

A review on Factors of Social Media influencing Crisis Communication

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Abstract

Social media and social media tools have improved rapidly and have started to influence society in recent years. This influence has forced businesses to revolutionize their communication with the external environment. The increasing popularity of social media and its tools also has consequences for crisis communication. Where crisis communication was previously conducted by making use of the traditional media, the social media provide a whole new perception. This review research paper gives an insight of the factors of social media and its tools that influence the crisis communication. The research methodology used is referring past research papers published in Journals, research articles and reference e-books. The findings include the identified prominent factors such as legitimacy, Confidentiality, Cost, transparency etc. Also it shows that the social media are a good addition to the

traditional media devices which are being used in crisis communication.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Social Network, News Dissemination

I Introduction

The popularity of the social media has increased the last couple of years which also brought consequences with it for crisis communication. Where crisis communication was previously conducted by making use of the traditional media, the social media give a whole new perception to crisis communication [3]. Especially in times of emergency, social media can and should be employed to transmit critically important information immediately to as many people as possible.

The fact that information is reachable everywhere all the time and it can be broadcasted thanks to the improvements of communication technologies and systems, creates new communication platforms which causes economic, political, social and

cultural transformations in many ways. Social media platforms and new media tools like mobile applications which were formed in the networks, has changed mass broadcasting initiative which was based on traditional media establishments like newspaper, radio and television into individuals, public and private enterprises which are not focused on broadcasting.

This review research paper gives an insight of the factors of social media and its tools that influence the crisis communication. The research methodology used is referring past research papers published in Journals, research articles and reference e-books. The findings include the identified prominent factors such as legitimacy, confidentiality flexible communication, Cost, transparency etc. It also shows the social media are a good addition to the traditional media devices which are being used in crisis communication.

II Literature Review

2.1 Social Media and Social Network

Social media is the most effective communication means in the whole world because of its sharing networks' ability and power to keep masses posted, entertained and impressed [2]. With social media, everyone has the potential to be watchdogs,

citizen journalists and photojournalists that can constantly survey the world around them and share what they find online. This acceleration of communication and awareness has serious implications for crisis communications. It is changing the landscape in which crisis communicators operate. No longer do they do need to be confined by space and time. "The explosion of social media – everything from social networking websites, to blogs, to broadcast text messaging – has changed the way in which anyone involved in risk communications must look at overall communication plans. When talking about the role and factors of social media that affect in crisis communication, it is important to explain what the social media exactly are and which types of social media can be distinguished. Social media is an umbrella term for all internet applications which make it possible to share information in a user friendly way. This includes not only information in the form of text, but also audio files and images which can be shared by the use of these social media sites. One of the most important features of social media is that it creates opportunity for user based information production. This feature allows social media to produce and share uncontrolled and uncensored information.

Another feature which makes social media usage attractive, produced message and information is transferred to long distances and big crowds in the most economical way. The social networks are the most popular type of social media which make it possible to connect with friends, family, acquaintances and strangers by making a personal profile [3]. Despite the emergence of social media, freedom of expression nowadays still faces an age old economic divide that seems at both domestic and international level. Money can buy larger ability to be heard. Those people that, as an example, run TV networks or own newspapers are able to express themselves in ways in which that are unavailable to the rest of us. Similarly, there's presently an excellent disparity between people who have access to the internet and people living in poorer conditions that don't. Therefore the modern debate concerning freedom of expression should not solely think about the political question of however very little or much government ought to censor its citizens however also question whether or not the disparity in freedom of expression ought to be allowed to continue [10]. The most familiar social networks are Facebook, Hyves, Buurtlink and Google Buzz which make it possible to communicate with each

other online by exchanging messages, uploading video's or by joining forum discussions.

