

An Assessment of The Pre-Crisis Communication Strategies used in Crises Preparedness in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Naivasha Sub-County in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the pre-crisis communication strategies used in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County. The key research question was: “What are the pre-crisis communication strategies used in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry?”. The study adopted the mixed research methodology, particularly the dominant-less dominant parallel/simultaneous (QUAL + quan) design. The study found that communication is critical in pre-crisis communication as supported from other literature, and as a strategy, the findings show that many of the hotels had a designated spokesperson who was key in pre-crisis communication and had planned channels in which to communicate to staff on what to do in case of a crisis. The study found positive correlations between pre-crisis communication strategies and crises preparedness which imply that increase in information level on crisis management plan in one staff category would increase the level of information in the corresponding staff category. Regression analysis shows that about 3% of the variations in crises preparedness in the area under study were attributed to pre-crisis communication strategies. The study findings will inform academia and be a base for scholars in mass communication in carrying out further studies in communicative strategies used in crises preparedness. The study will also be useful in enhancing crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Key words: Crisis, Pre-crisis Communication, Communication Strategies, Tourism Crisis, Crisis Preparedness, hospitality.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Several scholars have offered numerous definitions to tourism crisis. This study adapted the one given by Sonmez, Bachmann and Allen (1994) which defines tourism crisis as any occurrence which can threaten the normal operations and conduct of tourism related businesses; damage a tourist destination’s overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort by negatively affecting visitors’ perception of that destination, and in turn, cause downturn in the local travel and tourism economy, and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, in the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures. In view of the above definition, it is important to take what Glaesser (2006) calls crisis precautions that lead to crisis avoidance and crisis coping. Ritchie (2004) adds that while the specific nature of a crisis or disaster cannot be known in advance, managers can still reduce the risks through meticulous preparation for incident management based on likely occurrences. Therefore, the need for crisis preparedness is obvious (Maditinos & Vassiliadis, 2008) but, as Drabek (1995) and Prideaux et al. (2003) note, crisis preparation is not yet an integral component of tourism business practice, and many tourism executives seem reluctant to anticipate the need.

In recent years, the global tourism industry has experienced many serious crises and disasters including

terrorist acts, political instability, economic recession, bio security threats and natural disasters (Madinoto & Vassiliadis, 2008). The tourism industry has been one of many businesses affected by numerous crises and disasters around the globe in recent years (Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004; Santana, 2004). Therefore, Ritchie (2004) advises that tourism organizations and destinations need to be prepared to assist tourists during catastrophic events, and tourism destination managers should have crisis and disaster management competency.

According to Coombs (2009), communication is the essence of crisis management, and a crisis or threat of a crisis creates need for information. The reality of crises, he adds, leads to the need for preparation and readiness to respond. The critical component in crisis management is communication. Coombs continues to say that through communication, information is collected, processed into knowledge, and shared with others.

In December 2004, earthquakes with a magnitude of up to 9.0 on the Richter scale hit several parts of Asian coast triggering a tsunami (Reddy 2006). Tsunamis are one of the most destructive natural hazards that affect coastal areas, as their waves impact the coast with enormous energy capable of destroying objects on the coastal areas and can cause extensive damage and disruption to human lives, their livelihood, infrastructure and economic activities (Devi and Sheno, 2012). The disaster had an immediate impact on the tourism industry and livelihood of tourism dependent community, due to a decline to tourist arrivals (Reddy 2006).

Hurricane Katrina made a landfall in 2005 on the gulf coast of the United States, east of New Orleans city with a death toll of more than 1,200 (Dolfman, Wasser and Bergman, 2007). The hurricane also greatly affected the human, social, and psychological fabric of the city, with a notable effect on the city's economy, its labour market dynamics and its individual businesses. On tourism, 10.1 million visitors had spent a total of \$4.9 billion in New Orleans in 2004, but the number plummeted to 3.7 million visitors, who spent \$2.8 billion the year after the storm (Elliot, 2005).

Lockey et al. (2005) say that on July 7th, 2005, a series of terrorist bombs that exploded in London killed at least 54 passengers and left around 700 injured. The London bombings frightened visitors away from the capital's major tourist attractions and had considerable impact on the attractions of central London, especially on the 2005 domestic market throughout the summer holidays (Maley 2006). On 12th October 2002 the Indonesian island of Bali was rocked by a series of explosions and Bali experienced a dramatic fall in visitor numbers and this had by far the greatest impact on international tourism visitation than any other crisis in the island's history (Hitchcock & Darma Putra, 2005).

