

مجلة البحوث الإعلامية

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- The Role of PR in Tourism Companies for Maintaining
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- يطبق تقييم مارس 2020 للمجلات على كل الأبحاث التي نشرت فيها قبل 1 يوليو 2020
- يطبق تقييم يونيو 2020 للمجلات على كل الأبحاث التي سنكشر فيها بدء من 1 يوليو 2020 و حتى صدور تقييم جديد في يونيو 2021
- المجلات التي لم تتقدم بطلب إعادة تقييم سيظل تقييم مارس ٢٠٢٠ مطبقا على كل الأبحاث التي سنكشر بها وذلك لحين صدور تقييم جديد في يونيو 2021
- يتم إعادة تقييم المجلات المصرية دورياً في شهر يونيو من كل عام ويكون التقييم الجديد سارياً للسنة التالية للنشر في هذه المجلات

● **The Role of PR in Tourism Companies for
Maintaining Contact with the Audience during
the COVID19- Crisis**

Mohammed Alrushud
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● **دور العلاقات العامة في الشركات السياحية في الحفاظ على التواصل
مع الجمهور أثناء أزمة COVID-19**

● **محمد الرشود**
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Abstract

The current content analysis study aimed to know the most significant communication methods that tourism companies used during the covid-19 pandemic. The study involved two cases companies- Expedia Group and Booking. The two tourism companies were chosen because of their leading positions on the market of online-based tourism and hospitality industry as well as their uncompetitive status and the diversity of angles provided by both companies. Data analysis involved content analysis approach in which posts and videos were observed from 152020/3/ to 152020/5/ through the Facebook and Twitter platforms of the two companies. The study reached several results, public relations in tourism companies improve the contract and communication between the entities and their audiences. Moreover, companies used Facebook and Twitter to create awareness on the covid-19 pandemic and solve the reservations problems faced by their customers through direct communication to depict a positive image. In particular, The analysis of 65 social media messages by Expedia Group and Booking Company produced on Facebook and Twitter platforms suggests the existence of some subtle difference between the businesses' approaches towards the pandemic. In general, the study recommends the importance of using social media to create a robust public relation during and after the pandemic.

Key words : Public relations, Crisis plan, Covid-19, Communication, Social media, Tourism industry

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف دراسة تحليل المحتوى الحالية إلى معرفة أهم طرق الاتصال التي استخدمتها شركات السياحة خلال وباء كوفيد 19- ، وشملت الدراسة حالتين هما شركة إكسبيديا و بوكينج. تم اختيار الشركتين السياحتين بسبب مكانتهما الرائدة في سوق السياحة والضيافة عبر الإنترنت وتنوع الزوايا التي تقدمها الشركتان. تضمن تحليل البيانات نهج تحليل المحتوى حيث تمت ملاحظة المنشورات ومقاطع الفيديو من 2020/3/15 إلى 2020/5/15 إلى 2020/5/15 من خلال منصتي تويتر والفيس بوك التابع للشركتين. توصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج ، أهمها أن العلاقات العامة في شركات السياحة تعمل على تحسين التواصل بين الجهات وجمهورها. أيضاً من خلال الدراسة اتضح استخدام الشركتين لمنصتي الفيسبوك وتويتر لنشر الوعي حول جائحة كوفيد 19- وحل مشاكل الحجوزات التي يواجهها عملاؤها من خلال التواصل المباشر لإعطاء صورة إيجابية. تحديداً تم تحليل 65 رسالة من رسائل وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من قبل شركتي بوكينج وإكسبيديا والتي تم إنتاجها على منصتي تويتر والفيس بوك ووجد من خلال هذا التحليل اختلاف دقيق بين نهج الشركات تجاه الوباء. بشكل عام ، أوصت الدراسة بأهمية استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لخلق علاقة عامة قوية أثناء الجائحة وبعدها .

