ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN AVIATION CRISIS MANAGEMENT: A CASE OF ONE AIRLINE IN KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving mother for her support both financially and morally.

Without her support, this thesis could not have been possible to complete.
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I would like to thank the almighty Allah for allowing me to undertake this study and the overall facilitation he provided me until the end of this study. Allah is Great.

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ABSTRACT

Global, continental and Kenyan aviation industry is growing very fast and is becoming the most convenient mode of transport. The more aviation industry expands, the more likelihood the sector experiences crises. This general aim of the study was to determine the role of public relations in aviation crisis management at one Airline Company in Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives; to determine the usefulness of crisis management plans in managing aviation crises effectively; to establish the public relations strategies used by the airline to protect its corporate reputation during crises; and to find out how the airline deals with intense media and public scrutiny during crises. The study employed quantitative approach and adopted a survey design. Purposive sampling was used to pick the case which had 3,000 employees. The study further used stratified random sampling to pick 300 participants of the study. Response rate of 86.6% [260 respondents] was achieved. The study collected data using self-administered questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and was presented in form of tables, figures and charts. The study found that the company under study does not have a well-established crisis management plan. The study also found that the company is less proactive in providing timely information to the media and the public but reacts to the media content quickly. The study concludes that the airline company narrowed down its public relations strategies in crises management to only two strategies: rebuilding strategies (compensation and apology) and bolstering strategies (reminding, integration and victim age). The study finally recommended that the company enriches its crisis management plan by outlining communication and public relations strategies, and raising internal awareness of the document. It also recommends that the company becomes more proactive in providing timely information both to the media and the public.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

This chapter gives the thesis reader some information about the study and its variables. It clearly gives background information about aviation industry crisis and Public Relations as a field of study that is useful in managing aviation crisis effectively. This chapter gives statement of the problem, general objectives as well as specific objectives that the study will achieve. Scope of the study, justification, significance of the study and limitations are also discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Public Relations (PR) refers to the building of good relations with the company’s various publics by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good corporate image and heading off unfavorable views and rumors. Public Relations activities and policies are used to create public interest in a person, idea, product, institution, or business establishment (Lages and Simkin, 2003). The initial stage of Public Relations was publicity, which simply meant planting positive news about an organization through the media. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000:1) further add that PR is “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success and failure depends”.

Modern management practices have recognized the importance of Public Relations and its integration to the organizational structures. Such recognition acknowledges that all organizations, regardless of size, orientation, geography or industry, must engage in
Public Relations, their only choice being the quality and positioning of the function (O'Dwyer, 1993).

Public relation is devoted to serve particular interests of the firms or persons it represents. It does so by presenting them to the public in the most favorable light (Broom and Smith, 1987). Thus, a major goal of the public relation practitioners should be to create an advantageous image for their clients using the media. Such clients could be business entities, institutions, or private or public individuals. This process, however, requires the Public Relations practitioner to use diverse research techniques, communication strategies as well effective media relations.

Crises are no longer rare, random or peripheral, but have become an inevitable and natural feature of our everyday lives and an integral feature of the new information/systems age. Hardly a day goes by without the occurrence of a new crisis, or the unfolding and “dragging on” of old ones (Mitroff and Anagnos 2001: 3-4). The world has recently witnessed a severe increase in crises of all kinds. It is literally crisis du jour, or the “crisis of the day”. Major crises can happen anywhere, anytime and to anyone (Mitroff and Anagnos 2001: 20, 21). No company, no matter how financially successful, powerful or reputable, is immune to crises (Regester and Larkin 2005: 142). Crises are threats that actually do or have the potential to severely damage an organization (Coombs 1999b: 1, 3). Crises threaten to damage reputations because a crisis gives people reasons to think badly of the organization (Coombs 2007d: 164). Threats to reputation, whether real or perceived, can destroy, literally in hours or days, an image or brand developed and invested in over decades. These threats need to be anticipated,
understood and planned for (Regester and Larkin 2005: 2). Coombs suggests that because no organization is immune to crises, all organizations should learn as much as they can about how to manage crises (1999b: 1,3).

Due to the recent technological revolutions, reputation of organizations is at risk more than ever before and therefore the need for PR to handle corporate reputation becomes very critical. As a result, this has increased the awareness of modern organizations about crisis management and communication. Fearn-Banks (2001) defines crisis as “a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization as well as its publics, services, products and/or good name”.

Crises usually jeopardize operations of organizations and can sometimes put organizational existence at stake. Thus, crisis management is strategic planning to prevent crisis to happen, minimize its effects on organizations, if it occurs, and help organizations recover from tainted reputation of previous crisis (Fearn-Banks, 2001). In simple terms, crisis management is the preparation and application of strategies and tactics that can prevent or modify the impact of major events on the company or organization (Stocker as cited by Caywood, 1997).

Global aviation industry has experienced several crises in the recent past. Most disruptive and costly incident is the volcanic ash over some European Airspaces. This incident had a negative impact on both European airlines as well us major global airline companies, including Kenyan based airlines. As the world is reduced to a village, due to the technological and transport infrastructure enhancements, the aviation crisis in one
country such as unfavorable weather, regulations and deregulations can affect aviation commercialism in other countries.

This is the time for aviation leaders, researchers and policy makers to do something to contain such disruptions from all crises that an aviation industry is likely to experience. While an air-carrier crash tends to be the most visible form of crisis in aviation, it is not the only type of crisis the industry faces. The highly complex, competitive, and interdependent nature of the industry puts airlines in chronic crisis mode (Ray, 1999:9).

In Africa, aviation industry is very sensitive and prone to crisis. Although one of the most visible and media headline grapping aviation crisis in Africa is air crashes, African aviation companies face several other crisis both internally and externally. Ray further argues that due to the competitive nature of the industry often induces sudden market shifts, competitive airfare wars, threatening small carriers- all act as potential industry crises. Financial problems, top management succession may also create a crisis within an aviation organization and in the industry at large.

It is important to distinguish some three key terms: Incident, accident and crisis. An incident is an event which affects a “self-container” part of a larger system. An accident physically disrupts a system as a whole. A crisis “physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core (Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992:12).

Many scholars suggest that despite aviation industry’s efforts to reduce factors that lead to accidents, such crises are inevitable, due to the complexity of modern technologies,
human factors, and the great interdependency of the industry. Crashes have occurred since the birth of aviation, but the growth of the industry, combined with the lightning speed of mass communication and technology development, have made airlines disasters and crisis larger in size, highly visible, and extremely complex to manage (Ray, 1999:9).

Kenyan aviation industry became across many air crash events. An airline flight from Abidjan-Lagos-Nairobi crashed in to the sea on 30th January, 2000 shortly after take off. Most passengers are believed to have died. The airline’s experience in air crashes was limited, and therefore its responses were not in-depth, effective and Public Relations centered. Subsequent same airline’s air crashes were handled using better crisis response strategies, media, and Public Relations techniques.

On 5th May, 2007 the airline’s flight from Douala International Airport in Douala, Cameroon to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport crashed. The flight originated from Abidjan but stopped in Douala to pick more passengers. All 114 passengers are believed to have died.

The airline experienced staff strikes which had threatened its commercial interests, corporate reputation, as well as Kenya’s economy in general. In October, 2009, the airline workers issued a strike notice through The Kenya Aviation and Allied Workers Union (AAWU) over a pay dispute. This was a looming crisis which was to affect the aviation industry in East Africa’s largest economy. Many flights were grounded as workers went on strike, leaving many passengers stranded in Nairobi.
The dispute between the airline and its workers was settled giving the management temporary breathing space; however, the issue was to be tackled in several months to come as the company struggled to protect image and reputation. Such crises are far reaching. Unless image and reputation restoration strategies are stipulated in the crisis management programs, the company will have a hard time to recover form crisis effectively.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Both Global and African aviation industries are crisis sensitive. The Kenya aviation is not an exception. Any crisis within the aviation industry is likely to affect diverse air transport consumers and this makes the industry prone to crisis and get high attention of the media coverage when crisis do occur. Public Relation is a profession which is useful in managing such crisis effectively. Research-based Public Relation practices enable management to solve complex and dynamic crises; it is useful in tracking the opinions and beliefs of key organizational publics while producing the intended positive result (Austin et al, 2001).

In addition, aviation industry is set to expand due to increased demand for global air transport, globalization, poor roads and railway connectivity, particularly in the developing countries, and the fact that air transport is the most convenient transport mode suitable for both long and short distances. In Africa, years of conflicts, low investments in infrastructure as well as corruption left the continent roads and railway systems in tattered conditions. This makes air transport within the continent most convenient. Air
transport is extremely significant in Africa due to distance between main African cities and inter-continental air transport connectivity.

