MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

Responding to Hurricanes Irma and Maria: An Exploration of Puerto Rico Tourism's Image

Repair Efforts

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The Major Research Paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Master of Professional Communication

Ryerson University

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

August 2018

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Abstract

Tourists' perceived image of a destination, including perceptions of safety and risk, play important roles in deciding whether or not to visit a destination. When crises strike a tourist destination, tourism organizations must work towards restoring their images to a favourable state. In the fall of 2017, hurricanes Irma and Maria swept through the Caribbean with devastating consequences. Puerto Rico, whose tourism industry plays a vital role in its economy, was particularly devastated by the hurricanes. In the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria, Puerto Rico's tourism sector was in a state of crisis whereby its economic health depended on tourism revenue. Since image plays a vital role in the health of Puerto Rico's tourism industry, this Major Research Paper (MRP) seeks to analyze the use of image repair strategies employed by Puerto Rico's official tourism organization, See Puerto Rico, across multiple online platforms and across varying stages of the hurricane crisis. Drawing from image repair theory (Benoit, 1997), texts and images found on See Puerto Rico's website and Facebook page were analyzed by identifying the presence of denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification strategies with the addition of informational and suffering strategies. Findings indicate that See Puerto Rico primarily employed bolstering, informational, corrective action, minimization, and suffering strategies throughout its website and Facebook page. Puerto Rico strived to restore its image by providing tourists select pieces of information regarding the status of Puerto Rico's tourism industry and by showcasing the positive attributes of the islands. Part of See Puerto Rico's image repair efforts involved ignoring the hurricanes and minimizing their seriousness and impacts to reassure tourists that they could still travel to Puerto Rico. The application of image repair theory in this study suggests that it can be used to help understand tourism organizations' crisis responses to natural disasters.

Acknowledgements

This Major Research Paper would not have been possible without the continuous support of several stellar individuals. I would first like to thank my research supervisor, Dr. Carolyn Meyer, for her excellent guidance, mentorship, and encouragement throughout my writing process. Her expert knowledge in the field of crisis communication helped to make this Major Research Paper as strong as it could be. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Joanne DiNova, for her constructive insight and positive review of this Major Research Paper. Lastly, I wish to thank all of my peers in the Master of Professional Communication program who never fail to inspire me.

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Introduction

In the fall of 2017, a series of violent hurricanes swept through the Caribbean with devastating consequences. Two particularly damaging storms, hurricanes Irma and Maria, ravaged the islands of the leeward island chain. Puerto Rico, an island territory of the United States, was particularly devastated by the force of the hurricanes. The first of these cyclones was hurricane Irma, which formed on August 30, 2017, and cut a path of devastation across the Caribbean (Miller, 2017). On September 4, 2017, Puerto Rico declared a state of emergency in anticipation of the storm hitting the coast ("Extremely dangerous," 2017). The storm made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 6, 2017, causing damages estimated at $50 billion USD (Sullivan & Fieser, 2017; National Hurricane Centre, 2018). Before this small island republic had the chance to draw breath, a second storm was threatening its vulnerable coast. Hurricane Maria formed on September 16, 2017, and by September 20, 2017, it had reached Puerto Rico, exacerbating the damage from hurricane Irma (McCleary, 2017). Hurricane Maria was an order of magnitude more damaging than Irma, claiming the title of the deadliest storm of the 2017 hurricane season (Sutter, Santiago, & Shah, 2017). Hurricane Maria dealt a devastating blow to the island, destroying the electrical grid and causing an estimated $91.6 billion USD worth of damage (National Hurricane Centre, 2018).

Damage to the islands' infrastructure was widespread and severe as millions were left without power or water and relegated to shelters. Puerto Rico is a popular tourist destination with lavish resorts, white sand beaches, and pristine blue waters. The destruction caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria included the annihilation of many of the island's tourism businesses such as hotels, resorts, shops, and restaurants. The majority of the island's airports also suffered damage and were forced to close temporarily (Jenkins, 2017). Tourism is a significant sector in Puerto

Rico's economy. The industry directly accounts for 2.7% of Puerto Rico's total gross domestic product (GDP) and indirectly accounts for roughly 8%, contributing $8 billion USD to the island's total GDP in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). The destruction of Puerto Rico's tourism industry poses a serious threat to this small territory's economy. After the hurricanes, Puerto Rico's tourism sector was in a state of crisis whereby its economic health depended on the image perceptions of potential tourists.

The plight of Puerto Rico was well documented in mainstream and social media, leaving the aftermath of the hurricanes no secret to the public. The image of the island territory in the media after hurricanes Irma and Maria undoubtedly discouraged prospective tourists from travelling to Puerto Rico (Ruiz-Grossman, 2018). Tourist perceptions of safety and risk play important roles in deciding to visit a destination. Therefore, it is imperative to proactively prepare response strategies to limit the damaging impacts crises impose on a destination's image. Since image plays a vital role in the health of Puerto Rico's tourism industry, this study seeks to analyze the use of image repair strategies employed by Puerto Rico's official tourism organization, See Puerto Rico, across multiple online channels and across varying stages of the hurricane crisis. This study aims to address the following research questions: (1) To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its website to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria? (2) To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its Facebook page to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria? (3) How does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's use of image repair strategies vary between its official tourism website and Facebook page? (4) How have Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's image repair efforts changed over the course of the crisis?

Literature Review

The literature review explores three main topics: (1) various definitions and models of crisis communication, (2) crisis communication specific to tourism and hospitality industries, and (3) tourism disasters and online crisis communication. The literature review provides the theoretical foundation to explore crisis communication specific to tourism organizations in crisis.

Models of Crisis Communication

Crisis Communication

Over the years, crisis communication has garnered extensive scholarly attention, particularly regarding the ways in which organizations communicate to various stakeholders during times of crisis. Much of the literature has focused primarily on classifying and recommending message strategies for varying stages, intensities, and types of crises (Burnett, 1998; Seeger, 2006; Benoit, 1997; Coombs, 2007). Numerous studies have also investigated the role of traditional and digital media in crisis communication (Taylor & Perry, 2005; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). Crises are complex events that are ingrained in social constructionist perspectives of meaning, which renders the term rather difficult to define (Koerber, 2017). While there are multiple definitions across the literature, Fearn-Banks' (2002) interpretation encompasses several common characteristics. She defines a crisis as a "major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name" (Fearn-Banks, 2002, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, it is important to distinguish between a crisis and a disaster. Faulkner (2001) makes this distinction by referring to disasters as "situations where an enterprise (or collection of enterprises in the case of a tourist destination) is confronted with sudden unpredictable catastrophic changes

over which it has little control" (p. 136). Natural disasters, while partly attributable to human activity, are uncontrollable events where stakeholders do not necessarily place blame on the affected area. Natural disasters such as hurricanes can hardly be recognized as self-inflicted, even though vulnerable tourist areas can proactively take steps to reduce the impacts (Faulkner, 2001). For a crisis whose cause is self-inflicted to some degree, attribution is typically directed towards the organization at fault. Natural disasters are attributable to random natural weather events; thus, blame is not assigned and impacts can only be managed (Faulkner, 2001). A number of theories and models of crisis communication have been developed to shape best practices for navigating through crisis and disaster situations. Image repair theory (IRT) and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) will be examined with greater emphasis placed on the former.

Image Repair Theory (IRT)

Maintaining a positive image to various stakeholders is imperative to an organization's reputation and survival. When a damaging crisis occurs, an organization must work to restore its image to a favourable state. One theory that has gained much scholarly attention and has been the focus of extensive research in the field of crisis communication is image repair theory (IRT) as pioneered by Benoit (1997) (Holtzhausen & Roberts, 2009; Moody, 2011; Liu & Fraustino, 2014). IRT rests upon two essential assumptions: "communication is a goal-directed activity and maintaining a favourable reputation is a key goal of communication" (Benoit, 2014, p. 14). This theory outlines a number of message strategies that can be implemented to repair an organization's or individual's image when a reputation-damaging event occurs. IRT draws upon theories of apologia, specifically Ware and Linkugel's (1973) articulation of the genre of apology responses. Apologetic defences involve justifications put forth by an organization when

an unanticipated image-tarnishing event occurs (Benoit, 1997). As such, image repair theory offers a variety of potential message options for organizations to ensure favourable perceptions.

When responding to crises, Benoit (1997) proposes five typologies of message strategies that may be implemented to mitigate the damage to an organization's reputation: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification (Benoit, 1997). Denial can be divided into two sub-strategies: denying the occurrence of or affiliation with a wrongful act and shifting the blame to another entity as being responsible for the wrongful act (Benoit, 2014). When an organization is unable to deny their wrongdoing, they may opt to evade responsibility. This type of messaging strategy involves four sub-strategies. The first claims that the wrongful act was carried out as a response to a previous act (provocation). The second sub-strategy involves declaring a lack of knowledge or control over the wrongful act (defeasibility). The final two sub-strategies include making excuses based on the premise that the act was accidental and suggesting the wrongful act should be justified due to good intentions of the accused (Benoit, 2014). Next, reducing the offensiveness or negative perceptions of a wrongful act may take the form of any of six sub-strategies including: bolstering (strengthening the positive perceptions of the organization), minimization (claiming the wrongful act is less serious than it appears), differentiation (comparing the wrongful act to more serious acts), transcendence (positioning the wrongful act in an alternative, larger context), attacking the accuser (undermining the credibility of the accuser), and compensation (rewarding victims to alleviate negative perceptions) (Benoit, 2014). Corrective action involves taking responsibility for the wrongful act and offering a promise to correct the issue. Lastly, mortification embodies a full admittance of wrongdoing and a plea for forgiveness. Analyzing Puerto Rico's official tourism

responses to hurricanes Irma and Maria through an image repair lens is useful for evaluating its efforts to restore its reputation.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Building upon image repair theory and extending the discussion of crisis communication theory, Coombs' (2007) situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) is an important model that has often been explored by scholars over the past few decades (Koerber, 2017; Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Avery et al., 2010). This model is rooted in attribution theory, which postulates that audiences react emotionally and seek to assign responsibility in the event of a crisis. SCCT posits that the reputational threat faced by an organization is associated with the type of crisis, which produces predictable levels of attributed responsibility and stakeholder response. Coombs (2007) classifies crisis types into three clusters: the intentional cluster, where the organization is fully at fault, yielding the strongest attribution of responsibility; the accidental cluster, which attributes a moderate amount of responsibility; and the victim cluster, whereby organizations are perceived as victims of the crisis thus, weak attributions of responsibility are assigned (Coombs, 2007). Similarly, it has been found that publics are more likely to accept crisis responses when the crisis is perceived as external to the organization (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Other scholars have analyzed the applicability of SCCT by conducting experimental analyses (Jeong, 2009; Sisco, 2012). One study confirmed Coombs' (2007) theory and found that preventable and highly severe crises have more negative effects on reputation than accidental and less severe crises (Claeyes, Cauberghe, & Vyncke, 2010). Coombs (2007) also discusses the importance of the consistency of the occurrence of similar crises in the past, and the distinctiveness of past relationship management as key factors in predicting the level of reputational threat faced. Thus,

by taking into account crisis type, history, and previous relationship reputation, organizations are able to predict levels of image threat and implement strategies accordingly.

Definitions and prominent theories within the field of crisis communication research such as IRT and SCCT offer valuable insight for analyzing responses by tourism organizations when dealing with crises. Thus, image repair theory and the situational factors involved in a crisis will serve as the basis of exploration for this study.

Crisis Communication within Tourism and Hospitality Industries

Tourism Management

Global tourism and hospitality industries are known to be vulnerable to a number of inescapable crises such as natural disasters, political uprisings, economic downturns, diseases, wars, and acts of terror. Crisis management within tourism and hospitality industries is a unique, yet relatively underdeveloped field of study. Tourism crisis management is a concept not well-defined in the field but may be generally described as "planning for and managing tourism crises in order to protect the interests of the industry, tourists, and other stakeholders involved and contain any long-term damage" (Henderson, 2007, p. 9). Research within the realm of crisis management and tourism lacks a cohesive theoretical framework from which researchers may build upon to conceptualize effective responses to tourism disasters (Faulkner, 2001). Ritchie (2004) suggests that this body of research is limited due to the uncontrollable and complex nature of natural disasters and the difficulty with which tourism organizations navigate through such chaotic situations. Faulkner (2001) attempts to fill this gap by formulating the first disaster management framework specific to tourism. He highlights the necessary prerequisites and principles for effective management at each phase of a disaster. He delineates these stages,

describing them as "pre-event, prodromal, emergency, intermediate, long-term recovery, and resolution" (Faulkner, 2001, p. 140). Ritchie (2004) builds upon Faulkner (2001) and suggests that organizations within tourism industries should depart from prescriptive models of crisis management and adopt more strategic and holistic approaches. In the event of a tourism crisis, Ritchie (2004) highlights the importance of continuous scanning/planning, implementing, and evaluating while remaining flexible throughout the crisis in order to manage chaos and change. Understanding that strategies of tourism crisis management are in constant flux is useful for recognizing that tourism crisis responses may not adhere to pre-established response frameworks. Crises with impacts on tourism are difficult to prepare for, thus best practices in tourism management are constantly changing to handle varying types of crises.

