Evaluating Public Relations Effectiveness in Tourism and Hospitality: A Critical Study of Core Issues and Operational Challenges

Sahidur Alom

Assistant Professor, Assam Women's University, Jorhat, Assam

ABSTRACT

PR is vital to travel and hospitality crisis management as it assists in the repair and lessening of reputational damage to the sector. Transparency, understanding and coherence are the foundations of a successful crisis communication effort that can restore public trust, and mitigate long-term damage to reputation and revenue. Social media serves two functions in the digital space - proactive destination promotion and real-time crisis management. The goal of this study is to investigate the needs of public relations in tourism industry and the challenges of implementing PR in tourism industry that the tourism sector faces in the current digital era. The study objectives were attained by using the thematic analysis method. Two themes—the need of public relations in the tourism industry and the challenges of implementing public relations in the tourism industry—were developed from the six codes. The results showed that in order to promote resilience, restore confidence, and support sustainable destination branding, effective PR strategies in the travel and hospitality industries need to incorporate crisis preparedness, digital engagement, and consistent messaging.

Keywords: Public relation, Tourism industry, need of PR in tourism industry, challenges of implementing RP

1. INTRODUCTION

Fostering and keeping up a good reputation in the tourism and the hospitality sector needs efficient PR (Kim & Lee, 2018). Publicizing the visitors and restaurant industry, overall, is not an easy job; hence, the role of public relations planning should be stressed (Huang & Lin, 2015). In the travel and hospitality industry, public relations are significant and play roles in crisis communication and reputation management (Liu et al., 2016). Public relation's function in the travel and tourism sector has changed as a result of social media's increasing prominence (Leung et al., 2015).PR in the travel and hospitality industry Effective: for PR to be effective in the travel and hospitality industry, relationships with stakeholders need to be nurtured closely (Chen and Chen,

2014). The role of public relations can significant role in customer loyalty and satisfaction in hospitality and tourism industry (Kandampully et al., 2015).Uniquely difficult is to keep the public image from being tarnished in the tourist and hospitality sector, due to its intangible nature (Reisinger & Turner, 2012).Public relations could be very important to enhance sustainable tourism practices and better the image of industry (Lee & Ryu, 2017).In the travel and hospitality industry, comprehensive knowledge of publics is a prerequisite for successful public relation programme (Jung et al., 2015).There is great relevance gained in the travel and servicing sector in the realm of public relation with respect of globalization (Chen et al., 2016).According to Wang et al. (2017) the impact of a crisis on the travel and hospitality industry can be diminished when it is well-managed by means of public relations. The public are influenced very much by the public relations when they form an interest in tourist sites (Chen & Chen 2014).PR in the travel and leisure industry: Trust building for key stakeholders. The competitiveness of the tourism and hotel industry is increased through public relations (Huang & Lin, 2015). The increasing role of social media also means travel and hospitality industry public image is becoming hard to control (Leung et al., 2015).

The present study aims to examine the following objectives-

- To analyze the specific needs for PR in today's digital age
- To identify the key challenges faced by tourism businesses in implementing effective PR strategies

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

PR role in travel and hospitality, as in any other industry PR – building trust and reputation – is important in travel and hospitality (Kotler et al., 2006).Developing rapport with key stakeholders, which include members of the media, consumers, and influencers, is an essential factor in determining the success of public relations campaigns (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000).In addition to traditional public relations skills and expertise, tourism and hospitality Public relations professionals need to also be well-versed in reputation management, social media marketing, and crisis communication (Coombs, 2007).According to Leung et al. (2013), digital public relations has completely changed how public relations is carried out in the travel and hospitality sector. Building and sustaining a favorable online presence requires the use of social media, influencer marketing, and online reputation management (Freberg et al., 2011). Crisis communication is crucial in the travel and hospitality industry since crises can quickly damage reputations (Coombs, 2007). By using efficient crisis