In Kenya, following the promulgation of the constitution in 2010, the government is formulating a policy aimed at connecting all 47 counties through air transport. Among items in the policy is to ensure that each county establishes an airstrip while those already have one should upgrade to the nationally and internationally required standards. This indicates that air transport within the country will be increased tremendously.

For such national and global increasing trends of air transport demand, the aviation industry is set to expand massively. The more aviation industry expands the more crises are likely to occur. This study will examine the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management.

According to Lages and Simkin (2003:298) “PR is an emerging social science discipline currently lacking paradigmatic and topic diversity and strongly influenced by practice”. Within this context, contemporary society generally views the Public Relations function from one of two perspectives. First, there are those who discern it to be a mutually beneficial function benefiting both public and the management (Grunig, 2001). Secondly, there are those who identify Public Relation as being manipulative to the detriment of the public (L’Etangand Pieczka, 2009). It is against this statement of the problem that the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management in Kenya is sought.
1.3 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to determine the role of Public Relation in aviation crisis management in one Airline Company in Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

i. To determine the usefulness of crisis management plans in managing aviation crisis effectively.

ii. To identify the Public Relations strategies used by the airline to protect its corporate reputation during crises

iii. To find out how the airline deals with intense media and public scrutiny during crises.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study covered the role of Public Relation in aviation crisis management in Kenya. This study is contextualized in corporate public relations. The study is limited to one airline and it is carried out at the company’s headquarters in Nairobi. The researcher believed that this provides an adequate population and sample for the study and therefore gave reliable results and findings that are generalizable to other aviation companies.

The airline under study is significant market player, a giant in nature and offers sufficient sample of population from which findings can be generalized in context. The choice of this case (the airline company) is on the fact that the airline is one of the leading African
airlines which has its main operations and headquarters in Nairobi. The airline workers are diverse and this fact enhanced the study findings and reliability

Crises are different in nature, magnitude and impact on organizations. This study only covered aviation crisis in order to gain more in-depth understanding on aviation crisis and identify the best Public Relations strategies used to manage aviation crisis. Studying other industry crisis could offer some additional insights; this study is confined in aviation crisis in Kenya.

From a methodological perspective, this study adopted a survey design in order to generalize from a sample to a population. The purpose of a survey was to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitudes or behavior of this population (Babbie, 1990). This study was restricted in survey and questionnaires as its instruments in order to get sufficient and reliable data, which are easily quantifiable.

1.5 Justification/Rationale

This study focused on one of the Kenyan Airline companies and therefore limited itself to the above-mentioned scope of the study. The study focused on the aviation crisis experienced by the airline in the past and therefore addressed some of the critical unanswered questions. From the last 10 years, the airline experienced some air crash events, strikes as well as other forms of crisis, though the public was not provided with adequate information in relation to such crises. This study will facilitate an understanding
of aviation crises better, PR techniques used as part of the aviation crises management by the airline, and media and public handling.

From the researcher’s experience, there has not been much discussion in the public domain on the subject. No known study has been done on the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management in Kenya. This study is to bridge this gap in knowledge by investigating the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study help aviation policy makers, government and other relevant authorities to develop sound policies in relation to aviation crisis. This study examined the role of Public Relation in aviation crisis management, how best can be used to prevent crisis to happen, handle when it happens and deal with its effects at post crisis stage.

The study established strategies used by the management to avert negative impacts during crisis aimed at improving the organizational responsiveness to diverse crises that come up from time to time. This study is useful specifically to the leadership of the company under study. This study is a useful tool for understanding the role of Public Relations and how the Public Relations can be used to manage aviation crisis effectively in order to safeguard company’s corporate reputation.

Finally, the study contributed to the body of knowledge hence is of interest to both researchers and academicians who sought to explore or investigate the role of PR in managing aviation crisis.
1.7 Limitations

The study covered one of the Kenya airline companies and therefore was not able to study more institutions that would have otherwise provided a more in-depth understanding of the issue however; the researcher believes the study captured sufficient data to enhance our understanding of this subject matter and reliability of its findings.

The sample of the population is quite high and getting all data on time was to some extent challenging. In this regard, the researcher adopted flexibility in data collection method. Where it was difficult for the respondents to complete questionnaires on the spot, the researcher adopted ‘drop and pick later method’ as is detailed in chapter three under data generation technique. Despite all these limitations, the researcher believes that such limitations are addressed by exercising caution, flexibility and adaptability.
1.9 Operational Definitions of Terms

**Public Relation:** is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its publics. (Harlow, 1976:36)

**Aviation:** is the practical aspect or art of aeronautics, being the design, development, production, operation and use of aircraft, especially heavier than air aircraft.

**Crises:** are chains of events that have severe consequences (Hale et al., 2005), damaging human lives, property, the environment or any combination of the above (Stephens et al., 2005). Common to nearly all definitions of crises is the element of surprise (Massey, 2001).

**Crises Management:** is the art of making decisions to head off or mitigate the effects of such an event, often while the event itself is unfolding. This often means making decisions about an institution’s future while one is under stress and lack key pieces of information.

**Crises management plan:** is a key document that used to predicting and preparing for crisis through well-crafted and research based crises communication plans.

**Crises communication** is the dialogue between the organization and its publics prior to, during and after the negative occurrence (Fearn-Banks 2002).

**Reputation:** is the product of the social process that assigns agents/organizations their ranking in society
1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has identified, generally in descriptive, the organization to be studied. In addition to that, the chapter has clearly outlined the importance of the study and the research objectives to guide the study, which was conducted within the specified scope. The next chapter will discuss about the relevant available literature in relations to the role of Public Relations and aviation crisis management.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management. The chapter is structured on the basis of the research objectives which is to established how the airline company plans for crisis management, to establish the PR strategies used by the airline to protect reputation during crises and to determine if the airline deals with intense media and public scrutiny during crises effectively.

2.1 Theoretical review

Some theories have been developed to help aid us explain crisis management and communication. Among those theories is: Situational Crisis communication theory (SCCT).

2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

This study employed Situational crisis communication theory. This is a social-psychological theory, which attempts to analyze crisis from an organizational crisis responsibility perspective. The theory basically analyzes and tests hypotheses how dealing with different crisis situations are perceived, and how this affects outcomes such as reputation, purchase intention and emotions. SCCT is best used to analyze the effects of crisis and how it provides reputational threats to organizations. In this theory, threat is as the level of damage the crisis could have upon the organization’s image, if no action is taken. There are three different factors that shape the reputational threats in the crisis.
At the initial levels of crisis, crisis managers assess how much crisis responsibility stakeholders will attribute upon the organization. Crisis responsibility offers the elementary reputational threat, due to the proven negative effect it has on the organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007a). Immediately after the initial level of crisis, stakeholders and the public look in to the consistency and distinctiveness in order to evaluate crisis threats to the organization.

Consistency is regarded high if the organization experienced similar events in the past. Distinctiveness, on the other hand, is how well or poorly the organization has treated their stakeholders and handled such events in the past (Kelly in Coombs, 2007a). Threats from crisis are either increased by a high level of consistency or a low level of distinctiveness (Coombs, 2007a). Consistency-history of crisis- and distinctiveness –relationships prior reputation- both have direct and indirect impact on the wider organizational reputation.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory states that negative relationship prior reputation or a history of crisis will amplify loudly the reputational threats. This clearly demonstrates the significance of prior reputations perceived by both the public and stakeholders and how it may contribute in turn to manage crisis. At a crisis response strategy level, crisis managers should device strategies that can suit the crisis responsibility levels. As Coombs & Holladay (2006) argue, the factors that are controlling the reputational threats also tend to control the effects created by crisis and purchase intentions.

People want to hear the truth from a company regarding crisis. A 1992 survey by the Porter Novelli Public Relations firm found that the leading causes of anger about crises
were when the company involved refused to accept blame or responsibility, when the crisis could easily have been avoided, when the company provided incomplete or inaccurate information, and when the company placed corporate profits ahead of the public interest. Ninety-five percent of those surveyed said they were more offended by a company’s lack of honesty than the crisis itself (Maynard, 1993).

Situational crisis communication is a relevant theory for this study because it clearly demonstrates how to handle crisis situations for organizations. The theory also provides linkage between crisis and reputation. This theory further notes that reputation is perceived and therefore it takes more time to build than to damage.

