

Digital Public Relations And Its Role In Attracting External Audiences To The Organization

A Field Study Of The Algerian Telecommunications Commercial Agency, Tolga, Biskra

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Abstract:

This study aims to understand the role that digital public relations play in attracting external audiences to the Algerian Telecommunications Institution in Biskra. Digital public relations have introduced new methods that rely on the internet and its technologies and platforms to influence, persuade, and attract the external audience to the services provided by the organization in its field of work. The goal is to enhance the interactive capacity between the organization and its external audience. The study used a survey methodology, applying a questionnaire to gather information from the participants, who are employees of the Algerian Telecommunications Institution in Tolga Biskra, we have reached the following results: Digital public relations management contributes to attracting the external audience to the Algerian Telecommunications Institution in Biskra through:

Relying on tools and methods that help attract the external audience, such as digital advertising, the institution's official websites, the Internet, and social media platforms—particularly Facebook.

The quality of services and messages provided by the digital public relations department to the external audience is characterized by credibility and security in transmitting and disseminating information, as well as the speed and quality of the services offered, in addition to the improvement in the external audience's interaction with the institution.

Keywords: Public Relations, Digital Public Relations, External Audiences.

1. Introduction

Digital public relations are among the modern topics that have gained the attention of governments and countries, in addition to the interest of private institutions and companies. This is because digital public relations rely on modern technologies that help improve the quality of services and tasks provided, strengthen the link between any organization and its audiences, and develop its performance and activities. Furthermore, they enhance mutual and lasting trust with the audiences the organization deals with, ensuring the achievement of shared goals and interests. For this reason, those interested in public relations believe that its development is closely linked to the advancement of societies and their progress on various levels. In its new direction, public relations are seen as an integrated work combining various activities and functions inside and outside the organization, bridging management and organization with digital communication and human relationships, as well as balancing the professional and functional aspects with the psychological and social aspects of both internal and external audiences. This has led to the growth of digital public relations and the necessity of its development, whether in terms of technical or technological aspects, and the need to adhere to various digital functions related to its increasing interests, which are clearly connected with technological advancements in the digital environment.

2. Problem Statement.

In light of the competition faced by various contemporary organizations in recent years, public relations has become an important and essential function within the administrative structure of any organization. With the global growth and development of digital technologies, which have led to the transformation of societies from industrial to information-based, public relations management has adapted by utilizing and innovating new communication methods and digital applications. This has resulted in the emergence of digital public relations, which, through the use of communication and information technology, has found new and effective ways to facilitate communication and interaction between the organization and its audience. Digital public relations are characterized by their ability to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries, reaching audiences both locally and globally at lower costs, with greater efficiency, and faster achievement of goals, especially with the widespread use of internet applications, including social media platforms, websites, and others.

There is no doubt that any organization, regardless of its goals and purposes, must engage with its audience, which is the primary target of any organization. The audience is divided into two types: internal and external. The internal audience consists of all individuals working within the organization, including technicians, administrators, and workers, and may also include other categories such as founders and shareholders. The second type of audience is the external audience, which includes individuals outside the organization, such as current customers, potential future customers, distributors, and service beneficiaries. The external audience is further divided into two categories: the direct external audience, who are the recipients of the messages conveyed by public relations specialists, and the indirect external audience, who may influence the direct external audience or may later become part of the direct audience. Effective communication with both internal and external audiences leads to the success and development of the organization.

Algerian Telecommunications (Algerie Telecom) is among the service institutions that have come to rely on digital technologies, including the internet through social media platforms (such as Facebook and YouTube) and via smartphones through SMS as a communication method used across various fields. This allows individuals to access a vast amount of information and updates quickly, especially with the continuous growth of users. The public relations department at Algerie Telecom in Biskra is a vital component that helps the organization achieve its goals using various digital technologies and means. Based on the above, this research seeks to explore the role of digital public relations in attracting external audiences to Algerie Telecom's Biskra branch and drawing them to the services it provides. The following central research question has been formulated:

How does the digital public relations department contribute to attracting the external audience to Algerie Telecom, Tolga, Biskra?

This main question leads to the following sub-questions:

- What tools and methods does the digital public relations department use to attract external audiences?
- What type of services and messages does the digital public relations department provide to the external audience?

3. Reasons for Choosing the Topic:

- The novelty of the topic due to its connection with the use of modern technological tools and techniques.

- The importance of the topic from a scientific perspective and its suitability for field study.
- To explore the extent of interaction and response from the external audience to the organization's digital public relations management.
- The growing interest in digital public relations by the organization's management and various institutions today.

