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# Being social when crisis knocks

Why and how companies use social media to communicate in a time of  
crisis

Master's thesis within Business Administration

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### **Abstract**

Over the past years communication patterns have been changing continuously due to increased public demand for information and knowledge. Numerous social networks and websites have escalated and gained the attention of the academics and practitioners, as well as the business society. Previously scholars researched this field of interest from different perspectives. Thus it could be stated that the emphasis was put on the impact of the certain social media networks in terms of communication strategy. However, no holistic approach has been noticed in regards to why and how companies can use different media simultaneously in order to overcome a crisis situation. This research is aimed at filling the gap within existing literature.

This thesis complements the previous studies and provides a broader understanding upon the role of social media in the crisis communication process by the use of the triangulation method. This approach refers to the implementation of both quantitative and qualitative studies based on a questionnaire addressed to various organisations and by observing the actions taken by the company currently facing the crisis situation. The empirical findings provided concrete data on why companies use social media and how they can be deployed to communicate with the large audience during turbulent times.

The conducted study revealed that even if social media plays an important role in the communication and information sharing, traditional media is still perceived as more trustworthy by the organisations. Therefore, companies in crisis should combine the use of these two kinds of media in their corrective actions taken in order to regain public trust and overcome the crisis.

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# 1 Introduction

Communication, change, innovation and technology are concepts that can be used to describe the modern world that surrounds us. The significantly growing use of the Internet can be seen as one of the most important and innovative ways of communication and shared information used nowadays. Its expansion is impossible to ignore hence numerous researchers; academics as well as market participants are making an effort to understand the complicated nature of this medium (Morris & Ogan, 1996).

It is vital for corporations to find an effective way to communicate and share information with the external environment. Furthermore, they have to keep in mind the constant changes that occur in the behaviour of the consumers who are constantly acquiring new roles in building the image of a company (Schultz, Utz & Göritz, 2011). Consumers are seen not only customers but also “individuals that broadcast personal or second-hand information to their social networks” (Booth & Matic, 2011, p. 185).

The Internet has developed as an important economic sector helping companies to be more innovative and to improve the communication with the public. In addition, the cyberspace allows consumers and companies to connect and exchange information beyond geographical boundaries with extensive ease. However, it also gives people more possibilities to exploit information of organisations (Booth & Matic, 2011).

One of the extremely active and fast-changing areas within the World Wide Web is social media. This phenomenon has been transforming the business environment into a complex and competitive “playground” in which companies need to adopt new technologies in order to cope with the extensive amount of information shared and required by customers.

Social media is considered to play an important role in the social construction and deconstruction of a crisis (Schultz et al., 2011). Unauthorized internal information about a company’s crisis situation can be present in the Internet and cause negative repercussions to the organisation, since it can lead to misunderstanding and implicate a creation of harmful rumours that would circulate on social network sites and blogs. Yet, a company is not able to prevent itself from the bad press if it does not provide certain and needed knowledge about the outgoing crises in its structures to the public on time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In consequence, awareness regarding the opportunities and threats of using social media as a communication channel within an organisation is needed. The data that circulates on the Internet can be easily interpreted and criticized, and therefore it can lead to crises that impact the reputation and the image of the organisation. However, it can also enhance positive reactions if organisations are well prepared and have a good communication flow with the public.

The global social media phenomenon which includes among others sites such as Facebook, Twitter or blogs is gaining prominence in the latest trends of communication. Therefore,

organisations need to develop strategies that can help in integrating any type of media to their business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The company's presence in the social media world is crucial and is gaining in importance, since this trend has increased considerably with more users accessing networking and blogging sites (Booth & Matic, 2011). Companies must be engaged in listening and monitoring the amount of information that circulates through the social websites (Booth & Matic, 2011).

For instance, since these days it is easier for people to follow organisations and share information about them, the word of mouth communication as part of social media can be regarded as a potential trigger that starts a crisis concerning products, services or the company's image (Mongold & Faulds, 2009). Therefore, the new media have become a "viral market" where the word of mouth communication of stakeholders can lead to technological crisis (Dobele, Toleman & Beveland, 2005). In this case companies should learn to adopt more flexible structures that allows them to be transparent and tangible for their customers and also to have the power to positively influence the amount of information accessed and discussed by the public.