2.1.2: Crises

Regester and Larkin (2005) claim that in business as in life, crises come in as many varieties as the common cold. The spectrum is so wide it is impossible to list each type. No two crises are alike. Each has its own causal factors, ramifications, duration, rhythm, and unknowns (Dilenschneider 2000: 121). A crisis does not necessarily mean casualties or personal injuries by the hundreds with devastating effects. A crisis may also be the result of some undesirable, and often banal, situation that may have a negative impact on the organization in some respect (Fagerli and Johansen 2003: 233). Crises imposes severe strain on the organization’s financial, physical, and emotional structures, and might even jeopardize the survival of the whole organization (Pearson and Mitroff 1993: 49). There are many books written about crisis management but there is no one accepted definition of a crisis (Coombs 2007c: 2). One reason for this might be the many different perspectives and focuses of researchers writings in this discipline.
There are many definitions of what a crisis is, though these descriptions often share common characteristics. Crises are chains of events that have severe consequences (Hale et al., 2005), damaging human lives, property, the environment or any combination of the above (Stephens et al., 2005). Common to nearly all definitions of crises is the element of surprise (Massey, 2001). Either the triggering event of the crisis itself was unexpected or considered to have a low probability of occurring (Hale et al., 2005; Alpaslan et al., 2009), or the triggering event was expected to happen sometime in the future, but not at the time when it occurred. As the triggering event was not expected, the organization will lose control over the situation for at least a brief time (Stephens et al., 2005). It is central to the definition of crises that all crises harm one or more stakeholders. Due to the consequences for stakeholders, crises bring into view the organization’s legal and ethical responsibilities and how well they are seen to be fulfilled (Alpaslan et al., 2009).

Depending on how this is perceived, organizations face the possibility of severe consequences for its image, reputation and future survival from those who blame the organization for the crisis and the woes of its victims or who consider its efforts to be lacking (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Because of the high stakes and the risk that they will escalate during a crisis, the organization must act quickly to regain control and try to reduce the damaging effects of the events to its stakeholders and its reputation (Hale et al., 2005; Massey, 2001; Stephens et al., 2005; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Crises can be classified into three broad types, or clusters: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster and the intentional cluster. In the victim cluster, are those crises that are seen to be wholly caused by external forces or agents, such as natural disasters. The
accidental cluster crises are those events which are seen by stakeholders as being partially outside of the organization’s control and which were not caused by organizational malice or misdeeds. Examples of accidental events include those caused by technology failure. The intentional cluster crises are those perceived to have been caused by the organization intentionally risking the safety of stakeholders can be found (Hale et al., 2005; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

2.2.3 Crisis Communication

Fearn-Banks (2002) argues that “since the term public relation was coined early in the 20th century, the profession has been crisis driven” and most of the programs aimed on dealing or avoiding crisis situations. Although public relations is useful in all aspects of management and dealing with various types of important organizational elements such as; image, reputation among others, it is also useful in managing crisis, both external and internal, that are possible to affect an organization’s operation. It is the function of Public Relations that communicates to both internal and external audiences of an organization about the crisis and measures the organization has taken to address such crisis. Some of the key audiences of this engagement are employees, stakeholders, media, suppliers and the community under which the organization operates. All these audiences and others are critical to the existence and the success of the organization.

Considering the nature of the crises as an unexpected event, crises communication is a recommended part of proactive measures in the organizational process. Crises communication can be defined as the dialogue between the organization and its publics prior to, during and after the negative occurrence (Fearn-Banks 2002). He further
suggests that the strategies and tactics are designed to minimize damages to the image of
the organization as a whole and not necessarily one-time crisis specific.

The question of whether to respond to a crisis situation or not is not necessary at this
stage. Marconi (2004:264) for example argues that “the longer a company or organization
delays its response, the more time critics, rivals, competitors and adversaries take
advantage of the situation at the company’s expenses”. If the organization does not
respond to crisis, another party -the media and other stakeholders- will respond and the
information they disseminate might not be factual. Many scholars argue that crises are
natural reality to organization’s success and development. It is a fundamental part of the
modern business process, which cannot be ignored in any case (Seeger et al 1998). It is a
reality which has to face any company at one time or the other and therefore crisis
management and public relation strategies are essential skills for modern management
leaders of all levels. It is important for them to master or at least be well-versed in crises
management in the context of public relations.

Each crisis situation is unique and therefore requires unique strategies, techniques and
communication design. Crisis communication strategies are aimed to decrease the level
of uncertainty by providing needed and timely information. Ulmer et al. (2007) note that
to prepare for crises, managers in an organization need to realize the nature of the crisis.
Crisis starts quickly and unexpectedly and most of the preparation has to be done ahead
of time.

After the crises occur, the crises management team has a responsibility to communicate
to both internal and external publics in a consistent and timely manner. However, it is
important for crises communications team to avoid absolute answers to the public through the media and realize that in crises situation, it is permissible to state that there is no information available at the current time (Ulmer et al. 2007).

In case, an organization is not responsible for a crisis, it is much easier to regain the trust and recover from the crisis, than in an event of intentional crises. The crises communications team needs to incorporate into the messages that the crisis was not caused by the organization and if possible, build the case about who is responsible and why without necessarily shifting blames (Ulmer et al. 2007).

While managing crises, it is important to acknowledge the stakeholders of the organization, such as media, consumers, employees, and competitors since each of these stakeholders play an important part in efficiently handling the crisis. Fearn-Banks (2002) emphasized the importance of including the head of Public Relations department to top management in a crises situation, since such Public Relations representatives will be responsible for making decisions about the situation using all available information (as cited in Heath, 2006).

Crisis communication theory is a critical tool to public relation practitioners when dealing with crises. An organizational crisis requires planning and preparation for each possible event where public relations professionals can step up and help coordinate the crisis management. Organizations can deal with crisis effectively if priority is given to organizational reputation as well as media and public inquiries. The media and the public can both help resolve or deepen crises.
2.3 Crises Management Plan

Most of Public Relations literature focuses on predicting and preparing for crisis through well-crafted and research-based crises communication plans and crises management plans. Such literature includes (Helitzer, 1999). This, in a way, gives clear mandate to public relation professionals to proactively predict crises and put in place mechanisms to address such crises in case they do occur. Scholars give priorities to some elements in the crises management plans; communications, responsibilities, and preparedness, including provisions for responses (Mortenson, 2006).

Putting in place an effective crises management plan is a dilemma faced by many modern crises managers and Public Relations professionals. Anticipation is the hardest part of the overall plan. As (Caywood 1997) concludes planning in advance of a crisis may be the prime determiner of the depth of crises and cost to a company’s reputation and its bottom line. Once an event occurs, there is no time for a considered and thoughtful approach to crises. This may suggest that actions in relation to crises which had not been planned for are most likely not rational and reactive. In most cases, crises plan begins with a corporate statement which outlines the organization’s crises management approach, providing a decision making mechanisms. In a way, the plan will summarize the company’s philosophies and ethics, and delineate what the company plans to protect (Caywood, 1997). Planning crises in anticipatory manner can be part of the Public Relations proactive decisions that can prevent or minimize crises cost on organizational reputation, revenues and other tangible and intangible costs.
2.4 Public Relation Strategies in Reputation Protection

The relationship perspective of Public Relations suggests that balancing the interests of organizations and publics is achieved through management of organization is critical (Ledingham 2006: 465). John Ledingham and Steven Bruning have been the primary researchers advancing relationship management theory. Relationship becomes the core of Public Relations and is defined as “the state, which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (Ledingham and Bruning 1998: 62). Relationship management theory shifts the central focus of Public Relations from communication to relationships, with communication acting as a tool in the initiation, nurturing, and maintenance of organization-Public Relationships (Ledingham 2006: 466).

Coombs (2002) claims, that both primary and secondary stakeholders are interdependent with an organization. Stakeholders and an organization have a connection that binds them together, whether grounded in economic, political or social concerns. Hence, it is appropriate to talk about relationships between an organization and its stakeholders.

Coombs have applied the relational perspective to the Public Relations function of crises management. He suggests that crises are episodes embedded in a larger and ongoing relationship between an organization and its stakeholders (Coombs 2002). The relational history is the result of the collection of events in a relationship and is functionally equivalent to reputation. A reputation is based on a stakeholder’s experiences with an organization. Thus, both reputation and relational history results from past interactions between the organization and the stakeholders (Coombs 2002). Stakeholders use the
relational history as a lens through which to view the current crisis situation. Crisis managers must anticipate how the ongoing relationship might affect how the stakeholders perceive the crisis and its impact on the organization (Coombs 2002).

