

COMMUNICATION IN THE EMERGENCY SITUATIONS MANAGEMENT

Lecturer PhD **Ovidiu Aurel GHIUȚĂ**
„Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
ovidiug@seap.usv.ro

Professor PhD **Gabriela PRELIPCEAN**
„Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania
gabrielap@seap.usv.ro

Abstract:

This paper is talking about communication use in emergency situations management from a marketing perspective. We have analyzed if this communication is different from the communication of a company with her publics; the legislation which provides the framework for this type of communication in Romania, when is applicable and who is in charge. As methodology we have utilized documentary research. We mention similarities and differences between this type of communication and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC).

Key words: communication, emergency situations, emergency situations management, emergency communication, integrated marketing communications

JEL classification: M38, J28, K32, H84, H56

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the need of a special communication in emergency situations, how this type of communication is created, how it is different from normal communication with audience, which are the categories of target audiences, which are the institutions responsible for this type of communication, if there are laws or regulations that treat this emergency situations communication in Romania, when this communication is made and who is the decision maker in emergency situations.

In the following we present some definitions:

The emergency situation is an exceptional event with a non-military nature, which through its intensity and scale threatens life and health of the population, environment, important cultural and material values and to restore the normal state it is necessary the adoption of measures and urgent actions, additional resources allocation and unitary management of forces and means involved.

The disaster is the event caused by triggering certain types of risks, from natural causes or manmade, generating human and material losses or environmental changes and through its scale, intensity and consequences reaches or exceeds specific severity levels established by the regulations on the management emergencies developed and approved according to law.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present paper can be classified as a theoretical research article. As a research methodology we mention the direct documentary research using legislation in Romania and research articles and books in communication. The legislative side identifies the institutions and their responsibilities in the case of crisis situations in terms of communication. It has also been consulted the specialty literature of practitioners in communication and research articles of researches from the field.

III. LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONS IN COMMUNICATION FOR EMERGENCIES

In Romania communication and public information for emergency situations is provided by the following institutions:

A. permanent structures

1. General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, through National Operational Centre;
2. Operational centers with permanent activity in ministries with support functions;
3. Inspectorate for Emergency Situations of Bucharest, through operational center;
4. County inspectorates for emergency situations, through operational centers.

B. temporary activity structures

1. National Committee for Emergency Situations, under the direct leadership of the Minister of Interior and Administrative Reform and the coordination of the Prime Minister;
2. Ministerial committees for emergency situations, under the leadership of ministers, through operational centers with temporary activity;
3. Committee for Emergency Situations of Bucharest, under the direction of the prefect of Bucharest;
4. County Committees for Emergency Situations under the direction of the county prefect;
5. Local committees led by the mayor through operational centers.

The importance of regulations regarding communication in emergency situations is highlighted also by its extensive presence in normative acts:

- a) Government Decision no. 548/2008 on the approval of the National Strategy for Communication and Public Information for emergency situations;
- b) Government Emergency Ordinance no. 21/2004 on the National System of Management of Emergency Situations, approved with amendments and completions by Law no. 15/2005;
- c) Law no. 481/2004 on Civil Protection, as amended and supplemented;
- d) Law no. 307/2006 regarding fire safety;
- e) Government Ordinance no. 88/2001 on the establishment, organizations and functioning of community public services for emergencies, approved with amendments and completions by Law no. 363/2002, as amended and supplemented;
- f) Government Decision no. 1489/2004 on the organization and functioning of the National Committee for Emergency Situations, as amended and supplemented;
- g) Government Decision no. 1490/2004 approving the Regulation on organization and functioning and the organizational structure of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, as amended;
- h) Government Decision no. 1491/2004 approving the Framework Regulation on the organizational structure, attributions, functioning and endowment of committees and operational centers for emergency situations;
- i) Government Decision no. 1492/2004 concerning the principles of organizing, functioning, and duties of the professional emergency services.

The communication procedures during emergency situations exist between organizations and structures of National Management System of Emergency Situations, on one hand, and population and media on the other hand.

Also, Government Decision 548/2008 states that “the communication and public information guide becomes operational when the convocation of committee for emergency situations takes place, regardless of its national, county or local level”.

It is created a communication and public information center which has the following structure: chairman for emergency situations, spokesman, communicators/spokespersons within institutions represented in the committee and the operational team, and public information officer.

