



Oum Elbougghi University
Faculty of Social and Human Sciences

Name :.....
Group :.....

Humanities Department/ English Exam

Master 2 : Public Relations / Mass Communication & New Media

In today’s public relations environment, visibility is constant because every consumer can record events and disseminate them instantly on social media. The 2017 United Airlines (UA) Flight 3411 incident demonstrates how a single viral video can overpower years of corporate reputation building. When Dr. David Dao refused to give up his seat during an overbooking situation, aviation officers forcibly removed him. Passengers captured the scene, and the footage quickly circulated online. Social media accelerated the crisis: the video—not the company’s communication—became the dominant narrative frame, portraying UA as a powerful corporation mistreating a vulnerable passenger. Hashtags like #BoycottUnited spread rapidly, generating global outrage. Sentiment analysis would have revealed a dramatic shift toward negative public opinion.

United’s initial crisis communication worsened the situation. The company issued a delayed, defensive statement using euphemistic language (“re-accommodate”), which appeared insincere. A leaked internal email blaming the passenger strengthened perceptions of a lack of empathy and accountability. A genuine apology arrived too late to prevent major reputational harm. The long-term consequences included a temporary loss of market capitalization, regulatory scrutiny concerning overbooking practices, and the need for policy reforms aimed at restoring trust. The case underscores a key PR lesson: during a viral crisis, transparent action and authentic empathy must come before legalistic explanations if an organization wants to protect its reputation.

A. Comprehension Questions (05 points)

1. Why is the United Airlines incident considered an example of the modern “crisis of visibility”?

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2. How did social media affect the narrative frame of the UA crisis?

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3. What aspects of United’s initial communication made the situation worse?

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4. What long-term consequences did the crisis have for the company?

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5. According to the text, why must transparency and empathy come before defensive statements in crisis communication?

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B. Activity 02: Complete the sentences with the correct words (05 points)

Reputation- integrity- overbooking- insincere- re-accommodate- sentiment- journalist-capitalization- velocity- narrative frame.

1. In today's PR environment, every customer acts as a potential with the ability to broadcast events instantly.
2. The viral video of Dr. Dao became the dominant defining the crisis.
3. The rapid spread of #BoycottUnited demonstrated the global of the backlash.
4. Sentiment analysis showed a collapse in positive toward the airline.
5. United's first statement used the euphemism to describe the forced removal.
6. The leaked internal email contributed to the perception that the company lacked and accountability.
7. The CEO's sincere apology was viewed as because it came too late.
8. The crisis caused a significant drop in United's market
9. Public pressure led to new regulatory discussions on airline practices.
10. The company had to introduce proactive policies to begin the process of repair.

C. Activity 03: Build five sentences using the following concepts (05 points) : (visibility –viral - social media – Sentiment analysis – transparency).

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