Thus, the ongoing relationships with stakeholders provide a practical context from which to analyse a crisis episode, and helps managers to develop effective responses to crises. A relational approach adds depth to the attribution analysis of the crisis. The relational history of the stakeholders and the organization provide a value context for interpreting the current crisis.

According to L’Etang (2009:47) Public Relations is often defined as ‘reputation management’ by practitioners and journalists. Organizational reputations are often built over time, and its protection and sustainability is, in most cases, left with PR practitioners. As some scholars suggest, Public Relations is mandated to create and sustain favorable reputation for their agents. For instance Eisenegger (2005:1) asserts that the primary function of Public Relations is the long-term assurance of the survival of the agents involved. This presupposes that these agents can be positioned as positively as possible in their field of action, and also distinguish from any competitors. This is precisely the function presented by reputation: it is the product of the social process that assigns agents their ranking in society. To this extent PR can at its core be understood as reputation nurturing.

Although there is no much argument on the role of Public Relations as a reputation management, it is important to note that reputation is an asset for its organization. As Ashcroft (1997:326) argues, an organization’s reputation, even though it is not brought
up in financial reports, is just as important as any other asset possessed by the organization. In addition, Coombs and Holladys (1996) devised the damage to an organization's reputation can presumably be translated into substantial financial damages that might threaten the survival of an organization. They further suggest that the protection of an organization’s reputation from damage is achieved through the implementation of effective crisis response strategy.

Proactive public relation strategies are highly recommended by various scholars, an aspect they regard as an integration of Public Relations, marketing, and management disciplines to effectively address crisis when it occurs. Most crisis researchers focused on crises management without necessarily integrating it with other relevant disciplines. Until recently, proactive Public Relations management has been overlooked as a helpful tool for the successful management of organizational crises (Coombs, 2002; Fearn- Banks, 1996).

Some of the Public Relations strategies to protect reputation during crisis include: denial strategies, diminishment strategies, re-building strategies, and bolstering strategies (Coombs2007). These strategies are by and large dictated by the type of crisis and context. The choice of such strategies needs careful analysis before its adoption. It is also important to determine the reputational threat levels that crisis offer to organizations. If an organization has had similar crises in the past, the current crisis will be a much greater reputational threats (Coombs, 2004b; & Holladay, 2004).
### Table 2.4.1: PR crises response strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posture</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denial Posture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacking the accuser</td>
<td>The crisis manager confronts the person or group that claims that a crisis exists. The response may include a threat to use force (e.g., a lawsuit) against the accuser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>The crisis manager states that no crisis exists. The response may include explaining why there is no crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scapegoating</td>
<td>Some other person or group outside of the organization is blamed for the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diminishment posture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excusing</td>
<td>The crisis manager tries to minimize the organization’s responsibility for the crisis. The response can include denying any intention to do harm or claiming that the organization had no control of the events that led to the crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>The crisis manager tries to minimize the perceived damage associated with the crisis. The response can include stating that there were no serious damages or injuries or claiming that the victims deserved what they received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rebuilding Posture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>The organization provides money or other gifts to the victims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>The crisis manager publicly states that the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks forgiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bolstering Posture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminding</td>
<td>The organization tells stakeholders about its past good works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>The organization praises stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimage</td>
<td>The organization explains how it too is a victim of the crisis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Coombs, 2007*
During crises, organizational reputation suffers, partly because of the negative perception about the crisis by the public. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is part of a growing body of research, which tries to explain the relationship between Public Relations strategies and its role in reputational protection (Coombs & Holladay, 2004, 2005; Dean, 2004).

2.5 Handling the Media and the Public

Public Relations practitioners should have the public and the media in mind when developing crises communications plans, strategies and implementation. Crises become so because of the public perception on the issue. In other words, the public is the one to define crises. Organizations have no choice but to tailor public and media sensitive communication designs and strategies. Even though an organization does not perceive an event as a crisis, it becomes a crisis if the public regards it as one (Gillingham & Noizet, 2007). It is highly recommended, therefore, that Public Relations practitioners should perceive events from public’s perspective and not necessarily from an organizational perspective.

According to Nelkin (1988) media have an important role when conveying information, values and defining certain issues, which is far more than the seemingly simple task of only releasing information. Media are selective and ideological and therefore select and invite audiences to develop interest in some issues and not others. In most cases, media intention is to make a headline out of the crisis. This happens as quickly as possible. As
media and technology is rapidly advancing, the immediacy of crises coverage is becoming the order of the day. Electronic newspapers, blogs and even to some extent social media are all competing to ‘break a news’. The Public Relations practitioners should break the news of crises to the public before the media does, though not practical in most cases. In contrast, if the media breaks the news first on an organization’s crisis, the media will come out on top (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). If the organization does not provide information in relation to the crisis, the public and the media will get information from other possible sources, although it may not be factual.

The media selects one of its early-identified themes about the crisis and put more emphasis and highlights. The mass media focuses on one triggering theme so that its audience can also think in the same line, and therefore make judgment based on the mass media accounts. Barton (1993), Mitroff (1996, 2001, 2003), and Seymour and Moore (2000), claim the key to crisis management is control of messages.

The media’s ability to communicate news as soon as it happens has forced organizations to develop crises strategies that can be implemented expeditiously (Fink, 1986). It is highly recommended that the organizations control crises related information. Lack of organizational message management means control is relinquished to the mass media, and the media will retain control throughout the remainder of the crises and drive agendas according to their specific aims and objectives (Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999; Stephens et al. 2005).

A crisis situation can become more complicated in the atmosphere of high media involvement, where journalists are trying to continuously communicate with the primary
sources. One of the established ways to provide stability and protection for organizations in this situation would be to establish a crises center for the media (Lerbinger, 1997).

Caywood, (1997:63) suggests that Public Relations professionals relate with the media based on three main approaches: reactive, proactive and interactive;

Reactive media relations fields and responds to inquires. In this scenario media are information seekers. Public Relations practitioners should provide timely and accurate information so that what is covered in the media is their organization’s own perspectives and not that of the media and other speculators. This gives PR practitioners a chance to act as communication initiators and not terminators. Credibility of the organizational spokesperson in crisis situations becomes more critical. Many scholars suggest that such spokespersons should hold higher management positions in order to gain authority and credibility.

A proactive media relation builds upon the reactive steps and goes even further to promote and publicize the organization. At this approach the media, though information seekers, they are also keen to promote organizations in their favor and provide favorable coverage.

Interactive media relations approach is the best and the highly recommended approach. Professionals who strive for interactive media relations go even deeper to develop relationship with the press. Their reasoning is that media interest and subsequent coverage evolve from positive and ongoing interactions. In this approach, Public Relations practitioners are the sources of information, respect journalist’s deadlines and
generally develop mutual relationship with journalists and media practitioners. In my view, this latter approach is the most successful approach in handling media in situations of crisis.

Caywood (1997:67) asserts “...while the skepticism continues today, a new degree of personal respect is building between journalists and Public Relations practitioners. Both are beginning to realize that their relationship depends on mutual influence and interdependence. Case in point: it is estimated that 25-95 percent of the editorial material contain in published or broadcast media either originates with, or involves, a Public Relations professional”. This interdependence of both professions, in crises situation particularly, is what establishes mutual relationship and interactivity to allow the public consume messages with co-constructed realities and meanings.

The nature of media coverage is influenced by how crises managers deal with public demands regarding large events or crises in their organizations (Nelkin, 1988). Organizations in crisis should provide timely and accurate information to the public through the media because the media can move the company in to the public domain or keep them away from the public view too. Nelkin (1988) further argues “how the media portray organizations that are in a crisis can convince or upset the public, creating damage or repair reputation”. Most scholars agree the fact that the media is a critical stakeholder in any organization, especially those in crisis. Media, if effectively related with, can be an effective tool through which crises can be managed.
2.6: Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation (Reichel and Ramey, 1987). A conceptual framework should explain the main things to be studied, the key factors and variables. This could be displayed either graphically or in fluently text, and should declare the relationship between the variables (Miles & Huberman 1994). A conceptual framework is a research tool intended to assist a researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and to communicate this. In the context of this study, conceptual framework helps the reader to internalize or visualize the main aspects of the study in a clear manner.

**Independent Variable**

- Crisis management plan
- Proper handling of media and the public
- Effective PR strategies

**Dependent Variable**

- Effective crisis management

![Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework](image)
The figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework. The above conceptual framework is based on the readings and the literature review in this chapter. Both independent and dependent variables are clearly identified.