4. Importance of the Study:

The importance of this study lies in addressing the role of digital public relations in attracting external audiences, a topic of significant relevance in the fields of communication and public relations. With the advancement of communication technology and modern technical tools, it has become essential to keep pace with these developments and leverage them as much as possible to enhance communication processes and effectively persuade the external audience.

5. Objectives of the Study:

- To determine the extent to which public relations at the organization contribute to the use of technology.
- To identify the most important tools and methods employed by digital public relations to communicate with its audience, especially the external audience.
- To explore the various services provided by Algeria Telecom to its customers through digital public relations.
- To understand the response of the audience to the services offered through digital public relations.

6. Key Concepts:

6.1. Public Relations:

The International Public Relations Association defines public relations as: "An administrative function that is planned and continuous, through which organizations of all types and activities aim to gain the understanding, sympathy, and support of internal and external audiences." (Idris, 2005, p. 7)

The British Institute of Public Relations defines it as: "The deliberate, planned, and continuous efforts to establish ongoing mutual communication between the organization and its audiences."

Greece Wild defines public relations as: "The function performed by management to assess attitudes, determine policies, and align the organization's actions with the public interest, and to implement a program aimed at gaining the public's approval and understanding." (Adjwa, 2005).

Sullivan, a professor of American Public Relations, defines it as: "A management function that measures, evaluates, and predicts the opinions, attitudes, and anticipated reactions from both the organization's internal and external audiences. It controls the communication process between the organization and its audiences to achieve mutual benefits for both the organization and society." (Idris, 2005, p. 8)

6.2. Digital Public Relations:

Digital public relations is the process of communication through digital media and the distribution of materials such as publications and articles electronically, utilizing the tools and platforms of the internet and modern technological production (Al-Shamayla & Al-Laham, 2015, p. 150).

Morgan Carrie defines electronic or digital public relations as the use of modern communication technologies by public relations management to carry out certain activities that contribute to achieving organizational goals.

The International Public Relations Association and the British Institute of Public Relations define digital public relations as: "The management's use of modern communication technologies and digital media channels to carry out its activities in order to contribute to achieving the organization's objectives with its audience and society." (Haddadi, 2018, pp. 99-113)

It is also defined as: "Managing interaction and relationships with the audience through various electronic platforms and interactive applications such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others, which have allowed for organizing events and conferences not only in the physical world but also in the digital space. This is known as virtual objectives, where a dialogue circle is created with live discussions between the organization and its audience through its website, via multiple electronic applications that also allow for broadcasting events live over the internet and satellites." (Rayan, 2017, pp. 76-89)

6.3. Operational Concept:

Digital public relations is the management that relies on digital methods and tools to perform its tasks and achieve the public relations objectives of the organization with its internal and external audiences.

6.4. External Audience:

External audience is defined as: "Anyone who receives the messages directed by the organization outside its organizational framework. This means that there are two types of external audience: direct external audience, which is the target of the message, and indirect audience, which is expected

to influence the organization's external audience or may later become part of the direct audience that the organization interacts with."

(Al-Sairfi, 2005, p. 204)

The external audience is also defined as: "All individuals who are outside the organization but are directly or indirectly connected to it, including potential audiences such as shareholders, suppliers, and distributors, or the general audience such as the local community and the state." (Al-Mousous, 2015, p. 31)

6.5. Operational Concept:

The external audience refers to all individuals who interact with the organization and benefit from its services, either directly or indirectly.

7. Previous Studies:

Hadj Ahmed Karima, "Public Relations and the Application of Modern Technologies in Communication Institutions"

A thesis submitted for the Doctorate in Social and Human Sciences, specializing in Media and Communication, University of Rennes 2, academic year 2018/2019.

The researcher in this study was guided by the main question: "To what extent does public relations in Ooredoo Telecommunications use modern technologies, and what are the most significant of these technologies?" This question leads to several sub-questions:

- Does Ooredoo Telecommunications in Algeria have a public relations department?
- What is the impact and importance of the use of modern technologies in the public relations department of Ooredoo Telecommunications?
- How can modern technologies used in the public relations department contribute to the process of knowledge distribution within the organization?

The researcher relied on three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The existence of a public relations department in the organization is a valuable element for its development.

Hypothesis 2: The positive impact of using modern technologies in public relations facilitates the communication process between the organization and its audience.

Hypothesis 3: The use of modern technologies in public relations helps employees engage in their work, creating awareness and positioning the organization as a competitive and contemporary entity.

The study was structured into four chapters:

1. The basics of public relations.
2. Key concepts of communication and organizations.
3. The role of modern technologies in the development of public relations.
4. The impact of modern technologies in Ooredoo Telecommunications.