Communication is extremely vital in a crisis situation when company's actions influence the public perception of a corporation in turbulent times and it determines if its strong reputation and brand image will be maintained in the post-crisis phase. Social media can be seen as a two-way communication, based on the communication level between the company and the public, and the influence that media has on the organisation. By using a two-way communication companies are able to engage the public in a direct dialogue, offer instant access to information and generate feedback that will help increase the level of credibility, understanding and minimise possible conflicts (Heath, 1998). In this case websites like Twitter and blogs are considered to be ideal in generating the two-way communication, since they can reach a large audience and enable individuals to comment, answer or discuss a certain topic in a comfortable and direct manner (Schultz et al., 2011).

A one-way communication, on the contrary is represented by the traditional mass media where a sender is not able to confirm that the receiver has acknowledged and understood the message by getting the feedback. Therefore, an active interaction between the participants of the communication process can help in ascertaining receiver's opinions, attitudes and ideas (Perry, Taylor & Doerfel, 2003).

Social media as a two-way communication medium can be seen as a "double-edged sword" since apart from generating a possibility to effectively communicate with the public by the use of interactive chats or updating information on social networking sites it creates challenges to deal with several negative aspect such as criticism, subjective interpretations or misunderstandings (Perry et al., 2003).

Nowadays, the use of a corporate site might not be enough. Incorporating social media such as blogs and social network sites may help organisations to provide accurate information to their stakeholders as well as to the shareholders. Maintaining up to date

facts about the crisis situation and the latest developments and solutions incorporated inside the organisation can ease the public anger and be a mile stone on the way to regain public trust (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

On the other hand, providing an accurate level of the newest information cannot guarantee a successful recovery from a crisis. Consumers might be dissatisfied and disappointed by the company's actions which can lead to further complains and can result in compromising the company's image or may even start an internal crisis. Also as a second negative outcome that the use of social media can create, is that employees, which are encouraged to participate on internal blog discussions, might feel disturbed and become reluctant as the result of the negative feedback received from managers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media as a part of the Internet is an area that is present in everyone's life. Researches within this field have become more and more universal since more forms of communication has gained rapidly in importance. Within this thesis the authors examined how and why the social media are used in the communication's strategy of companies that are in the crisis situation and the possible effects on the corporation's reputation were analysed.

## 1.1 Background

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*In the previous section, the authors had provided a general discussion concerning the importance of social media as a communication channel. Additionally, more profound information will be presented in regards to the use of social media in connection with the crisis situation.*

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Since the use of social media as a part of company's communication strategy is rising in importance, several studies have been conducted to describe and explain this phenomenon. Social platforms and networks offer unlimited possibilities of connection between stakeholders and shareholders (Mei, Bansal & Pang, 2010).

Within the paper written by Perry et al. (2003), academics dispute that organisations are able to reduce the damage on their reputation and regain public's trust by incorporating social media into a crisis response. The use of social networks can generate a quick response from a company during a crisis and it can also have the advantage of receiving public feedback (Perry et al., 2003). It is also mentioned by the same authors that new technology and costumer product organisations are the most frequent adopters of this kind of communication (Perry et al., 2003).

These characteristics of social media led to increased interest in investigating their impact on helping to deal and recover from a crisis. Several researchers have focused their attention on the use of the Internet as a crisis management tool, for example DiNardo (2002) examined how the banking industry used this tool to deal with the threat of the Y2K crisis. Additionally, Greer and Moreland (2003) studied how both United and American Airlines incorporated the use of the web into their communication strategy to state their efforts during the September 11 terrorist attacks. Both authors conclude that companies

succeeded in integrating on their corporate website open and consistent information (statements, implications, further directions that were regularly updated) that was addressed to the victims, public or different kind of publicity (Greer and Moreland, 2003). Furthermore, Perry et al. (2003) explored the integration of the Internet into company's crisis communication.

