

The Role of Modern Public Relations in Enhancing the Image of Media Organisations in Algeria

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Abstract. This study examines how digital public relations (DPR) shape public perceptions of media organisations in Algeria through a case study of the Echorouk Group conducted between 1 January and 31 March 2024. A descriptive–analytical design was adopted, as it is well-suited to mapping organisational DPR practices and linking platform use to perceptual outcomes. A purposive sample was drawn from Echorouk’s internal audience, including employees across editorial, technical, and administrative units, to capture informed, practice-proximal assessments. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire aligned with the study’s axes and complemented by semi-structured interviews to provide explanatory depth. The findings indicate that Echorouk systematically leverages Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to expand its reach, standardise information flows, and foster two-way engagement, thereby enhancing public perceptions of the organisation. A secondary finding highlights the diversification of digital tools and the appointment of a PR officer, both of which contribute to the professionalisation of DPR functions and reinforce image management. The results also underscore the enabling role of planning, cross-departmental coordination, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation in sustaining reputational gains. This study contributes empirical evidence from the Algerian media context and offers practical recommendations for institutionalising DPR capabilities within news organisations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public relations have evolved into a strategic function within modern organisations. This reflects their expanding role in managing communication, shaping public understanding, and supporting institutional legitimacy. The transition from traditional communication models to digitally mediated environments has further transformed this function, as organisations increasingly rely on digital tools to engage with diverse audiences and maintain a coherent and competitive public presence. Within this context, digital public relations (DPR) have emerged as a core mechanism for disseminating information, strengthening organisational identity, and influencing public perceptions in real time.

The global shift towards digital communication has been particularly significant for media institutions, whose credibility and public reputation depend heavily on audience trust, transparency, and interaction. As social media and online platforms have become primary channels for accessing news, media organisations are now compelled to develop digital strategies that not only disseminate content but also manage their image, respond to audience expectations, and cultivate favourable public perceptions. This trend is especially evident in Algeria, where media institutions have expanded their online presence in response to increasing digital consumption and growing competition within the media sector.

Despite the growing reliance on digital communication, empirical research examining how Algerian media organisations utilise DPR to shape and enhance their public image remains limited. Existing studies have addressed certain aspects of media performance and organisational communication; however, the specific contribution of digital public relations to public perceptions, particularly within major media institutions, has not been sufficiently explored. This gap underscores the need for analytical studies that investigate the mechanisms, tools, and organisational practices through which DPR influences institutional image.

Accordingly, the present study examines the role of digital public relations in enhancing the public perception of the Echorouk Group, one of Algeria’s most prominent media organisations. By analysing DPR practices, digital tools, and internal organisational processes, this study seeks to determine how these elements contribute to shaping a favourable public image and sustaining the organisation’s visibility and credibility in the digital environment.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Problem and Research Questions

The rapid development of communication technologies has profoundly influenced social, cultural, and organisational practices. The expansion of digital tools and environments across multiple sectors has redefined the ways in which institutions communicate and interact with their audiences. In media organisations in particular, the increasing reliance on digital platforms has shifted public relations practices from traditional, face-to-face communication to digitally mediated interaction capable of transcending spatial and temporal boundaries. Digital media tools now facilitate continuous engagement between institutions and their audiences, strengthening communication processes and enhancing relational dynamics across diverse geographical contexts.

Consequently, public relations practitioners have increasingly adopted digital approaches to manage visibility, foster interaction, and reinforce institutional reputation.

Digital public relations are therefore regarded as a contemporary mechanism for managing institutional image and reputation, including that of media organisations. Enhancing public perception has become one of the most significant functions of DPR, as it contributes directly to building and maintaining a favourable organisational image. Based on this conceptual context, the central research question of this study is as follows:

- In what manner do digital public relations programmes enhance the mental image of a media organisation in Algeria?

The primary question is supported by the following sub-questions:

- What digital technologies are employed by Echorouk to enhance its image?
- What role does digital public relations play in enhancing the mental image of Echorouk?
- In what ways are the factors influencing the mental image of media organisations distributed?

2.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to clarify the importance of digital public relations and its role in shaping public perceptions within Algerian media institutions. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To ascertain the manner in which digital public relations contribute to enhancing the mental image of the media organisation.
- To elucidate the function of digital public relations in constructing and refining the mental image of a media organisation.
- To identify the digital techniques used to enhance the mental image of the media organisation.
- To examine the factors that influence the enhancement of the media organisation's mental image.

2.3. Concepts and Terms of the Study

A clear conceptual framework is essential for defining the terms used throughout this study. The following concepts are presented as they appear in previous literature, maintaining the exact APA-style citations.

2.3.1. Digital Public Relations Programmes

Digital public relations programmes are communication initiatives meticulously organised by public relations departments, designed in accordance with scientific principles and implemented through global communication networks to disseminate information. These programmes rely on comprehensive media campaigns and digital communication activities aimed at achieving predetermined objectives (Al-Waeli, 2022, p. 516). Operationally, the term refers to the digital strategies and methods utilised by Echorouk Group to interact with its target audience.

