Master of Arts Dissertation

The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communications/Situations, their involvement with the Hybrid Threats and the Terrorism in the contemporary operational environment.

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DEDICATION
This dissertation is dedicated to my wife for her support and patience.
ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the global geostrategic changes, the uprising terrorist threat and the development of the new media have formed a new info-security environment, where everybody, individual or organization, is vulnerable to a crisis. This has brought the crisis management, and especially the crisis communications domain, in the front line of the defense system of every entity. The scope of this thesis is to provide an answer to the key question of: what is the role, positive or negative, for the new media – social media in the crisis communications nowadays, by the use of a literature study, as a research method.

This study will take a general interpretation of the main subject of the crisis and crisis communications by scrutinizing the different approaches focusing on the progressive and damaging effect of social media on the crisis communications. Moreover, it will be examined in what way the social media can be used as an appropriate tool to enhance the existing situational awareness system for the exchange of info between communicators and audiences. In the same context, how the social media can contribute in the refutation of the circulated rumors and deception.

In the same time conventional or unconventional potential opponents are using the web through relevant networks, to deliver their own communication messages, generating or fuelling existing crises, damaging targeted areas of the society and spreading radical ideology. This is the new kind of modern warfare, in the contemporary operational environment, where every state is coming across the so called “hybrid threat”, including terrorism, organized crime, and more, which all use the social media for their own interest.

This study enhances the aspect that the contribution of the new media in the crisis communications had a positive, even in some cases in a small percentage, effect in the public.

Keywords: Crisis, Crisis Communications, New Media - Social Media, Hybrid Threats - Terrorism.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Action Communication Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>API</td>
<td>Application Programming Interface</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEOs</td>
<td>Chiefs Executives Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COT</td>
<td>Instituut voor Veiligheids- en Crisis management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMA</td>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahideen</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEDs</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Devices</td>
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<tr>
<td>INFO</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Crisis Centrum</td>
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<td>OSNs</td>
<td>Online Social Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTTs</td>
<td>Procedures - Tactics - Technics</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Rich Site Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Re-tweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARS</td>
<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCCT</td>
<td>Situational Crisis Communications Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRR</td>
<td>Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The Best Practices on Crisis Communications and Social Media: Pros and Cons

Taking under consideration the new environmental developments, the terrorism upbringing opportunities for crises, the media proliferation and development that increased exposure to crises, organizations have placed a higher premium on crisis management (Coombs, 1999, p.10). The effective crisis management implies successful crisis communications which absence can put in danger the participants and in risk the reputation of an organization. The organization’s communications plan have emotional impact how the public sees both the crisis and the organization itself (Stephens & Malone, 2009, p.231).

Following the principle that, no organization is protected to a crisis (Coombs, 1999, p.22) a crisis is generated from inside or outside factors and the moment it happens, lives and the reputation are at risk. The ability to communicate well with individuals who have a stake in the event may determine whether lives are saved and the organization emerges with its good reputation in tact (Reynolds, 2006, p.249).

Actually, we notice that while big entities with sufficient financial funds may have an opportunity to last a crisis without a plan, 80 percent of smaller ones without a complete crisis plan vanish within two years after a major disaster (Penrose, 2000, p.155). New media are under pressure to fulfill the need for information to their audiences following a 24/7 news cycle.

Crises in our days are having an important impact worldwide. Following the new changes of technology, people are able to watch as a major disaster reveals. Thus, the tactic that organizations follow in a crisis in the way they communicate throughout it is more efficient (Coombs, 1999, p.121). Describing how a crisis can be escalated in the age of new media we have the phenomenon that before the involved part knows about the incident, media are on the scene. In the lack of real information, an organization cannot respond in a significant way, a fact that does not restrict the media from reporting on the event (Weiner, 2006, p.5). Furthermore, stakeholders on the ground are now citizen journalists supported by social media via mobile technology.
The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the importance of the role of crisis communications today and how media extent the coverage of the crises, with the new media – social media – paying their contribution to this exposure. The main issue of the crisis and the communication process that takes place throughout it will be surveyed by the scope of different descriptions, meanings, approaches, models and theories concentrating on the pros and cons of social media impact on the crisis communications. Moreover we will have a detailed study in how social media can be a reliable source for the stakeholders in order to make sense of a crisis, and an appropriate tool for sharing basic, time-sensitive information quickly to citizens and crisis managers -communicators. In the same approach, social media can be helpful for organizations’ crisis communications for delaying the spread of misinformation. Also, there are relevant issues regarding the point that not all the users of the social media have the best objectives. In the contemporary operational environment we have the fact that a governmental entity is facing many hybrid threats, such as the various terrorist groups’ activity, which use the social media for creating a crisis, with a desired end state, the harm of the organization and those participants who bear the risk.
CHAPTER ONE
LITERATURE

General Approach - Hybrid Threats, Terrorism and their involvement with the Social Media/Online Social Networks (OSNs) in Crisis Communications

1.1 Theoretical framework
The comprehensive use of the social media in our everyday life has also effects regarding their practice in crisis communications. In the past crisis managers concentrated on the traditional media as the only mean of communication, today this role has also passed to the social media to such level that could not be unnoticed any longer. But what prospects the social media have in crisis communications? Why is it important to analyze the role of the social media as a tool in crisis communications? In this framework we will try to give answers to these questions according to the literature survey. The starting point will be to define what a crisis precisely is, paying attention to the crisis communications and to a number of models which are used for the analysis. At last there will be a connection with social media, which is essential in the context of this research, and their role in crisis communications.

1.2 Crisis and its occurred Types
Before all it is important to understand what a crisis exactly is. According to some subject matter experts the term of the crisis can be described as a major event with a probable harmful result disturbing to an organization- company, in addition to its employees, products, services or good reputation (Fearn-Banks, 1996, p.1). In this context, another definition is that a crisis is an emergency situation in the sense of an unexpected event or a series of events which has an extensive material and immaterial impact on the ones involved (Stamsnijder, 2002, p.3). There is also the useful definition that crisis is a threat which is conveyed by improbability, irregularity and serious actions against it are needed (Muller et al, 2007, p.8). The common characteristics of all these approaches is that crises are unexpected threat and there is urgency for a quick response (Ulmer et al, 2007, p.5-7). Moreover crises constitute a disorder of routine, a growing stream of incidents composed
with a feeling of an uncontrolled situation, high media attention, followed by search, analysis, assumption and, finally, the explosion of negative publicity (Ahmed, 2006, p.8).

A crisis is something that can be seen as ‘normal’ for organizations, since the great possibility of a crisis to occur. This is because of a hypothetical connection between the complexity, the production and the predictability of accidents. Many of the malfunctions that lead to crises are the result of unforeseeable technical interactions (Perrow, 1984, p.10). In this framework persons in charge should no longer evaluate if an organization will face a crisis, but rather when, where, what type, and how large the crisis is which it will eventually encounter (Millar & Heath, 2004, p.311). Due to the continuous technological developments, the growth of the population, worse crises are more widespread, following a pattern that we could not have imagined some years ago. Organizational crises have become a consistent part of our existence. We cannot prevent them and, as consumers, we cannot avoid those (Ulmer et al, 2007, p.14).

Crises can arise both in the private and the public sector. In public domain, crises may cause human casualties or disorder to the social-political system. Besides these, there are also other types which put in danger other vital values of our society. Thus in the public sector we have the patterns of crises which are armed conflicts, public unrests, natural catastrophes, terrorist attacks, huge accidents, epidemics etc. (Muller et al, 2007, p. 9-11). These crises enforce extensive harm which can have different forms (physical, economic and/or psychological) (Malone & Coombs, 2009, p.121).

To describe crisis, we must first define risk. In accordance to this account, risk is related to an incident that can have concerns of varying importance and the effects can be time to time predicted and controlled. Furthermore they can be harmful or beneficial and can be characterized as a risk expression (Heath, 2006, p.246). Another definition portraits crisis as an event that is an unfixed, main threat that can have a harmful influence on the organization, industry, or participants if it is ran incorrectly (Coombs, 1999, p.22).

Crisis is considered as a defining moment in an indistinguishable path from the risk. In this track, it can be viewed as a chance to exhibit the organization's commitment to an attentive conduct and to plot the means being taken to expel the issue (Martinelli and Briggs, 1998, p.44). Based on this, it is remarked that crises are exceptionally vague
occasions that require a choice that will bring a modification for better or for worse (Pearson and Clair, 1998, p.59).

A better understanding of crisis can be reached with a closer examination of different types. For example we can separate crises into consensus and dissensus type. The first is those where there is a concurrence on the importance of the circumstance, the standards - values that are fitting, and needs that ought to be taken after. The second one is the fighting situations where there are severely opposing views of the nature of the conditions, what the causes were, and what should be done as a solution (Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977, p.23). Moreover we can describe crisis by the possible results on the health status of the involved entity. Identifiable classification of crisis types include natural disasters, workplace, violence, rumors, malevolence, challenge, technical error accidents-product harm, human effort product harm- accidents and organizational errors. Further analysis on crisis types by looking at the focus of responsibility as being internal (poor operational procedures) or external (act of God or terrorism) can be done (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p.241). In our days, organizations find difficult to accept blame of a disaster of whether it comes.

Following the above, four different types of crises can be identified, as it is presented in Figure 01. A distinction for unintentional and intentional actions as well as the causes related to the organizations has been included (Coombs, 1995, p.456-457).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause/actor</th>
<th>Unintentional action</th>
<th>Intentional action</th>
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<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Faux Pas</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>Transgressions</td>
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**Figure 01** – Types of Crises (Coombs, 1995, p.455)

### 1.3 Defying Crisis Communications

In accordance with the definition and the over mentioned types of the crises, as this thesis will concentrate on the role of social media in crisis communications from the public point of view, we have the concept of crisis communications and the related theories under this topic. Thus the openness and communications are vital for every state and a maximum of transparency of government actions is a criterion for an adequate mutual
communication with its citizen’s. This transparency can be accomplished by a dynamic release of as many information as possible (Wallage, 2001, p.55). Particularly throughout a crisis, the authorities must offer crystal clear info about the whole situation. This information constitutes what Crisis Communications is about. This kind of communications consisted of the provided information from transmitters to receivers for the purpose of management of a crisis situation and thereby reducing the noticeable and intangible consequences of an event. Communications in this case is a very important function in order to provide to all the related parties with the correct and complete information, as soon as possible, even before or after a crisis arises (Stamsnijder, 2002, p.3). The main purpose of crisis communications in the public sector is to efficiently diminish, prevent any harm and help the people to go back to normality (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, p.46-47).

If an event is characterized as a crisis, then the mechanism of crisis communications starts to work. Crisis communications is defined as messages that are integrated and critical elements of a four-part overall crisis management process that includes prevention, preparation, performance and learning (Coombs, 1999, p.12). With the intention to put restrictions to a chaotic situation, crisis communications must achieve three main goals/ objectives (meaning, providing sufficient information and limitation of harm). The first is meaning (or interpretation) describing how the crisis is interpreted by the participants in the society (NCC, 2010b, p.1). In order to do this we must reveal the feelings of the community about the affected ones by taking care of them (Monté, 2011, p.2). The second one is providing sufficient information about the past and the present. Next to this it is important to inform civilians about the actions the authorities are taking, why certain decisions have been made and the dilemmas the authorities are facing (NCC, 2010b, p.1). It is critical to always keep individuals educated about what is going on and the procedure and to let them know when there are vulnerabilities or answers to investigations that can't be given yet. For this situation it is basic to tell open about which moves are being made to recover certain data (Monté, 2011, p.1). The third and latter objective is the limitation of harm by educating residents about conceivable debilitating circumstances. This additionally incorporates the impediment of conceivable harm of notoriety which may be created by gossipy tidbits by discrediting them (COT,
Examples are informing public concerning the need to take self-defense measures, leave the region, advice your neighbors and help each other (Monté, 2011, p.2).

In addition the three objectives, we can notice moreover three key principles for the crisis communications: openness, speed and honesty (Jong & Bos, 2009, p.8). The openness in the crisis communications talks on what the authorities must report to the public. Regularly a great grade of openness is a benefit of the actor which offers the information. Nevertheless even though the authorities can struggle for openness, particularly in the primary phase this might be challenging because there is a shortage of info at that stage (COT, 2010, p.4). The second principle, the speed in the crisis communications, is linked to the existence of information. Speed in providing quick and sufficient info by the authorities is essential in order to reduce the rise of a crisis and to establish a trustful relation with the citizens. When rumors arise we have as a result that the whole situation becomes real problematic. Moreover the involvement of the social media has forced real hard crises situations as there is a requirement for speedy information and rumors can immediately be disseminated with the social media (COT, 2010, p.4). The last principle is honesty and while one assumes the authorities offers only truthful info, a characteristic of a crisis is that the status of accessible data is uncertain. This fact leads to the result that it is vital for the authorities to define which info is correct and to let the public know on the way the crisis escalates (COT, 2010, p.4).

Today, more than ever, due to the characteristics of the crises, crisis communications shifted to an ongoing process not only related to the stage of post-crisis communications. Crisis communications is now linked with coordination of resources such as equipment, personnel, information in order to avoid or reduce harm and for coordinating resources during post-crisis dealing with support, recovery. Crisis communications also has the leading role in risk identification where the applicable communications of risk enables mitigating behaviors that can decrease the risk (Sellnow & Seeger, 2001, p.153).

Crisis communications give an additional approach to the basic definition of emergency situations (Sellnow & Seeger, 2001, p.167). In this meaning, the dedicated personnel can form how an emergency and the involved authorities are seen by people in
general. In short, the stages that must be followed to achieve this are: (1) info that tells participants how to respond to the crisis (2) info that assist individuals psychologically to handle the scale of the crisis, and (3) info that the public will use to frame an impression about the organization (Sturges, 1994, p.297).

1.4 Phases of Crisis Communications
Accomplishing the aim of reducing the harm produced by a crisis, this can be done in stages/ phases, though the number of them depends on the approach you will follow.