As in many other developing countries, tourism is one of the key drivers of Kenya's socio-economic development (Valle & Yobesia, 2009). According to Gachenge (2012), the tourism sector is extremely important to Kenya's economy and is one of the three top foreign exchange- earners, along with the horticulture and tea sectors. The National Tourism Strategy (2013-2018) identified tourism as one of the top priority sectors for realizing the development blueprint- vision 2030. The Tourism Act (2011) vouched for the establishment for tourism regulatory, development and marketing bodies, underscoring the importance of tourism to our country. The World Travel & Tourism Council (2015) says that travel and tourism had a total contribution of KES 561.8bn. to Kenya, a 10.5% of the GDP in 2014, and this was set to rise to KES 586.2bn in 2015. Dieke (2003) in de Sausmarez (2013) explains that tourism in Kenya is a source of stable foreign exchange and a means of diversifying a narrow resource-based economy.

Like any other country, crises interventions are crucial in Kenya because the tourism and hospitality industry in general is extremely important to the economy. According to Gachenge 2012, tourism is one of the top foreign exchange earners. The industry made a direct contribution to the GDP of Ksh184.4bn (4.8% of total GDP) in 2013 and was forecast to rise by 2.9% in 2014, and to rise by 5.2% pa, from 2014-2024. Additionally, Travel and Tourism in Kenya supported 226,000 jobs directly (4.1% of total employment) and

was set to rise by 2.3% pa to 2284,000 jobs in 2024, a 4.0% of total employment (UNWTO).

However, according to de Sausmarez (2013), tourism in Kenya has been affected by several crises in the recent years, the most serious of which was the unrest following the disputed elections at the end of December 2007. The unrest affected most of Western parts of the country, Naivasha, Kisumu and Eldoret, and to some degree the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa. The crisis occurred when tribal-based violence broke out following disputes over the results of the presidential elections where pictures of out-of-control mobs brandishing machetes were broadcast around the world, adds de Sausmarez. This led to a fall of 34% in international arrivals for 2008 over the previous year, even though the main tourism areas, the safari parks and beaches, were at no time threatened and that not a single tourist was harmed (de Sausmarez, 2013).

Gitonga (2014) asserts that Naivasha town is steadily becoming not only one of the safest and fastest growing towns in Nakuru County, but an exciting holiday destination. These days, he continues, Naivasha Sub-County is the most visited in Kenya, mainly during holidays, as it has become an alternative to Mombasa and the coastal region where there are concerns over insecurity. The Sub-County is home to the fresh-water Lake. Naivasha, has many tourist attractions like the Hell's gate National Park, Crescent Island Game Park and the Crater Lake Game Sanctuary. There are also several camping sites around the lake and a haven for bird watching and other game around the lake. Naivasha also boasts of a good number of world-class hotels and lodges such as Enashpai Resort and Spa; The Great Rift Valley Lodge Golf Resort; among others. Gitonga (2014) says that the lakeside area, with its cool climate, has become a retreat for local and international tourists seeking peace, quietness, and fun.

Naivasha Sub-County has been peaceful devoid of any significant crisis which can lead to what is termed as a philosophy of "it can't happen to me" –and can lead to the illusion of invulnerability reducing the responsiveness to danger signals (Ford, 1981; Rousaki & Alcott, 2006). With the constant threat of all kinds of crises ranging from natural disasters, technological, workplace violence, industrial accidents, terrorism and others, every organization, no matter how large or small, needs both a risk assessment and crisis communication plans (George 2012). Naivasha Sub-County tourism sector therefore needs to be prepared for crises as already argued by Coombs (2012) among other authors, that communication is a key component of crises preparedness.

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the most vulnerable to crisis and can be affected by internal and external hazards (AlBattat & Som 2013). Emergencies have become more frequent and complex than before, hence affecting the hospitality industry and related industries which have an impact on the economies of many nations, Kenya included. Many organizations in the world today are seeking for communicative interventions that may help in preparing for emergencies and catastrophes, since communication is an important aspect of effectively and efficiently dealing with crisis situations (Ritchie, et al 2004).

Kenya has on several occasions been affected by crises triggered by either terrorism, political, economic, or natural events. de Sausmarez (2013) gives the example of the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, which was followed by terrorist attacks on a hotel and an El Al flight near Mombasa in November 2002; political unrest following the disputed 2007 general elections; global economic recession that affected levels of discretionary spending in European and American tourism markets in 2007/2008, all which significantly led to lower tourist arrivals in our country. All these crises and others that had happened before and since, have had devastating effects and sometimes almost crippling the entire industry.