In addition, the study conducted by Mei et al. (2010) describes how companies may contribute to the escalation of their own crises and give answer to the question of what can be done to prevent the company from human-induced disasters. It has stressed the fact that the public reacts more negatively to the human-induced crises than to natural disasters since a company has no influence on external forces, however can be blamed for human inadequate decisions. Cameron, Pang and Jin (2008) and Pang's (2008) contingency theory of strategic conflict management and González-Herrero and Smith's (2008) crisis management model were used to introduce the new media crisis communication model by Mei, Bansal and Pang (cited in Mei et al., 2010). The model describes how organisations can "harness new media to their advantage while implementing safeguards against possible threats posed by the medium" (Mei et al., 2010, p. 144).

In times of crisis companies need to pay attention to how they deliver their messages so others can correctly understand them. The messages addressed to the public should be constantly updated and present coherent information (Perry et al., 2003). It is considered that the earlier and the more precise communication is made the better the outcomes will be for the company and the highest are the chances to survive a crisis (Curtin, Hayman & Husein, 2005). Therefore, social media provide companies with the facility to positively influence online conversations, share promptly information and address a large audience.

In conclusion social media can be regarded as a provocative field of study since information is considered to be just "one click away" and the Internet world tends to evolve and expand more and more. If companies learn how to have a favourable use of the social media then they will be able to reduce costs, avoid potential crises and have a better understanding of their environment (Perry et al., 2003).

The main focus of the study was put on the new social networks, to present why and how companies incorporate them into their crisis communication strategy.

As no extensive research has been conducted in this area the main goal of the thesis is to gather the most recent information and data about the usage of social media in the time of crisis, by analysing communication and social media role in crisis management. The outcomes can be used to support the managerial decision-making process and can help organisations realize what gaps or problems they would have to face without a proper communication strategy. They can use this information to further improve business's development.

## 1.2 Purpose

Researchers and academics have studied the progress of social media and its impact on both the society and companies for many years. Diverse topics have been discussed about the field on how social media influence behaviours and emotions of employees or consumers (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011), or the effects of the usage of the new and the traditional media within an organisation (Taylor & Perry, 2005).

In the academic study we can observe that different authors put more emphasis on exploring the field of social media and crisis communication, but not much attention has been focused on combining these two in order to find new solutions for organisations to overcome the damage created by a crisis (Landau, 2011). Also Landau (2011) suggests that further research is needed in order to observe the way that companies use the new media platforms (e.g.: Twitter, Facebook or YouTube) in their crisis communication plans.

Given the fact that social media represents a severe challenge for the corporate communication strategy and companies' ability to give quick and clear responses, the main purpose of this thesis is to explore why and how companies use social media in their communication strategy in time of crisis. The specific objectives of the study can be briefly outlined as follows:

- To describe why and how the social media are used by companies and depict the characteristics for each question.
- To assess how differences in the company size, industry, the crisis situation faced in the past and the frequency of updating the social media pages.
- To find out if the differences in using social media are influenced by the difficulty of integrating the social media into a crisis communication strategy.

## 2 Frame of Reference

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*This chapter will further outline several definitions as well as a literature review regarding previous studies in the social media and crisis communication field. The main blocks of the research; Social media, Crisis, and Communication will be examined and described in this section with the use of relevant literature.*

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In order to endow better knowledge and understanding of the terms used in this thesis for the reader, the authors created a definition section that contains a short explanation of the terms used. All definitions can be found in the Appendix A.

This section provides a review of previous academic work made by various scholars regarding social media, crisis and communication. Furthermore, the authors of this thesis proposed a diagram that explains the importance of social media in relation to crisis communication and the impact it has at the organisational level and on public perceptions.

The three elements of the diagram (Figure 1) - social media, crisis and communication - interfere with the organisation actions in regards to the measures taken in order to interact with the public and maintain their reputation. This will be further discussed.