Best Practices in Tourism Crisis Management

In the event of a crisis or the presence of risk associated with travelling, tourists may simply choose to avoid a destination or forever perceive a tourist destination as undesirable. However, crises have detrimental and occasionally irreversible consequences for the health of tourism industries. Since tourism represents a vital component of many destinations' economic survival (Schumann, 2013), scholars have argued the need to protect the industry by proactively developing a plan of action for each stage of a potential disaster (Beirman, 2003). Crisis plans should include a strategic course of action to take before the crisis, during its occurrence, and after it has dissolved. Beirman (2003), who has written extensively on tourism restoration marketing, notes the importance of formulating relationships with key groups of stakeholders such as potential tourists, media outlets, and infrastructural stakeholders such as airlines and tour companies. From a marketing perspective, Beirman (2003) states that restoring image requires customized strategies and messages for each type of stakeholder. Page et al. (2006) also propose

a series of best practices for destinations when managing economically threatening events. By analyzing the Scottish National Tourism Organization's (NTO) response to the Avian Influenza outbreak of 2005, the researchers identified pre-crisis scenario planning as a best practice (Page et al., 2006). Anticipating and planning for eventual crises by preparing response strategies places any destination in a good position to guard against image deterioration in the wake of a crisis (Page et al., 2006). While investigating whether or not Puerto Rico adhered to best practices is beyond the scope of this study, these findings serve as useful guideposts for what constitutes effective tourism crisis communication.

Alternative Tourism Crisis Response Strategies

A number of recent studies have suggested alternative strategies to repair image and reputation by analyzing the types of information disseminated (DiStaso et al., 2015; Moore & Seymour, 2005). Avraham and Ketter (2008, 2017) have written extensively on strategies to repair images and attract tourism for destinations in crisis that extend beyond IRT. They developed the multi-step model for altering place image, which incorporates three types of strategies destinations may implement when crises strike that lie outside of their direct control: source, audience, and message strategies (Avraham & Ketter, 2008). Source strategies attempt to replace the source of image-damaging information, while audience strategies attempt to align the destination community's values with those of tourists. Lastly, message strategies attempt to counter negative perceptions and/or stereotypes associated with the destination (Avraham & Ketter, 2017). Their analysis of tourism responses by various African and Middle Eastern countries dealing with political violence and terrorist attacks showcased the success and validity of the multi-step model for altering and restoring place image (Avraham & Ketter, 2017). Another study sought to analyze British Petroleum's (BP) social media response to the

Deepwater Horizon oil spill against Sturges' (1994) information strategies (Ye & Ki, 2017). Sturges (1994) identifies three types of information organizations may disseminate during times of crisis. Instructing information notifies stakeholders of the extent to which the crisis affects them and what they can do to protect themselves. Adjusting information aims to reduce stakeholder stress by updating them on crisis-related information. Lastly, internalizing information is a type of communication that works to build or repair reputation (Sturges, 1994). Some suggest that internalizing information should be emphasized during the pre-crisis stage in order to position the organization as an authoritative source of information (Austin & Jin, 2017). Alternative strategies for tourism crisis management aside from IRT will offer unique insight about the types of information disseminated by Puerto Rico's official tourism organization in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The above findings indicate the need to discuss crisis communication in the context of tourism and hospitality specifically. Crises that threaten tourism industries such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and economic crashes are different from other crisis scenarios. Tourism crises are complex, uncontrollable, and often chaotic events in which blame is not necessarily placed on one individual, organization, or affected area. Rather, destinations are often perceived as victims of the crisis. While many of their crisis response strategies overlap with Benoit's (1997) image repair typology, Coombs and Holladay (1996) propose the strategy of suffering. This strategy "portrays the organization as a victim of the crisis" or expresses shared suffering with victims to help build sympathy for the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 284). The dynamic, non-attributable, and often unpredictable nature of tourism crises suggest that tourism crisis management requires its own set of models specific to the industry that are flexible enough to adapt to constantly fluctuating chaotic crises (Ritchie, 2004). However, there

are some instances in which prescriptions for tourism crisis management can be applied to other crisis scenarios external to the tourism industry. For instance, both streams of research emphasize the importance of proactively developing strategies for each stage of a crisis, forming and maintaining relationships with stakeholders, and engaging in pre-crisis scenario planning (Page et al., 2006). It is important to recognize that tourism crises are unique and may not adhere to one-size-fits-all models of crisis communication. Rather, these findings will provide insight into how tourism organizations can adopt and adapt crisis communication strategies to best suit their image repair efforts.

Tourism Disasters and Online Crisis Communication

Use of Official Social Media in Tourism Crisis Communication

Social media including blogs and networking websites have become important tools for communicating crisis information, engaging with stakeholders, and correcting tarnished reputations (Sigala, 2012). While literature on the role of social media in tourism crisis communication is still in its infancy, numerous studies have stressed the importance of integrating social media in crisis plans, particularly in the first phases of planning, in order to engage with stakeholders (Roshan, Warren, & Carr, 2016; Liu, Pennington-Gray, & Klemmer, 2015). Social media has altered the way organizations communicate with stakeholders and how crisis-related information is shared. Sigala (2012) notes that organizations are now able to disseminate information in a "timely, international, and accurate way by using social media" (p. 2). Particularly in the event of natural disasters, social media may be used to collect local information or user-generated content to piece together the extent of the crisis effects and inform an appropriate response (Sigala, 2012). Additionally, others have noted that social media is a useful tool in building credibility and trust via one-to-many and many-to-many conversations

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with key stakeholders during all stages of a crisis (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008). Due to more authentic communication offered by social media, it has been found that crisis communication efforts made via social media may result in higher perceived reputations among audiences than via traditional media (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). These findings signal the importance of including social media in crisis management plans and demonstrate that it should be embraced to extend and enrich organizations' crisis communication efforts.

Social Media and Image Repair

While social media platforms provide new means for organizations to restore their images and communicate with stakeholders, they may also work to escalate crises (Mei, Bansal, & Pang, 2010). One study worth noting analyzed BP's use of image repair strategies on social media in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 (Muralidharan, Dillistone, & Shin, 2011). BP primarily implemented corrective action strategies via social media to provide updates on their clean-up process in attempt to restore their image. However, due to the extreme severity of the crisis, social media users were not mollified and continuously used social media to express their anger towards BP, rendering the image restoration efforts unsuccessful (Muralidharan, Dillistone, & Shin, 2011). Pennington-Gray, London, and Cahyanto (2011) examined Florida's official tourism organization's messaging strategies on social media in response to the oil spill. They highlighted the importance of establishing a single, integrated, and consistent message communicated through one voice, in this case Visit Florida, to represent tourism industries in order to succeed in image recovery (Pennington-Gray, London, & Cahyanto, 2011). These findings emphasize social media's influence on organizations' image restoration efforts and the importance of creating unified messaging, which will aid in examining the consistency of Puerto Rico's strategic messaging.

Use of Official Websites in Tourism Crisis Communication

Official tourism websites also serve as important tools for shaping the image of tourism destinations and influencing tourist decision making. Literature on the study of tourism websites in conjunction with crisis communication is limited, although it has been noted that websites are important agents in destination image representation (Pavlović & Belullo, 2011). Volo (2008) examined how official tourism destination websites communicated crisis- and risk- related information to tourists. The study concluded that the official tourism websites of various destinations influenced by the Avian Influenza outbreak did not provide sufficient information for tourists and other stakeholders about the risks associated with travelling to these destinations (Volo, 2008). Others have found that image representations of tourist destinations are not consistent across online information sources. For instance, Choi, Lehto, and Morrison (2007) revealed that the visual and textual presentation of Macau on its official website drastically differed from other official websites promoting Macau. These findings not only showcase the need to examine the effectiveness of tourism websites in disseminating crisis information, but they also highlight how image representations of tourist destinations may vary across online platforms.

These findings indicate that social media and other online platforms such as tourism websites need to be considered in crisis communication implementation. These findings will be useful when considering the role of social media and tourism websites in Puerto Rico's image repair efforts.

The focus of this study is Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's crisis responses to hurricanes Irma and Maria that occurred in the fall of 2017. By exploring individual prescriptions and larger models of crisis communication, the main areas examined in the

literature review position image repair theory as the basis of exploration for this study. The major topics presented in the literature review outlined: (1) various definitions and models of crisis communication including IRT and SCCT, (2) crisis communication specifically within tourism and hospitality industries, and (3) tourism disasters and online crisis communication. These models and prescriptions work together to help build a better understanding of crisis communication specific to organizations within tourism industries.

Research Questions

Based on the information gathered from the literature review, this study seeks to answer the following four research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its website to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria?

RQ2: To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its Facebook page to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria?

RQ3: How does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's use of image repair strategies vary between its official tourism website and Facebook page?

RQ4: How have Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's image repair efforts changed over the course of the crisis?

Data Collection

For this study, textual and visual data was collected from Puerto Rico's official tourism website (http://www.seepuertorico.com/) and Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/seepuertorico). The timeline for data collection was from August 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017, to allow for the examination of image repair strategies utilized from pre- to post- crisis.

In terms of Puerto Rico's official tourism website, texts and images were gathered from the homepage as well as from the press room page. Data was collected manually from Puerto Rico's official tourism website by capturing digital screenshots of its homepage and press room page. To obtain historical data from the homepages and press room pages, the WayBack Machine, an internet archive tool, was used to access and download twenty publicly available screenshots of the homepage and press room that were taken during the time of the hurricanes. Screenshots were then dated and stored in digital folders for later analysis. Screenshots taken from the homepage and the press room were stored in separate folders. Facebook posts were also digitally screenshot, dated, and archived. Screenshots taken from Facebook were archived in a separate folder from all website screenshots. The frequency of an image repair strategy utilized by See Puerto Rico's homepage, press room page, and Facebook page was tallied and recorded in separate digital spreadsheets.

Puerto Rico's official tourism website was chosen for analysis because of its official status, regular updates, and credibility. Puerto Rico's official Facebook page was selected over its other social media pages, such as Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube, due to its larger following, more frequent posts, and higher user engagement.

Method

This study utilized a content analysis of image repair strategies found on the official Puerto Rico tourism website and Facebook page. To answer research questions one and two, the texts and images found on Puerto Rico's official tourism homepage, press room, and Facebook page were coded based on Benoit's (1997) five typologies and twelve sub-strategies of IRT with the addition of the suffering strategy (Table 1). For this study, suffering was added as a sub-strategy of evading responsibility since suffering aims to eliminate blame and create sympathy for the organization instead. Coombs and Holladay (1996) define the suffering strategy as "portraying the organization as a victim of the crisis" (p. 284). The inclusion of this strategy was necessary in the case of natural disaster crisis responses because blame is not typically placed on the destination, rather, it is perceived as a victim. Sturges' (1994) informational strategies were also included and modified as a sub-strategy for the purpose of this study. Sturges' (1994) three informational strategies – instructional, adjusting, and internalizing – were grouped into one informational strategy. An image or a piece of text that aimed to notify stakeholders of the extent to which the crisis affected them, what they could do to protect themselves, or updated them on the status of the crisis was labelled as an informational strategy. Definitions and examples of the language that may have been used for each strategy and sub-strategy are given in Table 1.

This inductive analysis sought to explore and identify the presence of image repair strategies by matching texts and images with an appropriate strategy. Other emerging categories and insights derived from the data were also noted. Texts and images from the saved screenshots that exemplified the characteristics of an IRT strategy as outlined in Table 1 were highlighted and labelled accordingly. Texts and images that were not accurately represented by Benoit's (1997) strategies were also noted to highlight any irregularities. The number of screenshots

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found within each strategy folder for both online platforms were manually counted and input into digital spreadsheets. The archived frequencies of each image repair strategy utilized on both Puerto Rico's official tourism website and Facebook page were then tallied to uncover which strategy was most often and least often used on both platforms. The type and frequency of image repair strategies on both platforms were then compared to examine any discrepancies that may have existed between the two channels, which answered research question three. After the timeframes for each stage of the crisis were determined, all saved screenshots of the homepages, press room pages, and Facebook posts were re-categorized and placed into digital folders by stage. The image repair strategies utilized were then tallied to uncover which types of strategies were most and least commonly used during each stage of the crisis. These results uncovered how See Puerto Rico's image repair efforts have changed over the duration of the crisis, which answered research question four.