The same Government Decision considers also general target audiences, target audiences which are refined according to the type of emergency situation (as well messages transmitted differ

according the type of occurrence: fire, flood, earthquake, technological and hydro-technical accidents, epidemics or natural pandemics, extreme heat):

- a) victims and their relatives;
- b) residents in the area affected by the emergency;
- c) citizens of potential areas of risk;
- d) public opinion and local, national and international media;
- e) authorities involved in emergency situations management: institutions with support functions, government institutions, local and national agencies, hospitals;
- f) special categories of target audience: economic organizations, insurance companies, international humanitarian organizations, non-governmental organizations, church, educational institutions;
- g) members of management structures for emergency situations and members of the intervention teams.

IV. FROM COMMUNICATION TO INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Communication is the process of information transmission from a transmitter to a receiver.

We can define mass communication as “diffusion for a large audience. It is characterized by the fact that it is unidirectional, it uses media, and the transmitter rarely knows the target audience” (Lehu, 2004).

For Helfer and Orsoni (2005) communication exceeds simple informing. To communicate means to transmit information in order to obtain changes in the behavior or attitude of the recipient. Equally in emergency situations those who emit messages want to influence the behavior of the target audience and not only just to inform it.

In these cases we have to deal with two types of communication: the continuous/permanent one which aims to inform, because Romania is a country permanently exposed to natural hazards and the communication during the natural hazard and after hazard.

Regarding the communication type, this is an integrated one because the legislator states that the responsible should be only one person: the spokesman within the communication center. The fact that a unitary communication is absolutely necessary is imperatively indicated by “this will not be contradicted in front of the press” by anyone from those within the emergency committee or other institutions. This also deals with an integrated communication both externally with the public (citizens and media), and internally through communication with information officers from the institutions represented in the emergency situations committee or involved in any way in the emergency situation.

The fact that the action of communicating in crisis situations is at a strategic level and not only at a tactical level is highlighted by the fact that the legislation states also a post-emergency communication due to the fact that a number of elements of the emergency communication are already prepared according to the emergency situation type that may occur but also to the fact that it is stated a continuous communication and information between authorized institutions and citizens (continuous communication/permanent).

An essential element of the crisis is to avoid panic behavior among the population. To avoid public panic it is essential to build and maintain its sense of trust in the institutions that manage this communication and for that it requires a continuous communication.

Boistel (2007) presents a principle for the entire communication: “communication requires that the facts and speeches be consistent. Consistency between facts and communication is essential to convince targets of the speeches’ authenticity”.

Currently a topic of great interest is the integrated communication, namely choosing the best communication channels, the best media plan and conveying a clear and coherent message. In this paper we consider global communication part of integrated communication because for us global communication represents a clear and coherent communication for the entire organization, this aspect being found in the definition of integrated marketing communication.

Because integrated communication can be easily assimilated with integrated marketing communication we present in the following views of researchers and practitioners regarding this concept.

Integrated marketing communication is a new discipline related with marketing which is still under the process of conceptualization. An increasingly higher number of researchers analyze integrated marketing communication from strategic perspectives: both in terms of communication and brand management (Tsai, 2005).

For the marketing practitioner there is a problem: the increasing of media and communication varieties. A large number of sources are actually bombarding the consumers. In commercial marketing we talk often (in recent years) about integrated marketing communication. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) consists of the development of a global communication strategy which aims to create strong relationships with customers, proving to them that the company and its products help them satisfy their needs.

Initially, marketing communication had its purpose in advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing. Each of these areas has evolved to different levels and industries and the only way of communication is integrating every part of this mix (Schultz, Kitchen, 2000). Don Schultz advocates for a broader view which takes into account all contact sources that a customer or a potential client of a product or service may have with a brand or a company (Schultz, 1993).

Integrated marketing communication is a “concept by which a company carefully integrates numerous communication channels so that it can diffuse a clear, coherent and attractive message about itself and its products” (Armstrong, Kotler, 2007).

American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) elaborated one of the first definitions of IMC: A concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a detailed plan which evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, e.g. advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and public relations, integrating all these disciplines in order to diffuse a clear, coherent and powerful message (Schultz, 1993).

Tom Duncan and Sandra Moriarty state that IMC is an integrated part of the “new generation” of marketing approaches to which companies appeal in order to concentrate more their efforts for creating, developing and strengthening their links with customers and other stakeholders. The authors have developed a communication-based marketing model which highlights the importance of planning the ensemble of a company’s or brand’s communication because collectively these create, maintain, or weaken the company’s relationship with the customer or the interlocutor, and last but not least, gives value to the brand (Duncan, Moriarty, 1998).