An independent variable is that variable which is presumed to affect or determine a dependent variable. It can be changed as required, and its values do not represent a problem that require explanations in an analysis, but are taken simply as given. The independent variables in this study are crisis management plan, media and public inquiry, and PR strategies used to protect reputation, while dependent variable is effective crisis management.

The following chapter provides clear explanation of the research methodologies used for this study and its design, data collection and data analysis methods.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter dealt with the method the researcher used in carrying out this study. It is organized along the following sub-sections: philosophical paradigms, research approach, population and sampling procedure, sampling technique, research procedure, reliability and validity, data collection instruments, data analysis and presentation, ethical consideration of the study.

3.1 Philosophical paradigms

Although philosophical ideas remain largely hidden in research (Slif & Williams, 1995) as cited by (Creswell 2009), they still influence the practice of research and need to be identified. According to Creswell (2009:5) “…I suggest that individuals preparing a research proposal or plan make explicit the larger philosophical ideas they espouse”. Philosophically, for the purpose of this study, quantitative approaches are from the Positivist perspective (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 1997; Oates, 2007; Prasad, 2009).

Proponents of this philosophical paradigm look for universal laws and procedures that govern cause and effect. This camp also focused on what they can see and observe and they test ideas, assumptions and findings by manipulating the variables of their study. Since the case study approach may be employed within a variety of research paradigms and perspectives, and across a range of academic disciplines, the researcher feels that positivist or post-positivist paradigms could fit best to this study.
This paradigm is ideal for this study because post-positivist hold a deterministic philosophy in which cause probably determines the effects or outcomes (Cresswel, 2009:7). This study sought to determine the role of Public Relations in aviation crisis management, having dependent and independent variables. Post-positivist paradigm is ideal when the problems studied reflect the need to identify and assess the cause that influence outcomes such as found in experiments (Cresswel, 2009).

3.2 Research Approach

This study used quantitative approach. This approach is means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. The variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures (Creswell 2009). This approach allows researchers to draw statistical inferences about a population. As a result, findings hold true not only for those surveyed, but for the entire population within that sample frame (Broom & Dozier, 1990).

The selection of quantitative approach is based on, among other factors, the fact that realities are independents and numerical and scientific processes bear minimum bias and subjectivity in discovering the truth. In the context of this study, quantitative approach is useful because the study aimed at establishing the relationship between Public Relations and aviation crisis management where the both population and sample size is large. Statistical and quantifiable data leads to a meaningful interpretation and understanding the phenomena in study.
Quantitative approach is characterized by studies that mainly apply statistical analysis to data collected by standardized questionnaire through survey methods that has been numerically transformed and that comes from a sampling frame that indicates it is representative of a broader population (Hulme, 2007). In other words, quantitative research is a general focus on measuring social reality in both collecting numerical data and using mathematical method in analyzing the data collected.

Quantitative researchers view reality as independent and attainable objectively only by following rigid guides in the process of data collection and analysis. This signals that the researcher is detached from the research process. The general purpose of quantitative research process was to develop generalization that contributes to theory that enables the researcher to predict, explain, and understand certain phenomenon.

**3.3 Population and Sampling procedure**

Ngechu (2004) underscores the importance of selecting a representative sample through making a population frame. A population frame is a systematic list of subjects, elements, traits, firms or objects to be studied. From the population frame the required number of subjects, respondents, elements, firms were selected in order to make a sample. Sampling ensured that some elements of a population are selected as representative of the population (Keya et al, 1989).

Probability sampling strategy was adopted for this study. Probability sampling strategy is whereby the population or units in the population have an equal chance or probability of being included in the sample. Probability sampling is also known as ‘random sampling’
or ‘chance sampling’. Random sampling ensures the law of Statistical Regularity which states that if one an average the sample chosen is random one, the sample had the same composition and characteristics as the universe (Kothari, 2004). The researcher further used stratified random sampling technique in order to get a representative sample from the population. For this study, the researchers divided the airline company workers in to three strata: senior management, middle management and junior staff, which constitute the larger portion of the population. From each stratum the study used simple random sampling to select total of 300 respondents. Response rate of 86.6% [260 respondents] was achieved

Table 3.1 Sampling frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior staff</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Research Design

The research adopted a survey design. A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population where from the sample results; the researcher generalizes or makes claims about the population (Creswel, 2009). Survey method is a systematic process, which
gathers information from large number of respondents for the purpose of understanding or predicting some elements of the behavior of the population under study.

A survey design was suitable for this study because the researcher tried to understand the relationship between Public Relations and crisis management, hence, conduct the study in an aviation company environment. Survey design was preferred when the researcher tried to make inferences about a population and where the whole population cannot be studies due to the large number of population involved. Survey design gave the researcher an opportunity to study a significant portion of the entire population and make generalization. The findings from the sample hold however true to the whole population and not only those who are surveyed. Survey, as a method, is also economical and rapid turnaround in data collection. This makes the method ideal because the number of population under study is quite high, and to get a representative sample one should end up getting huge numbers of sample size. Survey can best be used to capture data from such large sample size in quantifiable manner.

3.4.1 Research procedure

The questionnaires were designed by the researcher based on the research objectives. This data generation technique was pre-tested, to a sample drawn from the population, to ascertain the suitability of the tool before the actual administration. Pre-testing was done by administering the questionnaire to ten respondents who were selected randomly from another airline company. This enabled the researcher to fine-tune the questionnaire for objectivity and efficiency of the instruments as well as enhancing the study’s reliability. The questionnaire was estimated to take about thirty minutes to complete. A research
assistant, who was trained on communication by using the questionnaire, was also engaged to administer the refined questionnaire and in data collection stage.

3.4.2 Reliability and Validity

Joppe (2000:1) defines reliability as “…The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable”. Kirk and Miller (1986:41-42) identify three types of reliability referred to in quantitative approach, which relate to: (1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (2) the stability of a measurement over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period. Within this idea, the concept of replicability becomes important, if another researcher conducts the same research in the same context using similar instrument—the researcher has to arrive, more or less, at similar findings.

In the context of this study, the researcher felt there is greater reliability when using quantitative approach and a survey as a method in order to determine establishing the relationship between the variables under study. Data generation instrument adopted for this study generated enough and standardized data, which is more objective.

Validity, in its broader sense, embodies objectivity, truth, actuality, deduction, reason, fact and mathematical data to name just a few (Winter, 2000). In quantitative approach, validity is critical. Scholars like Joppe (2000:1) provide the following explanation of what validity is in quantitative approach: validity determines whether the research truly
measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull’s eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. Validity in quantitative approach is also called as “construct validity”- the initial concept, notion, question or hypothesis that determines which data is to be gathered and how (Wainer and Braun 1998).

The concepts of reliability and validity are controversial and debatable ones in the circle of quantitative approach scholars, but in relation to reliability the result is replicability and with regard to validity the result is the means of measurements and their accuracy.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Four types of data generation instruments preferred in a survey design include: self-administered questionnaires; interviews; structured record reviews; and structured observations (Fink, 2003). This study collected data using self-administered questionnaires. Nevertheless, where it proved difficult for the respondents to complete the questionnaire on the spot, the researcher used ‘drop and pick later method’.

This was suitable and allowed respondents to give more information at their convenience. As some scholars suggest, researchers should exercise adaptiveness and flexibility. They further argue that researchers must remember the original purpose of the research but then must be willing to adopt procedures or plans if unanticipated events (Yin 2009).
Folz (1996:79-80) summarized the concerns associated with questionnaires construction this way: Know what you want to ask and why you want to ask it; compose clear, unambiguous questions; keep the survey (questionnaire) as brief as possible; and have a plan for analyzing the result before the instrument is administered”. When preparing a questionnaire, the researcher followed some systematic procedures in order to arrive at the threshold of three broad objectives. The questionnaire must: (1) successfully gather information that answers each study question. (2) Motivates respondents to answer all questions to the best of their ability, and (3) keep all potential error to a minimum (Malhotra 1999).

Some of the questionnaire, as a data generating technique, disadvantages includes pre-recorded answers, lack of complete answers in some cases, and the fact that questionnaires confine respondents to certain line of thinking. However, it is also cost effective and gives adequate time to the respondent to fill in and surrender. The questionnaire, for this study, had close ended questions that allowed the respondents give their opinion and suggestions in a more quantifiable manner which intern makes easy to analyze the data by using some mathematical methods or procedure.