A first model, according Fink (1986, p.13) include four phases for the crisis cycle: (1) the prodromal phase, where confirmations or signs indicate that an emergency starts to show up, (2) crisis breakout stage, which demonstrates a producing occasion with related harm, (3) chronic stage, where impacts of an emergency stay as endeavors to tidy up the emergency advance and (4) resolution stage, where there is some reasonable flag that the emergency is over. Additionally, the dedicated staff must be capable to take the initiative and perform appropriately each phase since the indications, that consists every stage, can be identified.

Another model explains the relation between crisis stages and communications actions (Sturges, 1994, p.316). Crisis managers must adjust their communications according the needs of the crisis phase. A fifth stage to this model can be added that provides experience gained from the crisis that will be potentially used in future ones or refine the reaction, which may really help an entity to stay away from it or if nothing else minimize its effect (Mitroff, 1994, p.105).

There is also the three-stage model, in which we have the pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis periods (Coombs, 2007a, p.135). The pre-crisis one concentrates on crisis preparation such as prodromal signal detection and research, which demands actions to be taken. It is divided in three sub-stages: detection, prevention and preparation. The crisis stage highlights moves made to manage the emergency or trigger occasion, for example, harm control and recuperation. The post-crisis period follows in which crisis managers can exploit the recent gained lessons learned. But since not all crises can be foreseen, it is essential for stakeholders to prepare for emergencies in addition. The second phase, the crisis, starts with an initiate event that illustrates the start and ends
when the disaster is thought to be fixed. Two sub-stages can be notable in this phase: recognition and containment. As the first one is about recognizing there is a crisis and reacting to the event as an emergency, the second one gives importance on solving the crisis and recuperating from it. The third phase, the post-crisis is characterized by evaluating and learning from the crisis and being ready for a following potential one (Coombs, 2007, p.18-19).

This and other crisis communications model can be updated and enhanced by integrating the use of social media. By this we increase the response and the protection of our organization from crises.

In the pre-crisis phase new technologies can be used as monitoring and management tools for any respective issues. Challenged with these divided audiences (on the web), simply early identification of issues and a speedy, appropriate reaction are urgent to prevent them from becoming situations influenced by rumors that finally will become a total crisis. An early analysis of web-based content might provide the early warning indicators that are needed to develop appropriate crisis plans and responses which can enable us to avoid bad situations (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.144). The subject matter experts also suggested recording all possible web domains containing ones with harmful effects, creating an online media monitoring service in order to maintain control, sustaining a hidden - secondary website that can be used externally in case of a crisis and signing up standard operation procedures especially for dealing with online propaganda. Moreover, according to their approach, it is crucial to have a web expert on the structure of a crisis team and identify the online actors that have an impact and can support you in periods of crises. It is similarly essential to create links with stakeholders online. One study found that those who read blogs perceive a lower level of crisis for an organization than those that don't. Using a blog to respond a crisis could be an effective crisis management tool Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007, p.240).

In the crisis phase, using the internet as an information site for all parties for instance a blog, creating interactive tools such as mini-surveys to understand stakeholders' perceptions, using chat tools for temporary dialogues and having Chiefs Executives Officers (CEOs) personally address are some of the measures that should be taken (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.145).
During the lifecycle of this crisis model, Social media can also be used as a tool to collect and communicate information – intelligence – knowledge leading to the understanding of the crisis. In new crisis communications models that deal with new technology and social media, communicators must be aware for fragmented audiences, otherwise their messages may not reach the target-intended audiences. According to this necessity, organizations - companies need to evaluate whether various audiences possibly use the internet for gathering information during a crisis and make sure they respond accordingly (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.146). Due to the fact that not all people are equally familiar with social media, the traditional channels of communications could be more sufficient in some cases. This can be firm by using surveys in the pre-crisis phase. In the post-crisis phase, it is suggested evaluating online-related measures, defining online strategies - tactics to rebuild your company's reputation, continue tracking - monitoring blogs (or other online media) and sending an online thank-you note to those who helped during the crisis, as the most preferable procedures that must be followed (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.147).

1.5 The Crisis Communications’ Synthesis model
The Crisis Communications is not something new when a crisis arises. A well-organized plan has to exist before the crisis. To demonstrate this, a synthesis model for crisis communications has to be established, which concentrates on the different stages (Horsley and Barker, 2002, p.406-428). The model particularly scrutinizes the public sector and highlights the meaning of collaboration and connects procedures and communications happenings that enable preparation and management of potential crises. Organizations should work together during a crisis. By this way they will be ready to synchronize the crisis communications with other actors when this is required. This synchronization among various governmental organizations is crucial for avoiding more damage and to assist the public get the same and correct message from all the authorities (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.426-428). This model is suitable for this study with the intention of defining the importance of the use of the social media in crisis communications and to why we must develop plans prior to a crisis which included them in their communications context.
The suggested model involves six interconnected steps (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.416-426):

1. Ongoing public relations efforts. Crisis communications should be developed in advance of a crisis. Thus the image building and persistent consideration for open and solid media relations are imperative. Beside this guarantee correspondence frameworks are set up when they are required within a crisis. A decent comprehension with the media is subsequently critical, it bails organizations throughout a crisis to spread their messages, and a decent connection with clients and partners expands the acceptability of those messages.

2. Identification of and preparation for potential crisis. Efficient subject matter experts dedicated to crisis communications recognize possible difficulties and get ready for them. Despite the fact that emergencies can't be anticipated, good plans can be adjusted to the circumstance via prepared faculty.

3. Internal training and rehearsal. Crisis communications plans assure that all the involved staff is familiar with their duties and are able to deal with their responsibilities.

4. The crisis event. When a crisis begins, a rapid and corresponding communications prevents rumors and assumptions. The media’s use to distribute information is a strategic action in sustaining good public relations. Settling the emergency in a moral and altruistic way is pivotal.

5. Evaluation and revision of public relations efforts. Afterwards a crisis has finished public relations achievements must be evaluated and studied. The authorities need to show that they have recouped from the emergency, have rolled out improvements to keep it from happening once more, and are set up to manage the following emergency that tags along. They can as well be open to the media by giving follow-up stories and advance reports so as to handle a damaging condition decidedly.

6. Interagency and political coordination analysis. Interagency coordination would permit authorities to utilize accessible assets from other governmental entities and even related stakeholders. Organizations may need to consolidate their emergency correspondence endeavors with different offices that have similar sorts of potential crises.

By utilizing the diverse stages this model depicts whether there is strategy gone for the use of online networking during emergency incidents and whether the web-based
social networking definitely are used as a part of the emergency correspondence of such occasions. The model will likewise help by recovering to what degree there approach is gone for the collaboration between various authorities and what is the part of the social media in this crisis communications cooperation (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.416-426).

1.6 Situational crisis communications theory (SCCT)

The over-mentioned synthesis model of crisis communications for the public sector is one of which the theoretical framework throughout the years has mostly been used. As indicated by numerous analysts there are still a few downsides in these models.

Thus the ‘situational crisis communications theory’ (SCCT) was established. SCCT has three core components: the crisis situation, crisis response strategies and a system for matching both these two elements (Coombs, 2006, p.241-260).

The first element gives emphasis on the crisis groups which can define in three categories: the victim, the accidental and the preventable cluster. In the victim type, the organization is also casualty of the crisis (e.g. a natural disaster, rumors, etc.). In the accidental type, the association does not have crisis objectives in its actions (e.g. challenges, mega-damage or technical breakdown accidents). The preventable one is when an organization deliberately puts general public at risk and breaks up regulations with its actions (Cooley & Cooley, 2011, p.205).

The second element, the crisis response strategies are those reactions that an organization practices to confront a crisis. They are built on verbal aspects and actions the organization uses in relation to the crisis which is going on (Coombs, 2007b, p.138). These actions - response strategies have a significant impact on the organization’s reputation and are being used to repair it, aiming to reduce adverse effects and prevent negative behavioral intentions (Cooley & Cooley, 2011, p.204). Crisis response strategies were considered as apologia but since it offered a somewhat restricted ability, the crisis response strategies were extended by looking at the idea of accounts. These accounts depend on the announcements individuals use to clarify their behavior when that is raised doubt about. The same as with apologia, the crisis response strategies based on accounts are likewise being utilized to shield one’s reputation from a danger (Coombs, 2007b, p.138-139).
The third core element is a system that matches the crisis situation and the crisis response strategies. This system is based on the perception that an organization’s response strategy can be matched to the nature of the crisis situation according to the supposed recognition of responsibility for a crisis by an organization (Cooley & Cooley, 2011, p.205).

Several effects can be observed from the use of the different crisis response strategies. For each of the strategy postures it is defined what the best strategy for organizations is to follow when they are experiencing a certain crisis (Coombs, 2007b, p.170-172).

Already, there is established a way to categorize the different kind of crisis response strategies by making use of a defensive – accommodative field. This approach is based on the aspects of apologia and accounts, and is the most common strategies for organizations to use in order to repair reputational damage from a crisis. Defensive strategies are related with the idea to protect the organization’s image and are more common when crisis responsibility is weak. Organizations claim there is no problem or try to deny responsibility for the crisis. Accommodative strategies are those that talk about fears of victims and interested parties such as apology or sympathy, where the organization accepts responsibility and takes corrective action. Therefore this kind of strategies is more common in situations where crisis responsibility is strong. The numerous crisis response strategies are categorized as follows: attack the opponent-accuser, rejection-denial, defense-excuse, explanation-justification, ingratiation, corrective action, apology and mortification (Coombs, 1998, p.179-180). The above revealed crisis response strategies are organized by defining if the intent of the strategy is to change perceptions of the crisis or of the organization in crisis. The strategies have been grouped into four clusters of strategies: denial, diminishment, rebuilding and bolstering (Coombs, 2007b, p.140).

The strategies which are based on denial concentrate on removing any connection between the organization and the crisis taking in account the fact that as long as an entity is not involved in the crisis, it will not suffer any damage from this. A common strategy in case of a crisis based on rumors, is for managers to argue that there is no ‘real’ crisis and they deny the truth to the rumor or deny the charges of immoral conduct. However,
these strategies can only be effective when the stakeholders and the media accept this frame of denial and if this happens there is no reputational damage for the organization (Coombs, 2007b, p.171).

The second cluster, the diminish crisis response strategies, are built on the idea that a crisis is not as bad as people think and minimization of the organization’s responsibility for the crisis is a key. Crisis managers in this case need to decline the connection of the organization to the crisis and/or try to make individuals view the crisis as less negatively. In this situation the stakeholders will be given competing frames and they will select the one provided by the source they find most credible. Diminish strategies are the most effective when they reinforce existing crisis frames. Next to this, excuse strategies can best be used to restate a crisis situation when this can be characterized as an accidental one. This because reinforcing a frame in an accidental crisis is much easier and less expensive to manage as if one speaks of an intentional crisis (Coombs, 2007b, p.171-172).

Rebuilding strategies are center on changing perceptions of the organization in a crisis and with this improving its reputation. This is on the one hand being done by offering material and/or symbolic forms of aid to victims. On the other hand manager present new and positive information about the organization to stakeholders or remind them of past profits that were provided. The key in this is to counterbalance the negatives from the crisis with current or good past things. These rebuilding strategies, like compensation and apology, are most effective when an organization is harmed from an intentional or accidental crisis which is accompanied by a crisis history or unfavorable prior relationship reputation (Coombs, 2007b, p.172).

The last cluster of strategies consists of bolstering strategies like reminding, ingratiation and victimize. These can offer a minimal opportunity to develop reputational assets. The main idea of these strategies is to remind stakeholders of past good works in order to create goodwill to help protect the organizational reputation. These past good works are being used to counter balance the current negatives from the crisis. This strategy however demands that there are good past works on which the organization can rely. Next to the tactic of reminding, organizations can also create goodwill by praising stakeholders for their efforts during the crisis as a means of improving relationships with
them. Another tactic for organizations is to explain that it is also a victim of the crisis. By doing this the organization can suggest sympathy. All bolstering strategies are most effective when they are being used as supplements to the three primary strategies (denial, diminish and rebuild) and adjusting information (Coombs, 2007b, p.172).

Moreover an extra attention must be given to crises with an intentional origin. These crises will create the most negative affect. Strategies in order to reduce or eliminate this negative effect can be used. For example, when making use of denial strategies it will be helpful if people accept the statement that there is no crisis. The adjusting information and rebuilding strategies are however the most effective ways to reduce negative affect. But also showing concern for victims is an example of adjusting information and expressions of concern can help to reduce negative affect. Adjusting information by expressing concern for victims and strengthening this sympathy through compensation and/or a full apology assist to mitigate feelings of anger (Coombs, 2007b, p.173).

### 1.7 Social media in general and New Technology

At this point we must clarify what the social media are and which types of them can be notable. Social media is a generic description for all internet applications which provide to the user the capability to share information in an approachable and often enjoyable way. This consists not only of text form data, but also audio collections and pictures which can be shared through these sites (Pondres, 2011, p.11). Moreover we can characterize social media as platforms on the internet where users can have interaction between them with open access adding their inputs. The most significant features of social media next to that logic are: open, social and the user is vital. Moreover social media context is user generated and they are actual time, subjective as individuals can share their own belief or info with others (NCC, 2010a, p. 2-3).

There are many types of social media and for our study we will use the following discrimination (NCC, 2010a, p.3-4):

- Social networks: is the most widespread kind which provides the capability to connect with other people by creating a personal profile and communicate with each
other online by messages, videos or forum discussions building a personal network. The most known social networks are Facebook, and Google Buzz (NCC, 2010a, p.3).

- (Micro) blogging and forums/fora: through weblog the user can share a published online report with other individuals. The persons who read this context are able to react on public. Forum was the first type of social media in which the users could have online discussions about a particular topic. The difference between a weblog and a forum is that the weight of a weblog is on individual’s personal opinion however on a forum is on the opinion of a group. Twitter for instance is micro-blogging and its message is called a ‘Tweet’, a short message of a maximum of 140 characters. It is an easy way to share info by posting a tweet and you can inform other people about everything in real time. With Twitter users are able to follow each other (NCC, 2010a, p.3).

- Wiki/ User generated content: an online platform which gives the possibility for users to cooperate on an individual generated exchange in terms of knowledge gaining. With this the users are able to modify the context posted by another person. This modification typically ends when there is common agreement about the published info on the specific wiki (NCC, 2010a, p.3-4).