2.3.2. Digital Public Relations

Digital public relations refer to optimising the communication process with the public through online networks, including social networks, search engines, virtual communities, and branding tools (Hatem, 2012, p. 146). Another definition extends the term to activities that use online media and social platforms as channels of communication and interaction (Al-Sabghi, 2016, p. 11). In this study, the term refers to Echorouk Group's utilisation of digital platforms and social media to facilitate communication and interaction with the public.

2.3.3. Mental Image

Linguistically, the term mental image denotes an internal simulation of an object or experience that cannot be directly perceived by the senses, often associated with certain emotions towards a person, system, or idea (Al-Sheikh, 2009, p. 4). Terminologically, organisational reputation encompasses the set of subjective impressions held by the public regarding an institution, shaped by its products, community engagement, social investments, and administrative performance (Ziada, 2022, p. 17). Operationally, the term denotes the aggregate impressions the public holds of Echorouk's digital practices and activities in the realm of DPR.

2.4. Type of Study and Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive–analytical design, which enables the researcher to investigate a scientific phenomenon in depth, describe it systematically, and provide logical explanations supported by evidence. Descriptive studies often focus on identifying media content and analysing audience interactions; therefore, researchers typically rely on two core methods: the survey method and the study of interrelationships (Abu Al-Hassan, 2007, p. 23).

2.5. Methodology

The research methodology reflects the structured approach used to understand the phenomenon under investigation. Methodology, as a science, examines the means by which truth is approached, as discussed by scholars and philosophers (Badr, 1994, pp. 35–36). Given the nature of this study, the descriptive–analytical approach was adopted to examine the role of digital public relations in enhancing the mental image of Algerian media organisations.

2.6. Data Collection Tools

The effectiveness of scientific research depends largely on the quality of the data collection tools employed. In this study, data were gathered using two instruments: the questionnaire and the interview.

2.6.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a structured set of questions designed to elicit responses that reveal the characteristics of the phenomenon under study (Ben Mersli, 2010, p. 64). The questionnaire developed for this study included items distributed across the study's axes to collect data on the relationship between DPR activities and public perception.

2.6.2. Interview

An interview is defined as a verbal interaction in which the interviewer seeks to obtain information, opinions, and beliefs from participants in order to collect objective data (Naqi, 2021, p. 86). The interview guide in this study comprised questions divided into three thematic axes to obtain in-depth insights related to the research topic.

2.7. Participants

2.7.1. Research Population

According to Maurice Angers, a research population refers to a set of elements that share specific characteristics distinguishing them from others and forming the focus of investigation (Angers, 2004, p. 298). Accordingly, the research population in this study consists of the internal audience of the Echorouk Group.

2.7.2. Study Sample

This study employed a purposive sampling technique, which involves intentionally selecting participants who possess characteristics relevant to the research objectives and are therefore considered suitable sources of information.

3. RESULTS

3.1. First: The Concept of Digital Public Relations, Its Uses, and the Factors Behind Its Emergence

3.1.1. The Concept of Digital Public Relations

The findings indicate that digital public relations (DPR) have become a central practice in contemporary organisations, reflecting the transformations brought about by advances in communication and information technologies. With the shift towards virtual spaces, public relations departments increasingly rely on digital environments as an alternative to traditional communication practices.

Digital public relations are defined as the use of online communication channels and technological means to communicate effectively with an organisation's stakeholders, ensuring the fulfilment of core public relations functions (Qadem, 2022, p. 150). Another definition emphasises interaction between organisations and their audiences through digital tools such as social media, search engines, and virtual communities (Ziada, 2022, p. 12).

Based on these definitions, the results confirm that DPR involves the strategic utilisation of digital media and electronic technologies to enhance organisational relationships and facilitate direct communication with target audiences through social platforms, search engines, and other related tools.

3.1.2. Uses of Digital Public Relations

The analysis reveals several organisational uses of digital public relations (DPR), consistent with the literature (Shafiq, 2008, p. 8):

- Designing organisational websites as communication hubs that connect the institution with its audiences.
- Using online databases to access information that supports the preparation of institutional publications.
- Monitoring competitors' websites to understand their activities and strategies.
- Employing email for internal communication and for sending official information to external audiences.
- Tracking how the organisation is perceived by the media, competitors, and users.

3.1.3. Functions of Digital Public Relations

The results indicate that digital public relations (DPR) serve multiple functional roles consistent with previous research (Baya, 2021, p. 30):

- Delivering essential information to strengthen organisational influence and identity.
- Attracting new audiences and bridging cultural differences.
- Supporting persuasive communication strategies.
- Enhancing institutional reputation by building trust and closing communication gaps.
- Measuring, monitoring, and evaluating performance.
- Stimulating positive engagement and audience interest.