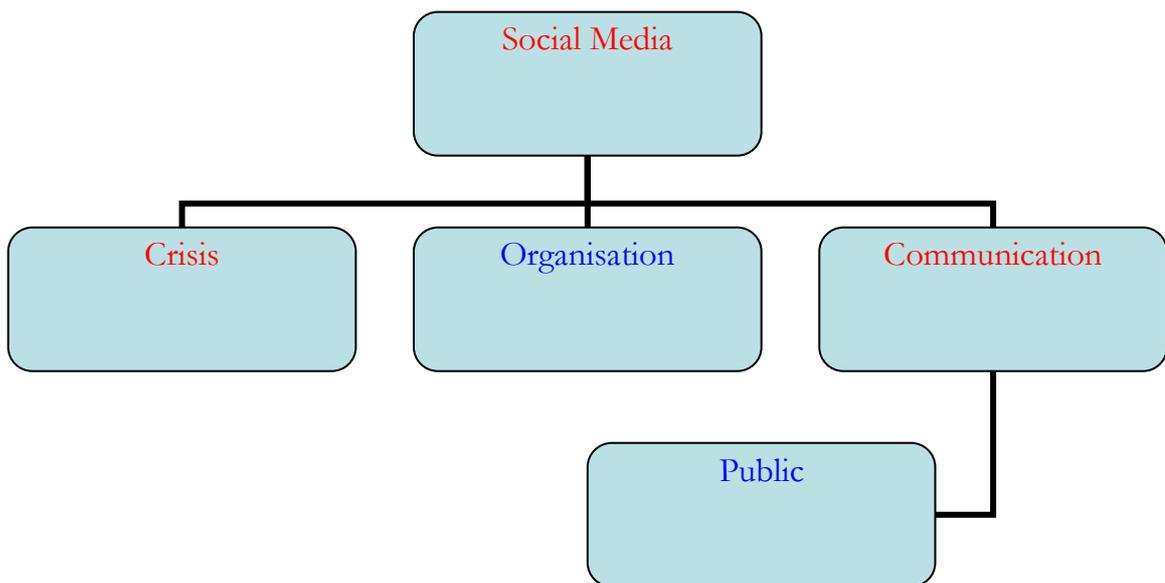


Figure 1 The social media influence on a crisis, organisation, communication and public.

Through extensive research the authors provided a structured literature overview to facilitate the understanding of the previous research in this field and to make a better connection with the relevant studies to the findings of this thesis.

### 2.1 Social media

Social media are known for playing an important role in crisis communication for an organisation. The integration of social media platforms into an organisation structure can

have positive as well as negative aspects, which communicators need to evaluate and take into consideration.

Different aspects of social media have been intensely researched by academics and practitioners, in regards to the *importance that they play in the society and the impact they have on relationship building between individuals or organisations.*

<p><b>Schultz, Utz &amp; Göritz (2011)</b></p>	<p>The authors focused on the characteristics and effects of social media and the role it has on companies' crisis communication. The study was based on the online experiment addressed to individuals regarding the use of online media by organisations that are in a crisis situation.</p> <p>The communication within social media is considered to be well structured and concentrated. For example Twitter uses short messages that force the sender to provide central information. When an organisation reacts to the crisis through social media platforms it will be perceived as more honest and committed in communicating with the public. Thus it is important to explore the social networks where the company chooses to communicate and share information because "impressions and reactions might be based more on the medium than the actual message" (p. 22). In the results of the study it is noted that "the medium turned out to be more important than the message: Although people still talk more about newspaper articles, tweets had the most positive effect on secondary crisis communication and reactions. Also, twitter users share information via different channels. Organisations should therefore pay more attention to twitter, and strategically reflect on their media choice and the target groups' media use" (p. 26).</p>
<p><b>Mei, Bansal &amp; Pang, (2010)</b></p>	<p>The authors emphasised the impact of social media on organisational crises. In this research they also proposed the new media crisis communication model, which states that corporations need to recognize the role and significance of new media in order to overcome the threats that the online environment creates. This model encourages organisations to engage in the online communication, to monitor and scan new information and discussions that take place in the media. For instance corporations should update their websites and create a crisis communication team that has expertise in the virtual world.</p> <p>By observing people's reactions, calibrating the tone of the message and gathering feedback from the public will help companies quickly recognize and react to possible threats.</p> <p>The involvement of the company and the degree of responsiveness is also taken into consideration. For example how the data was shared</p>

