Crisis Communication and Risk Communication

Ing. Marta Blahová
Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Faculty of Applied Informatics
Nad Stranemi 4511, 760 05 Zlin
m6_blahova@utb.cz

Abstract

Crisis communication and theoretical models of crisis communication. Innovative approaches in crisis communication, the Internet and social networks. The potential of social networks and efficiency of virtual communication in a crisis situation. Use of social media in crisis situations. Possibilities of social media marketing and its use in crisis situations.

Keywords: Crisis communication, risk communication, information society, social networks, digital inequality.

1.   Introduction

Information, its character, an amount, and a way of perception fundamentally influences behavior and decision-making at a level of individuals, but also institutions. 21st century as the century of expansion of the Internet and new Internet services with a large amount of information, their specific distribution, their focus, and their usability, is the reason for marking this stage of development of society as a new information society. One of the dominant characteristics of the development of the Internet is Web 2.0, which refers to a "new" generation of Internet services - such as blogs, social networks, RSS, Ajax, Wikipedia, YouTube, Second Life, MySpace, etc. Great emphasis is placed on interactivity and so-called content creation by ordinary users [1]. Social media is used not only by individuals but also by institutions, which thus gain a substantial aspect of decentralization and faster and more effective communication with citizens and the public. These aspects are crucial in crisis communication and emergency management. The current example of the use of new technologies with the participation and involvement of citizens is a public interactive crisis map.

2.   Crisis communication and risk communication

The first findings in the field of risk communication are an integral part of knowledge on disaster management from the 1950s and environmental and public health risks from the mid-1970s based on analyzing of real events (toxic leaks in industry, radon gas or contaminated food, but also the case of the spread of the Nile virus, bioterrorism, etc.). Risks and their occurrence are time-bound, geographically specific, and relevant to selected population groups [2].

Therefore, risk communication is a set of procedures and relationships that are more general than crisis communication, which is closely related to a specific emergency. People's responses to events that threaten their health and safety elicit a diverse range of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses whose rational contexts and causes can be elucidated by social, cognitive, and economic psychology. People have difficulty to process information when they are upset, indignant, afraid, and under severe stress. This is especially important when communicating with the risks in a crisis. Based on the reactions of people affected by an emergency, several theories explaining their behavior exist:

a) The theory of mental deafness states that people under stress process information inefficiently and up to 80% of it can be forgotten completely [3].
b) The theory of perception of trust speaks of how the communicated information is perceived. People in need are less trusting and often do not trust authorities in agitation [4].
c) The theory of negative dominance states that when people are upset, they are more likely to perceive negative news rather than positive ones, and more often to attach more importance to negative information than positive one [5].
d) The risk perception theory focuses on how risk is presented in media, how news is formulated, who reports it, and how it is communicated [6]. Misunderstood information can lead to inaction or inadequate or fatal behavior [7].

Situational factors, individual and group characteristics, and nature of the warning messages determine an extent with which appeals comply. Research confirms that the disaster warnings, which are locally relevant and culturally competent, are more likely to lead to risk awareness and to be more respectful of the meaning and importance of alerts. The specificity of the messages, their frequency, credibility, certainty, and understanding of a recipient of the source increases the effectiveness of the warning messages [8].

Higher intensity of risk perception may stimulate proactive behavior; however, because an emergency elicits a strong emotional response, it may create resistance to risk communication and recommended actions [9].

3.   Social communication and crisis communication

Communication is a term for any transmission of information. Social communication is created to execute various types and ways of communication in society with the participation of a well-known communication model consisting of communicators, information, transmission channels, and interconnection of levels of consciousness with other variables. According to the nature of relations between the participants in communication, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and public communication are distinguished [10].

Crisis communication means an exchange of information before, during, and after an emergency to deliver requested information at the right time to the right place, and thus positively influence the course and resolution of this emergency, including ensuring the preparedness of all parties involved.