Table 1: Image Repair Strategies Coding Scheme

Typology	Sub-Strategy	Description	Examples/Possible Language Used
Denial	Basic Denial	Denying that the event occurred or denying having any part in the event.	*That is false/untrue/ unlikely, this did not happen.*
	Shifting Blame	Placing the blame on another person, organization, or other cause as being responsible for the event.	*They, responsible, at fault, to blame, culprit.*
Evading Responsibility	Provocation	Stating that the event was carried out as a response to a previous act.	*In response to, had to, because of.*
	Defeasibility	Declaring a lack of knowledge or control over the event.	*Didn't know, first time knowing/hearing about.*
	Accident	Claiming that the event was accidental.	*Accident, surprise, error, mishap.*
	Good Intentions	Suggesting the event should be justified due to the good intentions of the accused.	*Unintentional, backfire, inadvertently.*

	Suffering	Portraying the individual or organization as a victim of the event to build sympathy.	*Too, help, hurting, struggling, striving, rebuilding, surviving, thank you, support, appreciate.*
Reducing Offensiveness	Bolstering	Strengthening the positive perceptions of an organization by reminding stakeholders of previous positive characteristics, events, or reputations of an organization.	*Expect, remember, memories, ready, expectations, voted best, top 10, open for business, desirable images (i.e. blue waters, white beaches, luxury resorts, etc.)*
	Minimization	Claiming that the event is less serious than it appears.	*Minor, not serious, only, not as bad, minimal impacts, other hurricanes.*
	Differentiation	Distinguishing the event from other, more serious events.	*In reality, unlike, taken too seriously.*
	Transcendence	Positioning the event in larger, less offensive, and more favourable contexts.	*At least, look at bright side, what is important here is.*
	Attacking the Accuser	Expressing negative information to undermine the credibility of the accuser.	*Accuser has history of/motive for, any negative comment toward accuser.*
	Compensation	Rewarding victims affected by the event.	*Discounts, coupons, refunds to those affected.*
Corrective Action	N/A	Offering promises to correct the situation or prevent it from occurring again.	*Taking steps to, repair, prevent, rebuild, restore, strive.*
Mortification	N/A	Taking responsibility for the event, offering an apology, or seeking forgiveness.	*I/we apologize, sorry, disappointed, did not mean to, accountable. responsibility, regret, heartbroken, devastated.*
Informational	N/A	Notifying stakeholders of the extent to which the crisis affects them or how they may protect themselves, or updating stakeholders on the status of the crisis.	*Updates, for more information, please visit, affects you, status of your (trip, hotel).*

Findings and Discussion

The following section will review and discuss the texts and images collected from See Puerto Rico's official tourism website and Facebook page to answer the four main research questions posed. Across See Puerto Rico's official tourism website homepages, press room pages, and Facebook posts, a total of 453 texts (i.e. sentences) and 207 images were analyzed for this study.

RQ1: To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its website to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria?

Table 2: Frequency of IRT Strategies – Homepages

Typology	Sub-Strategy	See Puerto Rico Homepage Screenshots (10 Total)
Denial	Basic Denial	0
	Shifting Blame	0
Evading Responsibility	Provocation	0
	Defeasibility	0
	Accident	0
	Good Intentions	0
	Suffering	0
Reducing Offensiveness	Bolstering	50
	Minimization	0
	Differentiation	0
	Transcendence	0
	Attacking the Accuser	0
	Compensation	0
Corrective Action	N/A	0
Mortification	N/A	0
Informational	N/A	23
Other	N/A	0
Total		**73**

Table 3: Frequency of IRT Strategies – Press Room Pages

Typology	Sub-Strategy	See Puerto Rico Press Room Page Screenshots (10 Total)
Denial	Basic Denial	0
	Shifting Blame	0
Evading Responsibility	Provocation	0
	Defeasibility	0
	Accident	0
	Good Intentions	0
	Suffering	34
Reducing Offensiveness	Bolstering	17
	Minimization	1
	Differentiation	0
	Transcendence	0
	Attacking the Accuser	0
	Compensation	0
Corrective Action	N/A	22
Mortification	N/A	0
Informational	N/A	67
Other	N/A	0
Total		**141**

Table 4: Total IRT Strategies Utilized on See Puerto Rico's Official Website

Typology	Sub-Strategy	See Puerto Rico Website Screenshots (20 Total)
Evading Responsibility	Suffering	34
Reducing Offensiveness	Bolstering	67
	Minimization	1
Corrective Action	N/A	22
Informational	N/A	90
Total		**214**

As summarized in Table 4, there were 214 observed instances of image repair strategies implemented on See Puerto Rico's official tourism website (drawn from its homepages and press room pages only) between August 1 and December 31, 2017. Each strategy implemented will be discussed individually below.

Informational

The most commonly implemented image repair strategy was the informational strategy. This strategy, adapted from Sturges' (1994) work on the types of information organizations may disseminate during times of crisis, is consistent with image repair theory because updating stakeholders on a crisis helps to build transparency and trust for an organization. Notifying stakeholders of the extent to which the crisis affects them, informing them about what they can do to protect themselves, or updating them on the status of the crisis are goal-directed communication activities that help to maintain a favourable reputation for an organization (Benoit, 2014; Ye & Ki, 2017). By providing select information to stakeholders, tourism organizations also have the opportunity to create desirable and positive image perceptions for tourists to embrace. The informational strategy was found 23 times in See Puerto Rico's website homepages and 67 times within the tourism organization's press room pages.

See Puerto Rico's website homepages all feature a section titled 'Key Facts about Puerto Rico,' informing website visitors of basic facts about Puerto Rico such as the languages spoken on the islands, the type of currency used, and safety precautions regarding the Zika virus. However, there are no images nor any mention of hurricanes Irma or Maria on any of the main homepage screenshots analyzed. From viewing the homepages alone, website visitors may not be able to tell that two violent hurricanes ravaged the islands of Puerto Rico. At an unknown point between September 2, 2017, and September 19, 2017, (the time between two captured screenshots), See Puerto Rico added a banner link at the top of the homepage that directed visitors to the press room page. The link reads 'Please click here for the latest travel updates' where visitors can read the latest information regarding the islands' recovery efforts. This link exemplifies the informational strategy as the website homepage is being utilized to direct visitors

to read updates on the status of the tourism industry in Puerto Rico and how their travel plans will be affected (Sturges, 1994). Adding a notice at the top of the homepage immediately diverts website visitors' attention towards key information one would need to know prior to travelling.

The informational strategy was mainly found woven throughout See Puerto Rico's press room pages. This result was expected due to the nature of online press rooms as their purpose is to update stakeholders of official information pertaining to the organization. The press room pages served as an official source for all travel-related information for inquiring tourists during the hurricane crisis. The press room provided useful information for tourists regarding the status of Puerto Rico's airports, ports, and lodging. For instance, eight out of the ten screenshots provided lists of airports, cruise ports, and hotels that were open, closed, or open with limited operations. However, See Puerto Rico offers conflicting information about the status of the hotel industry in Puerto Rico. In a screenshot taken September 9, 2017, the tourism organization writes, "After an early assessment this morning, we can attest to the fact that nearly all hotels in Puerto Rico are operational and apt to continue receiving guests" (see Appendix A). In a subsequent screenshot taken September 30, 2017, the tourism organization introduces a number of lists with, "The following hotels are closed and not taking new reservations until further notice," and "The following hotels are open, but not taking new reservations prior to October 2" (see Appendix B). See Puerto Rico first published a statement claiming that all hotels were open and operational, then later backtracked to list hotels that were non-operational. Perhaps the first statement was a quick and instinctual response to reassure tourists that they could still travel to Puerto Rico. However, misinforming tourists of the status of hotels decreases the perceived credibility of the tourism organization as an official source of information. These posts can also reflect the minimization image repair strategy (Benoit, 1997). The tourism organization stating

that most hotels are operational reduces the perceived severity of the impacts left by the hurricanes. As a result, downplaying the seriousness of the hurricanes by withholding vital travel information skews the image perception of the islands. From See Puerto Rico's initial statements, potential tourists may perceive the islands as only slightly affected by the hurricanes when actual travel conditions were significantly affected. Research supports this finding that official tourism websites often do not provide sufficient information regarding the risks associated with travelling to a destination as was found in the case of the Avian Influenza and various tourism organizations (Volo, 2008). Regardless, See Puerto Rico made a number of recommendations to tourists to contact their hotel directly for the most updated information regarding the status of their travel-related plans.

Other findings mirror a number of best practices for organizations handling crises. See Puerto Rico set up a designated hotline and live chat feature to remain accessible to tourists inquiring about the status of their flight, hotel, cruise, etc. at all times during the crisis. For instance, a statement titled "A Message to Travellers" taken October 2, 2017, begins with, "If you're thinking of visiting Puerto Rico or have travel plans booked in the coming weeks, we're here to keep you informed," and continues with, "We are online and standing by to support you. If you have questions about your upcoming travel plans, please call: 787-522-5960 or talk to us via our Live Chat" (see Appendix C). The language used by See Puerto Rico in communicating this information helps to position the organization as a supportive and available service to tourists. Being open and transparent can additionally exemplify the bolstering strategy as See Puerto Rico promoted positive perceptions about the organization. The press room pages also included a tab that visitors could click on that directs them to Status PR, an official website created by the Government of Puerto Rico designed to update residents and tourists of the status

of operating telecommunications services, gas stations, supermarkets, hospitals, shelters, banks, public transportation services, etc. A common best practice for organizations during a crisis is to remain accessible, open, and transparent to stakeholders, characteristics that aid in building a positive reputation for an organization (Coombs, 1995; Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004). Additionally, crises are accompanied by high degrees of uncertainty, particularly life-threatening crises such as natural disasters (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). During these times, stakeholders look to official organizations, such as See Puerto Rico, for accurate information regarding the safety of travelling to the islands and the conditions of various tourist attractions.

Bolstering

The second most commonly implemented image repair strategy was bolstering. This strategy, under the category of reducing offensiveness, aims to mitigate the negative effects of an event on an organization by strengthening the positive perceptions of an organization (Benoit, 1997; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). An organization may remind stakeholders of their positive characteristics, reputations, or past events to alleviate negative perceptions. Bolstering was found 50 times on See Puerto Rico's website homepages and 16 times within the tourism organization's press room pages. Bolstering was primarily found within the images on See Puerto Rico's homepage. The images on the website's homepages were presumably older images of the islands in their pre-hurricane state. From the data collected, all website homepages feature a slideshow of images overlaid by short pieces of text. An example bolstering can be seen in an image captured on September 23, 2017. The image features a picturesque landscape of a beach with a white sand shoreline and turquoise water adjacent to a forested area, of which includes a luxury golf course (see Appendix D). Overlain on this image is the word "Amazing" followed by five circles indicating a Trip Advisor 5-star review and the text, "Come to Puerto Rico and live

your own 5-star vacation story" (Appendix D). See Puerto Rico is attempting to bolster positive perceptions among tourists by reminding them of the beauty that characterizes the islands (Benoit, 1997). Showcasing positive, desirable images of Puerto Rico's islands reassures tourists that they may still travel to Puerto Rico and enjoy their vacation despite the hurricanes that struck earlier that month. Other homepage images reflected the bolstering strategy by depicting exciting ziplining excursions, happy families playing on a beach, lavish dancing and nightlife, and blue waves crashing against white sand beaches. These images worked to remind website visitors of the natural beauty and extravagant travel experiences offered by the islands.

The bolstering strategy was also found within See Puerto Rico's press room pages. Six out of the ten screenshots captured included an official statement from See Puerto Rico's executive director, Jose Izquierdo. An example of bolstering can be found in a screenshot taken November 6, 2017, when he states: "We are glad to report that the preparedness measures put into place have allowed for what we are expecting to be a full recovery for our tourism industry […] we are confident that with the continuous support of our industry partners, we can build a stronger Puerto Rico" (see Appendix E). See Puerto Rico is attempting to bolster its reputation by claiming that the organization was well-prepared for the hurricanes and that their recovery plans were successful in helping the organization recover. While it is unknown what these preparedness measures consisted of, pre-crisis scenario planning and having solid recovery measures in place for when a crisis strikes is a common best practice to guard against image deterioration in the wake of a crisis (Page et al., 2006). See Puerto Rico stating that their recovery efforts were successful defends against any potential flak claiming that the organization was ill-prepared for the hurricanes. This statement works to position See Puerto Rico as a responsible organization, committed to restoring Puerto Rico's tourism industry to a healthy

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state. This statement also tells potential tourists that tourism in Puerto Rico is in rapid recovery, a strategic way to bolster positive perceptions of the state of tourism in Puerto Rico.

Suffering

Another common image repair strategy found woven throughout See Puerto Rico's tourism website was the strategy of suffering. This strategy, adapted from Coombs and Holladay (1996), portrays the organization as a victim of a crisis by communicating a shared sense of suffering alongside the victims of a crisis. There were no observed instances of suffering found on See Puerto Rico's main homepages, but 34 instances were found within the tourism organization's press room pages.