Additional functions include conducting organisational research and improving internal relationships through information sharing (Ferjani, 2018, pp. 30–31). As illustrated in the referenced figure (Mohamed & Mehran, 2019, p. 167), DPR contributes to communication efficiency and strategic positioning within organisations.

3.2. Second: Foundations, Tools, and Methods of Digital Public Relations

3.2.1. Foundations of Digital Public Relations

The results confirm that the Internet provides significant opportunities for public relations (PR) professionals to apply creativity and innovation in their work (Al-Hilali, 2013, p. 35). The foundational elements identified include:

- Promoting organisational services and products through digital platforms, thereby reducing time and cost.
- Enhancing marketing efforts and strengthening organisational reputation.
- Disseminating information via electronic channels such as newsletters and email.
- Gathering public opinion and conducting media studies through online surveys.
- Evaluating public relations programmes in real time using digital tools.

These foundations demonstrate that digital environments have broadened the scope and enhanced the effectiveness of public relations activities.

3.2.2. Basics of DPR Management for Media Organisations' Public Perception

The findings indicate that cultivating a favourable organisational image remains a key strategic priority. Digital public relations (DPR) play a vital role in this regard due to their ability to influence audience attitudes, increase demand, build loyalty, and support competitive positioning.

Managing organisational image within media institutions relies on core managerial principles such as planning, organisation, implementation, and evaluation. These principles form the foundation for constructing a sustainable and credible public perception.

The mental image of an organisation comprises elements such as identity, achievements, visual representation, community engagement, and societal contribution. Digital public relations also support the development of organisational traditions and internal communication practices that reflect shared values (Hemal, 2021, p. 89).

The findings further highlight that internal perceptions, formed by employees, are often more influential than external sources in shaping an organisation's image.

3.2.3. Digital PR in Managing Organisational Image

Digital public relations (DPR) serve as a central mechanism for structuring communication between an institution and its audiences. DPR supports the design and implementation of strategies aimed at building and promoting a favourable organisational image.

This process encompasses two key functions:

1. Promoting and establishing a positive public image.
2. Disseminating and reinforcing that image across digital platforms.

The results also confirm the emergence of the "image maker" as a specialised DPR role responsible for shaping and marketing an institution's visual and symbolic identity. This finding aligns with previous research, which demonstrates that a strong public image contributes significantly to product promotion and competitive advantage (Hamal, 2021, p. 92).

3.3. Digital PR Strategies for Managing a Media Organisation's Image

According to the analysis, digital image management in media organisations involves several sequential stages:

3.3.1. Image Creation

This stage is particularly challenging, as audiences often remain cautious towards new organisations or unfamiliar digital presences. Effective communication strategies are therefore essential to strengthen image-building efforts and foster audience trust.

3.3.2. Image Preservation

Following the creation of an image, DPR teams must maintain it through sustained communication, continuous audience feedback, and proactive protection against misinformation.

3.3.3. Image Restoration

In times of crisis, organisations must implement corrective communication strategies to rebuild trust and credibility. The restoration process requires reinforcing the organisation's core identity and re-establishing its original image values.

The findings indicate that these stages are especially complex for media institutions due to heightened competition, digital convergence, and the rapid circulation of information.

Third: Managing Media Organisations' Online Reputation Across Platforms

The results demonstrate that the Internet—particularly social media—has transformed the operational and economic models of media institutions. Scholars classify online communication into three main systems: individual (blogs, forums), institutional (websites, portals), and media (digital news platforms).

Within the framework of digital public relations (DPR), managing online reputation across these systems is of critical importance (Samari & Awadj, 2022, pp. 622–625). The analysis identifies five key strategic components:

- Self-Assessment: Employing digital analytics tools (complaints, suggestions, feedback) to evaluate internal performance.
- Target Audience Identification: Using digital metrics to understand demographic and behavioural patterns.
- Positioning: Analysing public opinion to inform organisational strategy.
- Message Formulation: Designing core messages that convey the desired mental image through digital networks.
- Planning: Strengthening identity, developing evaluation mechanisms, and fostering partnerships.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation entail systematic assessments and real-time tracking of audience responses to ensure the effectiveness of image-building programmes.

Table 1. Data Analysis of the First Study Axis – The Reality of Digital Public Relations in the Organisation.

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you engage in digital public relations activities within the institution?	Yes	50	100.0%
	No	0	0.0%
Which department has supervisory oversight of public relations functions within the institution?	Department of Public Relations	50	100.0%
	Multimedia Unit	0	0.0%
	Production Unit	0	0.0%
Does the institution leverage digital public relations as a means to enhance its public image?	Yes	50	100.0%
	No	0	0.0%
Is a dedicated public relations professional necessary for effective institutional communication and image management?	Yes	45	90.0%
	No	5	10.0%

The results presented in Table 1 reveal a strong and consistent consensus regarding the presence and effectiveness of digital public relations within the organisation. The quantitative indicators suggest a highly positive perception, whereas the qualitative interpretations provide deeper insights into the organisational dynamics underlying DPR practices.