Due to the development of new technologies, crisis communication is carried out through social media using mobile and Internet technologies. Hence, information can be quickly shared, completed, and further distributed.

Social media is a term further used for Internet applications, also known as social networks. A social network is a connection of people through communication lines for various purposes of influencing. According to the purpose for which the social networks serve, a distinction is made between personal and professional social networks.

The best known and most popular social networks in the Czech Republic include Lidé.cz, Spolužáci.cz, Jagg.cz or Linkuj.cz; however, some others are also used: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, Google+, Flickr, Blackplanet, Instagram, Pinterest, Skype, Youtube etc.

Nevertheless, using the social networks also has its risks. Due to the possibilities of anonymous connection to the social networks, the security of shared information, unwanted monitoring, false registration etc. may be compromised.

A prerequisite for the effective virtual communication of an organization in some crisis is an appropriate choice of social networks, especially their purpose, focus, and knowledge of the rules of operation of the selected social network. How successful crisis communication is can

be found by the monitoring of selected crisis communication and the evaluating of data according to various criteria and goals.

4. Social communication and crisis communication

Social media currently becomes a new opportunity for crisis preparedness marketing and crisis communication. However, it is necessary to select an appropriate choice of adequate social media in terms of the demographic characteristics of addressed users. Today, the information society term is understood as "a society based on the integration of information and communication technologies into all areas of social life to such an extent that it fundamentally changes social relations and processes. Growth of information resources and communication flows increases to the extent that it cannot be managed by existing information and communication technologies." [11].

The CZSO data shows that most of the social network users are in the age of 16-44, then the number of users falls sharply. One of the most used social networks in the Czech Republic is Facebook with 4,800,000 users. There are 200,000 more women than men, specifically 2.5 million. There are already 910,000 users from Prague, 270,000 from Brno and 170,000 people from Ostrava using this social network. The age category 13-25 has 1,500,000 users, the age category 26-35 has 1,300,000 users, the age category 36-45 has 1 000 000 users, the age category 46-55 has 550 000 users and the age category 56-65+ has 450 000 users [12].

Accordingly, only a part of the population can be addressed with crisis communication and crisis marketing through social networks. The crisis communication through social networks requires additional specialized activities in the field of monitoring analysis and active contact with users under the recommended rules:

Answer these questions individually, patiently, and with understanding.

• Be able to admit a mistake, apologize and arrange a remedy.

• Do not censor.

• Do not lie.

• Do not fight.

• Communicate in a natural language [13].

The crisis communication in the environment of social networks is very sensitive to the accuracy and clarity of a communicated information due to possible misinterpretations of its content and the avalanche spread of alarming messages and panic. Due to the registration of many users, which ranges from several hundreds to millions, communication on social networks is analyzed by specialized software, as well as other controls and monitoring performed by experts and software programs. Monitoring outputs can then serve to other marketing purposes and preventive measures for crisis management [14].

The essence of marketing communication is public relations, i.e. relations with the public, which take place on both sides, even during crises, including communication in the environment of the social networks. Due to the quantification of social networks in terms of many social networks and many users, the social networks and communication on them place high demands on technical processing of crisis communication (including analyses by age groups and content of submitted reports and monitoring). Moreover, they require a high level of commitment to the prevention of communication crises [15].

5.   Conclusion

New communication technologies and innovative trends in the field of communication increasingly penetrate the field of crisis communication and risk communication. For this form of communication, to be effective and meet the criteria of social sensitivity, it requires an analytical approach from the perspective of social-digital equality and accessibility according to age criteria and other geographic levels including evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing strategies. On the one hand, digital communication speeds up the communication process. On the other hand, it contributes to the decentralization of public administration bodies, which leads to evident social isolation. Moreover, it leads to anonymity affecting the effectiveness of warning messages and crisis preparedness. Due to the constant growth and variable popularity of social networks, there is a relatively large fragmentation of the "information" population among dozens of social networks and inconsistency of the communicated information, including the emergence of various communication platforms with a possibility of alarming and uncontrolled panic. The speed of messages transmitted to the audience, their correctness, and monitoring of their objectification requires the involvement of other relatively demanding technologies and other professional staff. It makes this communication personnel-intensive and costly. The population group at the turn of the age of 45 and over is used to communicate in traditional forms and receive traditional warning

messages. The digital media represents only a marginal issue for this group. Hence, monitoring of this part of the population remains an unresolved problem in the Czech Republic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Použitá literatura