- Media/News-sharing: The users can share text, videos/ music on the web. Examples of these platforms are Flickr, Picasa, and YouTube (NCC, 2010a, p.4).

As a typical example of the role of the Social Media in our days we have the incident that took place on 15 January 2009, when a US Airways flight from New York to North Carolina was forced to make an emergency landing into the Hudson River. An ordinary citizen on a ferry, Janis Krums, took a picture of the crashed plane with his iPhone and uploaded it to the social media (Twit Pic - a mobile photo sharing site that posts directly to Twitter). Within the next three hours, the photo was viewed online 40,000 times and was seen on several national news networks (Terdiman, 2009, p.22). With this example we can see the power that the social media have – strengthened by mobile technology – to collect and spread ‘on the spot’ information. Social media allows ordinary people to share everything with everyone. This impact can help or deter organizations’ crisis communications during crises.

We will explore how social media can help by equipping participants with a resource tool in the direction of the crisis management and by creating a way to share
essential, time-sensitive information quickly to citizens and crisis managers and communicators.

In the same time, social media can threat organizations’ crisis communications by spreading misinformation at rapid speed. Also, nowadays the use of social media by the terrorists is a fact that cannot be denied by anyone and it has as a primary goal the start of a crisis in order to harm an organization or the nations.

1.8 Social Media and Crisis Communications

Nowadays more and more people have access to the use of the internet which leads to the fact that the social media have become more and more embedded in everyday life (NCC, 2010a, p.4). The social media offers to everyone the capability, to share with the rest of the world information by posting photos, videos, messages on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube in only a few minutes after an event happened (Monté, 2011, p.1). Due to these new media technologies users converted to online sources of information and they are not any longer just only consumers but they also take active part to the communication process. This change is known as the user-generated media since the news related to a crisis can be shared and re-shared to millions without the interference of journalists. Moreover today the rumor news have progressively grow to be more powerful and in many times supposed to be as even more reliable than ordinary media (Veil et al., 2011, p.110-111). The functioning of these new, user-generated media has another consequence, as the journalists are not anymore the only ‘watch keepers’ to the news/information. Furthermore journalists and the traditional media more and more adapt the social media, particularly Twitter, for their news - information collection process, that steered to the evolution of the citizen journalism, in which in many cases videos and other citizens’ products are being integrated in the traditional media news (NCC, 2010a, p.11).

The power of the social media has enlarged offering the opportunity to individuals to have ‘mass-self communications’ and this not only because the ordinary people have get the role of a journalist. This term means ‘self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many-to-many communications’ (Castells, 2007, p.248). This fact provides with the ability for sufficiently share of information
between comparative small groups creating a base for common action. On a larger frame transnational networks even create the possibility for mass movements. The emergence of mass-self communications offers an amazing mean for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and challenge the state institutions in their own terms and around their own plans (Castells, 2007, p.249). Recent examples of the increasing power of social media with regard to the mobilization of entities are: the Facebook party in Haren (the Netherlands) that got out of hand and even resulted in riots (BBC, 2012) and the revolutionary developments in the Middle-East in the spring of 2011 (Safranek, 2012). This recommends that from one side the authorities should pay attention to the social media in order to have situational awareness and on the other hand also they must use of the social media in their own communications. Especially on the local and regional European level there are a lot of cases where the social media are being used to collect information from individuals or to ask for their opinion about specific issues. The social media in this manner also offer opportunities for the authorities, namely that they can interact with citizens and get to know their opinion about certain things (NCC, 2010a, p.7).

Today the new media and the development of social media play an essential and central role in crisis communications (Schultz et al., 2011, p.20). The social media offers crisis communications a different perception, which was in the past established on the impression that authorities deliver the information to the residents. In our day, this point has changed in the way that the social media enable authorities and populations to interact, offering each other with valuable info in a speedy way in which rumors can be confirmed in an initial stage. Thus, the authorities have a tool to affect the news coverage of a crisis (NCC, 2010, p.9). In addition that the social media gave to the authorities the capability to interact with the individuals, they also help in accomplishing the three goals of crisis communications (providing information, limitation of harm and meaning). The social media may serve to provide information or where more information can be found, this ensures that clear information is provided. They are also helpful in decreasing the damage by warning, providing with an action view or supporting rescue operations through exchange of information. Next to this, social media can indicate a situation by for example eyewitness testimonies or video, image and sound (NCC, 2010a, p.8).
The social media, with Twitter playing the main role, can be used in an effective and efficient way to engage the target audiences, due to their flexibility but especially real time and updated characteristics (NCC, 2010a, p.11). In addition the social media can offer the opportunity for open, authentic and mainly speedy dissemination of messages. Their open and collective character makes them very accessible having a large range. Moreover, the authorities can use the social media in crisis communications by for instance releasing a more informative message to the citizens through Twitter or another social media (NCC, 2010a, p.9). But the advantage of the use of social media in crisis communications providing trustworthy information to many people in an easy and rapid way as well has an obstacle.

This first weakness is that because of the many-to-many communication model of the social media, messages of the authorities might face difficulty in reaching their target for the reason that enormous quantity of other messages are circulating on the social media (Freberg, 2012, p.416). Besides this drawback the social media can also have effects to the organizations because of their speed feature. While the social media create the opportunity for quick distribution of the information, they also lead to the need for rapid dissemination. While authorities in the past were able to give a press release in a few hours after an incident, now they need to provide situational awareness to everybody as soon as possible. Taking all these under consideration we have come to the assumption that the social media had an influence on crisis situations.

The most suitable type of social media used in crisis communications is microblogging and the especially Twitter. This kind of social media is not only beneficial as an informative tool for the authorities in order to deliver info to the citizens, but also vice versa. Similar to this, the social media/news-sharing is identical valuable as through this kind we can share videos, music etc. In consequence videos that individuals uploaded for instance on YouTube about a crisis event can be a source for collecting more relative information by the authorities. The last type of social media which is useful in crisis communications is the social networks, like Facebook, that can assist the state entities to inform citizens about the crisis or by unofficial authorizing each other to do so.

The practice of the social media in crisis communications has been scrutinized a lot by many surveys and theories regarding the management of the organizational
response during a crisis. A recommendation that comes as an outcome from the literature survey is that crisis managers should focus on monitoring the rumors which is moreover a pro of social media as they have the ability to uncover whispers in an initial phase (Jin & Fisher Liu, 2010, p.449). Furthermore, applicable segmentation of the audience is vital in order to approach all individuals that are possibly impacted by a crisis (Heath, Lee & Ni, 2009). Taking account this, we have the fact that age is one of the critical factor that segments the audience with messages spread via the social media (Freberg, 2012, p.417). Moreover for the crisis managers, it is crucial to define their target audience in order to use the appropriate type of social media for their crisis communications.

Also the social media can be used usefully in crisis communications offering information about where experts, that are essential for management of a specific crisis, can be found. Moreover the use of social media during crisis enhances authorities with the ability to get in contact with the public’s need-to-know questions, in order to adapt their crisis communications strategy to the specific ones (questions and needs). Taking into consideration in this way the opinion of the citizens, sooner or later, we achieved to gain the favor of the public opinion regarding our deployed crisis communications. By making use of the knowledge of the public and involving them in crisis communications authorities show that they are able to possess resilience, which includes the ability to react, self-organize, learn and modify behavior (WRR, 2012, p.229). The importance of the use of the social media is ever more identified in our time, with their main characteristics of participation and interactivity, their role can be significant in effective crisis communications.

1.9 Effects of the Social Media’s use in Crisis Communications

A consequence by the use of social media in crisis communications is that the possibility of misinformation is very high. For all the participants in a crisis this is a complex condition since it is difficult to define what is true and what is misinformation. Thus it is essential for all the participants to attempt as possible to deliver unchanging information. This refers to the meaning of collaboration of public organizations in crisis communications (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.427) and requires that the information which is spread on the social media should be in agreement with all the official participants,
moreover with the data disseminated in other media. The social media can be practiced as well with the traditional media but it is crucial that the information which is being distributed through the various media types must be uniform so as to decrease confusion or uncertainty. If misinformation is circulating on the social media, this should be denied by the responsible state entity because citizens might be confused and their trust might drop.

It is also very important to determine which social media are going to be used and whether they are being used without help or matching to other media devices. The crisis managers are responsible to decide which tool is going to be used for the specific target group. Although crisis communications principle is to engage as much participants as possible in a short time, it is important to adapt the operational mediums to the specific target audience. For example when we use just as an instrument the online networking in emergency interchanges, elderly individuals will likely not communicate and a large portion of them won't get the message. The choice which medium we are going to use for our crisis communications depends mostly on how the public will judge them putting in that way our reputational effects at risk.

Regarding reputational effects we can considered them as a product of the chosen crisis response strategy. Following this we can suppose that a denial or diminish tactic has for the organization’s responsibility in the crisis trivial influence. This can be done by directly countering rumors using the citizens’ interaction. If this doesn’t happen these rumors can sooner or later harm organizations reputation. As well, for a rebuilding strategy, the social media can be used in order to express sympathy to the victims and apologize for the things that took place. Finally for the bolstering strategies, the involvement of the social media can be so as to inform people. Since these strategies are used in combination with the others, the role of the social media and the effects coming from this use are less clear.

When we use the social media in our crisis communications, we must be aware that they are effective, when they are used in the right order and combined with the traditional media. Following this, we can achieve increasing the possibility of the success of the out coming messages, according to the basic principle that the social media should be used in a proper manner in order to accomplish the objectives of the different
strategies. If the social media are being used in a wrong manner, the result might be negative outcomes and reputational harm (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.426-428).

The public’s involvement in crisis communications is recognized as vital and had impact through the public policymakers to the politics. In the traditional theory of political communication, political influence through the media was largely determined by the interaction between the political elites and professional journalists, in this way the traditional media had an influence on the shaping of the public opinion since they were the gatekeepers of the information flows (Castells, 2007, p.254). The new communication technologies have also increased the control of consumers and social networking has enhanced this transformation (Katz, 1996 p.22-33). Where the traditional political influence was previously strong, nowadays non-typical political actors are able to influence political agenda setting. This happened as a result of the expansion of media-outlets and the fact that the news cycle is no longer of limited time but became a 24/7 news cycle. This means that news should not only be gathered as fast as possible but also be broadcasted as fast as possible which has led to the elimination of the editor’s role in the news production process for effective reasons (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004 p. 1208-1230). Thus the public are nowadays able to enter and interpret the political world because of this change in the media environment (Castells, 2007, p.254).

In recent times the social media are thought to be a cause of the mobilization of citizens and even political regime changes. Furthermore, the social media have a fixed role in public policy as they interact with the people. Although there are currently more involved residents than expected, these persons do not feel comfort with this participation because of the ways the government has shaped this. In order to increase civilian involvement government and citizens should have more trust in each other (WRR, 2012, p.11). As a response to this more space for social creativity is needed due to the fact that people want and are able to take more control. This will have better results and a more compact government increasing citizens’ satisfaction with their government and with this public legitimacy. The core motive to stimulate social initiative is that current governmental policies are mainly expressed based on the system world of the government, instead of from the perspective and environment of societies (Spies, 2012, p.2-3).
1.10 Social Media modify the Crisis Communications scene - Participant ‘Sense making’
Social media give the opportunity to everyone to be a journalist that can watch the world around him and shares his findings online. This phenomenon has changed the landscape in which crisis communicators operate, with serious consequences for crisis communications. There are no longer restrictions of space and time. The outburst of social media – from social networking websites, to blogs, to text messages – has transformed the approach that anyone implicated in the business of risk communications must take in concern in the preparation of the communication plan. Specifically in times of disaster, social media can and should be engaged to transfer critically essential information instantly to as many people as possible (American Public Health Association, p.10). Social media can be described in several ways one of them is the numerous e-tools, knowhow-technologies and applications, which enable collaborative communication and content exchange, allowing the user to move easily between the roles of audience and content producers (American Public Health Association, p.10). Today's toolbox contains blogs, social networking sites, RSS feeds, texting etc.

The meeting of old and new technology is assisting persons to communicate for the period of crises also in old and news ways. We must highlight that more individuals are playing a part in disaster response because this technological development has removed any time and geographic obstacles. In the same token this is a bulky edge for disaster activity as a matter of social approach like physical on-site behavior (Hughes, Palen, Sutton, Liu & Vieweg, 2008, p.8).

Moreover there is a similarity in the typical on-line common social behaviors during periods of crises and the ground ones. Those behaviors are helping, concerning, returning, supporting and exploiting. The parallel in behaviors is interpreted as crisis communications strategies do not need to be significantly renovated to fit in social media but only in the way of re-framing messages and aiming audiences using the new media.

Through crises periods, people seek to make sense of what is happening around them, this is called ‘sense making’ - they seek to find order in the chaos (Weick, 1998, p.305). Social media, due to the fact that users can create multimedia products (pictures-
videos) of the event, establish a different, very effective, way in how they doing this. Sharing these products in such situations can provide necessary information, which is worthy and beneficial for the world of the news. This phenomenon has been established since the invention of cameras. Today, due to the development of the new digital cameras and the entrance of photo-sharing websites, the ground for sharing such kind of information has been extended (Hughes, Palen, Sutton, Liu & Vieweg, 2008, p.10).

The technological union of camera, phone and user-generated websites support new forms of peer-to-peer communication and masses organization. As a model, groups nominated as ‘image aggregators’ have been set up on Flickr in crises as a way for participants to deal with them (e.g. hurricanes cases Katrina and Rita, the Virginia Tech shootings) (Hughes, Palen, Sutton, Liu & Vieweg, 2008, p.11).

1.11 Assisting in Crisis Communications
The ability of “sense making” that is provided by this new technology can be extremely helpful for the crisis responders by delivering useful information about the crisis to communicators and other participants. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has extended the methods societies can contribute and implicate in crisis situations. In contemporary tragedies, ICT has served as a tool of enhance communication for the survivors, interested observers, and partners wanting to help the victims of the crisis both inside and outside the area of the catastrophe (Palen & Liu, 2007, p.10). The people that have been affected by the crisis are those with concrete knowledge of the event. These individuals may attend the role of information managers linking entities and facts with the assistance of the media. They can assist, deliver, and hand out info along with design of diagrams in order to shape related information. They don’t aim to support crisis communicators, but their contribution in informative way basically does.