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاقات العامة، خطة الأزمات، جائحة كورونا، الاتصال، التواصل الاجتماعي، مجال السياحة.

introduction

The tourism industry has been worst hit by the covid-19 pandemic. The industry has experienced a decline in operations, revenue and profitability. Notably, the outbreak resulted in a series of travel restrictions, lockdowns and discouraged social gatherings. In preparation for the post-covid-19 reopening, companies have been devising ways to resume business, while observing containment measures. However, this was challenged by the negative perception that tourism had a positive link to the spread of the virus. In this way, the companies were faced by a new challenge to change the perception and improve the public image. As a result, the implementation of strategies that improve possibilities of a gradual reopening has prompted the need for communication with the customers. To remain afloat, companies in the industry have been devising ways to survive and maintain their market share after despite the pandemic. For example, the partial travel restrictions provided the companies with a chance to transact and engage customers. Most organizations in the tourism sector have resulted in the use of social media to facilitate public relations and remain in contact with customers.

However, Public relations became increasingly important. The pandemic left departure lounges empty in airports and hotels suffered sharp declines (Nepal, 2020). There are different ways in which PR, through the use of social media platforms, facilitated contact and communication between tourism companies and their audiences. For example, Facebook and Twitter are used to facilitate promotional strategies as well as brand awareness. In the same way, the

companies view the platforms as avenues to create awareness on the pandemic and ways in which the customers could engage in tourism activities while still adhering to the limitations.

Statement of the Problem

Most of the organizations in the economy have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The extent of damages in different organization has been varying. In this case, some companies have been harder hit than others. The tourism industry was worst hit by the travel restrictions and bans on international flights. The increased travel restrictions and total lockdowns have resulted in a decline in the number of tourists in the industry. The statement of the problem is an inquiry on ways in which companies have made efforts to contact and conduct business with their customers despite the pandemic. The main goal of the research was to analyze the communication methods that companies have applied to maintain constant communication with customers during the time when tourism has been suspended and to investigate the role of PR in the tourism companies for maintaining contact with the audience during the COVID-19 crisis.

Research Question and Objective

- What is the role of PR in the tourism companies for maintaining contact with the audience during the COVID-19 crisis?
- What are the communication methods that Booking and Expedia companies use to overcome the repercussions of the Covid-19 with their audience through Facebook and Twitter?

The specific manner in which the stated research questions were implemented in the conducted research will further be specified in the Methodology section of the current paper.

Background Information

Expedia Group 15/3/2020 -15/5/2020

Expedia Group published promotional and awareness creation content in their Facebook page. The posts, such as the “*Spark Your*

Wanderlust” entailed an illustration of tourism events that could be actualized. As part of awareness creation, the content indicated that the activities would maintain social distancing requirements. The content, such as a post on 8/3/2020 involved promotional aspects of the Saguaro Hotel. On March 9th, the company posted, in Facebook, Coronavirus Travel Advice. In May, the content changed to inclusion of home based tourism services. The content in Twitter platform entailed educational and promotional content. On March 26th 2020, the company acknowledged that customers were concerned about travelling, and provided an option to change or cancel the trips. April and May entailed posts on Twitter on the incorporation of trip management. For instance, the May 28th 2020’s post entailed the advisories on traveling policies in force.

The videos published entailed a comparison between pre-covid-19 era and the current operations amidst the pandemic. Additionally, videos included advisory information, guidelines and communication of availability of travel services. On May 22nd 2020, the company posted in Facebook a travel guides to the Yellowstone National Park. By so doing, the travelling guides were illustrated in compliance with the Covid-19 guidelines. The company posted a video on Twitter on March 30th informing on changing travel updates. Information in April was characterized by managerial changes due to the pandemic. For instance, it made a post on April 25th 2020 on refunds, and answered the comment questions. Videos in April and May were largely inforamatory. For instance, the company posted a video on Twitter on a presentation guiding travelers that would like to cancel their trips.

Communication with customers in Facebook platform was also actualized through active feedback. Specifically, the company engaged in active responses to the concerns and queries that the audience had. For instance, the comments were characterized by questions on ways to participate in tourism activities despite the covid-

19 pandemic threat. Communication in March 2020, both in Facebook and Twitter entailed information and awareness of the covid-19 pandemic. The communication changed in April through the inclusion of presentations on crucial processes such as trip inquiries, cancellation and availability of a service. In May, communication was presented in the form of a combination of comments, relies, videos and graphics.

