



Public Alerting by Social Media and Beyond – Advantages and Challenges of Social Media Compared to More Traditional Alerting Tools

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Objectives of OPTI-ALERT WP 2

- How are different types of risks perceived in different socio-cultural and regional contexts?
- What is the impact for an efficient risk communication?
- The perception of risk communication analyzed for different socio-cultural clusters in all participating countries.
- A particular focus lies on the perception of individualized alerting (via SMS, E-Mail, etc.), “traditional” alerting via mass media like radio and TV, and emerging communication channels on the web (blogs, social media, etc.).



Triangulation of Methods

Examination of 7 countries: Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Sweden:

- In-depth interviews with experts
 - Focus group research
 - Explorative interviews with survivors of disasters
(biographical interviews)
 - (Validation of results by CATI)
- ➔ **Innovative methodological social scientific approach that combines: sender perspective with recipients perspective**



3 General rules for alerting



- The choice of the alerting **tool** should correlate with the age of the recipients
- The alert **message** should correlate with the area of residence
- The choice of the alert **sender** should correlate with the respective „national trust context“



The choice of the alerting **tool** should correlate with the age of the recipients

- The younger the recipients of information the more likely the use of new media – though traditional media are used as well



Internet: widely used (PC, smart phones)



Social media: currently considered as just one additional information channel



SMS: considered to be the most important alerting channel



The choice of the alerting **tool** should correlate with the age of the recipients

- The older the recipients of information the more likely the use of traditional media – though increasing use of new media



Radio & TV is most considered to be most important



Increased use of Internet for elder people



Distinguished use of mobile phones: calling vs. SMS

The alert **message** should correlate with the area of residence

- Differences re. risk perception and risk knowledge between rural and urban areas



People feel safer in more urban areas



Factual better knowledge about disasters and coping strategies

The alert **message** should correlate with the area of residence

- Differences re. natural and industrial risk areas



Increased risk perception,
knowledge about disasters &
coping strategies present



No increased risk perception,
dissolution of cognitive dissonance

The choice of the alert **sender** should correlate with the respective „national trust context“

- Trust in authorities



Hugh differences regarding trust in authorities between examined countries!
Knowledge about this is important for meaningful alerting.

If trust in authorities is low → inclusion of otherwise trusted persons for alerting

The choice of the alert **sender** should correlate with the respective „national trust context“

- Trust in media



Again: huge differences between examined countries!

Distinguish between public and private media

Distinguish between information channels/media

3 General rules for alerting



- The choice of the alerting **tool** should correlate with the age of the recipients
 - The alert **message** should correlate with the area of residence
 - The choice of the alert **sender** should correlate with the respective „national trust context“
- **For personalized/regionalized alerting, one has to take into account all three rules and the the respective **risk culture****



Current role of traditional alerting tools

Media (radio, TV, daily newspapers)

- Role of the radio emphasized
- More frequent use than in „peace time“
- Interruption expected, special reporting event:
- Daily newspapers particularly relevant after the crisis



Classical Alerting Devices (sirens, loudspeakers, megaphones)

- Still considered to be the most appropriate tools for immediate attention (automatic alerting!)
- In many countries sirens are considered to be **the** alerting tool – though sirens are not without problems (more pro-active information needed)



Current role of individualized alerting tools

Mobile phones (particularly SMS)

- In all examined countries considered to be the best way of alerting by focus group attendees
- Few public authorities already use it (NL), in other SMS system is under development (F, H, I), other started to consider it (A, D, S)
- Already wide spread for in the field of weather forecast
- Opt-in / registration vs. Automatic SMS (NL)

E-Mail

- Only a minority is registered for receiving officially such a message
- Problem of electrical breakdown was mentioned

Internet

- Large differences between the countries exist (D – I)
- Play a particular role for immigrants
- Large differences in age groups
- Important for tackling the crisis afterwards
- Problem of connectivity (F)
- Search engines – role of online daily newspapers



Current role of social media for public alerting

- Only in NL public authorities make already use of social media; F is considering the use; all other studied countries did either not mentioned it (S, D, I, H) or even considered it not effective (A)
- In most of the examined countries (A, D, F, I) social media are currently not considered as an appropriate alerting tool – this include the younger age groups, too
- Only in Hungary and Sweden of the examined countries the willingness to use Facebook, Twitter, blogs for alerting could be identified in younger age groups.



How to use social media in a sensible way for public alerting ?

- Make social media part of pre-event logistics
- Include the public as partner for alerting
- Sender should be trusted and credible sources
- Particular role in case of predicted crises (weather forecast, epidemics)
- Particularly important for the post-crisis period



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Questions?

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