An example of suffering can be seen when See Puerto Rico acknowledges and thanks those who have given support to the islands as they recover. In a screenshot taken October 2, 2017, the tourism company states:

> The past week has been a very difficult time for Puerto Rico and all its residents, families of Puerto Ricans living outside the Island, and travelers on the Island whom have not been able to go back home […] What has truly kept the spirit of the Puerto Rican people alive and lifted during these days has been the overwhelming support from not only the emergency crews and government agencies providing critical help on the ground, but also the tremendous support from the private sector and notable celebrities and individuals. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank everyone so much for the outpouring of generosity [Appendix F].

By thanking those that have offered means of support for the islands and its people, See Puerto Rico positions itself as a victim of the hurricane crisis alongside the people of Puerto Rico. The tourism organization showcases immense gratitude and appreciation for the support received and later expresses the degree of dependency upon which it has for continued support: "What will continue to keep us strong and on a path to rebuilding will be continued assistance like this and I'm hopeful we'll continue to receive support from other partners" (Appendix F).

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See Puerto Rico further positions itself as a victim by expressing the struggles the people of Puerto Rico face and the strength they require to recover by stating: "We remain confident that Puerto Rico will quickly recover, and the resiliency and strength of our people will get us through the days ahead" (Appendix F). This statement alludes to the fact that recovery will be a difficult and lengthy process for the tourism industry and the people of Puerto Rico, which further enhances the victim status of the organization and the islands.

Coombs and Holladay (1996) note that expressing a shared sense of suffering with victims of a crisis can aid in building sympathy and further support for the organization. Select phrases used by See Puerto Rico in the above statements such as "the past week has been a very difficult time for Puerto Rico," "from the bottom of our hearts," and "the strength of our people will get us through the days ahead" work to build sympathy for the tourism organization (Appendix F). Coombs and Holladay (1996) note that "stakeholder sympathy can help to build a more positive view of the organization" (p. 284-285). The manner in which the tourism organization is communicating to tourists and other stakeholders aims to tap into their emotions and encourage them to feel sorrow for the islands and people of Puerto Rico. This may motivate people to want to help by volunteering their time, donating money, or travelling to the islands to help restore their tourism industry. Thus, See Puerto Rico positioning itself as a victim of the hurricane crisis by thanking stakeholders for their support and communicating a shared sense of suffering with the people of Puerto Rico creates sympathy for the organization. This helps to replace any negative image perceptions with more positive and sympathetic perceptions.

Corrective Action

Lastly, corrective action is an image repair strategy that seeks to correct the situation at hand and restore it to its pre-crisis state (Benoit, 2014). This strategy takes the form of offering

promises to correct the situation or make changes to prevent it from occurring again in the future (Benoit, 1997). However, crises such as natural disasters must first be distinguished from other types of crises whereby the organization or actor is at fault for the crisis. As Faulkner (2001) explains, natural disasters are unique types of crises over which affected organizations have little to no control, thus blame is not attributed to the organization. As a result, tourism organizations themselves are unable to take steps to prevent future natural disasters from occurring. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the corrective action image repair strategy is limited to communicating information regarding the tourism industry's restoration and cleanup efforts. There were no observed instances of corrective action found within See Puerto Rico's homepages, but 22 instances were found within the tourism organization's press room pages.

An example of corrective action can be seen in a screenshot taken October 24, 2017, of See Puerto Rico's press room page (see Appendix G). In a similar "Message from the Executive Director," the message begins by stating: "For the past few weeks, the PRTC [Puerto Rico Tourism Company] has been collaborating with government agencies and the private sector to provide immediate relief while ensuring the safety of all visitors and residents" (Appendix G). The tourism organization is communicating to stakeholders that it has been aiding with relief efforts to help those affected by the hurricanes. The corrective action strategy can also be seen in numerous statements published September 9, 2017, that express See Puerto Rico's ongoing assessment of various tourist attractions. The tourism organization writes, "Attractions such as parks and beaches are currently being assessed to ensure a committed focus on quick clean up in the coming days," and "We continue to work with all tourism partners to further assess damage and ensure attractions can resume full operations as soon as it is safe to do so" (see Appendix H). These statements exemplify the corrective action strategy as they illustrate See Puerto Rico's

efforts to assess various tourist attractions to keep tourists updated of their status. The continued commitment to assessing the impact on tourist attractions indicates that the tourism organization is taking steps to correct the situation and return island conditions to their pre-crisis state.

Overall, it was found that informational and bolstering strategies were the most commonly employed image repair strategies on See Puerto Rico's official tourism website, followed by suffering and corrective action strategies. The tourism organization utilizes its official tourism website to provide information to tourists regarding the status of the tourism industry while maintaining a positive image via the images presented on its main homepage.

RQ2: To what extent does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization utilize image repair strategies on its Facebook page to restore its positive image in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria?

Table 5: Frequency of IRT Strategies – Facebook Posts

Typology	Sub-Strategy	See Puerto Rico Facebook Post Screenshots (177 Total)
Denial	Basic Denial	0
	Shifting Blame	0
Evading Responsibility	Provocation	0
	Defeasibility	0
	Accident	0
	Good Intentions	0
	Suffering	24
Reducing Offensiveness	Bolstering	91
	Minimization	2
	Differentiation	0
	Transcendence	0
	Attacking the Accuser	0
	Compensation	0
Corrective Action	N/A	7
Mortification	N/A	0
Informational	N/A	23
Other	N/A	31
Total		**178**

As described in Table 5, there were 178 instances of image repair strategies implemented on See Puerto Rico's official Facebook page between August 1 and December 31, 2017. Thirty-one screenshots analyzed did not accurately reflect an image repair strategy. Each strategy implemented will be discussed individually below.

Bolstering

The most commonly implemented image repair strategy utilized across See Puerto Rico's official Facebook page was the bolstering strategy. Of the 178 Facebook post analyzed for this study, 91 screenshots exemplified characteristics of the bolstering strategy. The social media platform was primarily utilized to share positive images, videos, and news articles about the islands and rescue efforts throughout the hurricane crisis. Nearly all published images had a positive tone and featured desirable imagery such as tropical beaches, gourmet food and beverages, waterfalls, trails, historic buildings, cobblestone city squares, etc. The prominence of the bolstering strategy on See Puerto Rico's Facebook page is partly due to the fact that tourism organizations use social media platforms as marketing tools whether in crisis situations or not. Tourism organizations utilize social media to market their destination and promote various tourist attractions, events, excursions, etc. Thus, it is no doubt that tourism organizations would use social media to bolster their images when a crisis occurs and threatens their reputations.

A typical example of bolstering can be seen in a screenshot taken September 16, 2017 (see Appendix I). The Facebook post reads, "Here's the locals' scoop on travelling to Puerto Rico: our hotels are up and running, our restaurants are serving tasty means, and our beaches and attractions are waiting for you," and is accompanied by an image of San Juan, a popular tourist area, and an article from PReats.com with the headline "Facts you need to know if you are planning to visit Puerto Rico post-hurricane Irma" (Appendix I). Hurricane Irma had struck the

islands of Puerto Rico a mere ten days prior on September 6, 2017, (Sullivan & Fieser, 2017) and hurricane Maria hit four days later on September 20, 2017 (McCleary, 2017). This Facebook post, which was posted between the two hurricanes, attempts to bolster the island's image by claiming that tourists may still travel to Puerto Rico and that the islands' hotels and restaurants are open and ready for tourists. However, during this time period, many tourism attractions including hotels, restaurants, parks, tour excursions, etc. were negatively impacted by the hurricanes, limiting regular operations to some degree (Rosenbloom, 2017). This post exemplifies the bolstering strategy as See Puerto Rico seeks to remind tourists of the beauty and excitement Puerto Rico has to offer in order to reduce negative perceptions of the islands' tourism industry (Benoit, 2014). The tourism organization encourages potential tourists to travel to Puerto Rico by convincing them that many of the islands' tourism businesses are open, despite post-hurricane Irma conditions.

Another notable example of the bolstering strategy can be seen in a Facebook post from October 20, 2017 (see Appendix J). The post states, "The incomparable colors of Puerto Rico are like a beautiful rainbow after a storm. The vibrancy of our island will never fade. #PRStrong" and is accompanied by an aerial image of an island in Puerto Rico taken from a small airplane (Appendix J). When this post was published, hurricanes Irma and Maria had both dissipated in the Caribbean. Here See Puerto Rico acknowledges the hurricanes by comparing the beauty and vibrancy of the island to that of a rainbow after a storm. This exemplifies, to a degree, the rhetoric of renewal as proposed by Ulmer, Seeger, and Sellnow (2007). Natural disasters often create physical spaces for renewal and inspire rebuilding, so tourism organizations may strategically communicate how they are moving forward following a crisis (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). See Puerto Rico remains optimistic and focuses on the positive opportunities for

growth and renewal that can be drawn from the crisis. The phrase, 'beautiful rainbow after a storm' suggests that the islands are recovering and growing from the hurricanes in a positive, flourishing manner. However, the use of the word 'storm' in the place of 'hurricane' can exemplify the minimization image repair strategy (Benoit, 1997). The word 'storm' minimizes the perception of the seriousness of the damage left by the hurricanes. Additionally, by including 'the vibrancy of our island will never fade,' See Puerto Rico alludes to the strength of the people of Puerto Rico as they recover from the hurricanes. This phrase also exemplifies the rhetoric of renewal as it communicates the strength of the spirit of the islands as they recover and suggests that no hurricane may ever diminish that spirit. Here, See Puerto Rico projects an optimistic, strong vision for the future of Puerto Rico. In terms of the image content, the aerial view of the islands demonstrates to tourists that Puerto Rico is in a viable state to welcome visitors. However, the selected portion of the islands in the image may not be representative of other regions of Puerto Rico that were severely impacted. By declaring that the 'vibrancy […] will never fade,' See Puerto Rico is perhaps denying the severity of the hurricanes as there is little indication of damaged infrastructure. Rather, the image showcases a beautiful aerial view of the islands, which helps to bolster the islands' image. In this post, the tourism company highlights the colourful sights of the island to let potential tourists know that the island is operational and welcoming to tourists, but also minimizes the perceived seriousness of the hurricanes.

Other findings suggest that some of See Puerto Rico's Facebook posts were intended to strengthen the positive perceptions of the state of tourism on the islands. In December of 2017, See Puerto Rico launched a marketing campaign on Facebook to promote tourism during the holiday season. The campaign, titled Puerto Rico From A to Z Holiday Guide, was a series of videos posted to See Puerto Rico's Facebook page. Commencing on December 1, 2017, one

video was posted per day that gave tourists a reason to visit Puerto Rico that began with each letter of the alphabet. The campaign exemplifies the bolstering strategy due to a number of the videos including mentions of how tourists can help Puerto Rico's recovery efforts by physically visiting the islands. The campaign is a strategic way to market Puerto Rico during a time in which tourists commonly travel and when tourism revenue is desperately needed. A similar post, published November 7, 2017, simultaneously bolsters the beauty of the islands and encourages tourists to visit to help Puerto Rico's tourism industry recover. The post reads, "El Morro is looking stunning! Perfect for a light stroll around this historic block. Be part of the comeback this holiday season. #PRStrong" (see Appendix K). This post also may be considered characteristic of the rhetoric of renewal (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). The rhetoric of renewal is inherently future-focused and does not retrospectively look back to explain or justify a crisis (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). See Puerto Rico looks towards the future by using the word 'comeback,' which ensures that the islands are fully committed to recover and rebuild from the hurricanes. The tourism organization asserts that the islands are moving forward and rebuilding from the hurricane crisis, while also encouraging tourists to visit and experience the islands' comeback for themselves. Overall, See Puerto Rico recognizes that promoting its positive image in the wake of the hurricanes not only alleviates negative perceptions, but also encourages tourists to visit the islands, which brings revenue to the islands.

Suffering

Another common image repair strategy utilized by See Puerto Rico on its official Facebook page was the suffering strategy as proposed by Coombs and Holladay (1996). Suffering was found 24 times in the Facebook posts analyzed for this study. Similar to statements found within See Puerto Rico's press room pages, numerous posts showcase

thankfulness and appreciation for the support received by the tourism organization. For instance, in a Facebook text post from September 22, 2017, See Puerto Rico states, "The love, humanity, and community coming together right now to help Puerto Rico is a blessing to behold. We appreciate your thoughts, prayers and contributions – and look forward to welcoming you again soon…" (see Appendix L). A similar post from October 14, 2017, thanks tourism partners by stating, "We are very thankful to all our tourism industry partners who joined us on our relief efforts the past few weeks. Now is the time to rebuild a stronger and better Puerto Rico" (see Appendix M). Coombs and Holladay (1996) note that the suffering strategy seeks to remind stakeholders that the organization is a victim of the crisis at hand as well as those directly affected by the crisis. Words such as 'blessing,' 'thoughts,' and 'prayers' help to position See Puerto Rico and the islands as a victim of the hurricane crisis. Coombs (1995) further states that "suffering portrays the organization as an unfair victim of some malicious, outside entity" (p. 453). The devastating hurricanes were at no fault of the tourism organization, thus blame is not placed on the organization (Faulkner, 2001). Rather, See Puerto Rico's Facebook communications project thankfulness, appreciation, and gratitude, which work to create sympathy for the islands and the tourism organization, and shift negative perceptions away from the organization and islands. Facebook posts such as the two discussed briefly here also showcase the islands' recovery efforts. By highlighting all the support received, the tourism organization has the opportunity to communicate to stakeholders that the islands are operational and nearly ready to welcome tourists. Thus, these types of Facebook posts help to repair the islands' image by replacing any negative perceptions with more sympathetic perceptions.