3.3.3.1. Strong Adoption of Digital Public Relations

All respondents (100%) agreed that the organisation actively engages in digital public relations. This unanimous response serves as a significant indicator of the institutional integration of DPR as a formal and operational component of the organisation's communication strategy.

From a qualitative perspective, this suggests that:

- DPR is not a marginal or experimental activity but an institutionalised practice.
- Employees recognise DPR as part of their daily operational routines.
- The organisation has successfully transitioned from traditional public relations to a more digital and interactive communication model.

This finding aligns with previous literature suggesting that the shift towards digital public relations becomes evident when employees themselves perceive it as a core organisational function.

3.3.3.2. DPR as a Strategic Tool for Image Enhancement

Similarly, all respondents (100%) confirmed that the organisation relies on digital public relations to strengthen its institutional image. This unanimous agreement indicates that image-building is not an implicit consequence but a clearly defined strategic objective of DPR initiatives.

From a qualitative standpoint, the data reveal that:

- The organisation recognises the centrality of audience perception in a competitive media environment.
- Digital platforms are strategically employed to reinforce visibility, credibility, and brand differentiation.
- Employees are aware of the reputational function of DPR, reflecting a high degree of internal alignment around communication priorities.

This finding directly supports the study's core hypothesis that digital public relations play a significant role in shaping public perception.

3.3.3.3. Perceived Need for a Dedicated Public Relations Officer

A total of 90% of respondents believed that the presence of a public relations officer is essential, whereas only 10% (five respondents) considered it less important.

Although this divergence is relatively small, it remains meaningful:

- The overwhelming majority recognise the need for specialised human resources to manage digital communication professionally.
- The minority may reflect either limited direct interaction with the public relations unit or a belief that existing practices are sufficient without formal structures.
- This finding highlights a potential organisational gap, suggesting that the structure of the DPR unit may require clearer definition or improved internal communication.

The near-unanimous perception also underscores the growing complexity of DPR tasks, which increasingly demand specialised expertise in content creation, audience analysis, and digital engagement.

3.3.3.4. Institutional Responsibility for DPR Activities

All respondents (100%) agreed that the Public Relations Department is the primary unit responsible for digital public relations (DPR) activities.

Interpretation:

- The presence of a clear organisational structure enhances efficiency, coordination, and message consistency.
- Centralising DPR functions within a specialised department minimises fragmentation and ensures alignment with organisational objectives.
- Employees demonstrate a shared understanding of departmental responsibilities, suggesting effective internal communication.

This finding is particularly significant for media institutions operating in fast-paced digital environments that require unified and strategically managed communication flows.

3.4. Integrated Interpretation

Taken together, the data from Table 1 indicate that the organisation possesses a mature and well-defined DPR system characterised by:

- Full adoption of digital practices (100%).
- Strategic use of DPR for image building (100%).
- Strong internal demand for specialised public relations management (90%).
- Clear attribution of DPR responsibilities (100%).

Such a configuration reflects a high level of digital communication readiness, positioning the organisation to leverage DPR as a key instrument for shaping public perception, building credibility, and maintaining competitive visibility.

Table 2. Data Analysis of the Second Study Axis – The Institution's Digital Platforms and Their Uses.

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Does the institution have its own digital platforms?	Yes	49	98.0%
	No	0	0.0%
Which platforms does the institution use?	Facebook	25	50.0%
	Instagram	38	76.0%
	YouTube	7	14.0%
	The institution's official online platform	32	64.0%
How does the institution use these platforms to enhance its public image?	Creating effective external communication with the public	46	92.0%
	Enhancing internal communication within the organisation	4	8.0%
	Creating electronic advertising programmes or digital ad campaigns	42	84.0%
What are the key digital public relations initiatives and programmes undertaken by the institution?	Online publishing through the institution's website	22	44.0%

The results presented in Table 2 highlight a strong institutional reliance on digital platforms, together with clear patterns in how employees perceive their strategic use to enhance the organisation's public image. The analysis reflects both the extent of digital readiness within the institution and the degree to which specific platforms are integrated into its communication practices.

3.4.1. Ownership of Digital Platforms: Strong Institutional Digital Presence

A total of 49 respondents (98%) confirmed that the institution maintains its own digital platforms. This near-unanimous response indicates:

- The existence of a well-established digital infrastructure within the institution.
- Broad awareness among employees of the organisation's online presence.
- A foundational prerequisite for effective digital public relations (DPR), as DPR cannot operate without official digital communication channels.

The single non-response is statistically insignificant and does not affect the strength of the overall consensus.