Since tourism is highly susceptible to shocks, and effects of crises in the industry can lead to several direct and indirect repercussions, Kovoor et al (2000) recommends that appropriate communication techniques and strategies can help to proactively overcome or prevent crises. Regular evaluation of such techniques is necessary to ensure effectiveness (Ritchie et al 2004). Santana (2004) states that, there are communication

strategies in application for crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry world over. However, in Kenya, assessment of the same is glaringly lacking (de Sausmarez 2013) and hence, the need for this study, which was conducted to assess the pre-crisis communication strategies used in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Coombs and Holladay (2010), this is an anticipatory phase where prevention is top priority and vigilance is employed to aid crisis decision making and prevention. Wan and Pfau (2004) recommend using pre-crisis messages to inoculate stakeholders about crises while Coombs and Holladay (2010) explain that pre-crisis messages give stakeholders some information about a potential crisis to help build up resistance to a negative reaction and negative media coverage of a crisis. They view this stage as a proactive symmetrical process where environmental scanning should be emphasized. Environmental scanning entails trying to find early warning signs of a crisis and planning actions designed to influence the development of the issue.

Reynolds (2012) views environmental scanning as to monitor and recognize emerging risks since the type of crises that an organization is likely to encounter are somewhat predictable based on history, location and other risk factors. Communicators should predict and address the most likely crisis the organization is most likely to face, and once an assessment identifies the most likely crisis, she adds, it is easier to begin planning. According to Coombs and Holladay (2010), scanning segues into monitoring of an issue and to assess the threat posed by the issue by examining it in terms of the damage it could cause to the organization, the degree of control over the situation, and options for an organizational response.

Pennington-Gray et al (2011), advocate for a crisis communication plan as a crisis communicative strategy. They argue that a written communication plan is vital to the overall framework for strategic communication that allows organizations to respond quickly and effectively. Fearn-Banks (2010) maintains that whether an organization is a large multinational company or a small business, a crisis communications plan is needed since a crisis communication plan is the primary tool of preparedness. She adds that research shows that companies with a crisis management and/or crisis communications plan come out of a crisis with a more positive image than companies without such a plan. Coombs and Holladay (2010) explain that crisis management should focus on having a plan, a team and a spokesperson. In the tourism context, Sonmez et al (1999) noted the importance for the preparation of a crisis communication plan to counter any eventual downturn in visitor confidence and visitation.

According to Seeger (2006), pre-event planning has several benefits which include identifying risk areas and corresponding risk reduction, presetting initial crisis response so that decisions during a crisis is more efficient, and identifying necessary response resources. Having a plan in place, Seeger adds, serves as a constant reminder of potential problems and provides checkpoints to employees to follow in hope of preventing crises and such planning can enhance overall mindfulness regarding risks. Reynolds (2012) explains that the process of planning is important as the relationships and trust built during the process can be invaluable during a crisis. Further, a plan helps anticipate problems and ability to respond appropriately and it creates a template and a process for initial actions and decisions.

Organizations need to prepare for potential crises by appointing teams that are trained in handling crisis communication, who need to be prepared to communicate with the public immediately (Horseley & Barker, 2002).

White and Mazur (1995) contend that regular, accurate, complete, and, if possible, personalized, information- as in it being provided by one person speaking on behalf of the organization makes it possible to reduce uncertainty, limit the risk of too many players being involved, and avoid damage to the

organization's reputation and the population's trust in it.

Fearn-Banks (2007) explains that one spokesperson should be identified for the organization since this reduces the possibility of conflicting statements, organization values, or explanations being released to the stakeholders. Alternative spokespersons should be selected in the event the primary spokesperson is not available during a crisis. According to (Coombs 2007), spokesperson(s) should be well trained in what to say and how to say it and must have solid eye-contact and must have few vocal fillers or nervous adaptations. The spokesperson(s) should know how to present information clearly and to take the initiative from the beginning to be the authoritative source of information as the organization should be the single source of information- the only credible source since it has access to property and records (Harrison 2011). As Harrison continues to say, spokesperson(s) should exude confidence, expert knowledge, and gravitas to be able to fend off opposing views from detractors who may be trying to find a new angle on the crisis aside from the official line. Additionally, authoritative spokespeople, who are properly briefed and trained, and a well-managed information process will be able to slake the thirst of the media and the public for information and stories, so long as proper planning has been done.