	<p>and organized, how effectively the company used the public feedback or how transparent they were in the online discussions. In the last phase of the model, it is suggested that the organisation should monitor and keep the communication channels opened during or after the crisis. This is because they need to keep the public informed with further actions that they take in order to repair the damage and re-establish their reputation.</p> <p>New media can help organisations in a crisis to monitor and broadcast information that circulates in the online environment, but it can also create a new crisis. New media is regarded as a two-way communication channel since it allows users to interact with each other and exchange or share information.</p>
<p><b>Mangold &amp; Faulds, (2009)</b></p>	<p>Social media allow individuals to engage in discussions about companies and their products. The authors see this phenomenon as a “hybrid element of the promotion mix, because in a traditional sense it enables companies to talk to their customers, while in a non-traditional sense it enables customers to talk directly to one another” (p. 357).</p> <p>Since social media covers such a broad variety of word of mouth forums that includes social networks, emails, chat rooms or topic related websites, communicators must engage in these media platforms to positively influence customer discussions and provide up to date information.</p> <p>The authors conclude that although these suggestions are made, not much research has been done in terms of how companies should best incorporate social media into their communication strategies.</p>

Several authors have focused on *how large or small companies use social media* in order to share information and develop a better communication with the external environment (e.g., public, stakeholders, shareholders, journalists).

<p><b>González-Herrero, &amp; Ruiz de Valbuena,</b></p>	<p>Their study investigated 120 medium-sized and large corporations that came from different geographical contexts such as Europe, U.S. and Singapore.</p> <p>The results indicated that larger companies are more involved in adopting social media tools in order to communicate with the public than traditional media. Online media are considered to be a facilitator in information sharing and assure a two-way communication between individuals, organisation and traditional media. Companies enhance credibility, trust and enable feedback when they are integrating into their corporate websites pressroom sections, links and statements that contain information about the organisation actions. The research is</p>
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<b>(2006)</b>	<p>somewhat limited because the authors emphasize only how the organisations engage in different information channels to interact with the journalists more than the public.</p> <p>Although more and more people connect to the Internet to share and seek information, most of the companies are still not aware of the importance and the benefits of integrating social media into their communication plans. Therefore, some improvement is needed in the way that companies use the Internet and social media.</p>
<b>Callison, (2003)</b>	<p>The study focused on investigating how large companies use the Internet in order to improve their relationship with traditional media and the public. The results showed that most of the organisations incorporated within their corporate website: press room sections or media relation links to facilitate the access to information for the public or media reporters. In addition these actions allow the company to be seen as more transparent, approachable and credible and open to communication.</p>

Since *corporate websites* have gained in importance in a crisis situation, a number of authors have researched *the importance and effects* that the use of these sites has in regards to public perceptions, information sharing and reputation of the organisation.

<b>Hong &amp; Rim, (2010)</b>	<p>The research was based on a survey aimed towards the customers of a well-known food company in New York. The purpose of the study was to analyse the effect that the corporate website has upon the public's behaviour. The results indicated that the more engaged customers are in following the information provided by the corporate website the more it will enhance positive word of mouth communication, trust and relationship building with the organisation.</p>
<b>Campbell &amp; Beck, (2004)</b>	<p>The study focused on observing the capability of corporate websites to provide up to date information for the large public, as well as helping companies to protect their reputation and engage in other social media platforms. The research consisted of the examination of eight companies that were connected to media platforms. The results showed that if companies use the corporate website as well as other social media tools in order to provide consistent and updated information, they will be more capable of protecting their reputation and gain public trust, feedback and legitimacy.</p>
<b>Kent, Taylor &amp;</b>	<p>The authors looked at the importance of corporate websites in order to keep stakeholders informed and to protect their reputation. Within the paper it is stated that organisational "web sites provide a controlled channel through which they can communicate with stakeholder publics and the media" (p. 63). The results indicated that</p>

<b>White, (2003)</b>	when corporations use social media to engage in direct dialogues and provide helpful information to the public they will better overcome crisis situations thanks to the possibility to gather a feedback, monitor behaviours and expectations of stakeholders as well as to accomplish their goals.
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Some academics like Perry and Taylor (2005, 2003) and Doefel (2003) have focused on *social media as a communication facilitator during organisational crises* and they further adopted a five media tactic approach in order to describe how corporations integrated the online environment into their crisis communication plans.