3.4.2. Most Frequently Used Platforms: Instagram Dominates

Among the listed platforms, Instagram emerged as the most widely used, with 76% (38 respondents) identifying it as a key digital channel. This finding carries several interpretive implications:

- Instagram's visual and interactive nature aligns closely with media institutions' need for rapid and engaging content dissemination.
- The platform's high levels of user engagement make it an effective instrument for strengthening the organisation's visibility and credibility.
- Instagram supports both real-time communication and storytelling—two essential components of digital public relations (DPR).

Other platforms followed in the following order:

1. The institution's official online platform – 64% (32 respondents).
2. Facebook – 50% (25 respondents).
3. YouTube – 14% (7 respondents).

The limited use of YouTube, as noted indirectly by respondents, may be attributed to:

- High data consumption requirements.
- Longer production cycles associated with video content.
- Audiences' preference for shorter, instant-access updates rather than long-form content.

This distribution suggests a strategic prioritisation of platforms that provide speed, interactivity, and lower production costs.

3.4.3. Use of Digital Platforms to Enhance Public Image

The vast majority of respondents (92%, or 46 individuals) believed that the institution primarily uses its digital platforms to establish effective external communication with the public.

This overwhelming consensus reflects an organisational recognition of:

- The role of digital platforms in building and maintaining a favourable public image.
- The importance of interactive, two-way communication in fostering trust and transparency.
- A broader shift from one-way broadcasting to participatory digital engagement.

Only 8% (four respondents) indicated that these platforms are used mainly to enhance internal communication. This minority perspective suggests that internal communication is not the principal objective of the institution's digital presence, thereby reinforcing the external orientation of its digital public relations (DPR) strategy.

3.4.4. Key Digital Public Relations Initiatives and Programmes

The most prominent digital public relations (DPR) activity identified by respondents is the creation of electronic advertising programmes or digital campaigns, selected by 84% (42 respondents).

This finding indicates:

- A strong institutional focus on promotional and marketing-oriented communication.
- The use of digital campaigns as instruments for both visibility and audience engagement.
- An alignment of DPR initiatives with organisational branding and strategic communication.

The second most common activity, online publishing through the institution's website, received a moderate 44% (22 respondents). This suggests that:

- The official website, while important, is not the primary medium for real-time communication.
- Social media platforms are preferred for their immediacy, accessibility, and wider reach.

The findings therefore reflect a communication strategy in which social networking sites function as the dominant channels for DPR implementation.

3.5. Integrated Interpretation

The combined results presented in Table No. 02 reveal four principal insights:

1. The institution demonstrates a strong digital presence, with almost all employees acknowledging the existence of official digital platforms.
2. Instagram is perceived as the most influential platform, reflecting the organisation's preference for highly interactive and visually oriented communication tools.
3. Digital platforms are used primarily to enhance external communication, confirming that DPR efforts are directed towards strengthening the institution's public image rather than internal communication.
4. Digital campaigns represent the core DPR activity, signalling that the institution prioritises high-impact promotional strategies over website-based communication.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the institution strategically leverages high-engagement digital platforms, particularly Instagram, to reinforce its public image, expand audience reach, and support its broader communication objectives. The DPR system is thus characterised by a high level of digital integration and a clear prioritisation of social media over traditional web platforms.

Table 3. Data Analysis of the Third Study Axis – The Contribution of Digital Public Relations to Enhancing Institutional Image

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you perceive digital public relations as an effective tool for enhancing institutional image?	Yes	49	98.0%
	No	1	2.0%
To what extent do digital public relations contribute to enhancing the institutional image?	Large extent	45	90.0%
	Moderate extent	5	10.0%
	Limited extent	0	0.0%
Do you believe that leveraging digital public relations is crucial for enhancing the institution's image?	Yes	44	88.0%
	No	6	12.0%

The results presented in Table 3 clearly demonstrate a strong belief among respondents in the effectiveness of digital public relations (DPR) as a strategic instrument for enhancing the institution's public image. The quantitative indicators reveal an overwhelming level of agreement, while the qualitative interpretation highlights the depth of this perception and its broader organisational implications.

3.5.1. Perceived Effectiveness of Digital Public Relations

An impressive 98% of respondents (49 individuals) believed that digital public relations (DPR) constitute an effective instrument for enhancing the institution's image.

This high level of agreement indicates:

- A strong internal conviction that DPR contributes substantially to shaping public perception.
- Broad awareness among employees of the institution's reliance on digital communication to reinforce credibility and visibility.
- Recognition that DPR is consistent with contemporary communication practices and audience expectations.

The remaining 2% (one respondent) who disagreed are statistically marginal and may reflect individual scepticism rather than a broader organisational trend.

3.5.2. Extent of DPR's Contribution to Enhancing the Image

The majority of respondents, 45 individuals (90%), indicated that digital public relations (DPR) contribute to institutional image building to a large extent.

This finding suggests that:

- DPR is not perceived as a secondary or complementary activity but as central to the organisation's strategic communication efforts.