The spokesperson should also have communication management skills to be able to communicate blame and take responsibility if the organization is at fault (Horseley & Barker, 2002). They should know when to apologize, since an apology, acceptance of responsibility and showing remorse can repair an organization's reputation much faster. Even when the organization is not at fault, Horseley and Barker aver that the public and the media are still looking for some humanity and would want to see the spokesperson express regret for what happened and show compassion for the victims. However, the spokesperson should also be aware of the legal implications of taking responsibility for a crisis.

Hoger and Swem (2000) caution that open public relations practices and the need for protection from lawsuits can come into conflict when an organization is trying to resolve a crisis. They therefore advice that public relations practitioners and legal counsel should work together to develop responses that satisfy the public's need to know and yet avoid self-implication of legal wrongdoing. However, literature shows that a cooperative relationship between public relations and legal forces is usually adversarial, since while public relations advocates helping an organization obtain public forgiveness and rebuild credibility, the legal perspective views any admission of guilt as a legal liability that could be used against the organization in lawsuits (Fitzpatrick & Rubin, 1995).

Fearn-Banks (2010) contends that the CEO is considered by most public relations professionals to be the spokesperson of choice during a crisis, especially if people have been injured, if there is danger of physical harm, or if there is a huge damage to property. The CEO usually has the most credibility with publics and the media. He or she is seen as a true representative of the company, as a person who can make decisions, and speak for the company. If the company has a heart, it is the CEO's; at least, that's the public's perception (Fearn-Banks). The critical question, however, remain as to whether every CEO is trained in effective communication and PR skills.

METHODOLOGY

Mixed research methodology was used in the study, particularly the dominant-less dominant parallel/simultaneous (QUAL + quan) design. A quantitative sample of 362 hotel staff and a qualitative sample of the key informants was drawn from a population of 1092 employees using the multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques, respectively.

The instruments of data collection were questionnaires for survey of the 362 respondents and interview guides for 28 key informant interviews for CEOs, Public relations managers, Duty managers, Security managers, Front office managers, Food and beverages managers and car park managers.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data and were subjected to regression analysis using SPSS Version 24.0 software whereas qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

RESULTS

The study entailed a sample of 12 hotels and 340 employees. All the 12 (100%) sampled hotels participated in the study. However, from the 340 hotel employees, the study managed a response of filled questionnaires from 294 making it 81% response rate. The leading crisis reported from the sampled employees in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County was fire 104(35.4%). Majority of the respondents 185(63%) were females compared to the males 109(37%). The research participants were mostly between the years 1 and 3 in the current positions. The highest portion of the respondents 219(74%) had gained the college/university level of education while 175(59.5%) was derived from the employees who had not received any training on crisis communication.

The research question “What are the pre-crisis communication strategies used in crises planning and preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County?” was answered using various constructs in data collection as well as difference methods in data analysis. The constructs of the first objective included (i) a listed items that describes crisis communication and preparedness (ii) assessment of the crisis communication plan, and (iii) types of potential crises addressed.

Construct one was a list of 8 statements describing the level of crisis communication and preparedness. The questionnaire respondents were required to rate the level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 -strongly agree to 5 -strongly disagree. The collected data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Pre-Crisis Communication

#	Statements		strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	Total
1	I get information on what a crisis in the organization is	f	94	159	35	6	0	294
		%	32	54.1	11.9	2	0	100
2	A crisis communication plan is available to all employees and guests	f	68	140	62	18	6	294
		%	23.1	47.6	21.1	6.1	2	100
3	I have been informed about different likely tourism crises	f	54	163	58	19	0	294
		%	18.4	55.4	19.7	6.5	0	100
4	Managers provide regular information on crises	f	56	180	45	13	0	294
		%	19	61.2	15.3	4.4	0	100
5	Managers hold often talks about the likelihood of a crisis in the organization	f	24	87	84	83	16	294

		%	8.2	29.6	28.6	28.2	5.4	100
6	The organization has a designated spokesperson	f	48	136	78	27	5	294
		%	16.3	46.3	26.5	9.2	1.7	100
7	The spokesperson communicates effectively on crisis readiness	f	42	115	96	37	4	294
		%	14.3	39.1	32.7	12.6	1.4	100
8	Adequate information on what to do in case of a crisis in the organization is often given to employees	f	38	87	72	83	14	294
		%	12.9	29.6	24.5	28.2	4.8	100
	Mean		47.11	118.56	58.89	31.78	5.00	261.33
	Stdev		21.87	37.30	21.85	32.10	6.78	0.00

Table 1 shows that the 8 listed statements that depict positivity in crisis communication and crisis preparedness scored highest at an average of 118.56 with standard deviation of 37.3 rated as “agree” by the respondents. This implies that the pre-crisis communication about crisis preparedness was evidently present in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County. However, a standard deviation of 37.3 implied a high variability in the agreement with the statement. More specifically, majority of the respondents 180(61.2%) agreed with the statement “Managers provide regular information on crises”. Similarly, 56(19%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 1 shows that quite above average 163(55.4%) agreed that they had been informed about different likely tourism crises. Almost same portion of the respondent 159(54.1%) agreed that they got information on what a crisis is in the organization.