Booking Company 15/3/2020 -15/5/2020

In March, the company posted in Facebook messages to customers about trips and Covid-19. Importantly, the March 19th post entailed awareness of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts on booked trips. On April 15th 2020, the company posted on Facebook that it had developed the CoronaVirus Help Hub. The content in May included promotional strategies such as advertisements. The advertisement of Copacabana Beach on Facebook on May 8th 2020 represented promotional information amidst the pandemic. The Twitter platform also provided a communication avenue with the targeted audience. The Twitter content in March entailed informational posts. For instance, it made a post on March 19th 2020 informing all stranded travelers that their bookings would be resolved. The content in April included information on additional features, such as self-service provisions announced on Twitter on March 19th 2020. In May, the content entailed procedures and attempts to maintain tourism services despite the pandemic's limitations.

The company complemented the communication through the content with videos. The videos were effective as they attracted the social media audience. On March 19th 2020, the company provided presentation videos on travel restrictions due to Covid-19 and the available chances that could be booked. On April 21st 2020, the company posted on Facebook that they were waiting for the easing of the pandemic to fulfil booked trips to iconic landmarks. The company

posted a video on May 8th 2020, advertising the Copacabana Beach as a demonstration that it was preparing for reopening. Video presentations in March entailed information on the seized movements and precautionary messages on Covid-19 pandemic. On April 20th 2020, the company posted an inspirational video labeled “*The world will wait for us*” to inspire and develop patience among the customers. Videos in May, such as one posted on Twitter on May 27th educated the audience on ways they could order hospitality services from the comfort of their homes.

Apart from the use of Facebook posts and videos, the company communicated to the audience and prospective customers through replies. Notably, the replies were effective in easing the tension created by the pandemic, especially due to the already booked trips. The company, in both the Twitter and Facebook platforms, communicated to the customers through hashtags and initiatives respectively. For instance, the #OurTravelWishlist was an initiative in Twitter informing the audience that the services could be interrupted but company communication and relationship with the public exceeded providing services. As observed, social media platforms have been effective in maintaining public relations through sustained contact with the audience and customers.

Literature Review

The Role of PR in tourism industry

Enhancement of public relations and communication with the audience remains vital for tourism companies in the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Higgins-Desbiolles (2020), the Covid-19 has transformed the tourism industry, involving the communication platforms. As a historic transformation, communication has largely shifted to the online platforms. Moreover, social media has improved public relations by treating tourism as a public good. In this way, the availability of the service is enhanced by improvements in public

communication. Additionally, social media has enhanced presentation of information to the potential customers and other categories of audiences. For instance, the improved interactions improve the positivity of the perception among the audience, resulting in better public relations. Interestingly, public relations is improved through the effectiveness of communication as presented in social media platforms. By so doing, research indicates that engaging the public is effective in mitigating the negative impacts of a pandemic, such as Covid-19 on the tourism industry.

The circumstances and transformations raised by the pandemic to the tourism industry inform on the need for improved communication. Sigala (2020) added that the use of social media has a positive relationship with tourism demand. Importantly, the extent to which the public is involved affects their travelling attitudes and future expenditure behaviors. Importantly, the influence on the perception of the audience inform on the need to keep contact with the customers. The author demonstrated that social media played the role of aligning perceptions on travels and other services offered by the tourism companies. Importantly, the alignment improves the business relationship, allowing the industry to shield itself from adverse impacts of a pandemic, such as covid-19. The findings from research indicated that public relations is linked to constant communication and improvement of perceptions of the audiences towards the tourism services.

An enhanced public relations mitigate the risks associated with the pandemic in tourism industry. As indicated by Gretzel et al. (2020), e-tourism, through platforms in social media, has improved the implementation of the needed transformation in the sector. Notably, companies have improved their competitiveness and product promotion by illustrating past memories on social media platforms. In this way, social media has improved public relations through the role of product awareness. For example, museums have opened virtual

doors and experiences. The role has improved the provision of the tourism services during the covid-19 pandemic. Public relations, in this aspect, has improved the competitiveness of companies in the travel industry despite the travel restrictions. As a result, the PR plays a linkage role between the industry and their audience.