- Employees perceive a clear and direct link between digital communication activities and the institution's external reputation.
 - The organisation's digital presence is viewed as a decisive factor in building and maintaining public trust.
- Meanwhile, 10% of respondents (five individuals) stated that the impact was *moderate*, which may reflect:
- Differences in job roles or levels of exposure to DPR activities.
 - A belief that image building also depends on additional factors such as content quality, service delivery, or organisational performance.

Notably, no participants selected *limited extent*, further reinforcing the overall strength of the positive perception.

3.5.3. The Necessity of Leveraging DPR for Image Enhancement

A total of 44 respondents (88%) believed that leveraging digital public relations (DPR) is crucial for enhancing the institution's image, indicating widespread support for the integration of digital tools into its communication strategy.

This strong approval rate reflects:

- The perceived strategic importance of digital engagement in a competitive media environment.
- Recognition of DPR as a necessary—not optional—component of institutional communication.
- Alignment between employee perceptions and global shifts towards digital-first communication models.

Only 12% (six respondents) did not regard DPR as essential. This minority may believe that traditional communication channels or content quality alone can sustain image building, or their views may reflect limited exposure to DPR practices.

3.6. Integrated Interpretation

Taken together, the results indicate that:

1. Digital public relations are widely regarded as effective (98%), reflecting institutional confidence in digital communication.
2. The impact of DPR is perceived as substantial (90%), showing that employees view digital communication as a major driver of public image.
3. A large majority consider DPR essential for image enhancement (88%), confirming its central role in communication strategy.

These findings reinforce the conclusion that the institution's employees strongly associate digital public relations with the improvement, consolidation, and sustainability of the institutional image. DPR is therefore regarded not merely as beneficial, but as foundational to the organisation's ability to remain visible, credible, and competitive within the digital communication landscape.

Table 4. Analysis of Data Related to Strategic Planning in Digital Public Relations.

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Is strategic planning necessary for promoting a positive institutional image?		
Yes	46	92.0
No	04	08.0
From your perspective, is planning a part of the public relations department's responsibilities?		
Yes	48	96.0
No	02	04.0
What is the rationale behind the public relations department's dependence on planning?		
To achieve the institution's objectives	17	34.0
To activate internal and external communication	17	34.0
To create a positive institutional image	15	30.0

As illustrated in the preceding table, several key factors contribute to strengthening the institution's public image, with strategic planning emerging as a pivotal determinant. An overwhelming majority of respondents (92%, $n = 46$) affirmed that planning constitutes an essential prerequisite for cultivating a favourable institutional image, whereas a small minority (8%, $n = 4$) expressed the view that strategic planning is not a necessary component of image enhancement. This disparity underscores the strong collective belief in the role of structured planning within institutional communication.

Furthermore, respondents exhibited near-unanimous agreement regarding the responsibility of the Public Relations Department in overseeing planning activities. A substantial 96% ($n = 48$) indicated that planning falls squarely within the remit of the public relations function, while only 4% ($n = 2$) disagreed. These findings reflect a clear organisational perception of public relations as a strategic, rather than purely operational, unit, one endowed with decision-making capacity and central to institutional reputation management.

Regarding the rationale behind the Public Relations Department's reliance on planning, the results reveal a relatively balanced distribution across key objectives. A total of 34% ($n = 17$) of respondents reported that planning is essential for achieving the institution's overarching goals. An equal proportion (34%, $n = 17$) emphasised its role in activating both internal and external communication channels, thereby ensuring cohesive messaging and reinforcing communicative consistency. Meanwhile, 30% ($n = 15$) attributed the importance of planning to its function in cultivating a positive institutional image. This final element highlights the value placed on proactive image-building strategies within the digital public relations (DPR) context.

Taken together, these findings indicate that planning is not perceived as an ancillary activity but rather as a foundational pillar of the institution's communication infrastructure. This conclusion is reinforced by the respondents' conviction that planning simultaneously contributes to goal achievement, communicative efficiency, and image enhancement, an outlook that aligns with contemporary perspectives in DPR scholarship.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents According to Demographic and Occupational Variables.

Variable	Category	Yes (Frequency)	Yes (%)	No (Frequency)	No (%)
Gender	Male	22	95.7%	01	4.3%
	Female	27	100.0%	00	0.0%
Age	20–30 years old	34	97.1%	01	2.9%
	30–40 years old	14	100.0%	00	0.0%
	40 years old and above	01	100.0%	00	0.0%
Educational attainment	Primary	00	0.0%	00	0.0%
	Intermediate (Middle school)	00	0.0%	00	0.0%
	Secondary	01	100.0%	00	0.0%
	Higher education	48	98.0%	01	2.0%
Occupational category	Employee	46	97.9%	01	2.1%
	Administrator	02	100.0%	00	0.0%
	Manager / Director	01	100.0%	00	0.0%
	Assistant Manager	00	0.0%	00	0.0%

The data presented in Table No. 05 provide a detailed overview of the demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents. These variables are essential for interpreting the broader results of the study, as they offer insights into how personal and professional attributes may influence perceptions of digital public relations (DPR) and institutional image.