The table shows that majority of the respondents (combined strongly agree and agree) 208(70.7%) agreed that “A crisis communication plan is available to all employees and guests”. This depicts the sufficient level of pre-crisis communication in crisis preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County. Related to these quantitative findings, qualitative results through the interviews with one of the hotels’ CEO said;

It is very critical and important for us as a hotel to ensure the safety of both our staff and guests. As such, we don’t mark-time a crisis with its occurrence. We prepare them in advance as a safety measure. The communication and awareness about our crisis plan are disseminated among the staff professionally starting with issuance of the plan through staff emails, then notice boards and most critically at their strategic points of operations [KI 02].

On a further interrogation on how guests were informed on the crisis communication plan, the CEO explained that the guests who booked the hotels were sent the plans.

The results show that having a designated spokesperson for the hotels was key with a relatively higher than half of the respondents 48(16.3%) strongly agree and 136(46.3) agreeing with the statement.

Table 1 shows that “adequate information on what to do in case of a crisis in the organization was often given to employees” rated by less than half of the respondents (combined strongly agree and agree

125(42.5%)). While fewer than half of the respondents showed the presence of information on what to do in case of a crisis, it was noted through most of the interviews conducted that the employees are indeed informed on what to do. Most of the interviewees emphasized the importance of this. However, others only mentioned as a requirement rather than a practice. One of the CEOs reported.

We have in place channels in which to communicate to staff on what to do in case of a crisis. This is in line with the policy requirement of operating such a facility. Safety and emergency preparedness manuals calls for the necessity of having these in place, and that the staff should beware of what to do. We have been clear with this among our staff especially issues related to diseases. To be more precise, COVID-19 pandemic gave us a lesson and leeway for handling these types of communications among staff. At the peak of the pandemic, we were forced to conduct briefings every morning about safety and what to do in case of a reported case [KI 01].

Crisis Communication Plan in Pre-crisis Communication Strategies

The study used the construct on crisis communication plan to further assess pre-crisis communications strategies used in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county. The questionnaire for the hotel employees contained a list of 9 items related to crisis communication plan requiring them to rate the level to which they are informed. The statements were measured on a 4-point Likert scale from 1- well informed, 2- somewhat informed, 3-not informed and 4- don't know. The collected data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. The findings are presented using here below:

Table 2: Crisis Communication Plan in Pre-crisis Communication Strategies

#	Statements		well informed	somewhat informed	not informed	don't know	Total
1	how well the waiters are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	104	153	17	20	294
		%	35.4	52	5.8	6.8	100
2	how well public relations officers are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	166	96	19	13	294
		%	56.5	32.7	6.5	4.4	100
3	how well security staff are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	221	63	4	6	294
		%	75.2	21.4	1.4	2	100
4	how well car park attendants are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	135	98	29	32	294
		%	45.9	33.3	9.9	10.9	100
5	how well front office staff are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	167	117	6	4	294
		%	56.8	39.8	2	1.4	100
6	how well duty managers are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	224	65	5	0	294
		%	76.2	22.1	1.7	0	100
7	how well room attendants are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	120	132	9	33	294
		%	40.8	44.9	3.1	11.2	100
8	how well guests are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	67	68	83	76	294
		%	22.8	23.1	28.2	25.9	100

9	how well suppliers are informed of the crisis communication plan	f	30	54	110	100	294
		%	10.2	18.4	37.4	34	100
	Mean		137.11	94.00	31.33	31.56	294.00
	Stdev		65.28	34.55	38.41	34.55	0.00

Table 2, above, shows the highest mean of frequencies for the respondents at 137.11 with standard deviation of 65.28 rated at well informed. This implies that most of the respondents were well informed about the listed items related to crisis communications plan in pre-crisis communications strategies used in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county. However, a large standard deviation (65.28) implies a large variability within the responses (Pyrzczak and Oh, 2018). As such, the responses differ from the respondents at high level as some statements are highly acknowledged while others have low scores. More specifically, the table shows that majority of the respondents 224(76.2%) indicated that the duty managers were the most well informed of the crisis communication plan compared to all other categories of staff. These were followed by majority of the respondents indicating well informed of the crisis communication plan among security staff 221(75.1%).