The questionnaires also used Likert scale (also known as Summated Scale) questions were given to participants to ascertain their reactions to the expressed statements. As Kothari (2004:84) defines summated scales “…it consists of a number of statements which express either a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards the given objects to which the respondent is asked to react”.

3.6 **Data analysis and presentation**

Complete questionnaires were coded and arranged serially to make it easy to identify. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to analyze the findings from the raw data. These included measures of central tendency (the mean), measures of variability (standard deviation) and measures of relative frequencies among others. Cooper and Schindler (2006) notes that the use of percentages is important for two reasons; first they simplify data by reducing all the numbers to range between 0 and 100. Second, they translate the data into standard form with a base of 100 for relative comparisons. Data was presented in form of tables, figures and charts.

3.7 **Ethical consideration**

Ethical issues in research should be considered at all levels of the research process. The researcher believed that ethical considerations are broader than just following some set of static guidelines. Besides obtaining the research permit from the relevant government department, the researcher feels that several other issues are worth considering in upholding ethics in the research process:

Information given to the researcher only used for academic purposes where confidentiality was accorded at most. The researcher believed that participants should not be exposed or their identities be made public, this may affect directly or indirectly their positions and status.

In general, researchers are obligated to protect the identity of their research participants (Ryen, 2004). In a research context, confidentiality involved handling of private
information; this is grounded in respect for the person and entails three dimensions: (a) the autonomy of persons and their freedom to have and maintain privacy and secrecy to whatever extent they choose, (b) the concept that secrets can be shared as each person chooses, and (c) the understanding that the promise of confidentiality is binding but must also acknowledge each person’s desire and right to share information (Bok, 1983). The request letter of the questionnaire clearly demonstrated this assurance of confidentiality.

Informed consent- the researcher intended to alert participants of this study about its nature and ultimately solicited their voluntary participation in the study. The researcher clearly explained to the respondents that participation of this study was purely voluntary and not paid for. Also point clarified was the fact that participants were allowed to withdraw any time if they decide so.

3.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter described the methodology that is applied in carrying out this study. The research design is descriptive in nature focusing on the airline company. The target population was the employees of the airline company, working at the head office in Nairobi. The sample size, the sampling strategy and questionnaire as a primary data collection instrument have all been discussed in this chapter. The chapter has also indicated that, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and data presentation is in the form of charts, graphs and tables. The next chapter will present the data findings of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and findings of the study as set out in the research methodology. The results are presented on the role of Public Relations in Aviation Crisis Management with a specific reference to an Airline Company in Kenya. The data was gathered exclusively from questionnaire as the research instrument. The questionnaire was designed in line with the objectives of this study.

4.0.1 Summary of the Responses from Selected Respondents

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to the Airline Company in Kenya and the results were considered a success since the researcher managed to obtain 260 respondents from the sample size.

4.0.2 Demographic Information

The demographic information was to determine the gender, age group, education level, job category, and years of service or working period. These were important because they indicated the basic understanding of Public Relations and its role in aviation crisis management. Background information is also important as it lays a basic foundation on which interpretation of the study are based. Furthermore, background information of the respondents enables both the researcher and the readers to have confidence in the study.
4.1 Gender of the Respondents

The researcher sought to inquire about the gender of the respondents in order to represent views of all gender during the study. On the gender of the respondents, the study found that there were more males shown by 61% and females shown by 39% of the respondents. This is depicted in the figure below.

![Gender Composition](image)

**Figure 4.1: Gender Composition**

4.2 Age Brackets of the Respondents

The study also sought to establish the respondents’ age bracket. From the findings, the majority of the respondents were 26-35 years old as shown by 54% of the respondents and 30% were aged 36-45 years. 18-25 years and 46 and above had similar percentage of 8% each as shown in the graph below. An interesting observation is that this confirms the argument advanced by Lages and Simkin (2003) that “PR is an emerging social science discipline currently lacking paradigmatic and topic diversity and strongly influenced by practice”. Most PR practitioners in the organization under study are 26-35. An age group
that is youthful and clearly showing that their skills and knowledge in relation to PR are both recently obtained.

**Figure 4.2: Age Distribution**

### 4.2.1: Education level

From the table above, it was disclosed that the majority were Diploma graduates by 58%, followed by 25% first degree graduates. Post-graduates were represented by 9% and the least percentage were secondary level indicated by 8%.

**Table 4.1: Education Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First degree</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.4 Job Category

It was found that most of the respondents, 37.5% were in the sales and marketing department. This was followed by the communications department, which was represented by 22.5%. The next was the operations department indicated by 20.833%, followed by the administration, 8.33%, then the human resource department, 7.5% and the least was finance/accounts department shown by 3.33% according to the table above. In the context of this study, 22.5% respondents in the department of communication, where Public Relations falls under, is a clear commitment by the management that communication and public relation is positioned favorably as far as staffing is concerned.

Table 4.2: Job Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance/accounts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and marketing</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.5 Years of Service/Experience

The respondents were also requested to indicate the number of years that they had been working for the airline company. According to the study, most of the respondents as
shown by 50% reported that they had been working in the company for over 6 years, 33% of the respondents had worked in the company for a period between 1 to 5 years, while 17% of the respondents said that they had worked in the company for less than a year.

![Years of services/experience](image)

**Figure 4.3: Years of services/experience**

### 4.3 Crisis Management Plan

#### 4.3.1 Crises on Brand reputation over the past five years

The study sought to investigate the extent to which brand reputation has been threatened over the last five years. From the study, 67% of the respondents indicated that the company has experienced crises that threatened its brand reputation over the last five years, while 33% have not faced such a situation reason being that they were not in the company for the last five years. This corroborates the argument that public relation is crises driven and most of its programs are aimed at dealing or avoiding crisis situations (Fearn-Banks 2002). It also amplifies the existence of a dynamic and contemporary crises within the aviation industry that which requires contemporary public relation solutions.
4.3.2 Establishment of a crisis management plan

This study sought to investigate the availability of crises management plan in the company prior to any crises occurrence. Majority of the respondents 57% indicated that there is establishment of a crises management plan put in place in anticipation of crises. While 43% of the respondents argued that there was no crisis management plan in place in case of a crisis. It is highly advisable that the company puts in place a crises management plans for effective crises management.

As Caywood (1997:197) concludes planning in advance of a crisis may be the prime determiner as to the depth and cost to a company’s reputation and bottom line. Although the findings of this study show 43% of the respondents argue that there was no crisis management plan in place, this could be because of lack of awareness of the plan by members of the staff.
4.3.3 Incorporating communication strategies in crises management plan

The study sought to know whether communication strategies for crises management are outlined in the crises management plan. Majority of the respondents 58% indicated that communication strategies are not outlined in the existing crises management plan, while 42% further indicated that there elements of communication strategies in the existing crises management plan. The absence of communication strategies in the overall crises management plan puts the PR department in a reactive mode that deals with crises as they unfold.
4.3.4 Taking Responsibility of Crises

From a theoretical perspective, it is important that the management of any given organization under crises takes responsibility if crises are out of their fault or shortcomings. This is not common in today’s modern business world because of legal actions and compensational consequences. In the context of the findings of this study, 67% of the respondents indicate that the company’s management takes responsibility often in the event of crises. While 33% indicated that the company management has not been taking responsibility in case of a crisis. This could be attributed in crises situations where the company is not liable or responsible for the crises.

Figure 4.6: Communication Strategies in Crises Management Plan
Involvement of Corporate Statement

Corporate statements are ideal in crises management efforts because it outlines decision-making hierarchy, mechanisms and behavior. It also clearly shows the approach and possible scenarios of crises. Corporate statement summarize the company’s philosophy and ethics, and delineate what the company plans to protect (Caywood 1997). In this case therefore, companies who do not involve their corporate statements at times of crises are likely to lose focus and damage organizational reputation as well as its assumptions of crises preparedness. From the findings of this study, 58% of the respondents indicated that the company has captured corporate statement in crises management plan and 42% of the respondents indicated that they did not come across corporate statement involved in the plan.

The substantial 42% respondents who believe that corporate statements are not captured in the crises management plan are either junior staff members who could not access such
crucial documents for the company or the management has not taken the lead to raise staff awareness in relation to the document and its content.