Further, the suffering strategy also involves a positive rather than a negative link that can be drawn from a crisis (Coombs, 1995). This link, if capitalized on, can help to restore

organizations' images. Numerous Facebook posts showcased the strength of the people affected by the hurricanes, which helps to generate sympathy from potential tourists and other stakeholders. For instance, on October 21, 2017, See Puerto Rico writes, "Brothers and sisters. Locals and visitors. On the island of Puerto Rico, we all stand hand-in-hand, united as one family #PRStrong" (see Appendix N). The post is accompanied by an image of a young boy and girl holding hands in front a building with the Puerto Rican flag painted on its door. The tourism organization sheds light on the strength of the people of Puerto Rico and their resiliency in overcoming their struggles caused by the hurricanes. See Puerto Rico draws a positive link from the hurricanes by showcasing certain positive aspects such as unity, family, and strength that have arisen from the crisis. Additionally, research has shown that the use of children in advertisements elicits emotional responses such as sympathy from consumers (Burt & Strongman, 2005; Small & Verrochi, 2009). The tourism organization may have strategically posted an image of two children holding hands to generate a sense of sadness and compassion for the people of Puerto Rico, which further adds to the victim image projected. Overall, See Puerto Rico strategically communicates sentiments of suffering by expressing collective unity and stability, which helps to elicit sympathy from tourists. Thus, See Puerto Rico's Facebook communications not only project sentiments of suffering, but they also capitalize on the positive outcomes that can be drawn from the hurricane crisis.

Informational

Another common image repair strategy utilized by See Puerto Rico on its official Facebook page was the informational strategy as proposed by Sturges (1994). Coombs (1995) also supports that crisis communication is informational by nature. The informational strategy was found woven throughout 23 Facebook posts published by See Puerto Rico. The tourism

organization's official Facebook page often served to update tourists and other stakeholders of the status of major tourist businesses and attractions. For instance, See Puerto Rico published two updates regarding the status of Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport, the largest airport in Puerto Rico. On September 23, 2017, the tourism organization writes, "The Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport has reopened to a limited number of commercial flights. Most airlines are expecting to resume their operations tomorrow. Please reach out to your airlines directly for further information" (see Appendix O). See Puerto Rico later follows up on October 5, 2017, and writes, "Onward and upward! We're happy to report that Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport (SJU) is back to its normal operating schedule" (see Appendix P). Here, the tourism organization utilizes its Facebook page to simply provide important updates to travellers and how the hurricanes affect their travel plans. Another post from October 26, 2017, states, "We're excited to share another milestone along our road to recovery. The Hilton Ponce Golf & Casino Resort reopens today! Check out their website […] for more details" (see Appendix Q). This post both celebrates the tourism industry's recovery efforts and provides information regarding the operational status of a tourist attraction. The literature on best practices in tourism crisis communication suggests that organizations should keep stakeholders frequently updated on the crisis (Ritchie, 2004) and how the crisis will affect them (Sturges, 1994). However, it should be noted here that See Puerto Rico primarily updates tourists and potential tourists, not residents or locals, about how the hurricanes affect them and their travel-related plans.

Research has shown that social media platforms are useful tools for disseminating crisis-related information in a timely, international, and accurate manner (Pennington-Gray, London, & Cahyanto, 2011; Sigala, 2012; Ye & Ki, 2017). Organizations are able to communicate important information regarding their products and services to stakeholders on a global scale. Particularly

during times of uncertainty, stakeholders look to legitimate sources of information, such as

official social media platforms, for the most up-to-date and correct information (Beirman, 2003).

However, See Puerto Rico offers conflicting information on its Facebook page regarding the

'official' status of the tourism industry in Puerto Rico. In a Facebook post published on

September 15, 2017, the tourism organization states, "Puerto Rico is open for travel! Our tourism

and hospitality infrastructure is operational and the Island continues to welcome visitors. We

encourage travelers who are currently visiting or are scheduled to visit Puerto Rico to CLICK

HERE for the latest information on travel at this time" (see Appendix R). More than three

months later on December 21, 2017, See Puerto Rico writes, "Presents have come early this year

as Puerto Rico is now OFFICIALLY open for Tourism! We welcome you to join us in

celebrating the longest holiday season in the world!" with an image of a business door with an

open sign hanging in the window (see Appendix S). The first post was published shortly after

hurricane Irma had struck Puerto Rico with hurricane Maria on the horizon. Firstly, the initial

post ignores the hurricane crisis. Avraham and Ketter (2017) note that by ignoring a crisis, a

tourist destination may choose to let its natural beauty and friendly people help to repair its

image, and not remind tourists of the reality of the travel conditions. This post signifies an

attempt to convince tourists that they could still travel to the islands despite actual conditions of

tourism infrastructure at the time, which may have not been suitable for incoming tourists. See

Puerto Rico ignores the hurricanes and instead projects a 'business as usual' image of the islands

in order to maintain its positive image in the minds of tourists early in the crisis. By declaring

that the tourism industry in Puerto Rico is 'open,' See Puerto Rico disregards the hurricane crisis

in hopes that tourists will perceive tourism infrastructure on the islands as unharmed. Similarly,

this claim may also represent, to a degree, the denial image repair strategy as the tourism

organization denies the extent of the damage to Puerto Rico's tourism industry by stating that the

industry is fully operational as if nothing catastrophic occurred (Benoit, 1997). In addition,

official social media accounts are to serve as legitimate sources of information pertaining to the

organization (Sigala, 2012). Yet providing inaccurate information regarding the 'official' status

of the industry misleads tourists and other stakeholders and creates a false perception of the

islands. Sturges (1994) notes that people use such information to formulate an image about an

organization. As a result, misleading information regarding the status of the tourism industry in

Puerto Rico early in the crisis directs the image of the islands perceived by tourists in a desirable

direction. Thus, the informational strategy was implemented by See Puerto Rico to keep tourists

informed, but also to project a desirable image of the islands to keep tourism revenue flowing.

Corrective Action

Corrective action is an image repair strategy that aims to correct the situation at hand and

return it to its pre-crisis state (Benoit, 2014). There were seven observed instances of corrective

action found within the Facebook posts analyzed. Similar to statements found within See Puerto

Rico's press room page on its official website, the tourism organization put forth a number of

statements outlining their efforts to assess the impact of the islands and their general restoration

progress. However, the corrective action strategy was mainly found in See Puerto Rico's

restoration campaign, titled 'Meaningful Travel.' The campaign encompassed a series of

'Rebuild Days,' events where volunteers would come together to help the tourism organization

distribute supplies, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and clean up beaches, parks, trails, and other

outdoor tourist attractions. The campaign was introduced in October 2017 with a Facebook post

stating, "Are you interested in travelling with a purpose? Take a look at how Puerto Rico is

rebuilding and how you can help! #PRStrong" (see Appendix T). The text post also features a

news article published by Yahoo with the headline, "Tourism is back in Puerto Rico, but with a focus on clean up" (Appendix T). Several subsequent Facebook posts explain how tourists can help by donating their time and travelling to the islands, a concept also known as 'voluntourism.' For example, on December 8, 2017, See Puerto Rico posted, "Make your next vacation meaningful by volunteering for the "Rebuild Days" events in Puerto Rico. Get a deeper look into our varied landscape and natural wonders, and help us rebuild them so they may re-open to the world. Explore the Camuy Caves on December 16 […] #MeaningfulTravel" (see Appendix U). The post also includes a video showing volunteers hard at work removing rubble and debris. Here, the tourism organization showcases their efforts to correct the damage caused by the hurricanes by promoting tourism as well. Benoit (1997) notes that communicating to stakeholders that an organization is taking initiative to correct the crisis helps to repair image. These Facebook posts also reflect the rhetoric of renewal as See Puerto Rico's messaging focuses on how the islands are actively rebuilding their tourism infrastructure and growing stronger together as a nation (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). Thus, the corrective action strategy helps to repair the islands' image in two ways: by showcasing the tourism organization's restoration activities and by promoting tourism in the area by attracting volunteers to the islands.

Minimization

Lastly, one instance of minimization was found among See Puerto Rico's Facebook posts. Minimization is an image repair strategy in which an organization minimizes or downplays the act or event in order to make it appear less serious (Benoit, 2014). Hurricanes Irma and Maria were classified as category five storms, caused billions of dollars in damage, left millions without power or water, and claimed the lives of many. Numerous hotels, airports, restaurants, cruises, and other tourist attractions were negatively impacted by the hurricanes,

some of which are still recovering at the time of writing. An example of the minimization

strategy can be seen in a Facebook post from September 13, 2017, after hurricane Irma struck.

The post reads, "Travelers planning to visit Puerto Rico can be confident that their travel plans

should not be affected, and that our industry is ready to continue providing the quality experience

that distinguishes us" (Appendix V). The post includes a link to See Puerto Rico's press room

page and is accompanied by an aerial image of San Juan. Here, See Puerto Rico downplays the

impacts the hurricanes had on the tourism industry in Puerto Rico by claiming that no travel

plans are to be affected and that the industry is to operate normally. However, upon clicking the

link to the press room page, which can be referenced from a screenshot taken on September 9,

2017, tourists are informed that the major international airport in Puerto Rico is closed, alongside

numerous beaches and parks due to inclement weather. There is no question that travellers' plans

to visit Puerto Rico will be impacted, to some degree, by the hurricanes. Here, See Puerto Rico

attempts to reduce feelings of uncertainty and restore confidence among tourists that may have

been diminished by the hurricane crisis (Benoit, 2014). Additionally, there is evidence

supporting the bolstering strategy in this Facebook post by the tourism company claiming that

the industry provides exceptional, quality service. Overall, See Puerto Rico utilizes the

minimization strategy by downplaying the impact the hurricanes had on the tourism industry and

tourists' travel plans in order to alleviate negative perceptions regarding tourism on the islands.

Overall, it was found that bolstering, suffering, and informational strategies were the

most commonly employed image repair strategies on See Puerto Rico's official Facebook page,

followed by corrective action and minimization strategies.

RQ3: How does Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's use of image repair strategies vary

between its official tourism website and Facebook page?

Table 6: Top IRT Strategies Utilized Cross-Platform

See Puerto Rico Website		See Puerto Rico Facebook Page	
Strategy	**Frequency**	**Strategy**	**Frequency**
Suffering	34	Suffering	24
Bolstering	67	Bolstering	91
Minimization	1	Minimization	2
Corrective Action	22	Corrective Action	7
Informational	90	Informational	23

In comparing the image repair strategies implemented by Puerto Rico's official tourism organization, See Puerto Rico, across its website and Facebook page, there are a number of similarities and differences. The most commonly implemented strategies across both online platforms were bolstering, corrective action, minimization (Benoit, 1997), informational (Sturges, 1994) and suffering (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). When examining the strategies most similarly implemented, the use of the suffering strategy was prominent across both online platforms. Coombs and Holladay's (1996) strategy was mainly used to position See Puerto Rico as a victim of the hurricane crisis to create sympathy for the organization and the islands, and to enhance their overall image in the minds of tourists. Corrective action was also commonly found woven throughout See Puerto Rico's website and Facebook communications. The strategy functioned to highlight the tourism industry's restoration progress in rebuilding the islands' tourism infrastructure to welcome tourists once again. While the tourism organization could not take steps to prevent the event from occurring again in the future, See Puerto Rico communicated the steps it was taking to assess and repair various tourist attractions.

The bolstering and informational strategies were the two most commonly implemented strategies found across both online platforms. The bolstering strategy was more prevalent on See Puerto Rico's official Facebook page. The strategy was utilized within both text and multimedia

Facebook posts to help bolster the islands' images in the wake of the hurricanes. Numerous posts promoted outdoor excursions, beaches, hotels, restaurants, and other tourist attractions that tourists could only experience in Puerto Rico. Rarely did the Facebook posts analyzed offer any mention of the hurricanes, rather, the hurricane crisis was generally ignored by See Puerto Rico on its official Facebook page. Numerous Facebook posts simply tried to promote positive perceptions of the islands' natural beauty and recovery efforts and encourage tourists to visit the islands. Bolstering in this case can be seen as a way of ignoring the crisis as See Puerto Rico published a number of positive posts to encourage tourists to visit while the islands were suffering and dealing with the aftermath of the hurricanes. The informational strategy was more prevalent within See Puerto Rico's official tourism website. The website, particularly the online press room pages, was primarily used to update tourists and other stakeholders of the status of operations of various tourist attractions, accommodations, and transportation services. The tourism organization's press room page served as an official source for all crisis information for tourists inquiring about the status of their travel-related plans. In sum, bolstering and informational were the two most common image repair strategies implemented across both online platforms followed by the suffering, corrective action, and minimization strategies.

