



Trustworthiness of official messages sent via social media

As the discussions progressed further, the focus shifted increasingly from media providers to social media websites and social media messages originated by authorities involved in disaster management. Here, all participants who had known of or used such sites before, stated their trust: “I definitely trust [messages from] official bodies, everything provided by the civil protection department, the police or the fire brigade, because they are the right source of information” (G2-P8). Interestingly, contrary to participants' previously described general feelings of distrust towards the police in effective disaster response, social media sites and messages particularly from the police appeared to be highly appreciated and trusted: “Police departments that are using Twitter or something similar they are doing a great job now” (G4-P5). “If the police publish something like this I will trust it because they will have investigated it” (G5-P6). “I would say the police are very trustworthy when they offer information on social media” (G8-P1). “The police, I believe, would never let hundreds of thousands of people walk on the Zeil if they were in doubt that it was safe [...] Yes, of course, they are also learning, but I think we really should start to believe them and trust them” (G4-P11). Here, the participants' trust is not related to their perceptions of police forces' actual physical disaster response, but to the police's perceived capability to provide truthful and timely information: “All these police pages, they post very much about up to date events on Facebook” (G1-P9). These statements point at the potential of social media use to regain citizens' trust by taking up the role of a trustworthy information provider at times where both private and public media channels are increasingly distrusted: “Because the government is making it hard for me to believe, and it has also become hard for me to believe in big private media providers [...] I'd rather believe the smaller outlets, like the local community news or the local police who is posting something for their neighbourhood” (G1-P7).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Worldviews](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Attitudes toward the media](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Media](#), [Government](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Engage in activities and develop strategies aiming to improve trust between citizens and authorities](#)
- [Social media can be a useful alternative communication channel in all stages of disaster management](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.6 "Report on citizens' reactions and opinions: Citizen Summit 4 \(Germany\)" \(page 26\)](#)

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