communication tactics, a crisis can have a less detrimental influence on a destination's or hospitality company's reputation (Riad, 2013). Businesses in the travel and hospitality industries also have a lot of difficulties with reputation management, which is especially important when it comes to online reviews (Kotler et al., 2006). Digital communication and social media are becoming more and more significant, with social media being especially vital for advertising travel destinations and attractions (Cheong, J. M. H., 2020). Stakeholder engagement, event management, and community engagement are also essential public relations strategies in the travel and hospitality sectors. (Camilleri, 2018; Kim, 2020; Murphy, 2019). Even though it can be challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of PR in the travel and hotel sector, metrics like media attention, social media engagement, and customer satisfaction can be used (Watson & Noble, 2007). All things considered, the travel and hospitality industry depends heavily on public relations, and effective PR strategies are essential for reputation building, crisis management, and promoting travel destinations and attractions. Digital tools, storytelling, and cross-cultural communication are all integrated into modern tourism PR to enhance brand reputation and promote long-term growth. Through crisis management, event planning, and media relations, PR is crucial to creating and preserving a positive image. To increase trust and goodwill, many people engage in activities like influencer partnerships, community service, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). (Tanwar & Ashfaq, 2023; Fitran & Ridha, 2024; Amanda et al., 2022). European nations prioritize sustainability, IoT, and digital transformation in PR, emphasizing personalized experiences and post-pandemic recovery (Erbay, 2023; Tymchuk et al., 2025; Garda, 2025). Asia and developing nations think influencer partnerships and digital PR are essential for crisis recovery and destination visibility (Kihoro, 2024; Mwalukasa, 2024). To appeal to environmentally conscious tourists, tour operators are increasingly incorporating sustainable practices and corporate social responsibility into their public relations campaigns. (Tymchuk et al., 2025; Ia et al., 2018; Baniya et al., 2019).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology primarily involves a detailed literature review that encapsulates crucial studies on "Need for Public Relations in Tourism industry" and "Challenges of implementing of Public Relations in the Tourism industry". The data for the present research was collected from the secondary source of data collection. In the present research, information regarding need for Public Relations in Tourism industry" and "Challenges of implementing Public Relations in the Tourism industry would be

required which were collected from secondary sources. The authors have minutely reviewed and analysed the published articles on Scopus databases, web of science and other reputed journals. The study objectives were attained by using the thematic analysis method. Two themes—the need of public relations in the tourism industry and the challenges of implementing public relations in the tourism industry—were developed from the six codes, which include digital transformation and innovation, sustainable tourism and responsible practices, stakeholder engagement, effective communication and messaging, crisis management, and reputation protection.This research would follow all the ethical considerations related to the data collection and analysed, explored, and critically evaluated and gave unbiased conclusion.

Diagram: Main theme- Public relationship in Tourism industry
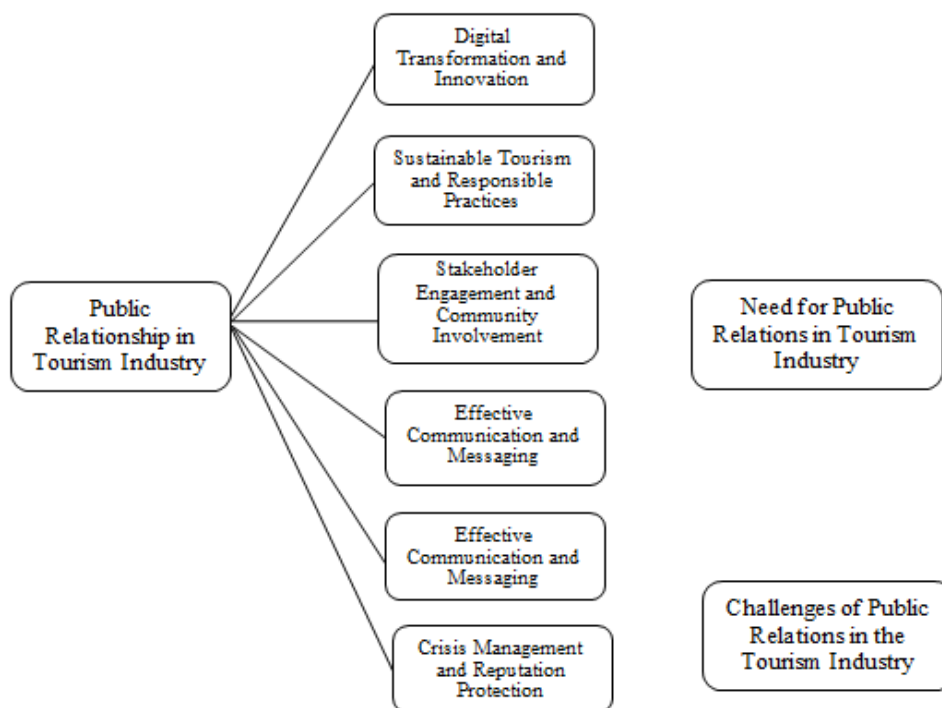
Source: Author's own survey