For instance, in 2007 through the Southern California wildfires, citizens used Google Mashups to produce maps with the areas that were evacuated. These products were generated by volunteers in the area, together with other sources that used Twitter in order to provide the public with the updated information (Sutton, Palen, & Shklovski, 2008, p.10). In another case, during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in China, people shared information about the virus using text messaging. This
path was selected to avoid the government's efforts to exclude the public information. Inhabitants using their own technique – mobile technology, they covered the gap of information about the virus and in the end they had more than the World Health Organization (Gordon, 2007, p.307). Similarly, there was the example in 2008 at Mumbai, India where a hostage situation in which terrorists killed 173 people and injured more than 300, took place. Detainees and citizens were transmitting images, text using their mobile phones, Twitter, Flickr (Gordon, 2007, p.310).

Old-style news entities are using social media in the same way. Fox 5 News in Washington, D.C. got immediate response concerning storm damage through social media and put it in the air on their news update. This material was gathered faster than the response from the official sources in disaster zones (American Public Health Association, p.22).

Also, participants can exploit user-generated mobile tools in order to enhance response and aid. For example, at the Virginia Tech Massacre, when they tried to define who the victims were individuals, they began releasing information on websites (Facebook pages). This was a totally self-governing effort, very precise and treated with extreme efficiency by participants due to respect for the victims’ families. This behavior bust the typical ways that public activity is described in times of crises, which is one in need of policing and control (Hughes, Palen, Sutton, Liu & Vieweg, 2008, p.10).

1.12 Social Media as the Source of Deception and a Crisis cause

Despite the social media benefits, which are mainly the great approachability and the speedy characteristics especially through mobile technology, there also some drawbacks. Firstly, it can assist or strengthen crises by distribution negative information or misinformation at an unbelievable speed. Sometimes, during the crises, the internet purely works as a manager that speeds up the traditional news cycle and passes all geographic frontiers (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.9). Under these conditions, the social media would act as the old-style conventional media simply depicting reality, clearly in a much more rapid and viral approach. This creates a trouble for crisis communicators to control their stories by leading the social media.
Additionally, in crises social media produce a lot of noise in which participants need to screen in order to locate related - important information. In accordance to this fact we can realize the necessity of creating connections online in the pre-crisis phase, providing in this way assistance to all the involved entities in times of crises by locating the sources of relevant information. A study proves that valuable information is regularly re-tweeted through Twitter. This movement supports the indication that re-tweets have a recommendation role, as users dynamically select to spread this type of information (Starbird & Palen, 2010, p.9). This remark could be beneficial to crisis communicators attempting to cut through the noise in order to collect reliable information.

Social media can as well cause crises in the form of rumors, hacking, shadow or copy-cat websites, web security breaks, and cyber-terrorism (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p.10). For example, in 1994 INTEL had to change Pentium chips when a math professor revealed a fault and announced it via Internet. Likewise, Company Kryptonite that produced locks lost several millions when a rumor was spread by a blogger that even a ballpoint pen can open its products. Moreover, big companies such as Mercedes-Benz, United Airlines and McDonald’s have been faced same problems by fake copy-cat websites (Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, p. 10). It is suggested that organizations must monitor all supposed negative and positive domain names related with them.

1.13 The way Social Media practice Crisis Communications - Their meaning
Nowadays many organizations fit in their crisis communications plans, social media as a vital process with a respective SOP. Afterwards the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, social media took the role of the main mean of communications nearly replaced the old-style communications systems. The social media reaction was so remarkable that the Host Nation created a Social Media Monitoring Service in order to provide information faster to participants in recovery operations by monitoring internet sites. In one case, the Homeland Security National Operations Center received a tweet about individuals trapped under a Building in Port-au-Prince with coordinates were given. The message was forwarded to the State Department, which sent a rescue team to the site. The American Red Cross likewise used social media during that disaster (Frank, 2010, p.13).
In the same way, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) made use of social media to inform the public with its ‘Hurricane Tip of the Week’ posted online and sent via email-text messages. Moreover, during the salmonella epidemic in 2009, the same organization used social media by creating an application which recorded individuals that have any involvement into a database. The social media communicators considered it as the most effective part of their crisis communications plan, as it turned out to be a significant tool in raising public awareness and allowing the entities to cooperate directly with the situation. Also, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has used Twitter to hold news conferences and bloggers’ round tables (American Public Health Association, p.10).

Despite the fact that many organizations include the social media in their crisis communications plan identifying the meaning they have in our days, it is critical they escape from the ‘shiny new toy’ syndrome that the new media may be used in many ways which are not operational. The Red Cross for example in order to manage with this issue has developed a crisis online-communication idea by using social media to enable users-supporters to get or give help during a disaster. Red Cross's platforms include a blog, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and a disaster online newsroom. Photo posts for instance during Hurricanes had helped the Red Cross distribute the relevant information to the need-to-know participants (American Public Health Association, p.10).

We must take as a start point the fact that a crisis can be distinct as a risk, which is conveyed by doubt and irregularity and needs serious movements (Muller et al., 2007, p.8). The information that a state system broadcasts at a crisis period is named crisis communications with objectives the interpretation of the crisis, the appropriate orientation of the participants and the control of crisis damage. In addition of this, crisis communications principles are the sincerity, morality and speediness (openness, honesty and speed). Quite a lot of theories were established related crisis communications necessary for the whole approach of the issue. Moreover, the theoretical framework considers the growing acceptance of the social media that steered modifications and new prospects for the crisis communications. But also they brought numerous effects on it. Furthermore consideration has been given to the characteristic of transparency. The
knowledge gained by this context can define the role of the social media in crisis communications.

Moreover, getting and hand out info rapidly is at the core of crisis communications. Social media can do this beyond time and space. The new mobile tools permit crisis communicators to use multimedia in order to cover a crisis online and to collect or disseminate related information. Social media is not the magic potion of crisis communications, but it is another device to communicate in another way. They transformed the techniques of how the crisis communications is contacted. We can find many pros and cons points to the whole issue but the benefits for the use of social media in crisis communications prevails over the disadvantages (Fearn-Banks, 2007, p.23).

Today organizations spend huge amounts of money to obtain as soon as possible the information from the ground in times of crises. They follow the same strategy also in times of normality as a protection against potential crises. Social media offers this with the smallest charge as all the ordinary people can take the role of the observer and the self-journalist with the power - ability to assist communicate in times of crises. The strategic point is to include this power – ability of the individuals into your crisis communications plans and practicing - tested it.

The social media due the fact that they belong to the new media may occur different to the majority of the people but in core they use the same model of communication like the traditional ones only they don’t have the restrictions of the time and space. Additionally, surveys have shown that general public perform similar in crises but just over when the use another tool, which means we don’t need to build a new concept.

As it was mentioned previously, in order to have any easy access in times of crises, it is a necessity to shape connections with all the stakeholders by social media. This will lead to the reduction of misinformation in accordance, firstly, with the establishment of relationships with bloggers in the same way that an organization would do with reporters. Secondly, with the protection of your reputation using domain names you have bought and finally via avenues provided to the individuals for sharing information as to make sense of crises, such as a Flickr site.
The pre-crisis period is just as vital as the others. Probably the relation that already an organization has with the public will follow in its social media policy. Though, social media permits that relationship to become stronger through a calmer more comfortable interaction. Building a robust relationship supports a robust reputation which can be useful in crisis communications. Organizations that pay no attention to the influence of these innovative communications devices are the ones that will feel more damage through a crisis, in addition with more possible bad health - safety effects on their people, one of the most important issues (Fearn-Banks, 2001, p.15).

This proposal does not definitely shape a plan in how to use this tool – new media (social media) in a successful way. This is since there is little non-subjective examination regarding the choices of participants for communication means with organizations and how to build relationships with them using social media. This thesis can only provide theoretical statement based on a comprehensive literature review research. In addition, this study examines the influence of crisis communications to shape public awareness concerning an incident but does not debate the percentage of the social media success of this objective. This is due to the fact that we don’t know too much about the efficiency of the social media, in times of crises, in framing messages and opinions. There is a requirement for supplementary analysis in how crisis communicators can use the social media to exploit valuable information, influence target audiences and control possible crises (Fearn-Banks, 2001, p.18). The earlier crisis communicators know this new tool, the better they can use its advantages in crises in order to service both their organization and their participants.

1.14 Approaching hybrid threats - Changing the world’s security environment

'Hybrid threats' are often appealed in relation to the conflicts in Ukraine and the ISIL campaign in Iraq. As policy-makers struggle to understand what hybrid threats mean for national security, it is valid to recall the roots, the meaning, and legal challenges associated with this concept (Pawlak, June 2015).

Fears about hybrid threats were first revealed in NATO's Strategic Concept of 2010 and integrated in the NATO Capstone Concept, which described hybrid threats as the ones created by opponents, with the capability at the same time to engage
conventional and non-conventional means adjusting in accordance to their objectives. Lately, the model of hybrid threat has been reviewed according to Russia's actions in Ukraine and the ISIL campaign in Iraq. (Pawlak, June 2015).

1.15 The term Hybrid (-threat, -conflict, -war)
The term 'hybrid' is a representation of the complications and difficulties linked to the change of the contemporary security environment. There is a solid relation with the type of challenges, the diversity of the involved actors and the multiplicity of the used means, conventional or/ and not. Having in our mind the changed stages of the threat and the objectives of the related players, it is potential to make a distinction between threat, conflict and war from the perspective of the hybrid warfare (Pawlak, June 2015):

- Hybrid threat is the result of the meeting and contribution of different components that create a more demanding and multidimensional danger.
- Hybrid conflict is a condition in which opponents choose not to use armed forces against each other, relying instead on a combination of military pressure, taking advantage of economic-political weaknesses and diplomatic or technological means to follow their objectives.
- Hybrid war is a condition in which a state selects not to use of armed forces against another state or other actor, besides to a combination of other mechanisms.

Hybrid conflict and war are two particular types for which a country practices hybrid tactics in order to complete its strategic goals.

1.16 The relation of the Hybrid- threat/conflict/war with the intentionality – proportionality and the International law – the global governance
The Hybrid war according to many approaches contains the idea of an adversary who makes use of a toolbox to complete his intentions. Launching proportionality of movements is required to confirm that the policy reaction is appropriate and balanced. However, due to the restrictions of international law, technological limitations or the transmission of power to non-state actors, which rise for uncertainty, this is not always the reality. For example, because of technological constrains and the participation of non-state players, it is difficult to find which exact country is behind a cyber-attack. The
NATO has not established yet any collective-defense mechanism for this hybrid threat (Pawlak, June 2015).

Despite the fact that there is no international legal context which controls hybrid warfare, any case arise in the international relations is regulated by the United Nations Charter. Accord to that, a member state can use force legally only if authorized by a United Nations Security Council resolution, when there is no armed attack against it or its allies. Concerning to hybrid- threat/conflict/war, a package of legal tools shields particular policy domains. Simultaneously, the use of standing international law and the global governance make the whole situation more complex. (Pawlak, June 2015).

The analysis of hybrid threats steered to a wide-ranging methodology joining together all players and existing means: armed forces, diplomacy, humanitarian aid, political processes, economic development, and technology. Nevertheless, it is as well significant to recognize that changes which were done at the world’s security environment lead by hybrid threats might have a long-term influence on the solidity of the international order and may finally have an impact on global power shifts. Following this token, a number of drifts are shown up: Conceptual, Material, Legal, and Institutional.

1.17 Social Media - Online Social Networks and Terrorism. Identify the links
In our days, though the development of digital-technology, Social Media - Online Social Networks (OSNs) (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc.) have developed as the most important tool of communications for terrorist groups with a variety of applications, from message directing, to propaganda and recruitment of new members. For the moment, through the terrorist attacks individuals use OSNs for information exchange, activating and coordinating aid for the victims.

Online Social Networks (OSNs) have occurred as the leading tools of communications for distributing info for various world-wide incidents. In the same way Internet progresses, the number of the users of OSNs is also rise (Reda, 2012). Several surveys have revealed that users are passing a noteworthy period of time with the OSNs (Karel, 2007, p. 47-58), (Reda, 2011, p. 57-62). One more survey presented that many
individuals don’t connect on the net regularly, but when they have the chance to do so, they choose to use social media (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Even though the ordinary social media users practice the new media innovations clearly for communication purposes, nevertheless in the same way it can also be used harmfully as a device for terrorism. Extremists use the web applications and new technologies in support and accomplishment of their radical actions. Terrorists through social media can exchange info, distribute propaganda, find new members and also organize their next strike. For instance we have the case of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, with its roots in Somalia, which practice Twitter through the Westgate attack in Nairobi by broadcasting information and taking the blame of the attack.

The developments of technology have transformed terrorist operational communications to interactive ones with two-way capacities (e.g. chat-rooms, online social media sites, video-sharing sites) (Weimann, 2012). The means and techniques that terrorists use depend completely on the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) structure (Veerasamy, 2012, p. 260). The examination provides clarifications about the part that ICT infrastructure has for the terrorism. There are surveys which tried to describe and categorize forms of the users activity on Twitter during a crisis, based on the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks by analyzing the Twitter stream during this event (Oh, 2012, p.33-43), (Gupta, 2012). These researches introduced social awareness theory in order to illustrate how data-info accessible on the Web for the period of the terrorist activities supports their decision making process.

But in what way do Terrorism and Online Social Networks (OSNs) are connected: 1. Terrorism: As Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) improves and change the way of our living, it also alters the methods that the terrorism uses. In our days terrorists take advantage of the great development of ICT to complete their objectives such as communication, recruitment, training and propaganda. For instance, one website related with terrorist organization broadcasted instructions regarding the construction of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), from common accessible resources. Furthermore another one has been disseminating guidance online on procedures - tactics - technics (PTTs) in how to conduct a terrorist attack.
2. Online Social Networks (OSNs) are a category of social media that provides to the users with the on-line ability by creating a profile with personal details to exchange info with multimedia content related to common interest. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). A number of the most widely held social networks are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr which are cooperative, disseminated, and public motivated, related on peer-to-peer networks. Not a long time ago, terrorists have altered and adapt the social media as their tool for communication purposes opening a new era which allowed terrorists to communicate without difficulty and more safe, distribute information – propaganda, organize - train -recruit their members, plan – contact attacks and search for the public support to their believes.