Duncan (2002) believes that the integrated marketing communication is a process for managing customer relationships which gives value to the brand. More specifically, it is a cross-functional process for creating and maintaining profitable relationships with customers and shareholders for the strategic control or for influencing all the messages which are sent to each group and encourages relevant dialogue based on information with these groups.

A unitary organization which makes a coordinated effort for the promotion of brand concept by using multiple communication tools which speak in one voice represented Shimp’s (2000) definition which brings integrated marketing communication very close to branding process and organization’s brand.

A more complex definition is given by Pickton and Broderick (2005): “Integrated marketing communication is a process which involves the management and organization of all agents in analyzing, planning, implementation and control of all marketing elements: contacts, media, messages and promotion tools, centered towards the selected target audiences in order to provide the highest growth and coherence to the effort of marketing communication in achieving pre-established objectives related to the product and to the organizational marketing communication” which has as a main view point the communication synergy phenomenon.

Lendrevie et al. (2004) also utilized the concept of efficiency in integrated communication: “Integrated communication on multiple channels means selectively, commonly and complementary

using multiple communication channels so that they can *speak with the same voice* with maximum efficiency” after which the author returns with a “more ambitious” definition (p.537): “Integrated multichannel communication has as objective a better return on communication costs, applying a strategy based on a different channel architecture that works in synergy and conveys consistent messages. It is customer oriented and driven mainly by quantified data on customer perceptions and behavior. Its efficiency is based on the multidisciplinary skills of the officials who lead the communication through new organizations - advertising agencies, new relations and new forms of remuneration based on the distinction between council and executive functions”.

Duncan and Everett (1993) focus on the strategic role of integrated marketing communication and the use of multiple disciplines of communication: A concept of marketing communication planning which recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan which evaluates the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines, e.g. general advertising, direct response, sales and public relations promotion - and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum impact of communication.

The common idea of all definitions is that the communication tools usually used independently are combined in a way that enables the achievement of a synergistic effect, resulting in a more homogeneous communication (de Pelsmacker et al., 2005).

In the case of communication in emergency situations and public informing we can speak about an **integrated marketing communication** because we are dealing with a continuous communication with the society and with gaining a sense of trust from the citizens.



Figure 1. The need for integrated communication in crisis situations management

Figure 1 presents the reasons why integrated marketing communication is necessary in communication in crisis situations management.

V. PARTICULARITIES OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Depending on the type of emergency situation there should exist protocols on whether or not information should be transmitted, if it requires the approval of a hierarchical superior person for the public announcement of danger. In general, the crisis is communicated to the media and public only if the information does not create panic among people, panic which could impede the proper conduct of operations to eradicate or limit the effects of the hazard.

A special element is represented by the emergency situations which can be foreseen. We cannot know what is the probability of predicting such events and if the population should be

announced. The decision is discussed between the communication center in these emergencies and researchers who have predicted the phenomenon.

Such research based on a simulation experiment of flooding in the United Kingdom shows that there must be a continuous and efficient communication between the researchers studying this phenomenon and the institutions responsible for the management of such natural hazard situation (McCarty, 2007).

Governmental Decision 548/2008 does not present or speak of the situation of a likely natural hazard. It does not specify whether it can be created the center of management for emergency situations based only on forecasts. What could be done in case of possible hazards?

For example in the case of volcanic eruptions, such as Vesuvius volcano in Italy, these are daily (active volcano), but of not significant intensity. A prediction of a strong eruption would not help because according to police statements of Naples (city under the mountain) they would not have sufficient time to evacuate the city.

In these cases we can talk about the concept of risk accepted by the population. A study conducted in China (Lei et al., 2010) to calculate the accepted risk on types of risks takes in consideration several variables measured with a Likert scale with seven intervals:

- risk acceptability;
- knowledge about the risk;
- risk controllability;
- social effects associated with the risk;
- risk novelty;
- risk imminence;
- risk benefits;
- terror towards the risk;
- trust in institutions.

As it can be noticed in the list of variables (especially those in bold) we find directly represented the communication of institutions with citizens, trust in these institutions, as well as indirectly, through informing citizens regarding the other variables.

Integrated communication before the event has a preventive and preparatory purpose and is managed by specialized institutions. During the event, its management can pass under the subordination of a different temporary structure.