The study focused on exploring and identifying the modern technologies used in Ooredoo's public relations. The human aspect of the study was based on the opinions of employees in the public relations department, while the institutional focus centered on Ooredoo Telecommunications in Algeria. The temporal focus spanned from 2013-2016, and the methodology was descriptive-analytical, using surveys to assess the use of modern technologies in the public relations department. The sample included 20 employees from the department, and the data collection tools included observation, surveys, and statistical analysis.

Results: The study highlighted the overall importance of the public relations department in Ooredoo, emphasizing its role in fostering trust, responsibility, and ethics, and serving as a positive intermediary between the organization and its stakeholders.

No significant differences were found among the public relations staff regarding the importance of modern technology in public relations activities. The use of modern technology by the department brought noticeable development in employees' knowledge levels, as modern technologies aim to disseminate awareness and knowledge.

Utilization of the Previous Study: This study shares similarities with the current study, particularly in its focus on the technological and electronic aspects applied to public relations. It has been instrumental in helping us understand and structure the topic, providing insights into methodological aspects such as selecting the appropriate study approach, as well as benefiting from the theoretical framework and references used in the research.

8. Study Areas:

8.1. Spatial Scope:

The study focuses on the Algerian Telecommunications institution located in the city of Tolga, Biskra. The institution is situated in the 011 Housing area, on Prince Abdelkader Street, next to the postal office on the right and the financial agent on the left. It was established in 2017.

8.2. Human Scope:

The human subject of the study consists of all employees at the Algerian Telecommunications institution located in the municipality of Tolga, Biskra. This institution is an economic service-oriented entity with a commercial nature, aiming to provide services to customers on one hand and achieve profits on the other. The institution employs 25 staff members who work on a shift basis, alternating between morning and evening shifts. The employees are distributed across the following departments:

Director's Office

Back Offices:

- A. Technical Commercial Office (includes one employee)
- B. Cashier's Office
- C. Accounting Office

Front Offices:

- A. Customer Service Offices (Responsible for customers)
- B. Office for Disabled Persons

8.3. Study Methodology:

In this study, we relied on the survey method, as it included all employees within the institution. Since there is no dedicated public relations department, the tasks related to public relations are distributed across various other departments due to the nature of the institution's activities.

9. Data Collection Tool:

The study used a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool to communicate with the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, which were divided into three main sections.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	19	90
Female	1	10
Total	20	100

Analysis:

From the table above, we can observe that the majority of respondents were male, accounting for 90%. The female respondents made up the smallest percentage, which was 10%. This could be attributed to work conditions, especially the evening shifts, which tend to be more suited to men than to women.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-23	0	0
24-29	0	0
30-35	6	30
36-41	6	30
42-47	2	10
48 and above	6	30
Total	20	100

Analysis:

From the data provided in the table, we find that the percentages are fairly close. The largest group of respondents (30%) fall in the age range of 30 to 41 years, followed by individuals over 48 years, also at 30%. The group aged 42 to 47 accounted for 10%. Notably, no respondents were in the age ranges of 18 to 29, indicating the absence of employees in this age group at the institution.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Secondary	10	50
University	10	50
Specialized Training	0	0
Total	20	100

Analysis:

From the table, it is observed that the respondents with secondary and university education are equally represented, each accounting for 50% of the respondents. There were no respondents with specialized training, which may be attributed to the nature of the job and its requirements.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Professional Experience

Experience Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	0	0
5-10 years	6	30
10+ years	14	70
Total	20	100

Analysis:

The table shows that the majority of employees (70%) have over 10 years of professional experience, while 30% have between 5 to 10 years of experience. This indicates that the employees are well-established in their roles and have gained significant expertise over time.

Table 5: Use of Communication Tools in the Workplace

Communication Tool	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Phone	10	50
Fax	0	0
Internet	6	30
Email	12	60
Social Media	2	20

Analysis:

According to the table, the most commonly used communication tool among respondents is email, with 60%, followed by phone at 50%, and internet at 30%. Social media usage is relatively low at 20%. This shows that digital tools are predominantly used for communication, in line with modern technological trends, and ensure effective communication with the external audience.

Table 6: Work Approach Used

Work Approach	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Traditional	0	0
Digital	12	60
Both	8	40
Total	20	100

Analysis:

From the table, it is clear that the majority of respondents (60%) rely on a digital approach in their work. Meanwhile, 40% use a combination of traditional and digital approaches. This indicates that the management of the institution is primarily adopting digital tools, acknowledging their efficiency in streamlining work and increasing speed.

Table 7: Technologies Used by the Institution to Communicate with External Audiences

Communication Technology	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Institution Website	14	70
Email	6	30
Mobile Phone	8	40
Smart Board	8	40
Internet Network	12	60

Analysis:

The data reveals that the institution's most used communication technology is its own website, with 70% of respondents indicating its use. This is followed by internet networks at 60%, and mobile phones and smart

boards at 40% each. Email, while still used, is less common. This highlights the importance of the institution's website in providing updates and services to its clients and partners.