Managing a tourist destination's image online can be a challenge. It has been found that image representations of tourist destinations vary across online platforms, so it is difficult for official tourism organizations to create and maintain image perceptions (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Pavlović & Belullo, 2011). The use of the bolstering strategy was most prevalent on See Puerto Rico's Facebook page and the use of the informational strategy was most prevalent on its official tourism website, particularly its press room page. Communications within See Puerto Rico's Facebook page and homepage exemplified characteristics of the

bolstering strategy as they featured numerous positive and desirable images of the islands to help maintain the islands' pre-crisis image. The Facebook posts and homepage images focused on the positive attributes of the islands to convince tourists that tourism in Puerto Rico was just as lively as it was before the hurricanes struck. However, upon clicking through See Puerto Rico's press room pages, website visitors are given lists of hotel, airport, attraction, and port closures due to damage from the hurricanes or continuing inclement weather. Website visitors are also confronted with an abundance of hotlines and other emergency contact information to inquire about the status of various tourism businesses. Here, there are two different images being portrayed of the islands and their operational status post-hurricane. The strong prominence of the bolstering strategy on See Puerto Rico's Facebook and website homepage projects a 'business-as-usual' tone, suggesting that tourism in Puerto Rico is continuing to offer tourists enchanting experiences unlike any other. However, See Puerto Rico's online press room acts as a resource for crisis-related information pertaining to the hurricanes. This suggests that the tourism industry in Puerto Rico is not 'business-as-usual' as tourists are instructed to contact their hotel or airline about how their travel plans are affected. The implementation of different image repair strategies on See Puerto Rico's tourism website and Facebook page paints conflicting pictures of the status of the tourism industry on the islands. Many scholars have signalled the importance of establishing an integrated message that is communicated consistently to stakeholders throughout all online platforms to successfully repair an organization's image (Pennington-Gray, London, & Cahyanto, 2011). It is key for destination marketers to understand and analyze varying image perceptions of their online communications and adjust strategies accordingly. Thus, the intended image projection by See Puerto Rico may not have been successfully delivered to potential tourists and online website visitors.

Overall, it was found that informational and bolstering strategies were the most commonly employed image repair strategies on both See Puerto Rico's tourism website and Facebook page. The informational strategy was more commonly employed on See Puerto Rico's official website (due to the regularly updated press room pages) and the bolstering strategy was more commonly implemented within its official Facebook page. The use of different image repair strategies implemented within See Puerto Rico's website and Facebook page may be due to the nature of these online platforms. Tourism websites, particularly online press rooms, often act as official and authoritative sources of information pertaining to travel conditions. On the other hand, social media platforms such as Facebook are often used to engage key audiences and share digital content designed to achieve strategic goals. Overall, the tourism organization mainly utilized its online platforms to offer travel updates and information to tourists and to bolster the positive image perceptions of the islands throughout the hurricane crisis.

RQ4: How have Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's image repair efforts changed over the course of the crisis?

Table 7: Frequency of IRT Strategies from Pre-to-Post Crisis

Stage	Month (2017)	Strategy	Frequency
Pre-Crisis	August	Suffering	0
		Bolstering	**56**
		Minimization	0
		Corrective Action	0
		Informational	9
Crisis	September	Suffering	11
		Bolstering	21
		Minimization	2
		Corrective Action	8
		Informational	**34**

Post-Crisis	October	Suffering	37
		Bolstering	33
		Minimization	1
		Corrective Action	15
		Informational	**59**
	November	Suffering	9
		Bolstering	**20**
		Minimization	0
		Corrective Action	4
		Informational	10
	December	Suffering	1
		Bolstering	**28**
		Minimization	0
		Corrective Action	2
		Informational	8

As discussed in the literature, many scholars have developed models to explain the lifecycles of crises, which suggests that crises progress through a series of stages (Faulkner, 2001; Fink, 1986; Roberts, 1994). Message strategies may be developed at various stages of a crisis to help prevent the crisis from progressing to the next stage (Ritchie, 2004). As illustrated in Table 7, the hurricane crisis that struck Puerto Rico can be broken down into the standard three stages of a crisis: the pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stages. The pre-crisis stage can be defined as a time in which organizations develop strategies or plans of action to halt or limit the impacts of a crisis (Ritchie, 2004). The first of the two hurricanes that hit Puerto Rico, hurricane Irma, began forming in the Caribbean in late August 2017 and made landfall on September 6, 2017 (National Hurricane Centre, 2018). For this study, the pre-crisis stage is set from the beginning of August (August 1, 2017) to when hurricane Irma struck (September 6, 2017). The crisis stage can be defined as a time in which the crisis is occurring and requires the implementation of strategies or plans of action in order to address and reduce the impacts of the crisis (Ritchie, 2004). For this study, the crisis stage is set from when hurricane Irma struck

Puerto Rico (September 6, 2017) to shortly after hurricane Maria struck (September 20, 2017). Lastly, the post-crisis stage can be defined as a time in which an organization begins to recover from a crisis by reducing the severity of the impacts and is when normal operations begin to occur (Ritchie, 2004). For this study, the post-crisis stage is set to when hurricane Maria had passed (beginning of October 2017) until late December 2017.

In the pre-crisis stage, it was found that the bolstering image repair strategy was most prominent. Across See Puerto Rico's official website homepages, press room pages, and Facebook posts between August 1, 2017, and September 6, 2017, there were 56 observed instances of the bolstering strategy. The bolstering image repair strategy mainly served to remind tourists of the natural beauty offered by the islands of Puerto Rico before the hurricanes struck. Sturges (1994) notes that in the pre-crisis stage, messages should aim to create positive opinions about the organization in order to precondition stakeholders to the organization's position in relation to a crisis. See Puerto Rico may have published numerous positive posts and images to have tourists embrace a favourable perception of the islands before the hurricanes struck to help mitigate damage to the islands' image. For instance, during the crisis buildup period near the end of August 2017, numerous Facebook posts featured texts and images of outdoor excursions and restaurants that tourists could only experience in Puerto Rico. These posts, as well as posts much earlier in the pre-crisis stage, could have served to precondition tourists to perceive Puerto Rico as a high-quality tourist destination unlike any other. Creating a strong positive image perception in the pre-crisis stage could have helped to defend against damage to the islands' image. However, as mentioned previously, the bolstering strategy found within the positive Facebook posts and website images during the month of August 2017 is partly due to the nature of tourism websites and social media accounts. They are designed to promote positive image perceptions of

tourist destinations. While it is unknown precisely which types of pre-crisis preparedness measures were put into place by the tourism organization, in terms of image repair See Puerto Rico strategically attempted to bolster its image as the hurricanes were on the horizon.

As the hurricane crisis was unfolding, it was found that the informational strategy was most prominent. Across See Puerto Rico's official website homepages, press room pages, and Facebook posts between September 6, 2017, and September 20, 2017, there were 34 observed instances of the informational strategy. During this time period, See Puerto Rico published numerous Facebook posts and updates to its press room page that offered relevant information regarding the status of the tourism industry in Puerto Rico and how the hurricanes would affect tourists' plans. Many scholars note that a best practice in crisis communication is remaining transparent, open, and available to stakeholders during times of crisis (Page et al., 2006; Ritchie, 2004). See Puerto Rico effectively made itself available to inquiring tourists by setting up a designated hotline and online chat for tourists to contact. However, particularly during times characterized by high degrees of uncertainty and risk, stakeholders look to official sources of information for the most accurate information. As discussed previously, there were numerous instances where See Puerto Rico misinformed tourists regarding the status of Puerto Rico's hotel industry, transportation services, and how the hurricanes would be affecting tourists' travel plans. The tourism organization offered conflicting information and often did not disclose all travel-related information that tourists needed to know prior to travelling to Puerto Rico. By not providing sufficient information, See Puerto Rico may have been attempting to minimize the seriousness of the hurricanes to protect the islands' image. As Sturges (1994) notes, stakeholders use information released by official organizations to formulate images about the organization. See Puerto Rico offering minimal information during the crisis stage informs tourists that

tourism in Puerto Rico was not significantly impacted by the hurricanes and that tourists could still travel there without issue. While See Puerto Rico remained open and transparent to inquiring tourists during the crisis stage, the tourism organization also painted a positive picture of the islands by minimizing the hurricanes' seriousness in order to protect its image.

In the post-crisis stage, it was found that the informational strategy was most prominent immediately following the hurricanes, and the bolstering strategy was most prominent once they had passed. Throughout the month of October 2017 after the hurricanes had fully dissipated in the Caribbean, the informational strategy was still as prominent as it was during the crisis stage. See Puerto Rico continued to offer pieces of information relevant to tourists travelling to the islands for the upcoming holiday season since the islands were still in crisis mode. Puerto Rico was still struggling with lost loved ones, damaged infrastructure, and loss of electricity and hydro (Jenkins, 2017). During this time, there was also a slight shift in See Puerto Rico's online communications that reflected the suffering strategy (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). As the islands were beginning their long recovery process, See Puerto Rico positioned itself as a victim of the hurricane crisis alongside the people of Puerto Rico. This strategy aimed to create sympathy for the islands and organization in the place of blame and other negative perceptions. Later in the post-crisis stage, the bolstering strategy became prominent again as it was during the pre-crisis stage. During November and December of 2017, See Puerto Rico continued to attempt to alleviate negative perceptions of the islands by focusing on the positive attributes and characteristics of tourism in Puerto Rico. Here, See Puerto Rico's online communications during the post-crisis stage reflect, to a degree, the rhetoric of renewal as proposed by Ulmer, Seeger, and Sellnow (2007). The rhetoric of renewal is optimistic by nature and focuses on how crisis-induced limitations can be overcome and what new opportunities can arise from a crisis (Ulmer,

Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007). Texts and images during these months reflected how the islands were recovering and gaining strength from the support received to build a better Puerto Rico. As mentioned previously, numerous Facebook posts included the hashtag 'PRStrong' and commented on the strength and resiliency of the people of Puerto Rico in overcoming the challenges induced by the hurricanes. See Puerto Rico may be attempting to convince tourists and other stakeholders to share its optimistic view that the islands will fully recover with help from the spirit of Puerto Rico and continued support from tourists and other stakeholders. Thus, in the post-crisis stage, there were observed instances of the informational strategy immediately following the hurricanes. There was then a subsequent shift towards the suffering strategy, followed by the bolstering strategy, which aimed to illustrate how the tourism organization and islands were recovering and growing stronger from the crisis.

In terms of the image repair strategies present in the lifecycle of the hurricane crisis in Puerto Rico, See Puerto Rico's online communications reflected the bolstering strategy in the pre-crisis stage, followed by the informational strategy in the crisis stage, and concluded with a progression of informational, suffering, and bolstering strategies in the post-crisis stage.

Conclusion

Tourists' perceived image of a destination plays an important role in deciding whether or not to visit a destination. When crises strike a tourist destination, tourism organizations must strategically work towards restoring their images to a favourable and inviting state. Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which struck the islands of Puerto Rico during the fall of 2017, plunged Puerto Rico's tourism industry into a state of crisis. This study sought to uncover the ways in which Puerto Rico's official tourism organization, See Puerto Rico, attempted to restore its image to a positive state in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria. Through the qualitative and quantitative analysis of texts and images present on See Puerto Rico's official website and Facebook page, a number of Benoit's (1997) image repair strategies were strategically employed. The most commonly implemented image repair strategies were bolstering, informational, suffering, corrective action, and minimization. It was found that See Puerto Rico primarily utilized the informational strategy within its official tourism website, which suggests that the website was used to keep tourists and other stakeholders updated on the status of Puerto Rico's tourism industry. Further, it was found that the bolstering strategy was commonly implemented on See Puerto Rico's official Facebook page, which suggests that the account was used to create favourable perceptions and share positive articles of the islands to overshadow negative perceptions. When comparing the use of image repair strategies across the two online platforms, the informational and bolstering strategies were the most commonly employed, which portrayed two different images of the operational status of the tourism industry in Puerto Rico. The tourism organization's use of image repair strategies also varied across the three stages of the hurricane crisis. See Puerto Rico's online communications reflected the bolstering strategy in the pre-crisis stage, followed by the informational strategy in the crisis stage, and concluded with a

progression of informational, suffering, and bolstering strategies in the post-crisis stage. Overall, the objectives of See Puerto Rico's image restoration efforts were to help restore the islands' damaged image the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria and to diminish negative perceptions regarding tourism on the islands. As noted, part of See Puerto Rico's image repair efforts involved ignoring the hurricanes and minimizing their seriousness and impacts in order to reassure tourists that they could still travel to Puerto Rico. By downplaying the crisis through promoting tourism amidst the hurricanes, the tourism organization appeared to prioritize profit over the lives of those suffering. See Puerto Rico's crisis communication efforts appeared to be solely concerned with restoring image and tourism revenue instead of offering genuine support and assistance to those affected, regardless of cost for the organization.