The study objectives were attained by using the thematic analysis method. Two themes—the need of public relations in the tourism industry and the challenges of implementing public relations in the tourism industry—were developed from the six codes, which include digital transformation and innovation, sustainable tourism and responsible practices, stakeholder engagement, effective communication and messaging, crisis management, and reputation protection. Digital transformation and innovation, sustainable tourism and responsible practices, stakeholders' engagement, effective communication and messaging and crisis management and reputation

protection, two theme was developed are the need for public relations in tourism industry and challenges of implementing public relationship in tourism industry.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research objective 1: The Need of Public Relations in Tourism Industry

Building and Managing Destination Image PR plays a very crucial role.PR is essential for shaping and maintaining a positive image of tourist destinations, which directly influences tourist perceptions and destination competitiveness. Effective PR campaigns highlight unique attractions, counteract negative perceptions, and build trust, all of which are vital for attracting and retaining tourists (Chizobam & Obinna, 2018; Santoso & Negoro, 2019; Rupasingha, 2021).

Stakeholder Engagement and Community Participation is very essential for the sustainable tourism business in the competitive market. PR strategies facilitate communication among stakeholders—local communities, tourists, policymakers, and businesses—ensuring that tourism policies are accepted and implemented effectively. Community involvement, fostered by PR, leads to more sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism development (Sawir et al., 2024; Awaloedin et al., 2024).

Digital Transformation and Innovation The integration of digital tools into PR strategies has revolutionized tourism communication. Digital PR increases interaction, encourages participation, and enhances brand credibility. It also aligns with sustainability goals by promoting responsible tourism and supporting economic growth through expanded employment opportunities (Garda, 2025; Kihoro, 2024; Khoirunnisa & Hakim, 2025).

 Strategic Communication and Storytelling Modern PR leverages storytelling and influencer collaborations to emotionally engage audiences, strengthen relationships, and amplify destination appeal, especially through social media and digital platforms (Awaloedin et al., 2024).

Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Practices PR is instrumental in promoting sustainable tourism by educating stakeholders about responsible travel, environmental conservation, and respect for local cultures. It supports the implementation of policies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Garda, 2025; Sawir et al., 2024; Awaloedin et al., 2024).

4.2 Research objective 2*:* Challenges of implanting Public Relations in Tourism Industry

Reputation Management: According to Kotler et al. (2006), managing internet reviews and reputation is a major concern for organizations in the travel and hospitality industry.

Crisis Communication: Since crises may swiftly harm a company's brand, effective crisis communication is essential in the travel and hospitality sector (Coombs, 2007).

Language and Cultural Barriers: In the travel and hospitality sector, communication between people of different languages and cultures can be difficult (Gartner, 1993).

Competition and Saturation: It can be difficult to stand out and hold onto market share in the fiercely competitive tourism and hospitality sector (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000).

Social media and Digital Communication: Travel and hospitality companies find it difficult to stay on top of the most recent developments in social media and digital communication (Kumar et al., 2020).

Sustainability and Environmental Issues: According to Rivera (2015), the travel and hospitality sector is under growing pressure to address sustainability and environmental issues.

Crisis Management and Reputation Protection PR play a pivotal role in crisis situations, such as natural disasters or political instability, by managing information, addressing misinformation, and reassuring potential visitors. Quick and open communication reduces adverse effects and preserves destination appeal (Sawir et al., 2024; Rupasingha, 2021; Chizobam & Obinna, 2018).

The quick dissemination of false information via social media and digital platforms can erode public confidence and harm travel destinations' reputations. Controlling the consistency, accuracy, and speed of information is a constant struggle, particularly during crises or bad press. Strong tactics are necessary for effective PR in order to combat false information and preserve a favorable reputation (Sawir et al., 2024; Pradini et al., 2024; Awaloedin et al., 2024).

Public relations for tourism frequently work in multicultural settings. Cultural differences can create communication barriers that reduce the effectiveness of messages and make it challenging to establish a destination's reputation in a variety of markets. To overcome these challenges, improving cross-cultural communication abilities and developing novel dissemination strategies are crucial (Zhang & Jiang, 2024).