Integrated communication during the event differs depending on the severity and impact of the event, therefore if it is managed by one of the devolved institutions (Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, Romanian Water Directorate, Anti-Terrorism) this coordinates also the communication. If its level requires the establishment of a temporary work structure, this is also takes care and is directly responsible for the communication before and after the event. For example, at the county level for a fire the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations is the coordinator, but for a fire that has a certain level of risk (human, material or strategic objectives), level of risk to be defined at the county level, the prefect is the direct coordinator by the establishment of the county committee for emergency situations. Therefore the responsibility for institutional communication passes from the level of the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations at the level of Prefecture. According to the legislation the responsible for communication during an emergency is the designated spokesman in an emergency.

The key difference is manifested between the continuous communication and communication in crisis situation (per event) and its fundamental purpose changes from efficiency to effectiveness.

Table 1. Changing the view of integrated communication from efficiency to effectiveness in emergency situations

	Main objective	Possible objectives	Achieving objectives
Integrated continuous communication	Efficiency	90% of the population to hear about risk 70% of the population to know details about the risk 60% know how to control risk 40% know how to act in case of risk	Minimal use of existing resources (human, financial, material) to meet the objectives
Integrated communication in managing crisis situations	Effectiveness	Notification and saving as many lives, resources and strategic points	With all available resources at all costs (plus volunteers, other funds, other equipment). There is no higher threshold for objectives achievement.

Note: Efficiency and effectiveness are not antagonistic concepts. Even if the main purpose is one of them, the other one may also exist in the background.

In communication in such cases there are also specific terms used:

- *notification* is the act of transmitting authorized information about the imminence of disaster occurrence and/or armed conflicts to the central public administration or local, as appropriate, in order to avoid surprise and implement protective measures;
- *warning* is bringing to the attention of people the necessary information about the imminence of occurrence or disaster occurrence and is performed by local public administrative authorities;
- *early-warning* is transmitting messages/warning signals to the authorities about the likelihood of disaster occurrence or an air attack;
- *alarming* occurs by transmitting messages/warning signals to the population about the imminence of disaster occurrence or an air attack and is performed by local public administrative authorities by means of alarming.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Extremely important is also the convocation or meeting the structures for temporary activity in emergency situations. Therefore we need protocols to establish when these structures shall be convened.

There has to be at the county level, for example, specific severity levels for each possible hazard. Thus the county committees convened for emergency situations, which is under the leadership of the prefect would be made when at least one variable from a predetermined list would also achieve a certain pre-established level. For example, for a fire or a flood we can propose determinant variables in convening a county committee for emergency: area affected, number of people affected, affected objectives.

The level where the emergency committee should be convened is required to be established by those skilled in combating the respective phenomenon.

Simply put, it is necessary the existence of protocols not only for the risk level evaluation a priori, but also for the risk level evaluation priori and eventually the reevaluation and its adjustment during the intervention in order to see whether it is necessary to convene a structure with temporary activity which would manage the operational situation including the communication during and after intervention.

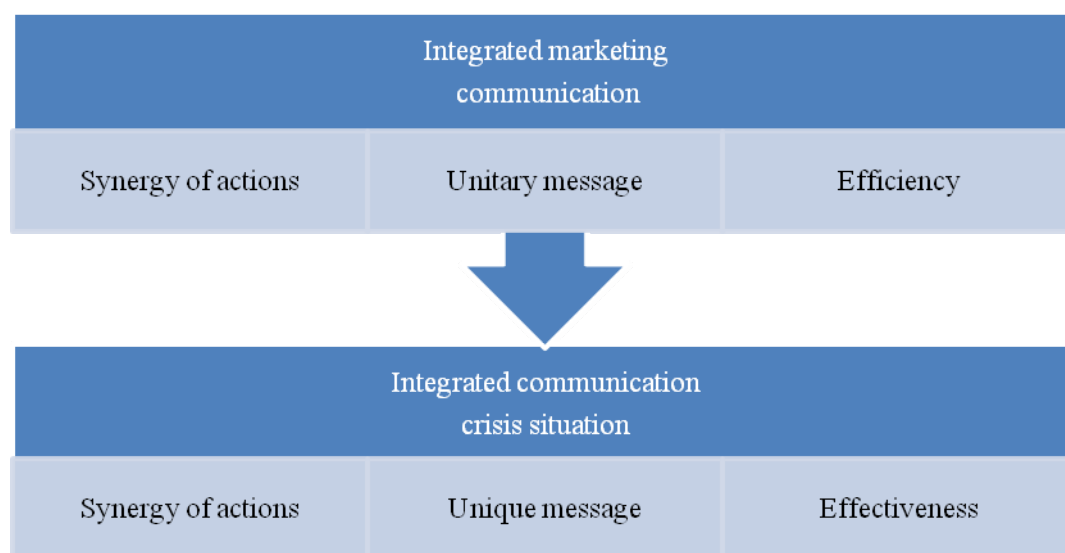


Figure 2. Essential elements of integrated marketing communication (continuous / permanent) and integrated communication in emergency management.