2.3 Crisis Communication and Management

The term *crisis* is "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services or good name" [4]. A crisis comes as a surprise, forms a certain threat and there is urgency for a short response time. Crises in the public domain can include events and episodes which entail many dead and wounded or threaten to disrupt the social and political system. Besides these types of crises there are also crises which do not threaten people's lives, but which do threaten other values which are important in society. Examples of crises in the public sector are wars, riots, natural disasters, epidemics, infectious diseases of plants and/or animals, terrorist attacks, major transport accidents et cetera [5].

Crisis communication has three objectives: The *first objective* is meaning (or interpretation) and refers to explaining what the crisis means for the ones involved and/or the society. The *second objective* is providing sufficient information about what has happened and what is still going on at the moment. The *third objective* is the limitation of harm; inform citizens about possible threatening situations. This also includes the limitation of possible damage of

reputation which might be caused by rumors by refuting these rumors [6].

Crisis management, in case of a possible crisis situation, is a process consisting of activities of evaluation of crisis signs, taking and applying necessary precautions in order to recover from the crisis with minimum loss. Crisis management is a set of interconnected evaluations and audits which an organization executes in order to prevent crises which are capable of creating serious threats for main product, service, production process, staff, environment and society. Crisis management is a decision-making process. Being a special kind of management, it has similar characteristics to strategic management principles. Crisis management aims to make sure organizations are ready for crises while taking necessary precautions to recover from them with minimum cost and maximum profit.

2.3 Social Media and Crisis Communication

The social media can be of major importance in effective crisis communication [9]. One of effects of the use of social media in crisis communication is that the social media increases the possibility of misinformation which is circulating. The information provided on the

social media of all organizations should be in accordance with each other and with the information provided in other media and if wrong information is circulating on the social media, this information should be refuted [7]. By determining whether or not to use the social media it is also very important to determine which social media are going to be used and whether they are only being used or complementary to other media devices.

III Research Approach and Methodology

The purpose of this review research paper is to give an insight of the factors of social media and its tools that influence the crisis communication. The research methodology used is referring past research papers published in Journals, research articles and reference e-books. The findings include the identified prominent factors such as legitimacy, confidentiality flexible communication, cost, transparency etc. It also shows the social media are a good addition to the traditional media devices which are being used in crisis communication.

IV Research Findings

The research findings shows that the social media has become the most effective

communication means in the whole world in a short time because of its sharing networks' ability and power to keep masses posted, entertained and impressed. This interest in social media caused many digital agencies to be born, in the meantime attracting the attention of the traditional media. There are various identified factors that have influenced crisis communication.

Legitimacy: Legitimacy refers to Accuracy and timeliness which further corresponds to good corporate governance when communicating to stakeholders. For crisis communication, the accuracy and timeliness of information is imperative, as poor information integrity could lead to decisions that worsen the crisis.

Confidentiality: It refers to the rights of individuals and organizations that need to be protected.

Flexible communication: The ability to access information from any location which will be beneficial to any organization whether it be public or private. The flexibility of communication allows instantaneous communication for people located anywhere: travelling between locations or at home

Cost: The cost factor simply means that social media is a cheap way of

communicating without geographical limitations

Transparency: It is the organization being upfront and visible about the actions it takes, and whether those actions are consistent with its values. Transparency implies openness, communication, and accountability. It is practiced in companies, organizations, administrations, and communities.

Information Integrity:

Social media help stakeholders with a ready resource to make sense of a crisis, and by creating a way to share integral, time-sensitive information quickly to citizens and crisis managers and communicators.

V Conclusion

There are many studies in the literature showing that communication management is the most important element of crisis management and social media communication has become one of the most important tools in crisis management. Social media means collective power, and can result in the mitigation of damage in crisis as well. The Research findings show that the prominent identified factors like Legitimacy, Confidentiality, Cost, Transparency, and Information Integrity of social media influences the crisis management in various

ways. The most important behavior organizations & other businesses must adopt in case of a crisis resulting either from internal or external factors, is communicating with consumers through the fastest and the most appropriate channel because social media is an environment where disinformation occurs often, quickly responding to communication among consumers on social media prevents disinformation.

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