3.6.1. Gender Distribution and Its Implications

The findings indicate a balanced gender representation, with 22 male respondents (95.7%) affirming the use of digital public relations (DPR), compared with 27 female respondents (100%). The near-unanimous approval across both gender groups suggests that the perceived importance of DPR transcends gender differences. The minor discrepancy among male respondents (4.3% answering *No*) likely reflects individual variation rather than a gender-based trend.

3.6.2. Age-Based Patterns

All respondents aged 30–40 years and those above 40 expressed full agreement regarding the effectiveness of DPR. Among the 20–30-year cohort, 34 respondents (97.1%) expressed agreement, while only one individual (2.9%) disagreed. These results indicate that DPR enjoys widespread acceptance across age groups, with slightly stronger consensus among older respondents. This may be attributed to greater professional experience or enhanced organisational awareness among older employees.

3.6.3. Educational Attainment and Perceptions

An overwhelming majority, 98% of respondents with higher education, affirmed the value of DPR, while respondents with secondary education also showed complete agreement. This reinforces the notion that higher educational attainment correlates with a deeper understanding of institutional communication mechanisms, particularly the strategic role of digital public relations.

The absence of respondents with primary or intermediate education indicates that the institution's workforce is predominantly composed of individuals with advanced or at least secondary qualifications, aligning with the competencies required in modern media environments.

3.6.4. Occupational Category and Agreement Levels

Employees constituted the largest occupational group (46 respondents), recording a strong endorsement rate of 97.9%. Administrators and managers also demonstrated complete agreement (100%). These findings suggest a consistent appreciation of DPR across hierarchical levels, reflecting institutional alignment around its strategic communication role.

These findings underscore two key observations:

- Digital public relations (DPR) are widely accepted across all professional levels, from entry-level employees to senior management.
- The unanimous agreement among administrators and managers indicates institutional recognition of the strategic importance of DPR in maintaining and enhancing corporate reputation.

3.6.5. Overall Interpretation

Across demographic and professional variables, the results reveal consistent and robust support for the role of digital public relations (DPR). This convergence suggests that:

- The institution has successfully embedded digital communication practices across its various units.
- Awareness of the importance of DPR is widespread, regardless of gender, age, educational level, or occupational category.
- The institutional culture appears to be well aligned with contemporary communication practices, particularly those related to digital engagement and image management.

4. DISCUSSION

The discussion of the study's findings reveals several important insights into the role and effectiveness of digital public relations (DPR) within the Echorouk Group. Collectively, the results indicate that DPR practices have become a central pillar of the institution's communication strategy and play a decisive role in shaping its public image.

4.1. Digital Public Relations Practices at Echorouk Group

The findings demonstrate that digital public relations (DPR) are actively implemented within the institution through a designated

public relations officer. Respondents overwhelmingly affirmed that these practices contribute significantly to enhancing the public perception of the organisation. Notably, perceptions were broadly consistent across demographic variables—including gender, age, educational attainment, and occupational category—indicating a unified institutional understanding of the strategic relevance of DPR.

4.2. Reliance on Digital Technologies for Communication

The study further reveals that the Echorouk Group relies extensively on digital technologies to ensure the accurate, rapid, and efficient dissemination of information. Digital platforms—particularly social media—function as primary channels for external communication and for facilitating internal information flows. Although some variation in responses was observed across demographic groups, the majority concurred that these technologies substantially enhance the institution's public image by promoting greater visibility, transparency, and interactivity.

4.3. Effectiveness of Digital Public Relations Strategies

The implementation of digital public relations (DPR) strategies within the Echorouk Group appears to have exerted a substantial positive influence on the institution's public image. Respondents affirmed that DPR contributes significantly to strengthening the organisation's reputation, enhancing audience engagement, and reinforcing its credibility. Although minor variations in perception were observed across gender, age, professional role, and educational background, the predominant view was that DPR constitutes a strategic asset in institutional image building.

4.4. Planning as a Key Driver of Institutional Image Formation

A core conclusion emerging from the data is the centrality of strategic planning in reinforcing the institution's public image. Respondents widely recognised that planning enables the Echorouk Group to achieve its objectives, foster both internal and external communication, and maintain a consistent and positive organisational identity. Although some demographic differences in responses were noted, the majority concurred that planning is indispensable to the effectiveness of the public relations function. Strategic planning can therefore be regarded as a foundational pillar of successful image management within the institution.