Social Media and Tourism Industry

Social media creates a positive image of destinations despite challenges such as pandemics. Heras-Pedrosa et al. (2020) illustrated that the application of social media platforms, contents and videos improve the promotional strategies in the industry. As a result, the companies can maintain a contact with their audiences with the assurance that their interests are catered for. The authors informed that tourism destinations are a product of activities, attractions, accessibility and the provision of amenities. With the interruptions of the covid-19 pandemic, social media has allowed the tourism companies to illustrate all the functions to a customer. Moreover, it provides a platform for video visualization. An integration of the strategies allows the companies to maintain contact with the customers and online audiences. The contact assures the stakeholders that they could still receive customized services, adhering to the guidelines issued due to the pandemic.

Public relations have improved proximity of tourism services despite the covid-19 outbreak. According to Romagosa (2020), the covid-19 pandemic has triggered a transformation linking social media to the pandemic-induced perceptions. In this case, the perceptions affect spending behavior and willingness to make early bookings. For instance, companies have been required to enhance their public relations as an objective of enhanced future management. For example, companies believe that maintaining contact with the customers and creating an extensive audience provide a guarantee for future operational breakthrough. In summary, the aspects of public

relations, such as social media content and videos, improve contact with the audience by facilitating a positive perception to the services offered and improving awareness on the pandemic. Additionally, social media has provided an effective communication and interaction channel, resulting in more productive crisis management.

PR and Crisis Management

A public relations toolkit is an irreplaceable device in reputational crisis management. In a classic study on the subject, Larkin (2002) asserts that the lion's share of the definitive factors in crisis management relate to the immediate actions a particular institution which is in the state of crisis performs after a crisis occurs and in the communication regarding the institution's stance on the crisis and its own resolution efforts. The relation between crisis communication and reputational risk minimization is irreducible, seeing that public relations strategies influence perception of the general public on the crisis management, whereas even the most successful efforts in crisis prevention may stumble upon a reputational block of the public bias against an institution in crisis. The importance of crisis communication as a part of public relations is also highlighted by Sano and Sano (2019) specifically in relation to the tourism and hospitality industries. Sano and Sano highlight the importance of both establishing the business-to-consumer communication and facilitating effective consumer-to-consumer communication that replicates the business' position on the crisis situation, seeing that in the matters of post-crisis evaluation of reputation of the businesses the opinions of peer consumers are much more prioritized by customers than official positions of businesses which are typically perceived as agenda-driven.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique crisis, seeing that the source of its value comes not from failures of a particular individual company or a defined set of companies, but rather from the universal

threat for tourism and hospitality markets. As a result, the direct application of standard communication methods is unavailable for tourist and hospitality organizations, seeing that the entirety of the market remains largely unviable for the business appeal, and the lack of appeal was universal during the early stages of pandemic and the first wave social distancing and lockdown efforts. However, even in the situation of comprehensive global lockdowns and the suspension of international travel, the tourism industry actors preserve the capacity of earning competitive advantage through effective communication. Sengupta (2020) researched the post-lockdown outcomes for effective public communication and noted the necessity for the hotels and tourism destinations to communicate their efforts for creating a safe and sound environment for an academic recommendation on minimizing chances of the COVID-19 outbreak. Whereas the results of the study on the importance of communication of responsibility and safety within the industry are reliably established, the research on the differentiation of marketing approaches between the audiences that have different perceptions of the hazard created by COVID-19 as a function of age, health, and risk aversion are underresearched.

Methodology

Sampling

The research used two case companies: Expedia Group and Booking Company. The two tourism companies were selected in the research as they resulted in effective social media communication after the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Expedia Group and Booking Company were chosen because of their leading positions on the market of online-based tourism and hospitality industry as well as their uncompetitive status and the diversity of angles provided by both companies.