Image repair theory in combination with a number of other crisis communication strategies was useful in analyzing and understanding Puerto Rico's official tourism organization's crisis responses to hurricanes Irma and Maria. This study was limited to only a handful of screenshots of See Puerto Rico's website that were publicly available from the Way Back Machine. More historical data from See Puerto Rico's official website, including more sample points than the homepage and press room page, could have painted a better picture of how See Puerto Rico implemented various image repair strategies throughout the hurricane crisis. Further research could evaluate whether or not See Puerto Rico's image repair efforts were successful in restoring its positive image among tourists. Further research could also examine how Puerto Rico's image representation varied across different information sources such as other travel, government, and review websites during the hurricane crisis. Overall, the application of Benoit's (1997) image repair theory in this study suggests that it can be used to help understand tourism organizations' crisis responses to natural disasters.
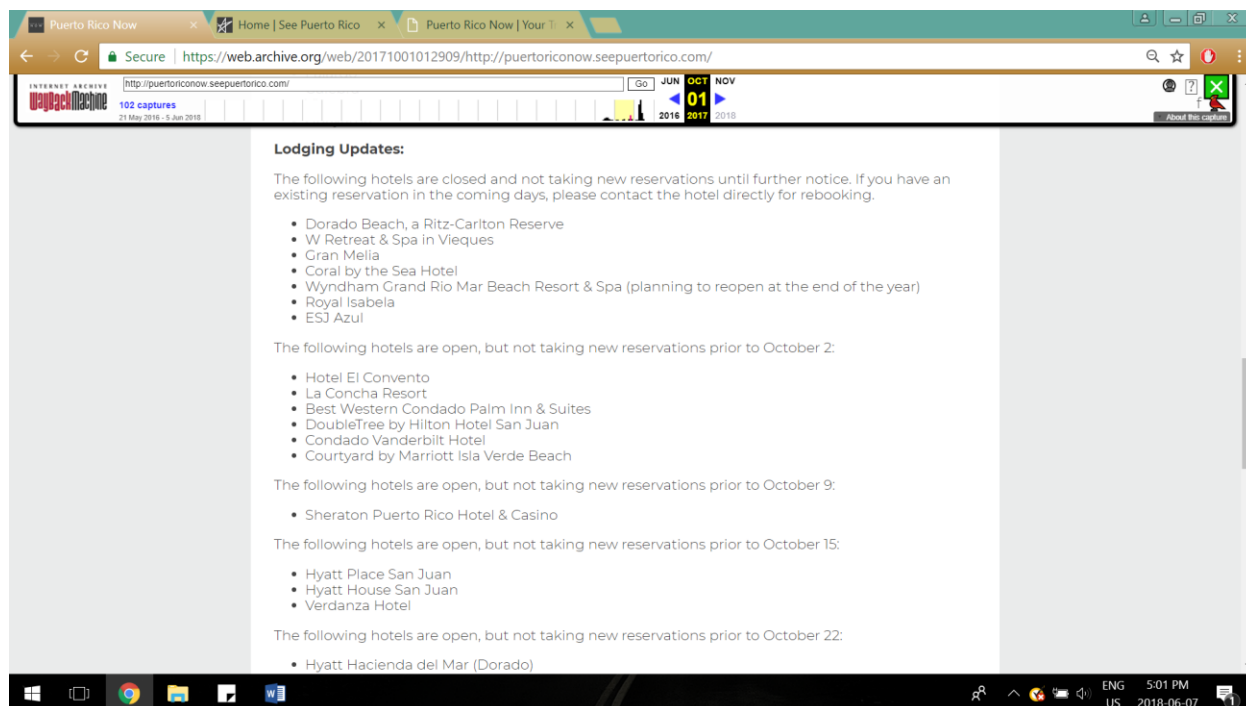
Appendices

Appendix A: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (September 9, 2017), taken June 7, 2018.
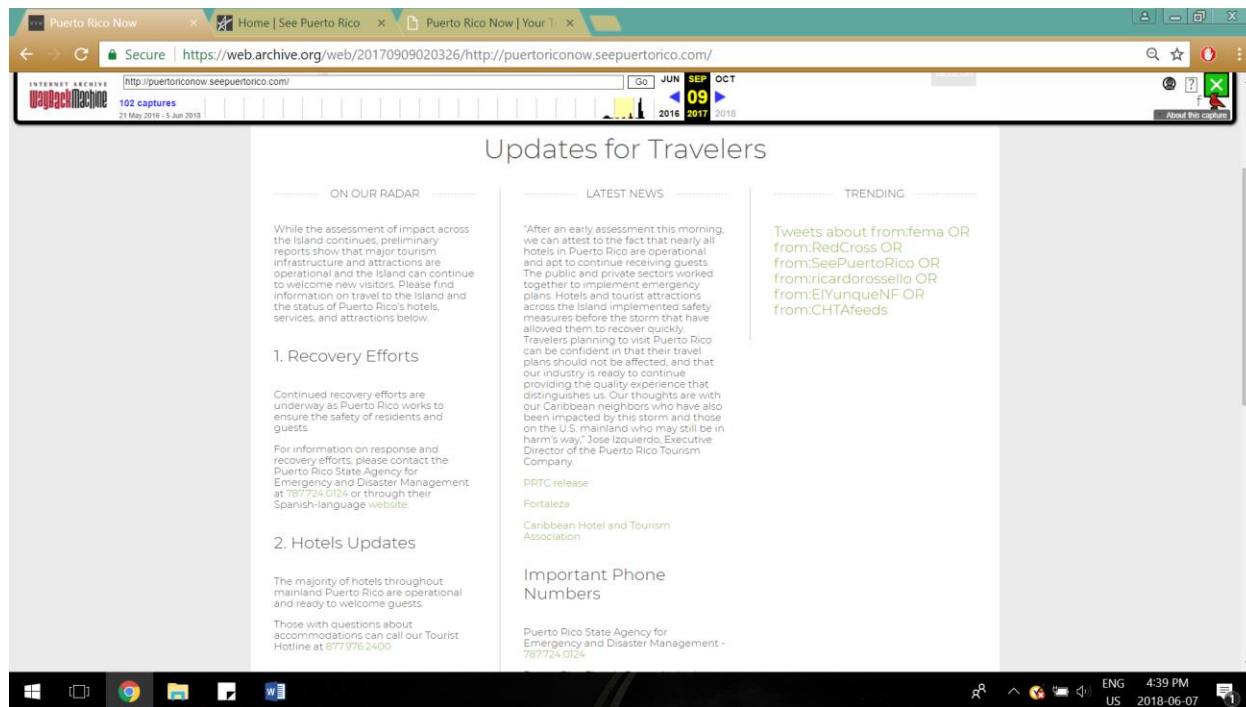
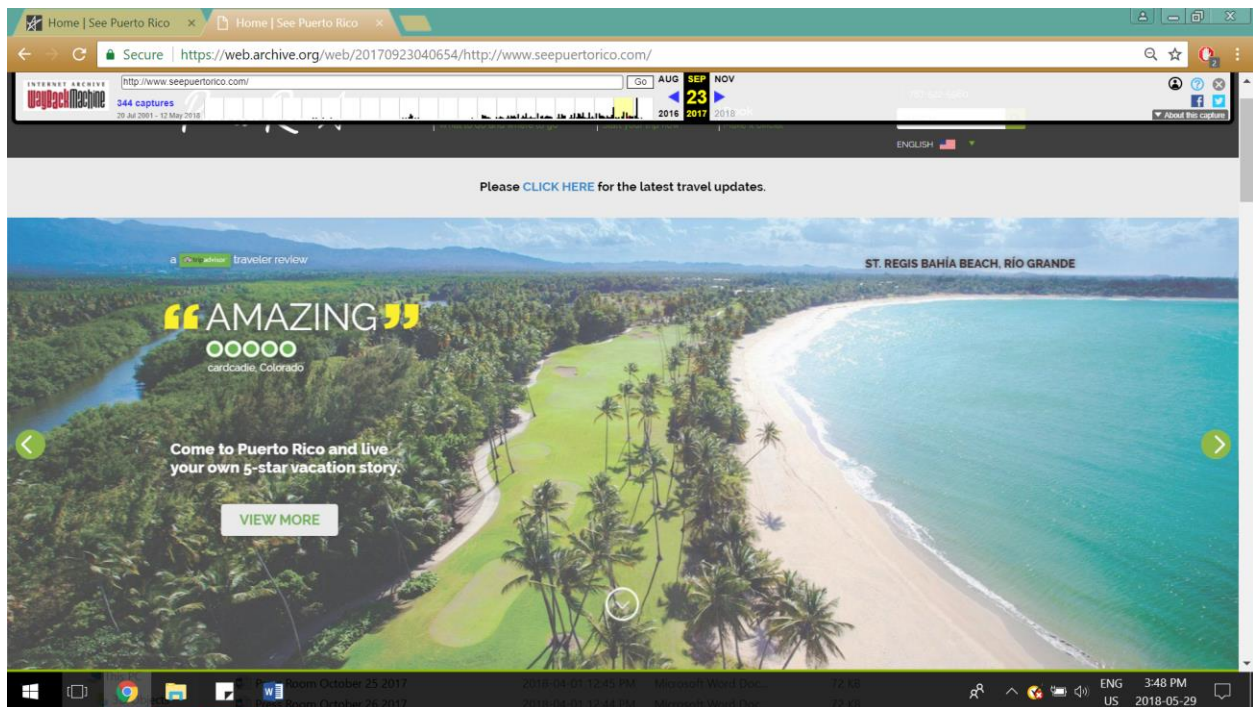Appendix B: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (September 30, 2017), taken June 7, 2018.

Appendix C: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (October 2, 2017), taken June 7, 2018.