![Figure 4.8: Involvement of Corporate Statement](image)

**Figure 4.8: Involvement of Corporate Statement**

### 4.3.6 Integration of crises plan to the corporate strategic plan

The researcher also asked the respondents if the crisis management plan integrated with the wider corporate strategic plan of the company. According to the figure below, 75% indicated that corporate strategic plan was integrated in the crisis management plan of the company while 25% of the respondents indicated that there was no crisis management plan in the corporate strategic plan. An interesting observation to this point is that crises management plan’s integration to the wider organizational corporate strategic plan is a clear commitment by the management to address crises in a highly anticipatory manner, while harmonizing the two documents to complement one another and serve a reference to crises management situations.
4.3.7 Extent to which Respondents agree with Airline Plans for Crises Management

Table 4.3: Extent to which respondents agree with the airline plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airline plans</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information released by the group spokes-person is effective</td>
<td>2.2951</td>
<td>1.45309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis management team makes recommendations after each crisis for effective future crisis management</td>
<td>2.6885</td>
<td>1.48931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public feedback on crisis is considered</td>
<td>2.7869</td>
<td>1.30531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s has an active crisis management team in place</td>
<td>2.8689</td>
<td>1.56499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are clearly stipulated roles and responsibilities of the crisis management team members.</td>
<td>2.9180</td>
<td>1.40588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The crisis management team has a spokesperson positioned in the center of the team</td>
<td>3.0492</td>
<td>1.56446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s Public Relations/communications department is responsible for developing crisis management plan</td>
<td>3.1311</td>
<td>1.47733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study sought the respondents’ level of agreement with the airline plans for crises management to the extent which it brings out the role of Public Relations in an aviation crises management. From the study, majority of the respondents indicated that
information released by the group spokesperson was effective shown by a mean score of 2.2951, Crises management team makes recommendations after each crisis for effective future crises management as shown by a mean score of 2.6885, Public feedback on crises is considered as shown by a mean score of 2.7869, The company’s has an active crises management team in place as shown by a mean score of 2.8689, There is clearly stipulated roles and responsibilities of the crises management team members as shown by a mean score of 2.9180, the crises management team has a spokesperson positioned in the center of the team as shown by a mean score of 3.0492, and the company’s Public Relations/communications department is responsible for developing crises management plan as shown by a mean score of 3.1311.

4.4 Public Relations Strategies in Reputation Protection

4.4.1 Public Relations Strategies applied In Airline Company that affect the Role of Public Relations

Table 4.4: Public Relations strategies applied in Airline Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR strategies</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial strategies</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminishment strategies</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuilding strategies</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolstering strategies</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table above, the majority represented by 75% indicated that denial strategies that are attacking the accuser, denial and scape goating were not applied in the aviation company. The study also indicated that diminishment strategies (excusing and
justification) were not applied in the company represented by the majority percentage of 59. Rebuilding strategies (compensation and apology) had the majority percentage of 83%, while the bolstering strategies (reminding, integration and victimage) had a majority percentage of 67.5 indicating that the strategy is practiced in the company.

4.4.2 Extent to Which Respondents agree with the use of Related PR Techniques

Table 4.5: Extent to which respondents agree with the use of related PR techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR techniques</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational reputation is an asset possessed by the company which is similar to that of financial assets</td>
<td>2.0164</td>
<td>1.24488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR department is the company reputation management</td>
<td>3.0656</td>
<td>1.40082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR reputation management strategies are applied based on its prior success or failure</td>
<td>1.5410</td>
<td>2.77833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation is volatile if the company experienced more crises in the past</td>
<td>2.3934</td>
<td>1.32008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study also required the respondent to indicate the extent to which respondents agree the use of PR techniques. From the study, majority of the respondents indicated that the extent to which respondents agree the use of PR techniques affect the role Public Relations include PR reputation management strategies applied based on its prior success or failure shown by a mean score of 1.5410, Organizational reputation is an asset possessed by the company which is similar to that of financial assets as shown by a mean score of 2.0164, and reputation will be volatile if the company experienced more crises in
the past as shown by a mean score of 2.3934 while PR department for company reputation management as shown by a mean score of 3.0656.

4.5 Handling the media

4.5.1 Company handles the media and public during crises

Table 4.6: Company handles the media and public during crises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On rating how the company handles the media and public during crises, majority of the respondents (42%) said to a low extent, 33% said to a moderate extent, while 25% said to a high extent.

4.5.2 Company reaction at times of crises

Table 4.7: Company reaction at times of crises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slowly</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quickly and effectively</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the rating how the company reacts at times of crises that threatens its operations and reputations, 63% of the respondents indicated to quickly and effectively extent, 21% said to a fast extent, while 16% of the respondents said to a slowly extent.

### 4.5.3 Establishment of a branded media center

From the findings as shown by figure below, 71% of the respondents indicated that there is established media branded center during crises, while 29% indicated that the brand media center is not established.

![Figure 4.10: Establishment of a branded media center](image)

**Figure 4.10: Establishment of a branded media center**
4.5.4 Intense Media and Public Scrutiny

Table 4.8: Intense Media and Public scrutiny

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crises are regarded high when the media involvement is high</td>
<td>2.9016</td>
<td>1.56743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises become so because of the public perception</td>
<td>2.5738</td>
<td>1.55412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the crises the company communicates to stakeholders as part of an effective crises management process</td>
<td>4.0333</td>
<td>5.61163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication with media then is an essential element of any effective crises management program</td>
<td>3.0492</td>
<td>1.75524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public feedback is valued by your company for a better crises management.</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>1.44914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company broke the news or crises before the media did</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>1.50555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company provide information to the media before journalists come for it</td>
<td>1.1967</td>
<td>1.44706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the extent that the respondents agree with the dealing of intense media and public scrutiny during crises in the aviation company, the majority of the respondents indicated that the company provide information to the media before journalists come for it as shown by a mean score of 1.1967 and crises become so because of the public perception as shown by a mean score of 2.5738. Further, the crises are regarded high when the media involvement is high as shown by a mean score of 2.9016. The company broke the news or crises before the media did as shown by a mean score of 3.0000 and effective communication with media then is an essential element of any effective crises
management program as shown by a mean score of 3.0492. However, most of the respondents indicated that they during the crises the company communicates to stakeholders as part of an effective crises management process as shown by a mean score of 4.0333

4.5.5 Application of Media Relations Strategies

Table 4.9: Application of Media Relation Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive media relations</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive media relations</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive media relations</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 4.9 above, 44% of the respondents indicated that reactive media relations were applied during the crises occurrence and 33% indicated that proactive media relation and 23% interactive media relations follows with the smallest percentage.

4.5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the analyzed data in the order of this study objectives. The next chapter will highlight the findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the summary of the findings from chapter four, and also it gives the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the objectives of the study. The general objective of this study was to investigate the role of Public Relations in Aviation Crises Management, a case study at Airline Company in Kenya.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

5.2.1 Background Information

The research findings revealed that there was gender disparity, which has been experienced in many companies since the majority was male. It was also disclosed that majority of the respondents were between 26-35 years. This is in line with the age of the PR profession in Africa continent at large and in to the Kenyan landscape in particular.

On the aspect of education level of the respondents, it was found out that the majority were diploma graduates. It was found out that most of the respondents in the sales and marketing department were the majority. According to the research findings it was found that the majority had worked between 1-5 years.
5.2.2 Crises Management Plan

The study found that the company has experienced crises that threatened its brand reputation over the last five years. Also, the company has a crises management plan put in place prior to the occurrence of crises. However, a good number of the respondents do now know if there is existing crises management plan due to lack of internal awareness.

The researcher also found that the crises management plan does not outline the communication strategies to be used in time of crises. The respondents indicated that the company always takes responsibility in time of crises. From the study it was clear that the management plan does not outline any response strategies. It was also indicated that the corporate statement is captured in the crises management plan. It was also seen that the crises management is integrated with wider corporate strategic plan of the company.

The study data also shows that the extent to which respondents agree with airline plans for crises management plan greatly affect the role of Public Relations through the effectiveness of the information released by the group spokes-person and the recommendations made by the Crises management team after each crisis for effective future crises management.

Also, the Public feedback on crises and the activeness of the company in crises management team is considered. Furthermore, the clear stipulation of roles and responsibilities of crises management team members. The study found out that the positioning of a spokesperson in the center of the team of the crises management and enhancing the company’s Public Relations/communications department responsible for
developing crises management plan would be very effective towards the role of the Public Relations.

5.2.3 Public Relation Strategies in Reputation Protection

The study found that the rebuilding strategies (compensation and apology) were greatly applied in the company, as a Public Relation strategy in order to protect its reputation. This is in line with the 67% of the respondents who indicated that the company’s management takes responsibility often in the event of crises. It was found that bolstering strategies (reminding, integration and victim age) were also applied in the company.