It is difficult to balance the interests of local communities, businesses, the government, and tourists. Unsustainable practices, poor policy implementation, and resistance can result from a lack of community involvement. Establishing credibility and encouraging involvement are important but difficult, particularly in new locations. (Sawir et al., 2024; Pradini et al., 2024; Awaloedin et al., 2024).

Pandemics and natural disasters are two examples of crises that can affect tourism. PR must be adaptable in crisis management, providing candid communication and swift action to protect reputation and reassure stakeholders (Sawir et al., 2024; Pradini et al., 2024; Awaloedin et al., 2024).Leveraging new media, adapting to digital transformation, and integrating tools like IoT require resources and expertise. Due to resource limitations, smaller businesses may find it challenging to implement effective PR strategies (Pradini et al., 2024; Garda, 2025; Erbay, 2023)

5. CONCLUSION

Public relations are crucial in tourism, driving success and growth by building stakeholder trust, brand image, and customer loyalty. The industry relies on creative PR tactics to manage crises, maintain reputation, and engage audiences amidst increasing competition and digital transformation. Public relations are vital for building stakeholder trust and long-term reputation in travel and hospitality. Effective PR strategies, including crisis planning, empathetic communication, media involvement, and social media management, help prevent, manage, and recover from crises, ultimately strengthening reputation and trust. The travel and hospitality industry must integrate public relations into its operations to navigate crises and emerge stronger. This helps build a robust reputation and fosters long-term growth, enabling the industry to overcome challenges and thrive.

REFERENCES

- Amanda, A., Hamidah, S., Rusdiana, R., & Muhammad, F. (2022). Peran Public Relations di Industri Perhotelan. *Cebong Journal*. https://doi.org/10.35335/cebong.v1i2.15

- Awaloedin, D., Pradini, G., Rohiyati, U., & Andini, D. (2024). Strategi Sustainability Strategy and The Role of Public Relations in the Promotion of Environmental Tourism Banten. *International Journal of Economics, Management, Business, and Social Science* (IJEMBIS). https://doi.org/10.59889/ijembis.v4i1.373

- Baniya, R., Thapa, B., & Kim, M. (2019). Corporate Social Responsibility Among Travel and Tour Operators in Nepal. Sustainability. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11102771

- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). Community engagement and public relations in tourism: A case study of rural tourism development. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 42(5), 791-804.

- Chen, C. M., & Chen, S. H. (2014). The role of public relations in shaping the public's perception of tourism destinations. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 12(1-2), 34-47.

- Chen, C. M., Chen, S. H., & Lee, H. T. (2016). The impact of globalization on the tourism industry: A public relations perspective. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 14(1-2), 19-33.

- Cheong, J. M. H. (2020). Social media and digital public relations in hospitality: A study of hotel chains. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 11(1), 34-45. doi: 10.1108/JHTT-12-2019-0144

- Chizobam, O., & Obinna, E. (2018). Public Relations Strategies and Tourism Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.30560/jems.v1n3p16

- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding. Sage Publications.

- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding. Sage Publications

- Erbay, M. (2023). The Advancing Roles of Internet of Things (Iot) in Europe's Tourism Industry: Public Relations Strategies Post Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal Spektrum Komunikasi*. https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v11i2.528

- Erbay, M. (2023). The Advancing Roles of Internet of Things (Iot) in Europe's Tourism Industry: Public Relations Strategies Post Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal Spektrum Komunikasi*. https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v11i2.528

- Fitran, H., & Ridha, M. (2024). The Importance and Role of Public Relations In The Marketing Department at Mangkuluhur ARTOTEL Suites. *Journal Vokasi Indonesia*. https://doi.org/10.7454/jvi.v12i2.122

- Garda, B. (2025). Public Relations in Tourism: Digital Transformation and SDGS for a Sustainable Future. *Eurasian Academy of Sciences Social Sciences Journal*. https://doi.org/10.17740/eas.soc.2025.v59.02

- Gartner, W. C. (1993). Image formation process. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 2(2-3), 191-216.

- Huang, Y. C., & Lin, W. R. (2015). The impact of public relations on the tourism industry. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 13(1-2), 34-47.