Appendix D: See Puerto Rico homepage screenshot (September 23, 2017), taken May 29, 2018.
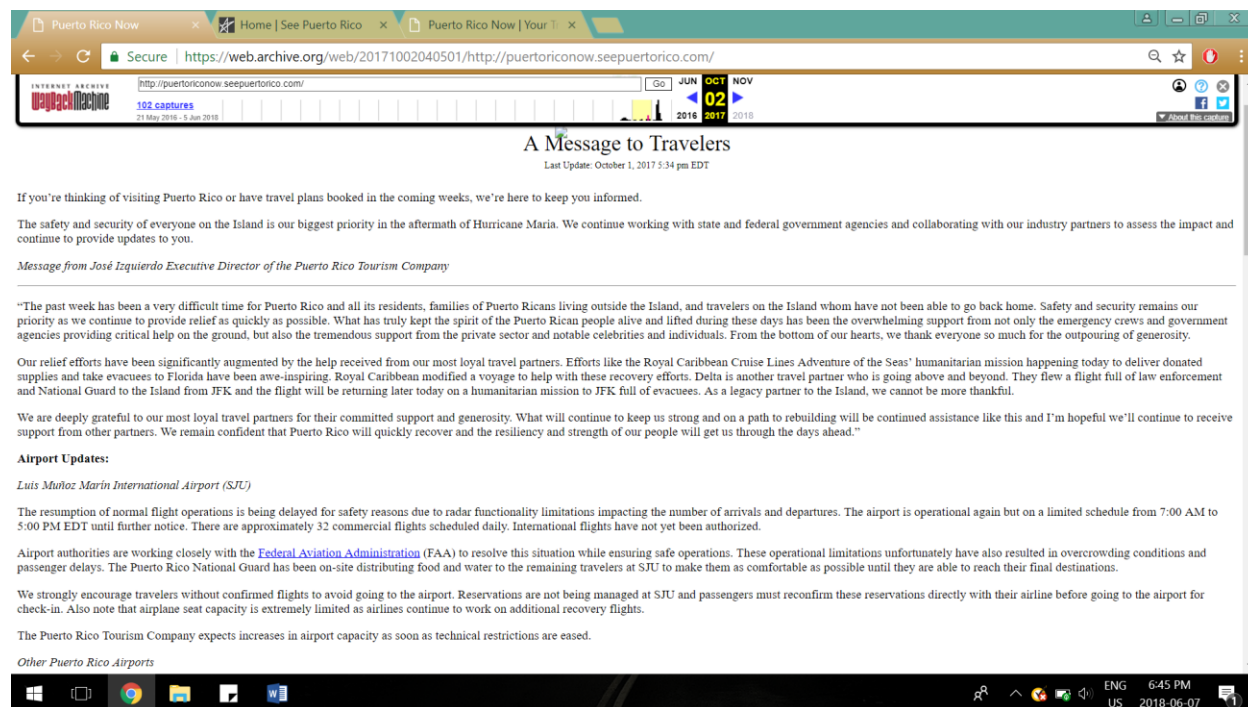
Appendix E: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (November 6, 2017), taken May 29, 2018.
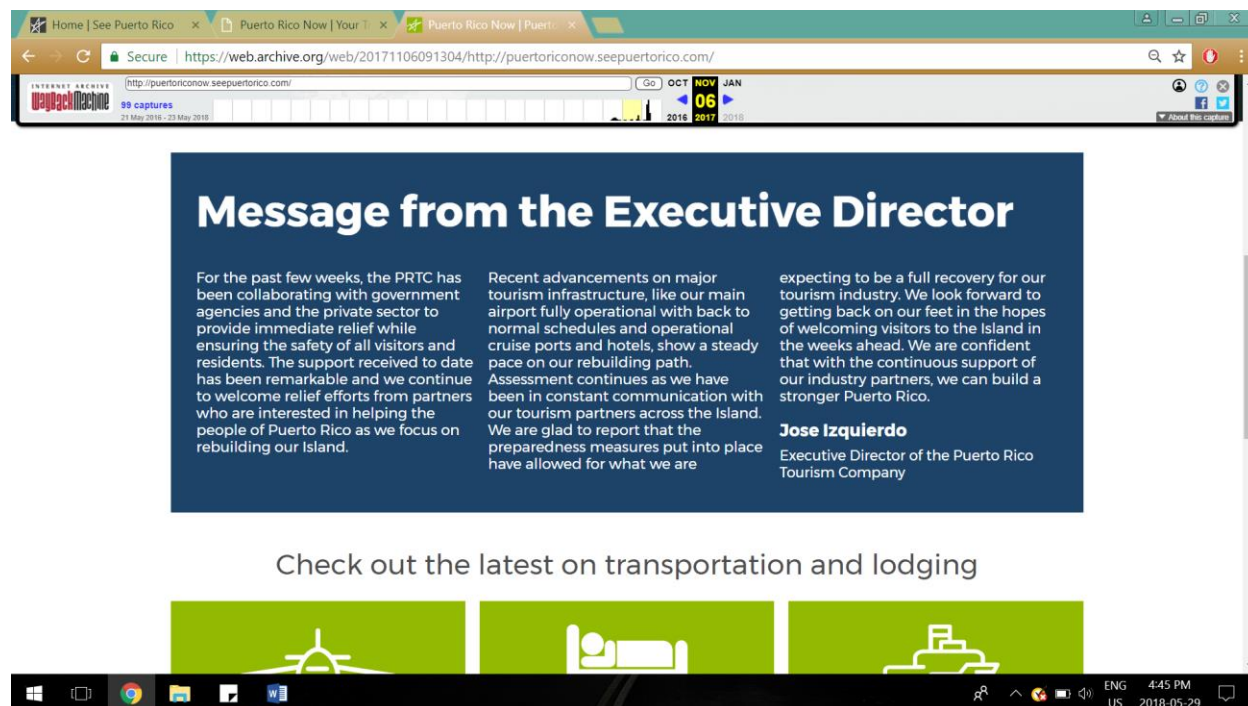
Appendix F: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (October 2, 2017), taken June 7, 2018.
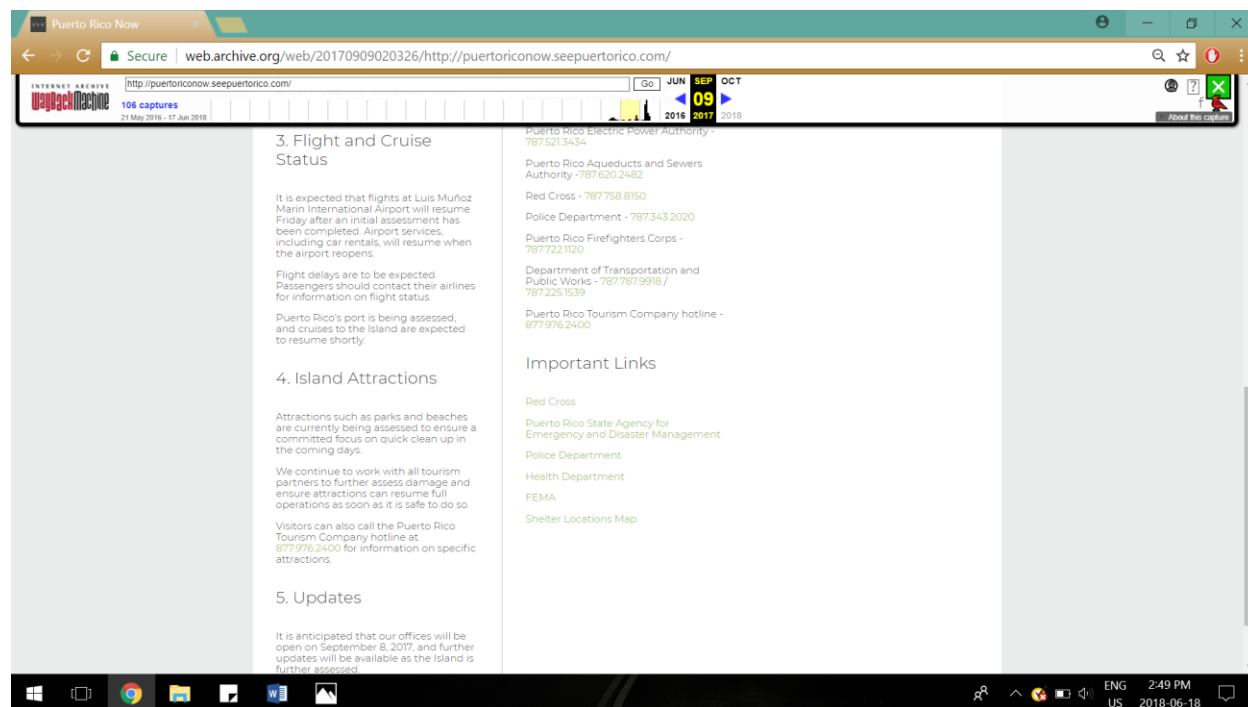
Appendix G: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (October 24, 2017), taken May 29, 2018.
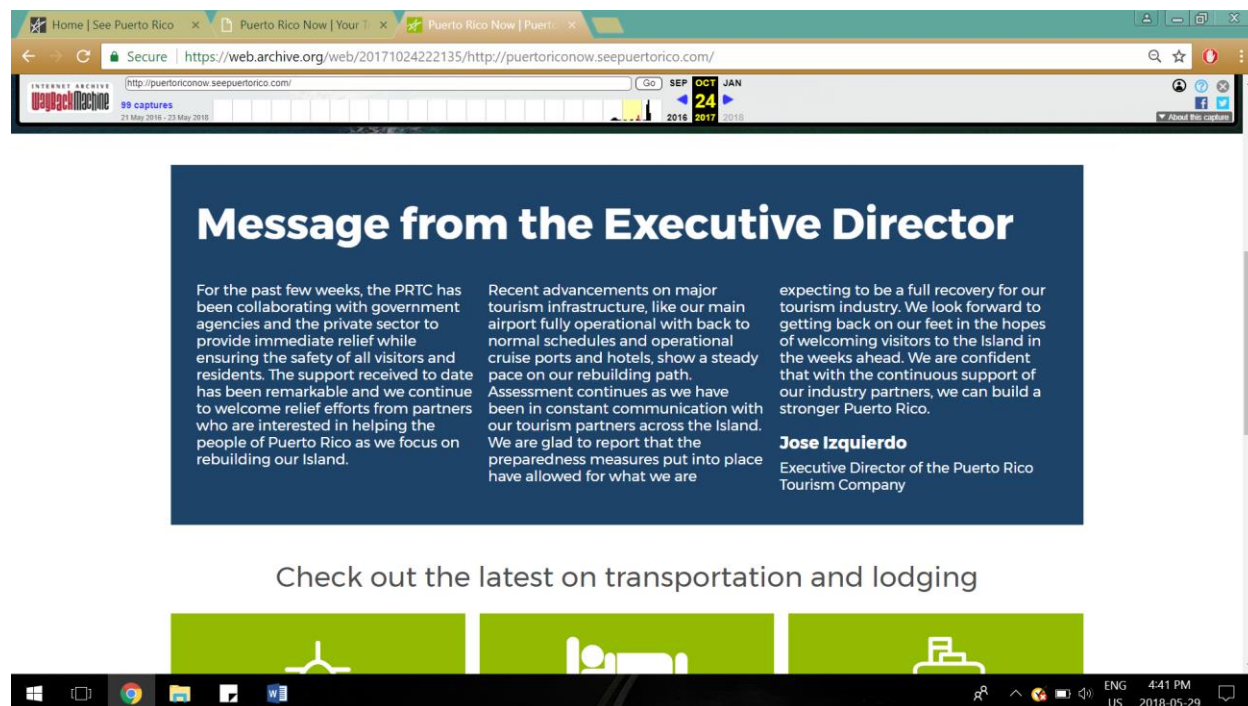
Appendix H: See Puerto Rico press room screenshot (September 9, 2017), taken June 18, 2018.

Appendix I: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (September 16, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix J: See Puerto Rico Faceook post (October 20, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix K: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (November 7, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix L: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (September 22, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix M: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (October 14, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix N: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (October 21, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix O: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (September 23, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

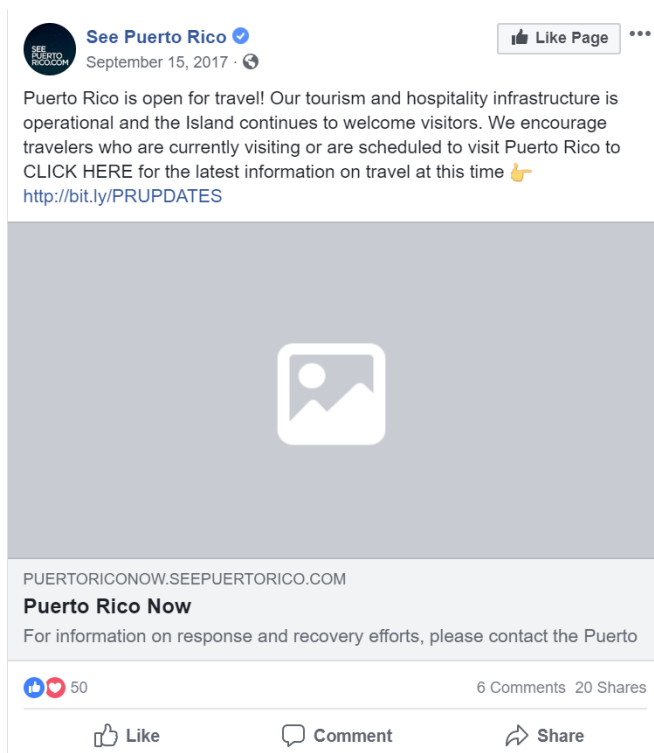Appendix P: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (October 5, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix Q: See Puerto Rico Faceboook post (October 26, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix R: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (September 15, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix S: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (December 21, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix T: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (October 15, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.
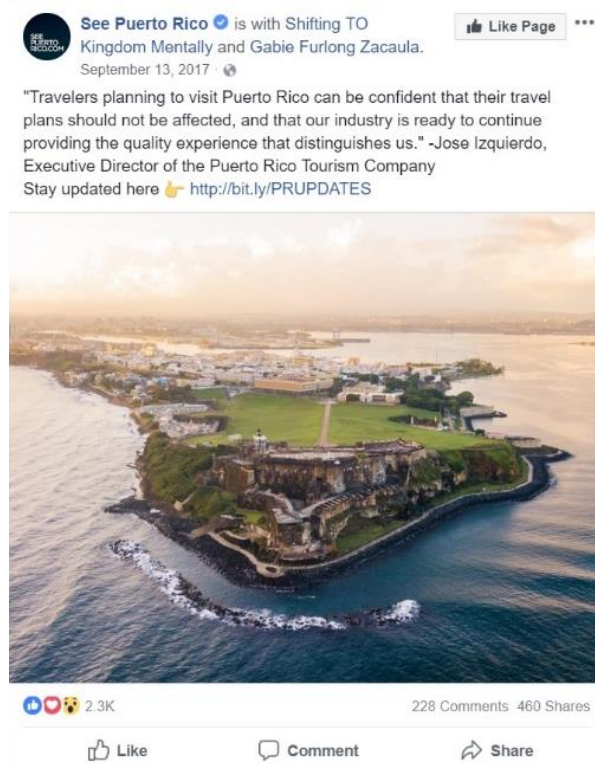
Appendix U: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (December 8, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

Appendix V: See Puerto Rico Facebook post (September 13, 2017), taken March 29, 2018.

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