Social media can be a useful alternative communication channel in all stages of disaster management

CARISMAND

Through social media disaster managers can reach out to wider and more diverse segments of the population, while at the same time avoiding communication breakdown generated by over-reliance on only one communication platform. The use of social media for disasters on an organizational level can be grouped in two main categories: it can be used to passively disseminate information and receive user feedback and it can be used actively to carry out emergency communication, issue warnings, receive requests for assistance, establish situational awareness and estimate damage.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Policy Makers, Disaster Managers, Citizens
Disaster Phases: Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery
Types of Actors Concerned: Media, Non-active citizens, Active citizens, Entrepreneurs, National research bodies
Hazards: Natural hazards, Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations, Man-made intentional hazards

Cultural Map Entries:
- Use of social media as an immediate response in a disaster situation
- Use of social media for ongoing communication in a disaster situation
- Use of social media to submit information to the authorities in a disaster situation
- Disaster preparedness as the responsibility of national and local authorities
- Infrastructural vulnerabilities perceptions in relation with the degree of preparedness
- Responsibilities of local authorities and non-governmental organisations in informing citizens on how to act in response to a disaster
- Use of mobile phone apps and social media usages in disaster situations
- Relationship between perceived effectiveness and trustworthiness of authorities
- Physical fitness as a preparedness measure
- Elderly people and their role in disaster preparedness
- Frequency of citizen training as a preparedness measure
- Smartphone apps vs social media
- Correlation between citizen likelihood to use smartphone apps and social media during a disaster
- Trustworthiness of official messages sent via social media
- Positive reactions to the idea of using of disaster mobile phone apps amongst, largely elderly, citizens who are not active on social media
- Social media police sites are highly appreciated and trusted
- Importance of considering communication channels used by the elderly, who may not be active on social media
- Training children and adolescents for disaster
- Cross-cultural symbols as a universal language
- Other groups that can act as volunteers during a disaster
- Communication platforms that can be used to reach citizens during disasters
- Usefulness of smartphone apps vs social media during disaster situations
- Different forms of social media to target different audiences during a disaster
- The role of new media in disaster communication
- Communication strategies of the Territorial Coordination Master Plan of the Province of Potenza

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General association with cultural factors: Communication

Implementation steps:

Recommendations on general principles related to use of social media in disaster communication

A. Be actively present on social media and ensure positive media coverage to increase citizens' trust. Related cultural factors: Communication

B. Use a dynamic dissemination campaign (e.g. messages aimed at disaster prevention) as an effective means for disaster preparedness. Related cultural factors: Communication

C. To foster information spread across different communities, local disaster responders should try to become members of "online neighbourhood watch groups", e.g., Facebook groups, and make use of the extensive network between such groups (via citizens who move their homes but stay in touch with their previous local communities online). Related cultural factors: Communication, Social networks

D. Set up or improve the Facebook presence of disaster authorities, to build and make use of citizens' trust in authorities' information sources online. Related cultural factors: Communication, Attitudes toward authorities

E. Utilize social media monitoring to catch emerging hoax faster and therefore use the power of TV broadcasting to disperse it from the very beginning. Related cultural factors: Communication

F. Create and upkeep trustworthy social media profiles for information dissemination, so that target groups know where to search for adequate information in times of disaster. Related cultural factors: Communication

G. Use social media networks to get a better sense of what is happening on the ground during a crisis (e.g. through social media monitoring), get better situational awareness, and improve information sharing during an emergency. Related cultural factors: Communication

H. Use social media to facilitate multi-directional information flows, which have significant psychosocial impact for disaster-affected populations and help in building resilience against future incidents. Related cultural factors: Communication

I. Use social media to support citizen-led clean-up operations, tell citizens when the crisis is over and issue preparedness advices. Related cultural factors: Communication, Social networks

J. Use visual communication and info graphics to spread key messages on risks, preventative behaviours and potential consequences to target groups and communities. Related cultural factors: Communication

K. Support the use of codified hash tags for disasters and emergencies, in order to consistently, effectively and efficiently reach target groups. Related cultural factors: Communication

Recommendations for institutional use of social media in disaster communication

L. Decide on a strategic plan to accommodate changing organizational and stakeholder requirements as well as the evolving nature of the Internet. Related cultural factors: Communication

M. Maximize branding by selecting an appropriate name and domain identification, i.e., .gov, .org, etc. Related cultural factors: Communication

N. Create a design that is functional, reader friendly and easy to navigate; o Incorporate a Contact Us Page, About Us Page and Site Map. Include a Search. Related cultural factors: Communication

O. Provide box on every page and search hints and recommendations. Related cultural factors: Communication

P. Keep content current, audience driven, and use plain language free of acronyms. Related cultural factors: Communication, Languages

Q. Decide on which forms and publications to include and how to provide for download of data files. Related cultural factors: Communication

R. Avoid duplicating material from other websites and link to relevant cross agency portals when appropriate. Related cultural factors: Communication

S. Adhere to national laws, regulations and directives concerning web content, operations and the protection of personal information. Incorporate transparency features, i.e., a privacy policy, security protocols and guidelines on linking, disclaimers and advertising. Related cultural factors: Communication, Rule of law

T. Institute a process for continually improving web operations by conducting formal evaluations using online surveys and usability testing. Related cultural factors: Communication

U. Establish emergency operating procedures and protocols for taking the site off-line for system maintenance and other contingencies. Related cultural factors: Communication

V. Consider cultural factors in disaster communication- Link to cultural factors in communication. Related cultural factors: Communication

Sources:

Deliverable 2.2: Report on systems and processes in disaster management - CARISMAND
(pdf, 9.2 MB)

Deliverable 3.1: Report on technologies use and cultural factors - CARISMAND
(pdf, 5.2 MB)

Deliverable 3.2: Report on best and emerging practices of technologies for disaster risk management and their adaptation to different cultural groups - CARISMAND
(pdf, 3.4 MB)

Deliverable 5.5: Report on citizens reactions and opinions Citizen Summit 3 (Italy) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 1.8 MB)

Deliverable 5.6: Report on citizens reactions and opinions Citizen Summit 4 (Germany) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2 MB)

Deliverable 5.10: Report on Stakeholder Assembly 1 (Romania) - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.7 MB)

Deliverable 7.1: Report on literature review - CARISMAND
(pdf, 2.5 MB)

Further reading:

Alhabash, S. et al., 2012. Exploring the Motivations of Facebook Use in Taiwan. Cyber psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 15(6), pp. 304–311.

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https://toolkit.carismand.eu/a/recommendation-social-media