Table 2 also shows that there were categories of stakeholders associated with the hotels at comparatively poor level of information on crisis communication plan in pre-crisis communication strategies (Suppliers, 110(37.4%)). However, these were external category of stakeholders compared to the employees of the staff who would be more informed through in-service and internal awareness programs and communication strategies.

The quantitative study findings reflect the comments received through qualitative results in interviews among the hotels' CEOs. One of the managers noted:

The crisis communications plan is an essential tool for us as a hotel. Every member is required to be aware of it. However, I understand that some staff could be more informed about it than others. This is likely to be so from the targets we give in communications. The mostly involved employees are kitchen staff, security guards, duty managers and front office staff. The variability may also arise from the period the staff have been around here with us. Those who have stayed longer are more likely to be informed compared to the newer ones. The inductions on crisis communications plans are done periodically but not categorically outright for every new staff [KI 02].

In another different interaction, another manager posited:

Crisis communication plan is used mostly among the security guards as it is contained in their job descriptions. This now makes most staff even to shy off the plan as it is designated for specific staff. However, we try our best that other staff get to learn and understand it. If we find it necessary to involve specific group of staff, we organize internal inductions for them, and we raise awareness [KI 04].

The study entailed analysis of data collected on how each of the staff category was informed on crisis communications plan. The results of a correlation analysis between the levels of information among the staff is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis in the Level of Information of the Crisis Management Plan

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. waiters	Pearson Correlation	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
	N	294								
2. public relations officers	Pearson Correlation	.576**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000								
	N	294	294							
3. security staff	Pearson Correlation	.295**	.381**	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000							
	N	294	294	294						
4. car park attendants	Pearson Correlation	.346**	.418**	.285**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000						
	N	294	294	294	294					
5. front office staff	Pearson Correlation	.286**	.196**	.235**	.374**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000					
	N	294	294	294	294	294				
6. duty managers	Pearson Correlation	.319**	.314**	.315**	.406**	.354**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	294	294	294	294	294	294			
7. room attendants	Pearson Correlation	.419**	.158**	.229**	.288**	.381**	.166**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.007	.000	.000	.000	.004			
	N	294	294	294	294	294	294	294		
8. guests	Pearson Correlation	.144*	-.084	-.040	-.056	.204**	-.149*	.357**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.149	.491	.336	.000	.011	.000		
	N	294	294	294	294	294	294	294	294	
9. suppliers	Pearson Correlation	.229**	.098	.148*	.139*	.166**	.071	.379**	.569**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.092	.011	.017	.004	.223	.000	.000	
	N	294	294	294	294	294	294	294	294	294

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows various correlation coefficient that associate level of information on crisis management plan among the staff. The table shows that the correlation between level of information on crisis management plan between waiters and the rest of the staff were positive and significant at the 0.01 significance level except for guest which is at the 0.005 level, and all 2-tailed. The security staff level of information is positively associated with public relations officers ($r=.381^{**}$), car park attendants ($r=.418^{**}$), front office staff ($r=.196^{**}$), duty managers ($r=.314^{**}$) and room attendants ($r=.158^{**}$). Similar trends are seen across other correlations except with level of information among the guests which repeatedly shows negative and weak correlations. Correlation with public relations officer ($r= -.084$), security staff ($r= -.04$), car park attendants ($r= -.056$) and duty managers ($r=-.149$). The positive correlations imply that increase in

information level on crisis management plan in one staff category would increase the level of information in the corresponding staff category. On the contrary, the negative correlations imply that increased level of information in one staff category would reduce the level of information on crisis management plan in the respective corresponding staff categories.

In a triangulation approach of the study findings, the qualitative results from the interviews showed that the role of staff in training and inducting others was common among the sampled hotels. Most Managers pointed out that many times, one group of staff are trained on crisis management plans and expected to use their communication skills to pass the information to other staff. He noted:

We mostly train group of staff who are then asked to train others. In most cases, it is not a formal training, but a peer learning through practice. The staff can induct each other through awareness programmes as directed by the hotel management. The effectiveness is also evaluated through assessing the level of awareness of crisis management plan among the indirectly inducted staff members. However, it is worth noting that the strategy is hardly used to reach out to guests as well as other close stakeholders like suppliers [KI 02].

The findings show that the pre-crisis communication strategies through the crisis communication is evident in the crisis preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County.