Table 8: Social Media Platforms Used by the Institution

Social Media Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	16	80
Twitter	4	20
YouTube	6	30
Instagram	2	10
TikTok	4	20

Analysis:

The table shows that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for communication, with 80% of respondents relying on it. YouTube and Twitter are also important at 30% and 20%, respectively. Instagram, with only 10%, is the least used, which may be due to its popularity among younger audiences who may not be the institution's primary target.

Table 9: Digital Methods Used to Attract External Audiences

Digital Approach	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Online Advertising	4	40
E-Marketing	4	40
Digital Promotion	8	80
Digital Advertising	2	20

Analysis:

According to the table, digital promotion is the most popular method used to attract external audiences, with 80% of respondents indicating its use. E-marketing and online advertising each account for 40%, while digital advertising is the least used, at 20%. This suggests that digital promotion is the most effective strategy for promoting the institution's products and services to the external audience.

**Table 10: Key Advantages of Digital Interaction with the Institution
According to Respondents**

Advantage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Speed	12	60
Time Saving	10	50
Quality	8	40
Security & Credibility	14	70
Effort Saving	10	20

Analysis:

From the table, the most notable advantages of digital interaction for customers and clients are security and credibility (70%) and speed (60%). Following these are time saving (50%) and quality (40%). The least significant advantage reported is effort saving (20%). This suggests that digital tools provide considerable security, efficiency, and trust, which are crucial factors in improving customer satisfaction and service delivery.

Table 11: Contribution of Digital Public Relations to Effective Communication with the External Audience

Contribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	20	100
No	0	0
Sometimes	0	0
Total	20	100

Analysis:

All respondents (100%) believe that digital public relations contribute to effective communication between the institution and the external audience. This is due to the advanced communication techniques and tools available within digital PR practices, which ensure seamless and rapid exchanges.

Table 12: Contribution of Digital Public Relations to Enhancing the Institution's Image with the External Audience

Contribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	70
No	0	0
Sometimes	6	30
Total	20	100

Analysis:

According to the table, the majority of respondents (70%) believe that digital public relations significantly enhance the institution's image with the external audience. Meanwhile, 30% consider its contribution to be occasional. This indicates that digital PR plays a significant role in shaping a positive public image by providing important updates and quality services that align with the audience's expectations.

Table 13: The Type of Audience Digital Public Relations Focuses on in Interactions

Audience Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Customers	12	60
Partners/Contractors	6	30
Suppliers	2	10
Institutions	0	0
Total	20	100

Analysis:

The largest group that digital public relations focuses on are customers (60%), followed by partners/contractors (30%) and suppliers (10%). No attention is directed towards other institutions. This indicates that the institution prioritizes its customers by providing them with essential services, while also engaging partners and suppliers as part of its network of relations.

Table 14: The External Audience's Interaction with the Institution's Digital Technologies

Interaction with Digital Technologies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	20	100
No	0	0
Total	20	100

Analysis:

The table shows that 100% of the respondents confirm that the external audience interacts actively with the institution's digital technologies. This suggests that the institution's digital platforms are effective and well-received by the public, enhancing communication and engagement.

10. Study Results:

After presenting and analyzing the study results, the general findings that answer the main question are as follows:

The digital public relations management contributes to attracting the external audience to Algeria Telecom in Biskra through:

- Relying on tools and methods that help attract the external audience, which include:**
 - Relying on digital advertising.
 - Relying on the institution's website.
 - Relying on the internet and social media platforms, especially Facebook.
 - Relying on smartphones, smart boards, and computers.
 - Relying on digital advertising and online marketing.

2. **The nature of services and messages provided by digital public relations management to the external audience is characterized by:**

- Credibility and security in transmitting and publishing information.
- Speed in disseminating information.
- Quality of the services offered.
- Improving the process of interaction between the external audience and the institution.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be said that digital public relations play a significant role in attracting and engaging the external audience with the institution. This is achieved through the use of various modern digital tools such as social media platforms, email, smartphones, and smart boards, as well as digital communication methods like online marketing, digital advertising, and digital advocacy, among others. These tools enable effective communication with the external audience, including customers, suppliers, and clients, by disseminating information about the services offered and informing them about the latest developments. Additionally, they facilitate the process of audience interaction, allowing them to raise concerns, make requests, and express opinions about these services, thanks to the ease of communication via digital tools. Therefore, all institutions, across various sectors, should consider adopting a dedicated digital public relations management department due to its significant and effective role in enhancing the institution's image among the external audience.

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