Respondents of this study indicated that organizational reputation is an asset possessed by the company, which is similar to that of financial assets. The establishment of a PR department for company reputation management was necessary for the protection of corporate reputation during crises in the company. Also, it was discovered that the application of the PR reputation management strategies were based on its prior success or failure. The study also found that the use of related PR techniques to protect corporate reputation in company was agreed because reputation will be volatile if the company had experienced more crises in the past.

5.2.4 Handling the Media and Public

The study found that majority of the respondents indicated that the company handles the media and the public scrutiny during crises slowly while it reacts quickly and effectively at the times of crises that threatens its operations and reputation. The interesting part of this scenario is however the low media and public scrutiny vis-à-vis the reactive nature of
the company to media content regarding the crises in that particular point of time. There could be, most probably, insufficient information given to the media, and the media adds its own information to complement, which led the company to become reactional.

Also, the majority stated that the company had established and branded media center at times of crises. It was found that the company deals with intense media and public scrutiny during crises through regarding crises high when the media involvement is high, formulating the crises to become so because of the public perception, communicating to stakeholders during the crises as part of an effective crises management process, effectively communicating with media will be an essential element of any effective crises management program.

5.3 Conclusion

The researcher concluded that the company does not have a well-established crises management plan, although a good number of the respondents/employee 43% were not aware of its existence. Furthermore, the established crises management plan did not also outline communication strategies to be used in time of crises and also the crises response strategies are not outlined.

The study concluded that there is usefulness of crises management plans in managing aviation crises which has effectively enhanced the role of Public Relations through the information released by the airline’s spokesperson, making of recommendations after each crisis for effective future crises management by the crises management team, considering of public feedback on crises, active crises management team in place, clearly
stipulating roles and responsibilities of the crises management team members, positioning of a spokesperson in the center of the team and the developing of a crises management plan by the company’s Public Relations/communications department.

The study concludes that the airline company narrowed down its Public Relations strategies in crises management to only two strategies: rebuilding strategies (compensation and apology) and bolstering strategies (reminding, integration and victim age were also applied in the company).

These strategy limitations does not allow the airline company to explore other available Public Relations strategies in protecting its reputation during crises and more so manage crises more efficiently.

Despite, the study concluded that the airline company staff indicated that organizational reputation is an asset possessed by the company, which is similar to that of financial assets.

Finally, the study concluded that the company handles the media and the public slowly but it quickly and reacts to crises content disseminated by the media that may have bearing on its reputation.

The fact that the airline company does not provide sufficient information to both the media and the public makes the media source for additional information that might not be true. This also puts the airline company in reactive mode that creates anxiety between the media and the company.
5.4 Recommendations

1. The study recommends the availability of well-established crises management plans before even crises do occur. As per the airline company under study, it had crises management plan that did not outline communication strategies as well as crises response strategies to be used in times of crisis or. Hence, a good number of its staff, 43%, were not aware of the existence of the crises management plan.

2. The study also recommends that since the Public Relations strategies applied in the company for reputation protection are few, other public relation strategies available should be considered like, the denial strategies of attacking the accuser, denial and scapegoating and the diminishment strategies of excusing and justification.

3. The study also recommends that since the company handles the media and the public slowly, affecting the role of Public Relations in crises management, it should handle the media and the public scrutiny more differently by providing sufficient and timely information in order to manage crises effectively and protect its reputation in the long term.

4. The study has explored the role of Public Relations in Aviation Crises Management with a specific reference to an Airline Company in Kenya and established that access to crises management, Public Relations in reputation protection and handling the media and the public. The study finally recommends for further research to be undertaken in the areas of;

   • Efficiency of Public Relations strategies used during crises
   • Media content during crises
- Public information during crises.
- Effects of financial consciousness of aviation companies on effective crises management
REFERENCES


Mohamed Dubo Mohamed
Moi University
Nairobi, Kenya.

RE: REQUEST FOR QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETION

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on The Role of Public Relations in Aviation Crisis Management in Kenya. This is partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Masters of Philosophy in Communication Studies degree. You have been selected as one of the respondents and your participation in this study is voluntary. I hope this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and be of beneficial to you and your company. This is an academic study and confidentiality is strictly emphasized. Your name and other identifying information will not appear anywhere in this study. Kindly spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire.

Regards,

Mohamed Dubo Mohamed
Section A: Respondent Profile

1. Gender
   Male [ ]  Female [ ]

2. Age group
   18 – 25 [ ]  26 – 35 [ ]  36 – 45 [ ]  46 and above [ ]

3. Education level
   Secondary [ ]  College [ ]  First degree [ ]
   Post graduate [ ]  others..............................

4. Job category
   Administration [ ]  Finance / Accounts [ ]  Human Resource [ ]  Communications [ ]
   Operations [ ]  sales & Marketing [ ]

5. Years of service/working period
   Less than 1 year [ ]  1-5 years [ ]  Over 6 years [ ]

Section B: Crisis Management Plan

Has the company experienced any crisis that threatened its brand reputation over the last five years? Yes [ ]  No [ ]

6. Does your organization have a crisis management plan in place prior to the occurrence of crisis? Yes [ ]  No [ ]
7. Does the crisis management plan outlines the communication strategies to be used incase of crisis? Yes [ ] No [ ]

8. Does your company management take responsibility of crises? Yes [ ] No [ ]

9. Does the crisis management plan outline crisis response strategies? Yes [ ] No [ ]

10. Is corporate statement captured in your company’s crisis management plan? Yes [ ] No [ ]

11. Is crisis management plan in your company integrated with the wider corporate strategic plan? Yes [ ] No [ ]
12. To what extent do you agree with the following statements with regard to how the airline plans for crisis management? 1= Least extent 2= Low extent 3= Neutral 4= Moderate extent 5= Great extent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Least extent</th>
<th>Low extent</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moderate extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The company’s has an active crisis management team in place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The crisis management team has a spokesperson positioned in the center of the team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s Public Relations/communications department is responsible for developing crisis management plan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis management team manage crisis specifically in case such events take place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis management team’s responsibilities are maintained until such events come to an end</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information released by the group’s spokes person is accurate, timely and effective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The crisis team evaluated the success of the plans in relation to the goals and objectives of crisis management and made adjustments for future cases-lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience response is always evaluated for effective crisis management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section C: Public relation strategies in reputation protection

13. Among the PR strategies mentioned, which ones are applied in your company?

- Denial Strategies (Attacking the accuser, denial, scapegoating) [   ]
- Diminishment Strategies (Excusing, Justification) [   ]
- Rebuilding Strategies (Compensation, Apology) [   ]
- Bolstering Strategies (Reminding, Integration, victimage) [   ]

14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements which relate to use of pr techniques to protect corporate reputation during crisis in your company? 1= Least extent 2= Low extent 3= Neutral 4= Moderate extent 5= Great extent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Least extent</th>
<th>Low extent</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moderate extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PR department is the most accredited departments in the company which is mandated to protecting the company’s reputation during crisis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational reputation is an asset possessed by the company which is similar to that of financial assets.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The choice of public relation strategies to protect reputation is sensitive to context and prior organizational crises</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational reputation is threatened extremely when the company experienced prior crisis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section D: Handling the media and the public

15. Kindly rate how your company handles the media and the public scrutiny during crises?

Low [ ] Moderate [ ] High [ ]

16. Kindly rate how the company reacted when it experienced a major problem that threatens its operations and reputation?

Slowly [ ] Fast [ ] quickly and effectively [ ]

17. During crises, did the company establish branded media center?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

18. To what extent do you agree with the following statements with regard to dealing with intense media and public scrutiny during crisis in your company? 1= Least extent 2= Low extent 3= Neutral 4= Moderate extent 5= Great extent
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Least extent</th>
<th>Low extent</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Moderate extent</th>
<th>Great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The company broke the news or crisis before the media did</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis are regarded high when the media involvement is high</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company provided information to the media before journalists come for information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis become so because of the public perception</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication with media, then, is an essential element of any effective crisis management program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During crisis, the company communicates to stakeholders as part of an effective crisis management process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Among the media relation strategies mentioned below, which ones are applied in your company?

  Proactive media relations [ ]
  Reactive media relations [ ]
  Interactive media relations [ ]
## Appendix II: BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget item</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Unit cost in Ksh</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research assistants 2</td>
<td>30 days</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>A4 size Photocopying paper</td>
<td>12 reams</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5,760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other stationeries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65,760</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Contingency</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,576</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>72,336.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>