<b>Perry, Taylor &amp; Doerfel, (2003)</b>	The study states that communication through the Internet “can help organisations communicate decisions quickly during a crisis to stakeholders and generate feedback from public or influence environments” (p. 207). Online communication enhances a faster response and a better dialogue between the company and individuals. The corporation can save time and resources by using online networks, as well as helping to monitor public concerns and expectations. This can lead to reducing the reputation damage created by the crisis and regaining trust from the public.
<b>Taylor &amp; Perry, (2005)</b>	<p>The authors stated that communication through online platforms influence the way in which organisations connect with traditional media and the public. The research focused on the positive and negative aspects of adopting the Internet into a company’s organisational crisis strategy.</p> <p>Five media strategies were addressed in order to ease the process of media integration into the organisation’s crisis response. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dialogue communication by supporting online responses from the public.</li> <li>2. Providing links with useful information about the organisation.</li> <li>3. Up to date information and monitoring continuously the environment during crisis.</li> <li>4. Engaging in social network sites that allow video content materials.</li> <li>5. Adopting an online chat communication to ensure a better involvement in communicating directly with the public.</li> </ol> <p>The results illustrate that companies incorporate social platforms into their crisis response because they allow them to easily share and update information and engage the people in participating in the online discussions and providing feedback. It also confers the</p>

	<p>possibility for the organisation to better explain and address the issue to the large public.</p> <p>Although it presents a lot of opportunities some organisations refuse to integrate social media into their communication plans due to "legal restrictions, technological limitations, fear of copycat attacks, or the public relations department's lack of control over Web site development" (p. 216).</p>
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Various researchers gave a particular interest in *examining different characteristics of the social media networks*. The studies and findings were focused on the benefits that companies can obtain from adopting these networks in communicating and connecting with the external environment.

<p><b>Stephens, Malone &amp; Bailey, (2005)</b></p>	<p>The research examined the need for organisations to engage into social media networks in order to facilitate the communication of the technical aspects of the crisis directed to stakeholders. During a crisis some of the key public will identify the need, that the company should give technical explanations about the situation. Therefore, organisations need to build up message strategies that communicate these details by using additional information such as links and open dialogues. Online media offers individuals more knowledge about a certain topic of interest as well as providing emotional support. Thus "crisis communication research is increasingly concerned with how organisations can use new media such as Web sites and blogs to better communicate with their stakeholders" (p. 229- 230).</p>
<p><b>Baron &amp; Philbin,</b></p>	<p>The study stated that when a crisis takes place the message would appear first through social media networks such as blogs and micro-blogs. One of the most complete social networks that facilitate the distribution of information is Twitter. Twitter allows users to directly connect to other social networks sites such as Facebook, YouTube videos, or sites that address a specific issue. Organisations in a crisis situation try to find the best ways to incorporate social media into their crisis strategy. Communicators need to be aware of the social media role within the organisation and how to make the best use of it in order to protect their reputation and encourage positive public perceptions.</p> <p>The authors proposed three key elements that need to be taken into account when incorporating social media into the companies' plans. The first element touches upon the importance of media as an environment that creates and supports a two-way open communication between the organisation and the public. The second element refers to the engagement that the company must</p>