Types of Potential Crises addressed in the Pre-Crisis Communication

The study delved into the inquiry of the potential types of crises in the pre-crisis communication in crisis preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County. The questionnaire item entailed a list of potential crises that required the respondents to tick all that they felt were addressed. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations). The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics on addressed Types of Potential Crises

#	Statements		no	yes	Total
1	addressed potential for fire outbreak	f	44	250	294
		%	15	85	100
2	addressed potential for accidents	f	91	203	294
		%	31	69	100
3	addressed potential for terrorism	f	72	222	294
		%	24.5	75.5	100
4	addressed potential for food safety	f	70	224	294
		%	23.8	76.2	100
5	addressed potential for staff strike	f	244	50	294
		%	83	17	100
6	addressed potential for political strife	f	207	87	294
		%	70.4	29.6	100
7	addressed potential for environmental issues	f	109	185	294
		%	37.1	62.9	100
		%			

Mean	119.57	174.43	294.00
Stdev	75.81	75.81	0.00

Table 4 shows that the majority mean of 174.43 and standard deviation of 75.81 indicated that the potential crises listed were addressed in their respective hotels. This is, however, slightly above half of the feelings of the respondents whose mean (119.57 indicated no address of potential crises in their hotels. Specifically, the table shows that majority of the respondents 250(85%) indicated the address of potential of fire outbreaks in their hotels. This was closely followed by address of potential crisis in food safety 224(76.2%), and terrorism 222(75.5%). The trends depict skewed address of the potential crises across the hotels with a high standard deviation for the addressed potential crises (75.81) implying a high variability in indication of the address.

Regression on Pre-crisis Communication Strategies and Crises Preparedness

The study used the questionnaire collected data to conduct regression analysis between pre-crisis communication strategies and crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha Sub-County. The model summary of the analysis is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Model Summary for Regression Analysis on Pre-crisis Communication Strategies

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate				
1	.078 ^a	.006	.003	1.28609				

Table 5 shows an adjusted R square of .003 at standard error of the estimate at 1.28609. This implies that about 03% of the variations in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county were attributed to pre-crisis communication strategies. The regression analysis coefficients are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Coefficients for Regression Analysis on Pre-crisis Communication Strategies

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.943	.201		29.502	.000	5.547	6.340
	Pre-crisis scores	.060	.045	.078	1.341	.181	-.028	.149

a. Dependent Variable: Level of crisis preparedness

Table 6 shows unstandardized beta of 5.943 at standard error of .201 for the constant and a standardized beta for the pre-crisis cores at .078. With the statistics in the results, a single variable regression equation can be modelled as follows.

$$Y = 5.943 + 0.078X + 0.045$$

Where:

Y – the level of crisis preparedness

X is the Pre-crisis communication strategies

The constant beta at 95% confidence interval would vary between 5.547 and 6.34 while the beta for pre-crisis scores would vary between -.028 and .149. The findings imply that a unit increase in the pre-crisis communication strategies would increase the level of crisis preparedness by 0.078 units. Similarly, the model shows that without the pre-crisis communication strategies ($X=0$), an equivalent of 5.988 units of crisis preparedness would still exist in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county.

From Table 4.8, the differences in mean scores of the constant is comparatively large ($t=29.502$) and significant (sig. =.000 less than critical p-value of 0.05). This implies that changes in the constant would significantly affect the level of crisis preparedness. On the other hand, the mean score of the pre-crisis scores is small ($t=1.341$) and insignificant (sig. =.181; greater than critical p-value of 0.05). This implies that changes in the pre-crisis scores would not significantly affect the level of crisis preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county.

DISCUSSIONS

The study found that the role of manager communication is critical in crisis communication as supported from other literature. For instance, a context of COVID-19 studies on employees' responses to managers' communication in hospitality industry showed that the word of the managers enhanced and prepared the employees on how to handle the crisis (Guzzo, Wang, Madera and Abbott, 2021).

The study also found that the hotel employees had been informed about different likely tourism crises. This implies that the hospitality and hotel industry in Naivasha was keen on sharing information on crisis in organizations prior to a crisis. The findings are different from what Mason, Flores, Liu, Tims, Spencer and Gire (2019) posited in medical tourism industry in Caribbean that while information was shared before during and after a crisis, it was not related to crisis preparedness but instead was all promotional materials.