- Ia, M., Campos, J., Hall, C., & Backlund, S. (2018). Can MNCs promote more inclusive tourism? Apollo tour operator's sustainability work. Tourism Geographies, 20, 630 - 652. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1457074

- Jung, H. J., Kim, W. G., & Lee, Y. K. (2015). The impact of public relations on customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 49, 82-91

- Kandampully, J., Zhang, T., & Jaakkola, E. (2015). The impact of public relations on customer loyalty in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 39(3), 267-283.

- Kashyap, V., & Bojanic, D. C. (2000). Public relations and destination image: A case study of the Gold Coast, Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 45-51.

- Kashyap, V., &Bojanic, D. C. (2000). A structural analysis of value, quality, and price perceptions of business and leisure travelers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 45-51.

- Khoirunnisa, D., & Hakim, L. (2025). Enhancing Tourism Promotion Through Digital Public Relations: A Case Study in Sleman, Yogyakarta. *Journal Spectrum Komunikasi*. https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v13i1.890

- Kihoro, O. (2024). Impact of Public Relations Efforts on Tourism Industry Growth in Developing Countries. *American Journal of Public Relations*. https://doi.org/10.47672/ajpr.2362

- Kim, H. Y. (2020). The impact of digital public relations on tourism destination image. *Journal of Travel Research*, 59(4), 559-573. doi: 10.1177/0047287520905412

- Kim, W. G., & Lee, Y. K. (2018). The impact of public relations on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 75, 102-110.

- Kotler, P., Bowen, J. T., & Makens, J. C. (2006). Marketing for hospitality and tourism. Prentice Hall.

- Kumar, V., Kumar, V., & Rahman, Z. (2020). Artificial intelligence and its applications in hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(10), 4324-4344.

- Lee, S., & Ryu, K. (2017). The role of public relations in promoting sustainable tourism practices. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(1), 34-47.

- Leung, D., Law, R., & Lee, H. (2015). The impact of social media on the tourism industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 6(1), 20-36.

- Liu, X., Zhang, Y., & Liu, Y. (2016). Crisis communication in the tourism industry: A case study of the MH370 incident. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 40(2), 147-163.

- Michigan' campaign. *Journal of Travel Research,* 58(4), 537-548.

- Murphy, J. T. (2019). Destination branding and public relations: A case study of the 'Pure

- Mwalukasa, B. (2024). Digital Marketing Strategies and Performance of Tour Operators Supply Chain in the Tourism Industry. *International Journal of Business, Economics, and Social Development.* https://doi.org/10.46336/ijbesd.v5i2.610

- Reisinger, Y., & Turner, L. (2012). The impact of public relations on the tourism industry. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 10(1-2), 19-33

- Riad, J. (2013). Crisis communication in tourism: A case study of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change,* 11(1-2), 1-15.

- Rupasingha, W. (2021). The impact of Public Relations on the Tourism Industry; a study based on Tourism in Sri Lanka. TRIVALENT, *Journal of Archaeology, Tourism & Anthropology.* https://doi.org/10.4038/tjata.v2i2.60

- Santoso, N., & Negoro, S. (2019). Public relations and tourism: finding public relations' role in communicating tourist destination. *Journal Studi Komunikasi (Indonesian Journal of Communications Studies).* https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v3i2.1532

- Sawir, M., Mastika, I., Prayitno, H., Lestari, A., Nur'aini, A., & Arsyad, D. (2024). Public relations strategies and sustainable tourism in Tolitoli Regency: a case study in the Indonesian context. *Cogent Social Sciences,* 10. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2376163

- Tanwar, P., & Ashfaq, R. (2023). Importance of Public Relations and its Tools in the Hospitality Industry. June-July 2023. https://doi.org/10.55529/jsrth.34.37.50

- Tymchuk, S., Neshchadym, L., & Barvinok, N. (2025). Brand Management in Tour Operating: Synergy of Marketing and Managerial Innovations. Economies' Horizons. https://doi.org/10.31499/2616 5236.2(31).2025.327444

- Wang, Y., Zhang, Y., & Liu, Y. (2017). Crisis communication in the tourism industry: A case study of the Zika virus outbreak. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 41(2), 147-163.

- Watson, T., & Noble, P. (2007). Evaluating public relations: A best practice guide. Kogan Page.

- Zhang, X., & Jiang, R. (2024). Analysis of Tourism Public Relations Strategies from A Cross - Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Social Science Humanities and Literature*. https://doi.org/10.53469/jsshl.2024.07(04).01