<p><b>(2009)</b></p>	<p>take in building relationships with the public by supporting open conversations, updating information and generating feedback. The last element focuses on gaining knowledge about the positive and negative aspects that social media have on the organisational level and to be aware of the impact they have on communication with the external background.</p> <p>Social media can impact an organisation in a crisis in two ways. Firstly the word of mouth communication can affect how the organisation is perceived during turbulent times, even if the company is already engaged in online conversations with the public. At the same time it can bring about positive outcomes since it engages companies in direct conversations and information sharing with the large audience. It can be regarded as a tool that complements the traditional media and facilitate the monitoring of public reactions. When integrating social media within the organisation it is essential to make sure that the costumers understand what social media implies and that they are constant users.</p>
<p><b>Palen, Vieweg, Liu &amp; Hughes, (2009)</b></p>	<p>The authors studied the aspects of the Internet in regards to communication and information sharing during the crisis of Virginia Tech. The results suggested that when a company is corresponding with the public through social media and networks like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, the information provided is regarded as more precise and updated. Individuals will gain a better understanding of the situation and they can generate feedback that helps the organisation overcoming the crisis.</p>
<p><b>Lange, (2008)</b></p>	<p>The study focused on the use of YouTube as a social network site that has the property to generate video content. Integrating this site into the organisation strategy during a crisis enables companies' usage of direct messages and images effectively and therefore captures the attention of the public.</p> <p>Although, it is important for organisations to complement their websites with additional social networks, communicators have to pay attention to different types of audience in order to meet the expectations of each of them.</p>
<p><b>Kwak, Lee, Park &amp;</b></p>	<p>The authors focused on the influence of Twitter as a social media communication channel between companies and the public, as well as facilitator of information sharing. People are seen as major “consumers of media content” that engage in gathering information from various types of media (traditional media and new media) in order to get more understanding about certain organisational crisis or issues that occur in everyday life.</p>

<b>Moon, (2010)</b>	Twitter is designed to employ and facilitate all the media content in one place. Information can be easily acquired directly by people that are connected or indirectly by retweets. “No matter how many followers a user has, the tweet is likely to reach a certain number of audience once the users tweet starts spreading via retweets” (no page). Therefore, by the use of Twitter companies can send short and concentrated information that can contain links of: press conferences on YouTube, corporate statements on their website and news from other sites of interests, at the same time capturing a large audience in a short time.
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To conclude, social media can be regarded as a broad topic since extended researches have been made in order to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon. Organisations should pave the way and carefully integrate social networks into their strategies in order to facilitate communication and to better understand the needs and expectations of public by having direct conversations in a virtual environment. It should be kept in mind that although it presents various advantages and opportunities, social media can harm organisations and people if not used correctly. For instance companies can find themselves facing a new crisis because they are unable to control the information flow and word of mouth that circulate in the online world and people can feel deceived by the lack of commitment from organisations.

## 2.2 Crisis

In the previous section it was said that social media could be seen as a facilitator, a platform where companies can communicate and share information with the public in order to overcome a crisis situation. Although it may bring many benefits in the communication strategy of an organisation, social media can also trigger new crises that can affect the organisations’ reputation and image. In this section the emphasis on previous studies done by academics regarding crisis types and models will be put forward.

Nowadays, more consideration for the crises that are produced in the online environment has been given. Researchers have investigated *how a crisis situation disrupts the functioning of an organisation and what actions companies should adopt in order to cope with the new challenges presented in the virtual world.*

<b>Palen, Vieweg, Liu &amp; Hughes, (2009)</b>	<p>These authors have focused on informatics crisis that rely on the “status of the technological communication infrastructure” (p. 2) through which “social media services provide new ways for people to interact both within and outside the spatial bounds of the crisis event” (p. 2).</p> <p>In informatics crisis it is suggested that the information shared by the organisation should approach the expanded public and not only to key stakeholders of the company. “Therefore, crisis informatics views emergency response as an expanded social</p>
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	<p>system where information is disseminated within and between official and public channels and entities” (p. 3). By activating in the technological environment the company will be able to measure and control conversations made on the online platforms, as well as enhance trust and act in a responsive way to the public needs for information.</p>
<p><b>González-Herrero &amp; Smith, (2008)</b></p>	<p>These academics analysed how companies can use online technologies in the time of a crisis in order to observe and influence public discussions. Another focus was also made on how organisations can introduce social media platforms into their crisis communication plan to keep the communication lines open during and after the crisis. The authors stated that by integrating social networks into the crisis response strategy an organisation will be able to efficiently scan, monitor and control the discussions and information that circulates within the Internet between communicators. If left unattended, the word of mouth communication can further damage the image of the company during the crisis.</p> <p>Crises impact the corporation depending on the preparation level or measures taken in order to share information and keep the public updated. “Belonging to communities and understanding the concerns of the communities will help them build relationships, spot opportunities, and prevent crises” (p. 150). It is also suggested that when dealing with online crisis, companies should take legal action in order to deal with “anti-websites” made by individuals or employees.</p> <p>Some suggestions on what kind of actions companies should take during online crises are presented as well. Corporations should use dark websites immediately when the crisis occurs, use extra links that provide additional information about the situation, have a well-structured platform to communicate, involve top management in communicating online with the stakeholders and “combine the use of online media with traditional media” (p.151).</p>
<p><b>Hallahan, (2009)</b></p>	<p>These authors argued that when the crisis takes place within cyberspace, it damages the organisation status and it generates public distrust.</p> <p>In order to better understand the effects of the crisis produced in the online environment, the researchers divided the crises into three categories; unintended service drop outs, negative word of mouth communication and outside critics (traditional</p>

