis, according to 76.66% of respondents, is to abandon dependence on downward communication, which takes a vertical form from the top of the organizational hierarchy to the lower administrative levels and is generally limited to orders, instructions, and similar directives. In its place, the institution shifts



toward horizontal communication, which allows individuals within the organization to communicate with one another across different levels and thus creates a wider margin of communicative freedom among the institution's various administrative levels. Post-crisis communication literature commonly emphasizes rebuilding internal communication, reflection, and more collaborative communication structures after the acute phase of a crisis.

The second-ranked measure was strengthening relations with the media, at 40%. This may be explained by the institution's recognition during the crisis that the media can play both constructive and destructive roles: when the institution maintains good relations with media outlets, they are more likely to support it during crises, whereas poor relations may produce the opposite effect. Research and professional guidance on crisis recovery consistently stress the importance of proactive media engagement and the rebuilding of credibility with journalists after a crisis.

In third place, 23.33% of responses referred to building new relationships with the public in a way that helps the institution move beyond the crisis. Finally, 16.66% pointed to the importance of taking into account the movements of pressure groups or competitors. These results suggest that the post-crisis phase is not limited to internal adjustment, but also involves rebuilding trust, restoring stakeholder relations, and monitoring external factors that may influence the institution's reputation and recovery trajectory.

Table 11. Obstacles Faced by Public Relations Practitioners During a Crisis

Question: What obstacles do public relations practitioners face during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of responsiveness from top management toward public relations	5	16.66%
Shortage of modern equipment and technologies	7	23.34%
Insufficient competence of public relations personnel	18	60%
Other	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

As shown in the table above, the majority of respondents considered the principal obstacle facing public relations practitioners during crises at the Directorate to be the insufficient competence of public relations personnel, which accounted for 60% of responses. By contrast, the least cited obstacle was the lack of responsiveness from top management toward public relations, which represented 16.66% of responses. Crisis communication guidance and related research



frequently emphasize that personnel competence, training, and the integration of public relations into crisis structures are central to effective crisis response.

The high percentage of respondents who identified the limited competence of public relations personnel as a major obstacle may be attributed to inadequate training of those assigned to public relations duties and to the lack of professional experience necessary for confronting crises effectively. It may also be linked to the Directorate's recruitment of individuals without specialization in public relations, which constitutes an additional constraint during crisis situations. Similar professional and training-related gaps are widely recognized as barriers to effective crisis communication, alongside technological limitations and uneven organizational support.

Axis Three: Communication Media Used by Public Relations in Crisis Management at the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa

Table 12. Communication Media Used by Public Relations Officers During a Crisis

Question: What media are used by the public relations officer in your institution to transmit and exchange information during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Seminars	5	16.66%
Meetings	27	90%
Media statement	9	30%
Other	4	13.33%

Source: By the Author

Table 13. Responses to the Open-Ended "Other, Please Specify" Item Related to Table 12

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Forums	1	20.18%
Internet	3	45.87%
Total	4	13.76%

Source: By the Author

As shown in Table 12, the majority of respondents considered meetings to be the communication medium most frequently used by public relations officers in their institution during crises, with a rate of 90%. Crisis communication guidance commonly treats meetings, briefings, and direct coordination forums as central channels during emergencies because they



facilitate rapid exchange of information, consultation, and aligned decision-making among relevant actors.

By contrast, the least frequently cited option was the category of other media, which represented 13.33% of responses, while media statements accounted for 30% and seminars for 16.66%. Table 13 further shows that, within the “other” category, respondents referred to forums and the internet as additional means of communication. Contemporary crisis communication practice also recognizes digital and online channels as increasingly important for the rapid dissemination and exchange of information during crises.

The high proportion of respondents who identified meetings as the most frequently used medium may be attributed to the importance of this channel in achieving effective and successful communication during institutional crises. Meetings also help generate solutions through the exchange of constructive ideas among actors possessing relevant professional experience and operational knowledge.

Table 14. How the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa Deals with the Media During a Crisis

Question: How does your institution deal with the media during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Involving the media in covering crisis events	18	60%
Promptly disclosing the real circumstances and facts of the crisis to the media	27	90%
Disregarding the importance of the media and imposing the institution’s own policy in announcing the crisis	3	10%
Other	0	0%
Total	48	160%

Source: By the Author

Table 14 shows that the largest proportion of respondents, representing 90%, believed that the institution deals with the media by promptly disclosing the facts of the crisis. Crises usually occur under unusual and highly stressful circumstances characterized by limited information, confusion, and both internal and external pressures, all of which may pose a threat to the institution. For this reason, the institution hastens to communicate the actual facts of the crisis in



order to avoid negative media coverage that may result from weak or inappropriate communication with the media during crisis situations.

A further 60% of respondents indicated that the institution involves the media in covering crisis events. This suggests recognition of the media's role as a key channel for informing wider publics and reducing uncertainty through broader dissemination of information. Crisis communication guidance likewise emphasizes proactive media engagement, timely updates, and transparent interaction with journalists as ways to reduce rumor, misunderstanding, and reputational harm.

By contrast, only a small proportion of responses, not exceeding 10%, indicated that the institution disregards the importance of the media and imposes its own policy in announcing the crisis. This result implies that such an approach is relatively uncommon compared with more open and responsive forms of media relations during crises.