Figure 2 shows a comparison of the essential elements of integrated marketing communication (continuous/permanent) and of integrated communication in emergency situations management.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper has been financially supported within the project entitled „SOCERT. Knowledge society, dynamism through research”, contract number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132406. This project is co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. Investing in people!”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Armstrong, Gary, Kotler, Philip, Le Nagard, Emmanuelle, Lardinoit, Thierry, *Principles de marketing*, Pearson Education France, Paris, 2007;
2. Boistel, Philippe, *Gestion de la communication d'entreprise*, Lavoisier, Paris, 2007;
3. De Pelsmacker, Patrick, Geuens, Maggie, Van den Bergh, Joeri, *Foundations of Marketing Communications. A European Perspective*, PrenticeHall, PersonEducation, England, 2005;
4. Duncan, T.R., Everett, S.E., *Client Perceptions of Integrated Marketing Communication*, in *Journal of Marketing Research*, mai/juin, USA, 1993;
5. Duncan, Tom, *IMC: Using Advertising & Promotion to Build Brands*, Burr Ridge, IL, McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2002;
6. Duncan, Tom, Moriarty, Sandra, „A Communication-Based Model for Managing Relationships”, *Journal of Marketing* 62, avril 1998, p. 1-13;
7. Gruen, Thomas W., Relationship Marketing: The Route to Marketing Efficiency and Effectiveness, *Business Horizons*, November-December 1997, pp.32-38;
8. Helfer, Jean-Pierre, Orsoni, Jacques, *Marketing*, 9^e édition, Vuibert, Paris, 2005;
9. Keh, Hean Tat, Chu, Singfat, Xu, Jiye Efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of marketing in services, *European Journal of Operational Research*, Volume 170, Issue 1, 1 April 2006, pp. 265-276;
10. Lehu, Jean-Marc, *L'encyclopédie du marketing*, Editions d'Organisations, Paris, 2004;
11. Lei, Huang și alii, Analysis of Determining Factors of the Public's Risk Acceptance Level in China, *Human and Ecological Risk Assessment*, nr. 16, 2010, pp. 365-379;

12. Lendrevie, Jaques, de Baynast, Arnaud, Riou, Nicolas, *Publicitor*, 6^e édition, Dalloz, Paris, 2004;
13. McCarty, Simon și alii, Riskcommunication in emergencyreponseto a simulated extreme flood, *EnvironmentalHazards*, nr. 7, 2007, pp. 179-192;
14. Mouzas, Stefanos, Efficiency versus effectiveness in business networks, *Journal of Business Research*, nr.59, 2006, pp. 1124 -1132;
15. Pickton, David, Broderick, Amanda, *Integrated Marketing Communication*, 2end edition, Pearson Education, England, 2005;
16. Schultz, Don E., „Integrated Marketing Communications: MaybeDefinitionIs in the Point of View”, *Marketing News*, 18 janvier 1993;
17. Schultz, Don E., Kitchen, Philip J., *Communicating globally. An integrated marketing approach*, Palgrave, New York, 2000;
18. Schultz, Don E., Kitchen, Philip J., Integrated Marketing Communications in U.S. Advertising Agencies: An ExploratoryStudy, *Journal of Advertising Research*, september-october 1997, pp. 7-18;
19. Shimp, T., *Advertising, Promotion, and Supplemental Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communication*, 5th edition, Dryden Press, New York, 2000;
20. Soberman, David, Marketing agencies, media expertsandsalesagents: Helping competitive firmsimprovetheeffectiveness of marketing, *Intenational Journal of Research in Marketing*, nr.26, 2009, pp. 21-33;
21. Tsai, Shu-peí, Integrated marketing as management of holistic, *Business Horizons*, 2005, vol.48, pp. 431-441;
22. ***, Government Decision no. 1489/2004;
23. ***, Government Decision no. 1490/2004;
24. ***, Government Decision no. 1491/2004;
25. ***, Government Decision no. 1492/2004;
26. ***, Government Decision no. 548/2008;
27. ***, Law no. 481/2004;
28. ***, Law no. 307/2006;
29. ***, Government Ordinance no. 88/2001;
30. ***, Government Emergency Ordinance no. 21/2004.