1.18 Twitter in the new age of Terrorism

Twitter is one of the most widespread social media that enables discussion between the users based on the exchange of short messages up to 140 characters long known as Tweets. Hashtags are words starting with ‘#’ which describe a topic. Twitter is well famous due to the way of replying to a tweet which has grown into districted mark-up attitude: RT stands for Re-tweet. A re-tweet is a message from one user that is sent by another. The re-tweet mechanism allows users to release information of their choice. The user’s message that is an answer to another’s one is known as a Reply. The follower on Twitter is the user that gets all the tweets from other persons he follows.

The individuals use Twitter in various ways and for dissimilar objectives that can be generally categorized to the followings (Java, 2007, p. 56–65), (Ramage, 2010), (Naaman, 2010, p. 189–192):

1. Chatting: talk of daily events.
2. Conversations: individuals participate by replies technique.
3. Info share/Distribution: using posts enclose URLs.

Social Media has been proven as an appropriate assistance tool for terrorists and especially Twitter due to the easy entrance, limited governmental control, wide-reaching audience, anonymity, rapid stream of information, inexpensive development of OSNs
webpages and multimedia use. Today under the extremely improvement the technology terrorists practice social media for the following scopes:

1. Information sharing: They practice them in order to link with international audience in a way that has establish them as an experts in unsigned/ encrypted communications by encode privacy software (e.g. Al-Qaeda has been practicing the software ‘Mujahideen Secrets v1 and v2’).

2. Recruiting - Training: Social media have developed as useful tool for them in order to deliver their ‘terror’ messages and recruit followers (Homeland Security Institute, 2009). Today terrorists’ recruitment and training is done more efficient by the social media in an easy and anonymous way than it was in the past, which required the physical presence of the participants. Trainees are taking a series of examinations in password protected websites, restricted chat rooms before entering the terrorist group (Gerwehr, 2006, p. 83). The recruitment-training process consists of the simulation of terrorism acts, like mass suicide attack, via cartoons, video games and music videos in the direction of draw the youths into extremism.

3. Planning: Social media are used by extremists for planning process due to its encoded communication and rapid message transfer.

4. Fundraising: Social media give the opportunity to the terrorists to get in contact with the fanatics groups and through web transfer and email to collect money for their goals.

5. Cyber-attack: Brings up the practice of the net tools as an attack weapons for other computer networks or national - governmental communications systems in vital public domains.

6. Propaganda: They are using the Social media for their propagandistic objectives. This publicity aims in sending ideological interpretations, explanations or advertising the terrorist activity and consists of violent acts material.

Thus we have the case of the Andalus Foundation, the propaganda division of al-Qaeda which on March 2013, created its fist a Twitter account with more than 14,500 followers, linked with 7 accounts including the Somali terrorist group Al-Shaabab (Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahideen -HSM). Al-Shaabab generated their account in
English on December 2011 as ‘@HSMPress’. Since then they have been using Twitter to overstate their military activities (Kimunguyi, 2010), (Ibrahim, 2010, p.283-295).

The Westgate attack in September 2013 in Nairobi was the result of Al-Shabaab’s conflict with Kenya (because of the interferences of the Kenyan Army in Somalia). The terrorist group’s Twitter account has been many times suspended by Twitter due to violation of terms of service in which it is crystal clear that no one can post any threats of violence against others. Though, every time that their account is blocked, they generated a new one with a small difference on the same name such as @HSMPRESS1, @HSM_PressOffice, @HSM_PROffice and @HSM_PR.

1.19 Patterns of Hybrid Threats – A typical example
The most noticeable patterns, globe wide, for the various elements that consist parts of the hybrid threat spectrum, are the followings (Pawlak, June 2015):

- Terrorism: terrorist organizations like Hezbollah (non-state actor, proxy, and gorilla), Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIL (non-state actor, irregular tactics, hybrid tactics against conventional forces) operate worldwide using various mechanisms to achieve their political objectives.
- Cyber-security: the operations of state-associated hackers (hacker attacks, propaganda and disinformation, proxy teams) from Russia and China who use cyber-weapons in an effective way due to the absence of norms of state behavior in cyberspace.
- Organized crime: Russian mafia (Bratva), Japanese mafia (Yakuza), Drug cartels in Mexico (Sinaloa Cartel) which use violence to gain economic profits.
- Maritime disputes: The way in which China imposes its intentions in the South China Sea by combining economic and military pressure.
- Space: limitations on access to satellites and use of orbital space because of the remains that were created by anti-satellite missile tests.
- Resource scarcity: In 2010, China halted transfers of minerals to Japan as a reaction to the capture of a Chinese fishing boat. Another example was, in 2011, when India denied having a water-sharing agreement with Bangladesh.
- Covert operations: Russia’s use of Special Forces and information in Ukraine.
The use of the new media – social media for crisis communications purposes has not been exploited in the same degree in the above patterns and is a subject for further research in future studies. The most characteristic example for a wide use of this area could be represented by the terrorist attack of the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

In this terrorist incident which resulted in the death toll of 72 people and the wound of more than 200, the practice of the social media in crisis communications, specifically Twitter, was made in an extensive degree. The attack took place from 21 to 27 September 2013 by the Islamist group Al-Shabaab which took the responsibility for the incident (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2013).

Various studies have been conducted examining the data of this incident. Their analysis of data collected throughout the crisis, in order to form a complete image of the incident, scrutinized specific measurements and figures. The Twitter hashtag, specifically #Westgate, determines that it was used by both the terrorists and the citizens and it was the most related and typical one (Ishengoma, 2013).

Their starting point was the analysis of the amount of tweets that were circulated the first hours of the attack and found to be very high (Ishengoma, 2013). This is explained of the Twitter’s online nature and the performance of the users to post about what is taking place timely. This use of social media gradually reduced during the passage of the time and after the first sock of the attack. Additional evidence is that the sharing of Twitter posts throughout the event proves that most of the tweets were original posts, coming next re-tweets and replies (Ishengoma, 2013).

Another evidence of the same study, regarding the geographic dissemination of tweets, displays that most of them originated from the underdeveloped nations. Kenya had the higher degree of posts, mainly due to the fact that was the attacked country. Moreover, a noteworthy percentage of the related tweets found to be origin from US and UK (Ishengoma, 2013).

Scanning the demography of the tweets through the incident, analysts realize that males are witnessed to tweet more than females (Ishengoma, 2013). This could be as a result of the gender gap in developing countries where 16% fewer women than men use the internet daily (ITU, 2013).
At the example of the Westgate’s terrorist attack, the outcomes were surprising, as Social Media were practiced as a communication tool by both the terrorists and the authorities – citizens. However, their use during the disaster was very high, besides of the various restrictions (such as problematic internet connection) (Ishengoma, 2013). This example of Crisis Communications, with the use of Social Media, is a proof that state organizations must practice the new media in their crisis communications plans including possible hybrid threats scenarios.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communications through a qualitative approach

2.1 Approaching the relation of the Public and Social Media

Nowadays, social media have been established as a significant mean of the public communications, affecting more than ever the way of thinking and the behavior of the users. Furthermore, this change has an impact on the performed crisis communications perspective which today depends more and more on the practice of the new media – social media. The vital need of the public for updated info has also contributed in the extensive practice of the social media in crisis communications (Weiner, 2006, p.5). This thesis approaches the role of the social media in crisis communications by the public understanding and interest. Thus the leading effort will be to define if the social media can be a helpful tool for crisis communications, disseminating and in the same time collecting adequate info in a “limited time”, always taking under consideration the needs of the public. This public orientation is very demanding related to the time but is a necessity for the success of our crisis communications.

The over mentioned issue, about the role of the social media, is approached in this study with the assistance of the qualitative study of selected crises that took place recently worldwide and had excessive effects on the general public. From these cases, it can be seen that the social media can support the accomplishment of the objectives of crisis communications in harmony with their principles.

One of the leading questions that must be answered if we want to have an overall view of the topic is which opportunities the social media provide in crisis communications to enhance the legitimacy of the conducted ones? In order to accomplish this, it is crucial to ensure that the public has a positive attitude about the implemented crisis communications. Another significant question which will be answered in this study is how the public accepts the crisis communications which are practiced. In order to achieve this, it is vital for the authorities to pay attention to the problems and the emotional state of the community. This can be done initially by listening to public opinion, through social media, in an environmental analysis. Having awareness regarding
what is taking place between the citizens, primarily provides the capability to the authorities adjust their crisis communications tactics to the particular needs of the audience. In addition, they can interact with the people through social media, a factor which can also raise credibility. The latter point is that the performed crisis communications must be sincere, through the applicable practice of the social media, and deliver essential info to the audience even when the whole situation is unclear.

Moreover, particularly in crises, when the time limits are extremely stressful, it is vital to fulfill the needs of the citizens, as they are the main priority of the performed crisis communications.

### 2.2 Analyzing the New Media - Social Media

The social media today, as it is mentioned before, have a major role in our daily life and their use has proved to be increasingly essential as a mean of communication. Social media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have enhanced their status over the recent years (Pondres, 2011, p.10). From the time when the Facebook appeared in 2004 succeed to have in 2012 around 845 million active users worldwide. Similarly Twitter has developed progressively in five years, since its creation in 2006, to over 300 million users. Furthermore, with the begging of YouTube in 2005 it has turned into a not difficulty process to hand out video data. The primary reason of the raise in reputation is since the social media offer the chance to more users to have an easy and inexpensive communication through the facilities they offer. Likewise, the accessibility of the social media have improved its reputation, as they provide the capability to everybody to share info (Safranek, 2012, p.1-2). This acceptance is not only recognized by the upraising number of their users, but moreover due to fact that they require the contribution of many players, as regular people, non-governmental organizations, telecommunication-software providers and governmental organizations (Shirky, 2011, p.1).

The upring impact of the social media, during the last years, is proven by recent political changes and furthermore as they had modified the way that governments communicate. As an example of these discrete changes are the radical events in the Middle-East in the spring of 2011, the well-known ‘Arabic Spring’ that it can be consider as a good case of the developing part of social media in political and system modification.
But what do these latest changes indicate for public policy makers? Today the governmental organizations must take notice of the social media as a significant tool their crisis communications. Although the meaning of the social media has enlarged the recent years, there are people that have doubts about the role of these new media. These pessimists recognize the social media as a threat, mainly due to the fact that rumors are able to be spread without difficulty and very speedy, as never before. Particularly when concentrating on crisis communications they state that in crisis communications nowadays is hard to hold control on the (external) communications and as a result of this the previously character of authorities has weakened. In contrast there are the optimists who highlight the endless prospects the social media can provide in crisis communications. Built on the knowledge of the public, the social media give great options, Twitter for instance can assist train travelers to let know each other about delays or to answer a specific question (Duin et al, 2012, p.143).

Specifically concerning to the issue of the knowledge of the public it is also essential to take note to the role of the social media linked to the citizen’s involvement. Even though that today more people are involved than estimated, the percentage of their active participation has been decreased because of the ways the government has formed this involvement. To increase individuals participation the government and citizens must built a common trust between them (WRR, 2012, p.11). With reference to this main characteristic of citizen participation, the social media might also offer methods in crisis communications to achieve this. However about the public legitimacy it is crucial to determine the role of the social media in crisis communications and in what way they can for instance help in the enhancement of the public’s satisfaction with the crisis communications practiced by the authorities. Particularly in a crisis we can talk about a trend between delivering adequate information for taking decisions in a short time from one point of view and retaining the needs of the public on the other. Although the first fact can be seen as a procedure with a time constrain to the necessary actions that must be taken, the second is supposed to be a time consuming route.

While latest studies have already presented that the practice of social media in crisis communications by the authorities can be efficient with particularly Twitter as a respectable enhancement to the common used resources (Bos, Veen Van Der & Turk,
2010, p. 49-51), we will try to provide a different understanding in their role in crisis communications by taking into consideration the public point of view. A special attention will be given on how the social media can support the objectives of crisis communications and why we must use them in such a case.

This context will be answered by the examination of the crisis communications for selected crises which took place recently worldwide. The crisis communications of these cases have been the subject of debate by many researchers, particularly on account of the role of the social media had played. Thus, for instance, at one case the participants did not pay so much attention to the social media in their crisis communications, in another example the social media were involved in the crisis communications plan. As a consequence of this difference these examples can provide good view on role the social media can play in and can define why it is vital to include the social media in our crisis communications.

2.3 Methodological framework
This thesis will try to identify in which way social media can contribute in crisis communications by the analysis of the literature on selected crises, which took place in the recent years, around the world. The followed research method consists of a framework: on its structure, the collection of bibliographical data, their analysis through answers to various sub questions that conclude to the key question of this survey. The collected figures will be examined if they fulfill the study’s questions in accordance to the over mentioned theoretical framework, supporting in this way the comprehensive approach of the examined issue.

2.3.1 Research scheme
The main purpose of this study is to estimate the role of the social media in selected worldwide incidents by examining and defining their part in crisis communications. The following features are the basic characteristics of this thesis approach:

With the uprising use of the Internet in our days, this study is more an explorative one due to the fact that presents the different thoughts about the role that the social media
can play and the estimated consequences of their use in crisis communications, taking into account the public perspective.

Additionally, it is also a descriptive survey since the incidents will be described in accordance with the questions which are used in order to achieve more understanding for the role of social media in crisis communications and to describe the possible effects coming from this use (Babbie, 2007, p.88-90). The examined cases will be explored and compared with each other. Due to this comparison, it can also be categorized as a comparative case study.

Qualitative data of the incidents will be collected by a thorough literature review search. Because of this, it can moreover be described as a document study as quite a lot of researches and reports have already been published about the incidents, which can similarly be of use for this thesis. These publications used to get a general understanding of the whole issue and to assist the responding process of the raised questions. This exploration is going to be contacted on the relevant scientific domain bibliography and will be the main source of the essential data that are needed for the survey’s completion.

In advance, it must be definite that this paper can only offer theoretical recommendation, although there are some difficulties in the research method regarding the limits of the quality and quantity approach of the whole issue. Therefore, this research can also be recognized as an evaluation one. The collective data will originate from documents collected from open sources such as representatives of municipalities, the safety regions and umbrella organizations, for instance the National Crisis Centrum (NCC). The results of their process are beneficial for producing directions for the use of the social media into upcoming crisis communications (Babbie, 2007, p.350).