For purposes of this study, the two companies selected as primary research subjects are Booking Company and Expedia Group.

Booking Company is the US-based online traveling agency with the headquarter in Amsterdam. The company operates on the tourism and hospitality market for more than twenty-five years and had earned a reputation of a profit-driven corporation without consideration of corporate social responsibility programs ranging from the triple bottom line to sustainable development (Mellinas, María-Dolores, & García, 2016). Expedia Group is an indirect competitor of a Booking Company, an online-based entity that is engaged in travel fare aggregation rather than direct travel agency duties. Because of the status of the company as standing on the meta of tourism and hospitality market, it does not create particular managerial decisions on the tourism market yet still profits from internal traffic which grows as a function of demand for traveling and hospitality institutions (Shen, 2018). As a result, there are good reasons to consider that Expedia Group and Booking Company alike would benefit from effective communication that would sustain a vision of tourism and international travel in the post-lockdown countries as attractive and safe.

In summary, Booking Company is one of the leaders in online travel agencies market whereas Expedia Group is a data-aggregate that does not engage in managerial policies on coordinating online travel. The two companies provide the opportunity to sample two diverse corners of online hospitality markets and notice possible differences in communication strategies, seeing that Booking Company's strategic aim is to earn a competitive advantage over other traveling agencies while Expedia Group aims at maximizing booking with all traveling agencies hosted on their platform via using the company's services.

Data Selection

For this study, the selection of Expedia Group and Booking Company was based on their up-to-date posts and ease of tracking data from 15/3/2020 to 15/5/2020. The selection was picked on the

basis of relation of the posts to the topics of COVID-19, lockdowns, pandemic safety, or other health care considerations that are related to the pandemic. Further, the selection of the two companies was also based on their commonness in the tourism industry and availability of Facebook and Twitter pages. The availability of social media posts was considered strategic in availing data for collection and analysis stage, which was later used in the content analysis. The selection provided research with a sample of 36 messages on behalf of Bookin Company and 29 messages by Expedia Group. 16 messages of Booking Company were collected from Facebook and 20 from Twitter, while for Expedia Group 8 messages was Facebook-derived and 21 was received from Twitter.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study presented in this paper employed a qualitative method of content analysis in order to evaluate the types of general strategic positions employed by Expedia Group and Booking Company throughout the first three months of the lockdown. The present study intentionally avoided the quantitative methods and the rigid evaluation matrices, as its primary goal was to establish a general impression of the companies' strategic vision and methods for achievement of such vision. The unit of analysis used in the present study is Facebook posts and Twitter messages related to the COVID-19 and awareness content issued by Expedia Group and Booking Company in the established period of time, whereas the criteria of analysis are the general positions regarding the customer safety that could be interpreted from the sample of units of analysis. While the outcomes of the present study can potentially be used to establish a qualitative model of corporate usage of public relations for purposes of earning competitive advantages in the markets the functioning of which is delayed by a public hazard, this is not the aim of the present study. Instead, seeing the novelty of COVID-19 pandemic and the

general state of near-universal lockdown caused by a global public health hazard, the current study attempts to produce a novel methodological viewpoint on the effects of the COVID-19 on the two specific companies.

Data analysis involved the content analysis approach. In this technique, posts and videos were observed from 15/3/2020 to 15/5/2020. The criteria for data collection was thematic. Specifically, a post was considered important if it related to covid-19 pandemic and had a link to the tourism industry. For instance, the initial data involved posts in social media in March. Consecutively, data was collected for the posts in the month in April and May. The content analysis involved the arrangement of data in a tabular format to illustrate the changes in content, videos and communication in the three months. The content analysis was linked to the themes, such as social media, tourism, and communication with the customers and audience.

