



The role of traditional media

Whereas social media's role is definitely increasing both in times of calm and crisis, traditional media remains a trusted and authoritative source of information, making their mix ideal for the communication of strategic messages to the citizens. The media have played an important role in educating people on matters of public interest in general and on crisis, and risks in particular. Moreover, they can make significant contributions to information flows during and after cascading crises and disasters; yet, many times, myths perpetuated through media channels may also hinder response and recovery initiatives through their distortion of the behaviour and needs affected populations have. Emotional discourses in disaster media coverage can help raise aid donations and invite members of the public to care about 'distant suffering'. However, critics argue that this focus on 'death and destruction' has disproportionate influence upon the allocation of resources, and it is often appropriated by political elites to serve their respective agendas. Media have been promoting a model of 'shared responsibility', in which citizens are encouraged to play an active role in the production and sharing of crisis information, this being mainly seen within the last years via social media. The role of the news media has shifted from gatekeeping to gate watching, whereby they publicize and share relevant news content rather than focus solely on production. 'First informers' and citizen journalists provide eyewitness perspectives on disasters that help emergency managers build situational awareness. Thus, the harnessing of collective intelligence via social media has the potential to create new information flows during the response and recovery stages of cascading disasters that could prevent disruption spreading to other elements of the socio-technical system. Social media can also facilitate multi-directional information flows. In their turn, these flows may have significant psychosocial impact for disaster-affected populations and help in building resilience against future incidents. However, it should be noted that this often privileges the voices of better off residents at the expense of poorer ones, who typically lack the skills and expertise to make themselves heard online. New media is an engaging actor that communicates in case of disaster. It provides new communication channels between citizens and government representatives or institutions with responsibilities in disaster management. Moreover, social media tools allow emergency managers to disseminate information to wider audiences, interact with the public, monitor social media networks to get a better sense of what's happening on the ground during a crisis, get better situational awareness, and improve collaboration for sharing information during an emergency and sharing of best practices and lessons learned (Yasin, 2010). Even though new media tools and channels are not available to all categories of target audience, being mainly used by young people, social media and other new media instruments can help reach a wider audience and send and receive emergency alerts or information related to a disaster strike. Nowadays, social media tools and smart phones are used to reveal the situation and location of someone who was caught in a disaster, by simply using two or three clicks of a button (Yasin, 2010). Technology has considerably change the way in which mass media serves as a main channel of communication, helping to build a bridge between generations, as well as between citizens and governments and other public institutions. Whether we refer to bookmarking sites (sites that help people store, classify, share and search though collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content – e.g. reddit.com, dig.com),



collaborative projects (communal databases created through user generated content - e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (online communities where people share various types of content such as photos, audio and videos – e.g. YouTube, Flickr), social review (websites that allow people to search, rate and share information as well as provide recommendations – e.g. Google Places, social media opens up a whole new set of opportunities a challenges to how communication during risk, crisis and disaster has to be performed in order to become effective. As an essential instrument of communication during and after a disasters strikes, media helps connecting affected people, families and communities with other family members, first responders, support systems and institutions/organizations with responsibilities in disaster management, playing an important role in the process of response and recovery. In conclusion, print and broadcast media remain one of the most trusted and authoritative sources of information during crisis situations, as they provide information to citizens about “what happened, what to do, how to protect themselves during crisis and how to find their missing loved ones” (Hannides, 5).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Communication](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#), [Response](#), [Recovery](#), [All disaster phases](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Media](#)

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

Recommendations:

- [Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures, they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

Source

[Deliverable D8.2 "Report on the role of the media in disaster risk communication" \(page 164\)](#)

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