4.5. Synthesis of Key Findings

Based on the overall data, several structural and operational priorities have been identified:

1. Establishing an integrated information exchange system within the institution to enhance efficiency and ensure coherence in communication processes.
2. Expanding the use of networks and digital platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and others, for publishing media content, promotional materials, and programme announcements.
3. Strengthening the institution's official website (Echorouk Online) as an interactive multimedia platform for engaging external audiences.
4. Institutionalising the public relations function by recognising it as an independent unit within the organisational structure.
5. Using WhatsApp as an internal communication tool to facilitate rapid and effective information exchange among employees.
6. Leveraging WhatsApp and other instant messaging platforms for external communication, including coordination with journalists and coverage of press events.
7. Employing a variety of digital public relations (DPR) tools, such as:
 - Digital newspapers and publications disseminated through the official website.
 - Online resources for sourcing materials and supporting media production.
 - The intranet system, which streamlines internal workflows, enables remote submission of journalistic work, and reduces bureaucratic delays.

Overall, the study highlights that DPR practices within the Echorouk Group represent a dynamic and evolving field that contributes significantly to the institution's public image, internal cohesion, and communication efficiency.

5. CONCLUSION

In light of the findings presented, it is evident that advances in information and communication technologies have profoundly influenced the field of public relations, leading to the emergence and consolidation of digital public relations (DPR) as a fundamental organisational function. This modern paradigm has attracted significant scholarly and professional attention owing to its capacity to enable rapid, efficient, and wide-reaching communication through a diverse array of digital tools and platforms. Within this evolving environment, institutional image has become a central concern for organisations, as public reputation increasingly depends on the ability of public relations practitioners to maintain continuous and purposeful communication with target audiences.

The study concludes that DPR plays a pivotal role in managing and enhancing the public image of organisations—particularly media institutions—by ensuring alignment with technological developments in the communication sector. Through the strategic use of digital technologies and platforms, institutions are able to strengthen their visibility, reinforce their credibility, and cultivate a favourable public perception. Furthermore, the findings highlight that strategic planning constitutes an essential dimension of public relations practice, enabling institutions to achieve their objectives, enhance organisational coherence, and consolidate their reputation.

The results also demonstrate that contemporary media organisations are increasingly adopting communication strategies grounded in DPR to improve their image and fulfil their institutional missions. Within the Echorouk Group, the establishment of a dedicated public relations department underscores the organisation's recognition of the strategic importance of DPR. This department not only contributes to enhancing the organisation's public image but also facilitates effective internal and external communication flows. The use of interactive digital communication systems enables the institution to engage dynamically with

audiences, gather feedback on its programmes and activities, and respond promptly to public expectations. Such efforts collectively contribute to consolidating a positive and sustainable institutional image.

In conclusion, the study affirms that DPR has become indispensable to media organisations seeking to adapt to the rapidly evolving communication landscape. By combining strategic planning, technological integration, and audience-centred communication, institutions can strengthen their public image and ensure continued relevance and competitiveness in the digital age.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several practical and strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of digital public relations (DPR) in enhancing the institutional image of media organisations, particularly within the Algerian context:

1. **Establish a Comprehensive Digital Communication System**
Media organisations should develop an integrated digital communication infrastructure that facilitates efficient internal information exchange and supports the continuous dissemination of accurate and timely content to external audiences.
2. **Strengthen the Public Relations Department**
It is recommended that media institutions reinforce the structural and functional capacities of their public relations departments by ensuring the availability of qualified personnel specialised in digital communication and online reputation management.
3. **Expand the Use of Social Media Platforms**
Institutions should intensify their presence on major social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and emerging networks—to promote content, engage audiences, and monitor public sentiment in real time.
4. **Develop Interactive Organisational Websites**
The creation and ongoing development of interactive, multimedia-rich websites are essential. Such platforms should enable two-way communication, provide real-time updates, and serve as reliable and authoritative sources of institutional information.
5. **Adopt Strategic Planning for Image Management**
Institutions should implement structured planning processes for DPR, including the formulation of clear objectives, identification of target audiences, and application of evidence-based strategies to build and maintain a positive public image.
6. **Enhance Internal Communication Mechanisms**
Digital tools such as WhatsApp, intranet systems, and electronic newsletters should be systematically utilised to improve internal coordination, ensure timely information flow, and enhance communication efficiency.
7. **Invest in Digital Advertising and Content Promotion**
Although currently underutilised, digital advertising—such as sponsored posts and targeted campaigns—should be leveraged to broaden audience reach and increase the visibility of media content across diverse audience segments.
8. **Monitor and Evaluate Digital PR Strategies**
Media institutions should regularly assess the effectiveness of their DPR initiatives through digital analytics, audience feedback, and performance indicators to ensure continuous development and strategic refinement.
9. **Strengthen Crisis Communication Protocols**
Given the critical importance of image restoration, institutions should establish clear digital crisis communication plans to manage public perception effectively and rebuild trust during reputational crises.
10. **Promote Continuous Digital Training for PR Staff**
Regular training programmes in digital media literacy, content production, analytics, and online engagement should be implemented for public relations practitioners to ensure alignment with international standards and evolving best practices.

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