Table 15. The Degree of Coordination and Cooperation Between the Institution and the Media in Covering Crisis Events

Question: Is there coordination between the institution and the media in covering crisis events?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	60%
No	12	40%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

As may be observed from the table above, 60% of respondents believed that there is cooperation and coordination between the institution and the media in covering crisis events, whereas 40% considered that no such coordination exists. This distribution suggests that, although a majority perceive a degree of institutional-media alignment during crises, a substantial proportion still identify weaknesses in the coordination process.

Table 16. Reasons for Contradictory Statements Between the Media and the Institution in Covering Crisis Events

Question: If the answer is yes, is this due to the following reasons?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage



The media rushes to report the facts of the incident	9	75%
The media doubts the extent to which the institution's information corresponds to reality	2	16.66%
The institution delays providing information	7	58.33%
Other	0	0%
Total	18	149.99%

Source: By the Author

Table 16 shows that the largest proportion of responses, namely 75%, attributed contradictions between media statements and institutional statements to the media's haste in reporting the facts of the incident. In crisis situations, time pressure and incomplete verification can contribute to conflicting narratives, particularly when media outlets are under pressure to publish rapidly.

The second most frequently cited reason was the institution's delay in providing information, at 58.33%, followed by media skepticism regarding the extent to which the institution's account reflects reality, at 16.66%. More broadly, these results may be interpreted as evidence of weakness in the relationship between the institution and the local media, a finding that appears to contrast with the results presented in Table 14, which suggested a more positive pattern of media engagement. Crisis communication literature likewise indicates that delayed institutional responses, inconsistent messaging, and mutual distrust can undermine effective coordination with the media.

Table 17. Evaluation of the Communication Media Used by the Public Relations Department During a Crisis

Question: How do you evaluate the communication media used by the public relations department during a crisis?		
Options	Frequency	Percentage
Appropriate	11	36.66%
Somewhat appropriate	16	53.33%
Inappropriate	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Source: By the Author

This table presents respondents' evaluation of the communication media used by the public relations department during a crisis. The response "somewhat appropriate" ranked first, accounting for 53.33%, followed by "appropriate" at 36.66%, and finally "inappropriate" at 10%. These results suggest a generally moderate assessment of the communication media employed during crisis situations.



It may therefore be inferred that the media used by the public relations department are considered relatively suitable, though not fully adequate. At the same time, and in light of the previous responses, these media appear to meet the expectations of employees within the institution to a reasonable extent. Crisis communication research commonly indicates that communication channels are most effective when they combine reliability, clarity, timeliness, and suitability for both internal and external audiences.

4.1. Key Findings:

The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

- Most members of the sample confirmed that Public Relations is understood primarily as the body that links the institution with its internal and external publics.
- The public relations unit occupies a middle-management position within the organizational structure of the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries.
- Most respondents emphasized that the role of public relations in the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries is primarily communicative in nature.
- The majority of the study participants considered public relations in their institution to have a preventive importance.
- Most members of the sample believed that two-way communication is the most frequently used form of communication during crises.
- The public relations unit relies on a transparency strategy in addressing the crises faced by the institution.
- All respondents confirmed that the public relations unit contributes to preserving the institution's positive image during crises.
- The public relations unit develops prior policies and plans aimed at preventing the occurrence of crises.
- Meeting with the crisis team constitutes the first measure undertaken by the Directorate of Tourism during a crisis.
- The public relations unit abandons reliance on downward communication and instead adopts horizontal communication.
- The insufficient competence of public relations personnel is regarded as the main obstacle to the effective practice of public relations activity.
- Most respondents confirmed that meetings are the most frequently used communication medium during crises.
- The public relations unit promptly discloses the real circumstances and facts of the crisis to the media.
- Most participants in the study confirmed that there are cooperation and coordination between the institution and the media.



- Most respondents evaluated the communication media used by public relations as somewhat appropriate.

5. Conclusion:

When a crisis occurs, it places the institution, including its administration and public relations unit, before an immediate and unavoidable reality, often under difficult conditions of decision-making. A crisis is generally characterized by surprise, since it emerges suddenly and without warning, and it is also marked by a high degree of complexity and overlap among its causes and components. Crisis communication literature similarly emphasizes that effective planning, transparency, media relations, and internal coordination are central to institutional resilience during crises.

The Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries in Tebessa is among the institutions that rely on public relations activities and functions in crisis management. This study found that the public relations unit performs an effective role in managing crises both inside and outside the tourism institution. At the same time, the study revealed certain shortcomings in public relations practices, particularly in relation to the media, which makes it appropriate to propose a number of recommendations that may be taken into consideration by the competent authorities.

Therefore, we suggest the following recommendations:

- Strengthen the relationship with the media and ensure that it is consistently provided with accurate information, whether the information is that which the institution intends to publish or that which the public seeks to know, especially during times of crisis.
- Seek to provide more advanced technological means through the institution's administration, and train the public relations unit as well as other employees in their effective use. Contemporary crisis communication guidance repeatedly stresses the importance of communication technology and team training in crisis preparedness and response.
- Expand the scope of upward and horizontal communication in order to ensure broader participation in problem-solving and crisis management within the institution.

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