Results

The analysis of 65 social media messages by Expedia Group and Booking Company produced on Facebook and Twitter platforms suggests the existence of some subtle difference between the businesses' approaches towards the pandemic. In general, the Expedia Group appears to be more leaning towards a cautious and safety-oriented approach towards travel. In contrast, Booking Company, while explicitly stating its adherence to the safety and security standards, applied a more optimistic approach towards final dates and the scope of the pandemic. The generalized results of the sample represented by the landmark content issued by Expedia Group and the Booking Company in each of the three months of the research are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Content Analysis

Twitter Platform	Expendia Group	Booking Company
March 2020	On March 26 th 2020, the company informed customers that were worried about their trip that they could cancel or change their travel dates.	A post on March 19 th 2020 informing all stranded travelers that their issues would be resolved.
April 2020	The content in April involved managerial changes due to the pandemic. For example, there was a post on April 25 th 2020 on refunds and answers to the frequently asked queries.	April 20 th 2020, the company posted an inspirational video labeled “ <i>The world will wait for us</i> ” to inspire.
May 2020	Included content on enforced policies, available itinerary options and trip management, such as the May 28 th 2020’s post.	On May 27 th 2020, the company posted on Twitter and educated the audience on implementing the new normal.
Facebook Platform		
March 2020	On March 8 th 2020, the content posted entailed promotional information on the services on offer and the hotels available, such as the Saguaro Hotel. The promotional information was complemented by Coronavirus Travel Advisory.	The March 19 th 2020 post entailed information and awareness of the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the booked trips.
April 2020	In April and May, the company posted information on ways in which the home based tourism would be achieved.	On April 15 th 2020, the company posted on Facebook that it had developed the CoronaVirus Help Hub.
May 2020	On May 22 nd , the content in Facebook entailed the parks, such as the Yellowstone National Park that customers could visit.	The post on Copacabana Beach on Facebook on May 8 th 2020 demonstrated that the company was reopening some services amidst the pandemic, with the help of the provided guidelines.

The application of the discursive analysis to the selection of messages reveal the significant difference between the strategy of the two companies. In particular, the Booking Company and the Expedia Group appear to use drastically differing strategies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The intuition behind the difference of the chosen strategies can be illustrated in the following discursive graph:

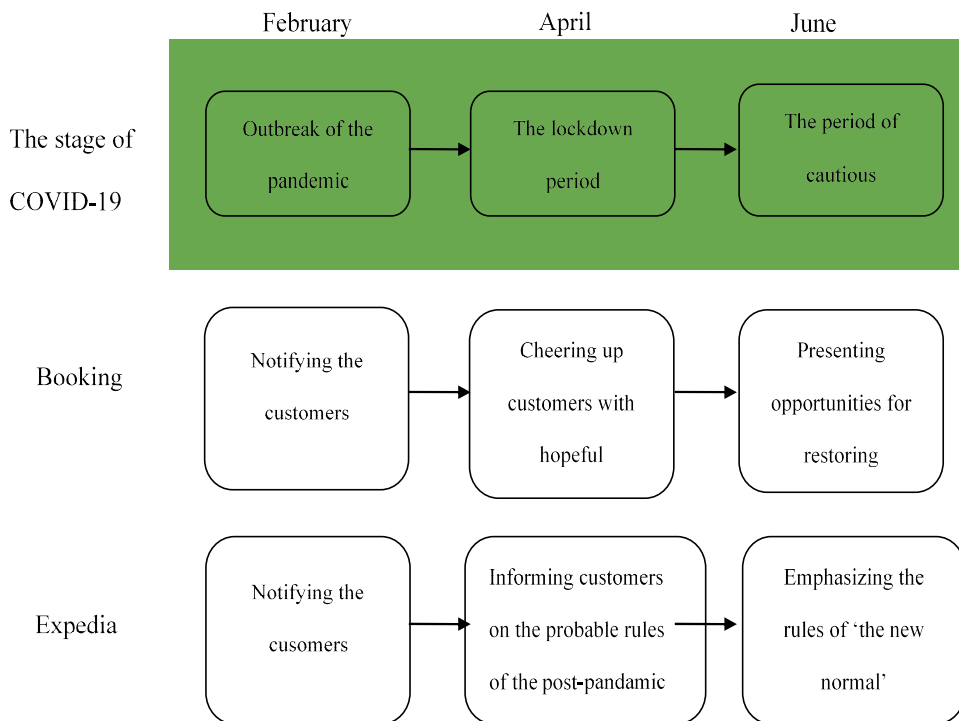


Figure 1. The stages of COVID-19 response and the correlating messaging of Booking Company and Expedia group.