2.3.2 Study’s data collection

This thesis will use the collected data through a document review, in order to have a quality approach on the selected incidents, as there are numbers of related reports and surveys. This comparative examination of them will be conducted with the intention of have an in depth look about the contribution of social media in crisis communications, as these surveys deliver info on the performed ones in the selected crises by the authorities and individuals. Therefore a document study is a good technique to facilitate collection of
all available material as to get a general view of the whole issue. As a result numerous reports-surveys have been studied for the selected crises and also the news related to them coming from inter-national and local newspapers - media.

2.3.3 Arranging the study
Since the selected cases have many differences, unrelated characteristics of them were ignored in order to compare them (Van Deth, 1998, p.6-14).

In the beginning of this study, an effort was done in defining unclear concepts, so as to make them clearly distinguishable, measurable and understandable, through the results of literature review of the theoretical framework. In this way, the creation of the sub questions, that answer the key issue of this thesis, was made in accordance with the theories of the research’s theoretical framework. These theories provide the answer to the related sub question. Then the concepts related to the sub questions are transformed into physical features of the examined cases. In this way the concepts are able to be measured by means of the physical characteristics (Van Deth, 1998, p.6-14).

2.3.4 Key questions of the study
This thesis is designed to achieve more understanding in the role and the advantages - disadvantages, the social media can play in crisis communications. This will be made by a bibliographic study of the crisis communications of specific cases that took place in the recent years. The incidents and the part that the social media had played are explored and put in comparison with each other with the aim of define which role the social media can have in crisis communications. Consequently we have our main key question of this thesis that refers to the role of the social media can play as a tool for crisis communications in crisis situations. With the purpose of responding to this core question a number of sub-questions have been gathered.

Initially it is essential to define to what degree the authorities used the social media so as to collect information, as many individuals posted material on the social media about the events. By answering this first sub-question we can focus on why or why not it is vital for authorities to use the social media for collecting information on the crisis situations.
After we have a strong answer in the previous sub-question, it is reasonable to search the response of the authorities after the incidents took place and the method they used to inform populations about the whole situation. A second sub-question follows this is whether/how the authorities used the social media and which one they used as to provide information to the public. Similarly to the first one, we can concentrate on why it is significant to use the social media in crisis communications and whether this might have weaknesses.

Afterward we have a pure answer in the above sub-question, it is also essential to examine the policy portion of the crisis communications. Thus the third-sub question examines if the authorities have policies which their intention was to use the social media in crisis communications and if they really used these policies during those cases or they chose a different tactic.

The last sub-question that stands up is related to which were the effects of the use of social media as a tool for crisis communications that were detected in the selected cases.

2.3.5 Conducting the study

The answers of the sub questions of this survey will be provided as the outcome of the collected data- information from the document study.

The first sub research question, that refers to the extent the authorities made use of the social media to obtain information about the selected crises, will be replied by the document study, since there are several reports dealing with this issue. To answer this first sub question, we must consider the theoretical framework. As already has been defined, the social media transformed the citizens from only consumers of information to also contributors of it due to the fact that they gave the opportunity to everyone to provide with news the rest of the world. In this sense it is essential to define why it is vital for authorities to have consideration of the messages the citizens distribute by the social media. The answer to this first sub question will give us a good insight to what degree the authorities of the selected cases have made use of the social media in order to get information about them (Monté, 2011)(Veil, 2011).
With the intention of giving a response to this second sub question of the survey that refers to the way in which the social media have been used by the authorities in order to provide up-dated information to the citizens about the selected crises, a document study will as well be used additionally to some theoretical models. Firstly the effort will be on the news spreading by the use of the social media and which social media services have been used by the authorities in their crisis communications. Following the interaction with the citizens through the social media is essential, as it has been presented in the theoretical framework as the new characteristic of the social media. Moreover we will focus on why the social media have been used in the crisis communications and with which objectives (Monté, 2011) and crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2006). By defining with which objectives a specific crisis response strategy has been directed we can understand why the authorities made an exact selection for their communications strategy. Especially as it was according to the framework we will pay attention on the characteristic of transparency (Curtin & Meijer, 2006, p. 109-122) in other words how transparent the authorities were in their crisis communications.

For the third sub question which examines the range of the authorities’ policies pointed at social media in crisis communications and the degree these policies have been used in the selected cases will be answered based on two concepts according the document study. The first one is linked to the synthesis model of crisis communications (Horsley & Barker, 2002) and assists us to understand in which phases of the crisis the social media have been used in crisis communications and how the related authorities have equipped themselves for a possible one. More specifically, in what way they were ready for the practice of the social media in their crisis communications of a potential disaster case. In accordance with this, it is crucial to take note to a probable change in policy and implementation that is the second concept linked to this sub question. Moreover for this additional concept the synthesis model is used as a foundation. In this sense the question that arises is to determine the degree the crisis communications plan was sufficient enough at the time of the actual crisis and to define the extent of modifications have been made.

The latter sub study question that deals with the detection of the effects of the practice of social media as a tool for crisis communications after the examined events
will also be answered by the collected data from a literature study. Also three concepts will be used that are consequent from the theoretical framework. The first one discusses the reputational effects (Coombs, 2007b). While the use of the social media in crisis communications can have quite a lot of reputational consequences, it is significant to define if this had happen for the examined incidents. The public can for instance understand the use of social media as positive or negative experience. Furthermore it is essential to calculate the degree that the public evaluates the information shown by the authorities in the social media as adequate and trustworthy one. This is connected to the feature of transparency (Curtin & Meijer, 2006, p. 109-122). By concentrating on these matters more knowledge can be gained into the reputational effects for the authorities and how this connects to the legitimacy of the crisis communications that were practiced. In addition to reputational effects as well the second concept of uniform information is vital to be searched. In accordance with the framework of the theory, the social media give the option of a fast sharing of information, but due to this speed we are facing the risk of the threat of misinformation and the struggle of providing uniform information. The third and most significant concept related to the answer of this sub question is the aftermath evaluation measure that refers to the lessons identified that can be regained from the disasters and the lesson learned for future ones by the authorities. This concept is harmonized with the synthesis model (Horsley & Barker, 2002) in which emphasis is given to the meaning of an evaluation and an adjustment of the public relations attempts. Moreover it is essential to remember the performed crisis communications of the selected incidents and define what could be done better in the future making use of the gained lesson learned.

In order to provide an answer to the main research question, which is related to the role that the social media can play as a tool for crisis communications in crisis situations, the sub questions are dedicated to different parts of this. In this way, the aim of this thesis is to provide a reasonable description of the appropriate roles that the social media can play in crisis communications and why it is significant for authorities to turn on particular features of this use.
2.4 Study’s methodology remarks
In this thesis we will try to provide an answer to the main and the sub research questions by the practice of a qualitative case study. The observed cases consist of the crisis communications with regard to the selected crises. The data for this examination has been collected by the document study of different relative reports which have been published previously from this survey regarding the selected disasters. An answer to the main question will be the result of the answers to the different sub questions which have been formed for this survey. Stand on the answers of the sub questions it will be promising to define the role of the social media in crisis communications in general.

2.5 The surveyed Crises
The cases studies in this research that have been selected include different aspects for the use of social media as part of response measures within the frame of the respective crisis communications plans. While the selected cases can be considered as a crisis, which could not be foreseen, they are dissimilar according to the type as it was explained at the crisis table offered in the theoretical framework (Coombs, 1995). Moreover, concerning the outcome of the use of the social media in the selected cases, there was a distinction, particularly on the different approach that some of the authorities practiced them in their crisis communications.

In this context, these specific crises were selected to be examined in this thesis, due to the fact that both of them had as a cause a non-conventional threat, a hybrid one. Secondly, the use of the social media in the performed crisis communications by the involved authorities is so different in each case, which gives us a clear answer why it is so important to integrate new – social media in our crisis communications. Last but not least, the case study of the Paris’ terrorist attacks was selected in order to examine the links between the social media and the terrorism, understanding in this way how we will defend against it.
CHAPTER THREE
FINDINGS - DISCUSSION
The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communications through the Public approach

3.1 Overview of the selected crises
The reputation of the social media has expanded the latest years in such level that has come to be implanted in our daily life. The fact that more people nowadays are using the social media for their communications changed the landscape of the way organizations, governments and authorities linked with the public, for example in times of a crisis.

Before we examine how the involved authorities of the selected disasters used the social media in their crisis communications, it is as well vital to go more in depth to the cases, giving a short outline. Although the provided information in this summary does not address to the entire sub questions, the background is essential in order to get a full overview of the main research question.

3.2 A Greek example of crisis communications: Bomb defusing operation of Kordelio- Thessaloniki - Features and the use of social media
The operation took place on Sunday 12 February by the special bomb squad de-miners of the Greek Army and in accordance with international security protocols, till 10:00 hours were evacuated for preventive reasons all the essential areas that are within 1.9 km from the point that the bomb was found. It should be noted that the largest part of the population that were evacuated, were residents in the municipality of Kordeliou-Evosmou, with their number reached the 62,000 inhabitants.

The incident can be considered as an unintentional act that was originated by an outside factor. In this context, the incident can be categorized as a ‘Faux Pas’ following the typology of the theoretical framework (Coombs, 1995).

According to an announcement of the Region of Central Macedonia for the operation of the removal of bomb blast in the Kordelio, on Sunday 12 February 2017 from 10:00 hours in the region marked on the interactive map (on the website of the Region of Central Macedonia: www.pkm.gov.gr) none should remain or passing through,
for preventive and safety reasons, due to the operation of discharge and removal of a found bomb from World War. Also, at the same time and until the end of the operation was blocked every activity and function in this area. Information related to the compulsory -preventive- evacuation was provided from the call center which operated throughout the operation, through announcements to the media by all the involved actors and by all the appropriate means.

Throughout the incident citizens had the ability be informed as to whether or not to leave their homes through call center in the Region of Central Macedonia from 09:00 hours until 21:00 hours, but also from the region’s official website (www.pkm.gov.gr) by entering their address in the relative interactive map. Also, information on the operation was accessible through the call center and the websites of Municipalities Ambelokipon - Menemenis, Delta and Kordeliou - Evosmou.

But what are the initial estimations of the Region of Central Macedonia in accordance with the cost, the figures of the calls and the "views" on the official website, but also for the whole communication campaign.

Thirty-five thousand calls accepted the call center of the Region of Central Macedonia from citizens who requested for information on the procedures of their transfer from the evacuation zone according to the operational plan. At the same time the website of the region accepted 500,000 "hits" by residents and individuals, who requested info as to whether their houses and shops were within the borders of the restricted area. The above figures were mentioned at the Economic Committee conference on 14 February 2017 by the director of the Civil Protection Section in the Region of Central Macedonia, Mr. Haralambo Stergiadi, on the occasion of the update of the economic commission and the submission of relevant documents for the procedures followed. Mr. Stergiadis pointed out that, within a very limited time, the removal of 70,000 residents had been organized, describing the whole operation as a successful one and stressed that there were no problems in terms of traffic or theft problems. He also mentioned the three assignments related to the operation, regarding the creation of a communication public awareness campaign, the dissemination of information via the media (creation of spots and other informative projects) and the supply of traffic control equipment as requested by the police. In accordance with the relevant proposals approved by the Economic
Commission: 38.000 euros plus VAT claimed for the telephone service center (call center), 15.600 euros plus VAT the script of the radio message - scenario with the production of radio message and 21.792 euros plus VAT the supply of traffic control equipment. The above amounts did not include the costs of the transmission of the informative spots by the media which they will be calculated after the media’s reports.

During the conference the Regional Councilor of "the Radical Left Unity", Mr. George Theodoropoulos, questioned the fact that the performed communication campaign was not free of charge in accordance to article 5 of the Greek Law 4279/2014, in which it is stated that the free transmission of audiovisual and audio messages during the period of the digital transition, pursuant to article 14 of Greek Law 3592/2007 for the update and correct information to the public which serves the public interest, is an obligation of the television and radio stations. The transmission of these messages shall be approved by the General Secretariat of Telecommunications according to a program, it is not considered as advertising campaign and it is free of ad tax, any tax, fee or other charge. Following the above raised dilemma, Mr. George Theodoropoulos added if the process should be free of and in accordance with the current legislation it was the duty of those who are providers of digital transition, that are the TV channels and the radio stations, to communicate this campaign in order to inform the public. In response Mr. Stergiadis, said that it is not specified by the law when and in which zone the informative spots will be broadcasted and added that within a very short time period, from Thursday to Sunday, the authorities had to inform 70,000 citizens, at certain times, before the daily newscast, due to the fact that according to relevant surveys in this way was ensured the maximum viewing of the message. He stressed that if the authorities did not have these tools within three days, there would be no public information for the operation and in that case the consequences would be disastrous not from the bomb itself, but by negligence, from car accidents, from traffic jams, from other issues. The chairman of the Financial Committee, Mrs. Athena Adiona, commented that the information campaign was necessary in order to convince the citizens, who finally responded with great understanding, to evacuate their houses. In this context, Mr. Theodoropoulos underlined the need for updating the plan for management of technological accidents and noted that there great danger of the operation was not coming from the fragments of the bomb, as
for this special measures were taken but due to the reason that the location of the incident was very near to tanks of gas and oil companies. Specifically, Mr. Stergianidis noted that all entities and companies that were within the zone of evacuation were informed that had to be transferred. In particular, the workers of the companies were transferred and the fuel tanks were emptied, following the rules and the security protocols.

But the operation was not delayed only because the residents who evacuated more slowly their houses, but also as a result of of a camera. Shortly after 10:30 hours, the region commissioner Mrs. Voula Patoulidou announced that the defusing of the bomb will not start if a camera of a web page, located in the building above the petrol station where the bomb was found, was not removed. The whole problem was solved, as the state television channel ERT3, that covered officially the whole operation, broadcasted and the process continued. The removal process of the bomb was completed until 18:00 hours. The area was secured by the police within 30 km across the perimeter of the evacuation zone, while each activity and function in the region suspended from 10:00 hours until the end of the operation.