[1] ITBIZ.cz [online], Nitemedia, © 2018. [feeling. 2018-12-15]. Available from: https://www.itbiz.cz/slovnik/marketing/web-2-0.

[2] LINDELL, M.K .; PERRY, R.W. (2004) .: Communicating environmental risk in multiethnics communities. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[3] BARON, J .; HERSHEY, J.C .; KUNREUTHER, H .: Determinants of priority for risk reduction: the role of worry. Risk Anal. 2000, 20 (4): 413-27.

[4] REYNOLDS, B .; GALDO, J.H .; SOKLER, L. (2002) .: Crisis and emergency risk communication: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from www.bt.cdc.gov/ cerc / resources / pdf / cerc_2014edition.pdf. p.248 Reynolds, B., & Seeger.

[5] LERNER, J.S .; GONZALEZ, R.M .; SMALL, D.A .; FISCHHOFF, B .: Effects of fear and anger on perceived risks of terrorism: a national field experiment. Psychol Sci., 2003, 14 (2): 144-50.

[6] MORGAN, M.G .; FISCHHOFF, B .; BOSTRO, M.A .; ATMAN, C. (2001).

[7] BRODIE, M .; WELTZIEN, E .; ALTMAN, D .; BLENDON, R .; BENSON, JM .: Experiences of hurricane Katrina evacuees in Houston shelters: implications for future planning. Am J Public Health. 2006 Aug; 96 (8): 1402-8.

[8] SORENSON, J.H .: Hazard warning systems. Review of 20 years of progress. Natural Hazards Review, 1,119-125.

[9] COVELLO, V.T .; PETERS, R.G .; WOJTECKI, J.G .; HYDE, R.C .: Risk communication, the West Nile virus epidemic, and bioterrorism: responding to the commnication challenges posed by the intentional or unintentional release of a pathogen in an urban setting. Journal of Urban Health, ISSN 1099-3460 (Print) 1468-2869 (Online) June 2001, Volume 78, Issue 2, pp. 382-391.

[10] Sociological encyclopedia. Institute of Sociology AS CR, v.v.i. © 2018. [feeling. 2018-12-15]. Available from: https: // encyclopedia. soc.cas.cz/.

[11] JONÁK, Z .: Information Society. KTD: Czech Terminological Database of Library and Information Science (TDKIV) [online]. Prague: National Library of the Czech Republic, 2003- [cit. 2018-12-19]. Available from: http://aleph.nkp.cz/F/?func=direct&doc_ number = 000000468 & local_base = KTD.

[12] JIREŠ, J .: Newsletter: Crisis, this time social media. dobryweb.cz [online]. October 19, 2011, [cit. 2018-12-15]. Available from WWW: http://blog.dobryweb.cz/krize-tentokratsocialne-medialni.

 [13] LINKEDIN.CZ. [online]. How are individual social networks doing in the Czech Republic? © 2018. [feeling. 2018-12-15]. Available from: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/jak-se-daří-jednotlivýmsosociální-títí-v-české-republice.

 [14] COVELLO, V.T .: Best practices in public health risk and crisis communication. J Health Commun. 2003; 8 Suppl 1: 5-8; discussion 148-51. Available at: https: //www.tandfonline. com / doi / abs / 10.1080 / 713851971.

[15] GLIK, D.C .: Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies. Annual Review of Public Health. Los Angeles 2007, Vol. 28: 33-54. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev. publhealth.28.021406.144123.