The findings show that the guests who book the hotels are sent the crisis response plans even before their arrival at the hotels. The crisis plans are in PDF formats and shared with the guests through emails once they make a deposit for booking the hotels. The CEO revelations also coincided with the statement in the quantitative results where 87(29.6%) of the questionnaire respondents agreed that "Managers hold often talks about the likelihood of a crisis in the organization". This is evident for other studies that recommend single and double-loop strategies of learning as a way of crisis preparedness in hotel industry (AlBattat & Mat Som, 2013).

The hotels had a designated spokesperson who was key in pre-crises communication evidenced by a relatively higher than half of the respondents 48(16.3%) strongly agree and 136(46.3) agreeing with the statement. Having a designated spokesperson create a single source of information on such crisis preparedness which also enhance credibility, effectiveness, and clarity. In a methodology involving structural equation modeling, Donghwan and Youn-Kyung (2016) found that creating a singularity in source of information develops self-congruity as a factor in credibility of the information. The study further points out that the spokesperson type is key in determining the attractiveness of the information being released. Finally, the study acknowledges the importance of source credibility in effectiveness of the communication. These findings justify the emphasis of effective risk communication in organizations by Covell (2009). Effectiveness creates room for information accuracy, timeliness, clarity as well as constancy. This is critical for risk communications as it cements the level of trust among the employees through creation of perceptions.

The hotels had planned channels in which to communicate to staff on what to do in case of a crisis. The

findings imply that pre-crisis communication is key in enhancing crisis preparedness in hotel industry. The COVID-19 pandemic drew about the practicability of pre-crisis communications which the findings elaborate as key, and especially in extreme cases, can be done on daily basis. In a related study delving into evacuation plans against Hurricane Dorian in 2019 amid COVID-19 pandemic, the findings showed that pre-crisis communication in hotels was critical for decisions to prepare for the crisis (Botzen, Mol, Robinson, Zhang & Czajkowski, 2021). The study reported that information on the state of COVID-19 pandemic played an important role among the elderly held at various hotels in deciding whether to evacuate or stay. This was also seen in Florida hotels where another Hurricane Eta was upcoming in the November 2020. The findings replicate the current study in Naivasha hospitality and hotel industry in how the employees and guests get communications on crisis before an incident. This implies that pre-crisis communications are essential in decision making not only for the guests but also employees in their course of action even before an incident.

Crisis communication plan is used mostly among the security guards as it is contained in their job descriptions. The findings show that the focus of pre-crisis communication strategies based on crisis communications plan for crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county are skewed among staff. Certain categories of staff are more informed than others. In relate study, Liu-Lastres (2022) used a theory synthesis approach to review crisis communication in hospitality and tourism industry. The study revealed that there existed various transactive mechanism for crisis communication in the industry. The mechanism included the areas of concern as development and dissemination of information on crisis communication plan.

The study found positive correlations which imply that increase in information level on crisis management plan in one staff category would increase the level of information in the corresponding staff category. Related studies appreciate the role of staff amongst themselves in knowledge sharing that forms basis of the correlation analysis results. Terry, TLee, Paek, and Lee (2013) assessed knowledge sharing among hotel industry staff based on the role of social capital. The study revealed that employee relations influenced knowledge sharing which is fundamental in organizational performance. The study further points out that cognitive SC was more associated with knowledge collecting while relational SC was associated more with knowledge donating among the staff. Hawamdeh and Al-edenat (2019) used a T-test and One-way ANOVA to demonstrate how organizational barriers affected sharing of information on hotel industry. With a scope of the Jordanian hospitality industry, study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in level of barriers for information sharing based on age, job, gender and even qualifications of the hotel employees.

Finally, the study showed that majority of the respondents 250(85%) indicated the address of fire outbreaks in their hotels. In related literature, Pennington-Gray, Thapa, Kaplanidou, Cahyanto and McLaughlin (2011) point out that many organizations have documented a crisis preparedness plan indicating the level of potential crisis addressed. The plans contained information on how local emergency agencies were involved and the frequency of involvement. Notably, the study revealed that there was less documentation on crisis preparedness for guests in the Florida hotel industry. The address of the potential crises and their documentation was attributed to availability of funds more than it was to communications strategies whether in the pre, during or post-crisis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study showed that the majority of the respondents 250(85%) indicated the address of fire outbreaks in their hotels. Regression analysis shows that about 3% of the variations in crises preparedness in the tourism and hospitality industry in Naivasha sub-county were attributed to pre-crisis communication strategies. The study recommends the emphasis on implementing pre-crisis communication strategies that can avert

fatalities during a crisis in hotel industry. The strategies include among others, a specified officer in charge of communicating pre-crisis preparedness, identification, and communication on potential crises, and ensuring every hotel staff is informed of the preparedness.

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