The information management for the three involved municipalities (Municipality of Kordeliou - Evosmou, Ambelokipon - Menemenis and Delta) was conducted centrally from the Operational Center of the Region of Central Macedonia, where there was a representative of each involved entity. The citizens were sufficiently informed by the media, traditional and new. At the entrance of each building a poster was putted informing about the evacuation and also a leaflet was distributed door to door, with details about the assembly points, the departed public buses and other available means of evacuation. Audio messages could be heard throughout the municipality Kordeliou - Evosmou constantly and the various call centers of the involved authorities provided updated info.

In addition, the region commissioner of the Metropolitan Unity Thessaloniki Mrs. Voula Patoulidou and the Mayor Kordeliou - Evosmou Mr. Petros Soulas held on Saturday 11 February a press conference, with context the organized operation of the evacuation of the area and the transfer of the population. The press conference was held at City Hall of Kordeliou - Evosmou and the agenda included updating the media for all
taken actions. One of these was the providence for direct info through the website of each the Municipality and the social media for whatever issue would rise during the operation.

In this framework, the web contact details that the involved Municipalities used during the crisis were the followings: the Municipality of Ambelokipon - Menemenis Http://www.ampelokipi-menemeni.gr, Municipality of Delta Http://www.dimosdelta.gr and Municipality Kordeliou - Evosmou Http://www.kordelio-evosmos.gr, as well as the most popular hashtags used: #bombkordelio, #kordeliobomb etc. The mayor Kordeliou - Evosmou said it is positive that prevailed not panic, and the public faced with humor the whole situation expressing this mainly using social media (Twitter, Facebook). Safety instructions were given to the citizens in order the authorities to succeed ‘limitation of harm’. The gigantic and unique for Greek dimension, operation to eliminate the bomb in the Kordelio, was communicated from the involved state entities to a satisfactory level, using all the principles of crisis communications with the participation of the new media to a limited extent, do not contesting that their use might be more widespread if the crisis has taken another worse turn, a case that the authorities also had planned. Finally, this crisis communication campaign was performed in a very professional way, as any circulating rumors were immediately identified and refuted by the authorities with the use of reliable official information. In this way the trust and the opinion of the citizens for the authorities and their communication campaign were enhanced.

3.3 The Terrorist attacks in France - Features and the use of social media

On Friday 13 November 2015, a series of terrorist attacks took place all over Paris, resulting in 128 deaths and many people injured. Immediately after the terrorist attack, French President Francois Hollande declared the war to the terrorism (Madhavan, 2015). The results of this terrorist attack have a great effect all over the world as France is a developed western European country (Papagianneas, 2015).

The reactions for the attack varied from having the examples of ordinary people' blood donations, changing their profile pictures in Facebook with a French flag overlay and hashtags to organize shelter for the victims (Beigelman, 2015).
The incident can be considered as an intentional act originated by an outside actor and thus it can be categorized as ‘terrorism’ according the typology of theoretical framework (Coombs, 1995).

During the terrorist attacks in the French capital, the development of technology in the media has played a significant role in crises communications in many ways (Madhavan, 2015).

Through Twitter and Facebook, the initial situational awareness was provided regarding the incident. Social media were used as tool in order to collect, disseminate info and to provide the vital safety instructions to the public during the crisis (Papagianneas, 2015).

Citizens that had the need for info about the situation and their kin used Twitter by the various related hashtags. Other hashtags were used straightway after the attack to aid the suffered people finding a safe place to stay (Madhavan, 2015). The #PrayforParis was the most famous hashtag that has been used. Twitter, during the crisis, had become an important source for the media and a tool for the authorities’ crisis communications. This was done by the notices and video to the people who need protection or assistance. (Papagianneas, 2015).

The new media and especially Facebook helped the affected citizens to inform their worried relatives and friends. Throughout the attack a huge number of tweets and messages circulated in the web providing info about the incident (Madhavan, 2015). Moreover, several users of the Facebook, in the attack zone, used its Safety Check feature, that was activated, in order to inform that they are safe (Beigelman, 2015). In that way everybody knew their status. This tool was proved highly useful through the crisis, although it had been formerly used only in cases of natural disasters from the time it was created in 2014, the Paris’ attack was the very first time that it was used for a human-made disaster (Papagianneas, 2015).

The Safety Check tool was used by millions of citizens and similar were the numbers of the users that used the social media throughout the crisis (Papagianneas, 2015).

Nevertheless, there was an opposite side of the use of the social media. In the same way that Facebook and Twitter were some the main tools for the officials
communications around the world, but there were the same platforms that terrorists used (Beigelman, 2015). Throughout the discussions on Twitter about the offenders terrorists, there was a contradiction related their features and their motivations. Moreover, in the same day, ISIL, using internet, stated that was responsible for the attack and through social media spread its propaganda on the incident.

Subsequently the Paris’ terrorist attack, a reasonable concern about the use of the internet and especially social media by terrorists was generated, because terrorism seem to use technology faster than the official authorities (Madhavan, 2015).

The social media played a significant role in the crisis communications of the Paris’ terrorist attack as of a consequence of the public needs for update info and security. The performed ones by the authorities followed the principles of crisis communications as these had been described in the theoretical framework.

3.4 General findings of the selected crises

The main outcomes from the comparative study of the selected cases are described in the following points. While the first one can be described as an accident - Faux Pas since it was unintentional, on the contrary the other can be categorized as terrorism as the objective of the external actor was to cause damage (Coombs, 1995). Throughout those cases loads of info was flowing on the social media depicting in this way their growing reputation. This was similarly presented by the massive numbers of related tweets and an examination of the news distribution of the selected cases. The importance of the practice of the social media as a tool to the crisis communications was not only depicted by the numbers but moreover by their various users. It was illustrated that not only the individuals used to a considerable extent the social media, but also journalists and the official organizations intergraded them in their crisis communications. Moreover, the adversaries used social media in high level for their purposes.

In the following parts of the thesis, they are presented the findings of the study related to the sub questions of the methodology, on the base of the theoretical framework. This study does not stand on the actual facts of the selected crises but only on the observations on the performed crisis communications. That is the reason that the used
approach is much more general and focus on what should have be done in order to have a more effective crisis communications.

3.5 The practice of social media in the selected crises

In advance of examining the crisis communications of the selected crises, it is essential to summarize the characteristics of the figures of participating groups/organizations. While in terrorist attack several entities from various organizations participate by the use of social media, this did not happen in the other case, in which the authorities did not pay so much attention of the new media in their crisis communications. This contrast between the incidents was crucial to bear in mind all through the research process.

In this content, for instance, in the case of the terrorist attacks in Paris, totally two safety regions, six municipalities, three ministries, several institutes, were involved in the crisis communications.

Differently to this mass participation of various actors, in the case of Kordeliou there was the contribution of fewer in the crisis communications by the use of social media.

Moreover, in the examined terrorist attacks the radical groups of the adversaries used the social media in high extent as a propaganda tool in order to accomplish their goals.

3.6 The participants’ news collection through social media

In one of the crises, the involved official actors practiced the social media in order to collect info providing situational awareness and developing more understanding on the public’s needs. This info - understanding was helpful for the environmental analysis in crisis communications and the basis of the followed instructions, tactics, techniques, plans, strategies and procedures. Through understanding the relations between media and audience, the communication policy of an organization were in line with the beliefs and emotions of the citizens. This was done in one of the cases via an environmental analysis that gave an accurate approach to the situation as it did not concentrated on the actual incident but in the way the general public understood the whole case. In this sense the
existing rumors in the social media were defined with the purpose of approve or refute them.

Moreover, it would be essential to highlight, that despite the fact that an environmental study had not been performed in all the examined cases, it must be encompassed in crisis communications as it is thought to be the foundation of them. A survey in one case proves that there was no practice of the social media as a tool of the crisis communications in order to collect info of the incident. Thus a combination of the emergence situation and a shortage of qualified personnel was the cause that in this crisis the environmental study with the help of the social media has not been executed in a sufficient way. In the same case, just the municipalities involved in the disaster took little care of the environmental study with the affected municipality to have the main effort.

These observations are essential, since effective crisis communications consider the opinion of the public (Monté, 2011). The citizens’ involvement and needs can be considered as the base for defining the official followed crisis communications strategy. Furthermore, as the social media have transformed every citizen to a journalist with the capability to disseminate info and more self-confidence, it was notable that the involved authorities in the examined cases performed limited or not at all environmental analysis throughout the crisis, overlooking how beneficial this tool is for the preformed crisis communications (Monté, 2011).

Moreover, the involved authorities listened to the emotions - opinions of the citizens in their crisis communications and afterwards used this information as feedback for the followed communication strategy. In this way citizens created a more positive opinion about the executed crisis communications, since they had in some cases the sense that their question or opinion was being heard and was taken into account, which was again vital from a legitimate view.

For example, in the case of the Kordelio’s bomb, more or less an Action Communication Center was arranged at the town hall, with a number of responsibilities, including the environmental analysis and the administration of the official website of the municipality. Their analysis was steered in messages of the traditional media, on relevant websites and the social media, which were being monitoring and checked permanently. Overall the ACC had provided several analyses to the policy team. Built on these, the
policy team could then define their administrative or police interference. These environmental studies gave weight to the needs of the public, which in the beginning dedicated on getting situational awareness, as the time passed, moved more to the reason which generated the disaster (Duin et al., 2012, p.152 -154).

The environmental analysis contributed in the early identification of the flowing rumors on the social media and the more easy way of dismissing them. In this direction, there was the case of a special department of the police in Netherlands, which in order to collect more info and evidence during a crisis, made broadly use of the social media in their tracing process, by establishing from the beginning a specific webpage on Facebook where citizens could exchange relevant videos (Nationale Recherche, 2012). Moreover, this fact illustrates the new opportunities the social media provide as media- and news-sharing tool in crisis communications (NCC, 2010a, p.4).

Additionally, it can be noticed that there is an important contrast at the news collection process of crisis communications of the examined incidents. The main Lesson Learned to this domain from these case studies is that all the participating actors should have concentrated to the environmental analysis. By monitoring the social media persistently they are able to adjust their crisis communications strategy to the dominant perspective emotions and the particular needs of the public, improving in that way the acceptability of the conducted crisis communications. By doing this, the people have the sense that they are being worthy.

3.7 The participants’ news spreading through social media
In one of the cases the involved municipalities used various communications mechanisms with the intention of informing people about the disaster. These devices were used to accomplish the three objectives of crisis communications: meaning, providing sufficient information and limitation of harm (Monté, 2011). It is crucial to notify residents about the situation and provide them with safety instructions. The involved municipalities in order to accomplish the goals of their crisis communications used various means (such as official website, press conferences and releases) to inform the public. But despite the fact that some of the authorities had a certified Twitter account, they did not include the social media in their crisis communications, as there was confusion about the acceptance of the
new media in crises and the absence of proficiency in practicing them, particularly Twitter.

For example, the Municipality of Central Macedonia did not practice the social media throughout the crisis even though they had an operative Twitter account in advance. They used Twitter in minimum degree for informing the public. On the contrary, in the terrorist attacks in Paris the authorities used in extent degree the Twitter to disseminate info and news to the public.

In the crisis communications of one of the examined crises, since many civil services weren’t operational on Twitter from the beginning and there was confusion between the public, some private sites created accounts with the intention of re-tweet messages of official civil services and ones that directed to more informative sites. In addition, it was established an evaluation process by surveying wherein citizens their proposals to the authorities. While these sites worked to the direction of the situational awareness and steered crisis communications to the defined requirements of the people, the involved authorities did not act similarly in all the times.

On the other hand, in the other examined case, from the beginning, the participating actors used broadly the social media and particularly Twitter. In this context the police immediately after obtaining the first report about the incident, sent their official respond on Twitter using their account and afterwards similarly the involved authorities were operative on the social media (Duin et al., 2012, p.146). A remarkable point was that from the starting point of this crisis the number of followers of the involved authorities raised dramatically. Moreover it is indicated that the authorities had intentionally distributed limited press releases as they were assumed as old-fashioned and time-consuming tools of communication depending on the endorsement of the political advisors (Duin et al., 2012, p.154).

As well with the official organizations, a lot of their personnel were active on Twitter in the hours after the incident with their personal accounts, despite the fact that the organization’s account was not active at that moment. The employees did not post any new messages but re-tweeted official messages.

The crisis communications’ basis of some of the involved authorities in the examined crises was to provide situational awareness to the public audience, except for
the info related to figures or private data of the fatalities. Their method was that after the policy makers’ board was conducted, the latest info was published on the official webpage and Twitter account (Duin et al., 2012, p.153).

In the cases where the social media were practiced, this use was in line to the objectives of crisis communications. Primarily the social media had provided info that ensured the situational awareness of the public. Regarding the meaning had mainly been completed with more efficacy and advanced reliability by an official spokesman, due to the emotional influence of the events, rather than a post on Twitter. In this sense, the limitation of harm had been succeeded by providing citizens using social media with safety instructions and guidance, throughout the crisis.

In order to deal with the flowing rumors during the crisis communications in one case, the authorities posted messages on Twitter with accurate info so as to neutralize those whispers (Duin et al., 2012, p.150). For instance about the rumors for the existence of bombs in the other places, the official instructions were to stay away from those regions till the situation would be clarified.

Despite the fact that the social media are an operational tool to refute flowing rumors, this is not an easy task and relies on the times the rumor will be re-tweeted. To confirm that the authorities’ correction messages on Twitter, which include the real situation/information, will be successful, it is vital that the organization’s official account is, in advance of the crisis, operative and has a lot of followers. This is in agreement to the synthesis model of crisis communications, where it is crucial that all the participants to be linked in advance of a potential crisis (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.426-428). In this framework the key players in a crisis must be coordinated about the management of the authorized social media accounts. Thus the social media manager is in charge of spreading-colllecting updated info and developing the official social media accounts with a lot of followers in advance of a potential crisis.