Discussion

Public relations entail a positive rapport between an organization and its customers. The outbreak of covid-19 pandemic resulted in travel restrictions and bans, risking a deterioration of public relations (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). Further, organizations have been prompted to adopt communication approaches to maintain their audiences. Social media has improved the roles of public relations, such as communication and positivity of perceptions, in maintaining contact with the audience (Djalante et al., 2020). Other roles of public relations, through the use of social media, include instilling global responsibility and collective approach in crisis management. Notably, social media can minimize disease racialization and improve demystification of a pandemic in the tourism sector (Jamal & Budke, 2020). The content analysis indicates that public relations enhances rapport and communication, thus maintaining contact with the audience.

The general impression created by comparison and contrast between Expedia Group and the Booking Company suggests the existence of at least two strategies in relation to sustaining the customers' interest towards services of online traveling agencies and meta-hospitality agencies. On the one hand, the companies can engage in sustaining public communication as professional channels for dispersing relevant and current scientific information on the pandemic and informing the customers on the rules that are likely to be upheld in the majority of tourism and hospitality facilities. On the other hand, the companies may engage in optimistic cheering of the audience's expectation on the soon return to normalcy. The differences in tone and tenor between the two platforms are evident and correlate with the general reputation of Booking Company as a less CSR-aware entity compared to Expedia Group. Simultaneously, the message of the Booking Company consistent with its business

goals as a online travel agency, while the message of Expedia Group correlates with general goals of the travelling marketplace.

The two strategies appear to be highly competitive and such that appeal to the drastically different target audience. Thus, the outcomes of the current research on crisis communication in the time of the pandemic has the potential of expanding the research topics of the ongoing academic research on crisis communication in COVID-19 specifically and in the situation of global marketwide hazards in general.

Conclusion

Summary

Summing up, public relations in tourism companies improve the contract and communication between the entities and their audiences. As indicated by Expedia Group and Booking Company, the use of social media is a strategic approach in improving organizational public relations. Specifically, Expedia Group used Facebook and Twitter to educate its audience and create awareness on the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the company used the same platform to clarify issues and maintain crisis management stability. By so doing, social media allowed the companies in the tourism sector to depict a positive image to the public. The strategies of executing crisis management may, however, vary significantly. As illustrated specifically in the case of Booking Company public communication, tourism companies may use their social media communication channel in order to communicate their perception of the scope and seriousness of the crisis and to attempt to frame public perception correspondingly. The difference between social media content of Expedia Group and Booking Company by the end of the general lockdown regime represents the different perceptions of the consequences of the pandemic the companies attempt to create in their respective audiences. Nevertheless, both cases illustrated the specific roles of PR among tourism companies in maintaining contact with the

audiences include enhancement of positive perception, creation of awareness, and improvement of communication.

Recommendations and Future Research

The COVID-19 crisis has affected the tourism and travel industry most. As a result, the industry should take advantage of the use of social media to create a robust public relations during and after the pandemic. For instance, the industry should permanently adopt social media platforms as solid communication platforms. Moreover, tourism companies should use social media platforms to solve customer crisis, even after the crisis. Future research should incorporate quantitative research and data analysis to expand the findings. The collection of quantitative data would provide both the magnitude and influence of the research variables, such as perception and susceptibility of the pandemic among the audiences. A particular point of interest discovered by this study is the influence of the business model of particular tourism industry actors and the content of the crisis communication. The differences in communicational framing between the two companies that were the subjects of the present study could be explained by at least two alternative hypotheses: either by the general attitude of the company towards corporate social responsibility or the ways in which reputation risk management relates to company's profits. The case study of two companies cannot provide a persuasive answer to which model explains the companies' choice of framing in crisis situations; however, the question may potentially be answered in further qualitative and quantitative research on the difference between crisis communication of individual travel agencies and large online tourism platforms.

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