In this framework the critical reasons of the social media’s inclusion to the authorities’ crisis communications are the follows. The social media practice can satisfy the three objectives of crisis communications. Moreover, they are an accessible and rapid tool of delivering info-news to the citizens, following the principles of crisis communications. Linked to openness, the social media can give more clarity to the conducted
communications. Regarding honesty, it embraces that authorities must update the public about their taking actions in order to deal with the crisis. With this in mind for instance, it is vital to let the citizens know that dealing with the whole issue in order to provide them with answers. In that way, the citizens get situational awareness in a speedy manner that leads to the enhancement of their attitude towards the authorities’ contacted crisis communications.

Moreover, the terrorists used social media in high level for spreading their radical ideology and propaganda.

3.8 The Social media in crisis communications plans
In the context of the theoretical framework consideration has been given to the synthesis model of crisis communications that highlights the meaning of collaboration-coordination of the public sector’s civil services in crisis communications. This cooperation can take place from the pre-crisis phase till the after-crisis phase (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p.426-428).

Given the background it is obvious that also in some cases the social media did not play a specific role in the crisis communications plans which were active at the time of the incidents. Some of these plans were invalid or at the time of the crisis were under revision. In the same way, although the social media were not involved in the official crisis plan, some authorities were conscious of the role they could play and included partially them to their crisis communications (Duin et al., 2012, p.153).

3.9 Socials’ media effects on the selected crisis communications
Sometimes in the first examined crisis, the social media did not support the environmental study with feedbacks and in this way they did not offer situational awareness to the public due to the lack of info that could have leaded to massive social disorder. On the contrary, in the other selected case, the social media were practiced in that way, providing during the whole period of the crisis at worst minimum details about the taking actions in a way the citizens were, on a positive degree, pleased. The practice or not of the social media had an impact on the public opinion regarding the performed
crisis communications, related to other elements, that demonstrated their role as another beneficial and vital communication tool (Duin et al., 2012, p.154).

Despite the fact that the involved state actors in the examined incidents did not interact with the citizens because of the emergency situation, they had this option, as a positive effect of the social media is that gives the chance to the authorities to cooperate with the citizens and fulfill their need for answers. Moreover in the examined crises there was a shortage of qualified personnel that was essential to cooperate with the citizens. The social media’s interaction with the public offers the chance to identify the citizens’ needs and the flowing rumors in order to refute them earliest before their expansion.

Furthermore by studying the media and more particularly the social networks, the involved actors, at these crises, could have accustomed their crisis communications plan to the requirements of the people having an impact on the citizens’ evaluation of their image. The outcome from this was useful effects for the status of the participating actors and on the contrary the non/wrong-practice of social media had harmful ones. The reason for this was due to the fact that the crisis communications was adjusted to the audience, as the social media used or not to provide situational awareness.

Moreover, the practice of the social media in the examined crisis communications had several consequences. In this context, the distribution of reliable info via the social media was much more complicated and challenging particularly as various state entities were operating at the same time. With the purpose of the enhancement of the info’s accuracy released to the social media it was crucial to be lined up and also provable. In addition, ordinary individual has transformed to a journalist through the social media, putting in that way nowadays ethics at risk, as in the past professionals usually estimate a moral judgment about what in case or not to be published. Thus, horrible news challenged the public in advance the authorized info channel (Duin et al., 2012, p.152).

One more consequence of the social media growing role in crisis communications was that the part of the traditional media/journalists as source of info in these cases had shrunk and dedicated more on exploring the background information, putting in this way sometimes ethical concern. The effect of this new drift of collecting background info also had impact to the security. While the police was mainly concentrated on researching,
nowadays they have to monitor the social media for flowing rumors with the intention of retaining the control of the crisis situation (Duin et al., 2012, p.156).

Although also other factors can have an influence on the relation between the use and non-use of social media in crisis communications and the way the public evaluates this, the study of the selected cases shows that some of the crisis communications were evaluated significantly less positive than others.

3.10 Overall remarks of the selected crisis communications

Built on the news collection portion of crisis communications, the study reveals that there is an extreme dissimilarity between the selected incidents. Thus in one case only some state participants gave notice to an environmental analysis checking the social media for emotions and opinions among the public, on the other hand in the other crisis all the involved authorities did so. This environmental analysis, which comprised a demanding scanning of the social media, gave to an organization the chance to adjust its crisis communications strategy to the particular feelings, thoughts and needs which were widespread at the specific timing. This was a process that it was very crucial for the examined crisis communications, as the public opinion about the executed ones would perhaps be more affirmative subsequently of the feeling that they had being heard as audience and had the attention on their specific questions and needs. In this context the legitimacy of the organization’s crisis communications was ultimately improved which was a helpful factor of the use of social media in these crisis situations.

The practice of the social media in these crisis communications was vital since it helped to the accomplishment of the three objectives of crisis communications. Therefore, in one incident the authorities was mainly concentrated on using the traditional media in their crisis communications, with a small exception of spreading a small percentage of info through Twitter, on the contrary in another case of crisis communications were mainly performed by the social media. Also, the examination showed that the social media were an accessible and rapid way to disseminate information to the people, which matches with the principles of crisis communications. Following this first principle, openness, the social media easily completed this by making the crisis communications more transparent. Moreover, the updated information that the
social media provided to the citizens offered them situational awareness about the incident, including that authorities informed the public about their activity. In this way, the citizens were informed that the authorities were working in the direction to cover their needs, a fact that finally advanced the public opinion about the conducted crisis communications and their acceptability.

Moreover through the study it was recognized that in the selected cases, the social media were not included in the active crisis communications plans at the time. The majority of these plans were non-operational/invalid and some of them were at the time of the crisis under revision according to the authorities’ crisis plans. In addition, some authorities were conscious of the role the social media could play and included partially into their crisis communications, although they were not involved in their official crisis plan.

The study indicates that the use of the social media in crisis communications had positive along with negative effects. The positive ones were that the social media gave the possibility to adjust the particular crisis communications strategy to the exact questions and needs of the public. This was accomplished by the practice of the environmental analysis and the interaction among social media-public having as a result the transparency of the performed crisis communications. This led in the end to have a more affirmative evaluation by the public opinion and with this the legitimacy of the crisis communications was increased. But the opposite was also occurred in the examined cases, when the used crisis communications did not take into account the public. In this case the citizens’ opinion about them was fallen. Another obstacle of this perception was that the authorities in charge of a crisis faced many difficulties to provide reliable information through the social media. Due to the speed feature of the social media it is very essential in crisis communications to test the offered information by the several organizations and authorities in order to avoid the growth of ambiguity.

Moreover, in the examined terrorist attacks the radical groups of the adversaries used the social media in high extent as a propaganda tool in order to accomplish their goals and spread their ideological framework.
CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis selected crises situations have been examined with the purpose of define which role the social media can play in crisis communications and their involvement with the Hybrid Threats (Terrorism) in the contemporary operational environment. This was firstly defined by concentrating on the part that the social media can have in the collection effort of the authorities regarding about a particular disaster, or more precise, to what degree authorities pay attention on the information citizens post on the social media regarding the crisis event. Moreover the information authorities spread to the people about it and which particular social media tools have been used to do so. In addition, we study the part that the social media have in the active authorities’ crisis communications plans. It has been defined to what range these plans were functional at the time of the crisis and which possible revisions had to be made to these. The latter issue has been the effects from the use of social media in crisis communications.

The examined crises point out that when the crisis started loads of relative info was flowing at the social media. The huge number of tweets related to the events directly illustrates that the important role that Twitter plays in crisis communications today. As a result of this growing acceptance it is essential for the authorities to consider the part that the social media can have in their crisis communications.

Moreover, the examination displays that while in one incident the implicated participants ignored the social media (only the interested safety regions in this disaster paid some consideration) at another event the opposite took place with the authorities to include social media as portion of their crisis communications. This can be done by scanning the tweets posted by the public, which feedbacks can be included in their organizational environmental analysis. Through this detailed analysis the authorities can clarify, concentrate on the information which is requested by the citizens, getting in that way the outside world to the inside their body and developing the capability to adjust their crisis communications strategy to these particular requirements of the public. It is indicated also that the info coming from the social media is very vital in order to build an environmental awareness and achieve in this way the acceptability of the followed crisis communications. Once the citizens got the impression that their requests, notions and
needs are being noticeable by the state organizations, they probably will form a more confident attitude regarding the authorities’ crisis communications.

After a detailed study we conclude that with the support of the social media to the crisis communications several objectives can be achieved and in this sense these new media are a worthy supplementary tool which authorities can practice in their crisis communications in that direction. Above and beyond this, the social media are an accessible and fast way to spread facts to the people following the principles of crisis communications. The Twitter for instance can offer individuals info about an incident through tweets, short messages which contain related material or links with more useful data. Regarding the principle of openess, the social media are following this as they can provide situational awareness to the citizens (also called process information) facilitating in this way the transparent of the conducted crisis communications. This can finally promote the citizens’ opinion about the authorities’ crisis communications and in that way their acceptability.

Even though there are clues that there is a connection among the practice of social media in crisis communications and their evaluation from the citizens, also additional relative influences exist. The study of the selected crises demonstrates that the crisis communications of one case is valued noteworthy less affirmative as the performed ones in another crisis, where the social media have played at least a small role. The practice or not of the social media in crisis communications is linked to their inclusion to the environmental analysis and to the authorities’ ability to adjust their crisis communications to the requirements - needs of the citizens. Moreover interaction with the public through social media offers the possibility to identify which questions are flowing among the users in order to give the right answers. As well with the statement that involving the social media in crisis communications provides a lot of prospects and helpful effects, there are similarly harmful ones.

Thus the social media make it more complex to distribute reliable information due to the fact that quite a lot of authorities participate in crisis communications. In this sense every person has the opportunity to be a journalist, which is a pro for social media but in the same time a number of rules and ethics are getting at risk.
Last but not least, not all the users of social media have the gentlest intents. Terrorist groups for instance may practice them in order to generate harmful and chaotic conditions that will lead to a crisis situation. Study showed how Hybrid Threats, mostly Terrorism, are involved with the Social Media in crisis communications.
RECOMMENDATIONS

While the acceptance of the social media is growing, it is essential for organizations in civil services to focus on the role these new media can have in crisis communications. Even though the possibility for the traditional media to be replaced from these new media is low, the social media could be a worthy supplement to the toolbox of crisis communications with a rising status.

The first recommendation we have as a result of the analysis is that it is vital to adjust the crisis communications strategy to the particular requirements and necessities of the citizens. This can be succeeded by adopting the users’ inputs on the social media as feedback for the environmental analysis, which is the capstone of an effective crisis communications strategy. In the same framework an interaction with the public when a discussion occurs is crucial. If this happens on the social media, the involved authorities must be active that implies they should have accounts on the social media prepared in advance of a possible crisis so that they will be able to join in. In this way if authorities choose to be active on the social media, they will have the opportunity to detect rumors in the initial phase of a crisis and accordingly deal with them by confirming or refuting. One more essential feature is that the crisis communications strategy must be adjusted to the requirements of the public and this will finally result in a more accepted way of performing crisis communications.

Another recommendation is that the authority’s communications department must be active on the social media and has the necessary knowledge, so as to offer speedy - adequate information at the time of a crisis. Thus, there is a need for a crisis website and a Twitter/Facebook account with enough followers prior to the event. If these accounts are not prepared before the crisis, the efficiency of releasing information through social media will probably fall as these accounts will have not sufficient reputation. If for instance the status of the Twitter account is very low this will possibly cause that not many users will be get the information which is released by the authorities. As the practice of the social media in crisis communications demands speed and a rapid response, it is also very essential that the related official personnel of the communications
department, which is in charge of these tools, has the authority to publish/disseminate information about the incident.

We must also make sure that all the information we provide, regardless of the communication source, is verifiable. Making information provable increases its credibility and also makes sure that the public knows that it is provided by an official authority.

The recommendation for cooperation between the official participants is one of the most important, particularly when multiple authorities are involved in crisis. In order to achieve this, the related public sector counterparts must be prepared for a potential crisis by making arrangements about how the crisis communications will be performed and which communication tools will be used. These agreements can help in making sure that each authority, each website and each social medium provides citizens with the same information (Horsley & Barker, 2002, p. 406-428).

Moreover in briefly:

Social media provide an open, commonly accessible way for bidirectional stream of information between the public and the involved security authorities dedicated to the crisis management. For instance, Twitter offers to the public sector authorities a connection tool between them and the public that is global, easy to communicate and does not face any operational drawbacks, as other communications systems do.

Different worldwide disasters offered us several lessons learned that could support the growth of an SOP that will give the capability to various actors to screen, coordinate and integrate their social media feeds throughout crises. In addition to this the authorities need to have always an updated crisis communications plan in which the new media must have a specific role. And as we all know a good plan is the one that has been constantly tested to its limits.

There is a need for future research analyses of the differences between routine and emergency utilization of the social media by emergency organizations. Moreover, Twitter-Mate, Twirus (a tool that notices the most trending topics on Twitter) or related devices can grow into a tool that will assist to crisis communications. Managing the information that is delivered by the public is one more difficulty which the preferable way in order to be overcome is through education rather than regulation.
To summarize, every organization must develop prior to an emergency situation, an official social media account and a website in order to inform and interact with the public. This account must be active before the crisis, so as to have a sufficient number of followers and appropriate links. In that way its credibility will increase and the organization’s crisis communications toolbox will be ready on time. Moreover, there is the necessity for every state entity to establish a Media Operations Center. This Center except that it will be responsible to disseminate info to the public, it will accomplish the analysis of the each audience (local, regional, international) adjusting the communication policy to the needs of the public. Inside the body of the Media operations center, a special department must be nested, dedicate to the new – social media. This social media department must be manned with analysts and subject matter experts, with knowledge of the characteristics of each audience, its culture etc. Furthermore, this department will be responsible for the official account and website, through which the interaction with the citizens will be achieved. These must be the limited capabilities that an organization, whatever size and structure it has, should offer to the direction of effective crisis communications.

As far as I am concerned, and except some gaps mainly referring to the sentiment analysis and the quality rather than quantity approach to the research method which is used, the use of the Social Media Platforms in reporting Wars and Crisis is a step to Knowledge always under the prism of an relevant SOP that will allow multiple responders to monitor, synchronize and integrate their social media feeds during emergencies. A governmental organization that wishes to engage social media as a tool for its crisis communications must first outline the policies and the regulations that will use, along with the description of the level of information’s sharing and through which channels.
REFERENCES