	<p>media).</p> <p>The reason why the cyberspace crisis occurs is because people have open access to the information and through social media networks they have the power to influence, communicate and control the environment. Therefore, organisations can easily be victims because of negative rumours or incorrect information that circulates within the Internet or traditional media.</p> <p>Organisations should use new media in order to communicate in times of crisis and built relationships with their followers in order to enhance trust and a positive feedback.</p>
<p><b>Liu, Austin &amp; Jin, (2011)</b></p>	<p>The academics brought to their research “the blog - mediated crisis communication model”, which helps the organisation monitor and influence the public discussions within the virtual medium.</p> <p>Managers need first to identify what will be the proper medium to use in order to correspond and exchange information with the outside environment and after focus on how to address and respond to the public needs during the crisis. Organisations should focus on the blogs that are used intensely by the key public.</p> <p>This evaluation tool will help the company identify response strategies in accordance to their followers’ needs and expectations. The authors identified four types of groups that organisations need to monitor during and after a crisis situation. These are: people that search for information, individuals that write about the crisis, people that are not exposed to the information and the media. Thus the use of blogs provides word of mouth communication where the communication is transmitted, shared and analysed.</p> <p>After identifying the key blogs where communication in shared and promoted intensely, organisations need to monitor the discussions. It is essential for companies to provide proper and clear information in order to reduce the rumours that may negatively affect their reputation. Gathering public support and feedback can have positive effects on reducing rumours.</p> <p>Companies adopt different responses in times of crisis and their character change from denial of the situation, blaming third parties, apologies, victims or acting responsible and taking measures in order to overcome the problem.</p> <p>The authors bring into discussion the social mediated crisis</p>

	<p>communication model that implies “that publics use social media during crises for the following three motivations: issue relevance, information seeking/sharing, and emotional venting/support” (p. 345). The model was separated in order to capture “(1) how the source and form of crisis information affect organisations’ response options and (2) recommended social-mediated crisis response strategies” (p. 346).</p> <p>This model illustrates the relationship between the organisation in crisis and the “story tellers” that generate the information, the media followers that consume the information and other individuals that in an indirect way interfere with the organisation. According to the situation, companies can evaluate and respond to the crisis situations in accordance the requirements of the public need for communication.</p>
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Some of the researches have focused more on *the crises that are provoked by rumours and negative word of mouth communication*. Some suggestions upon what actions companies’ should adopt in these kinds of situations are stated.

<p><b>Thelwall &amp; Stuart, (2007)</b></p>	<p>The academics put emphasis on the public relations crisis. This relates to various circumstances in which organisations must engage quickly in communicating with the public in order to avoid negative word of mouth discussions.</p> <p>The authors have used some guidelines proposed by Martin &amp; Boynton in order to minimise the harmful effects of the media during an organisational crisis. Thus the corporation should: react quickly to the public needs; be truthful; have a constant information stream; show consideration for people affected by the organisation’s crisis situation, as well as choosing suitable persons that will directly communicate with the public during and after the crisis (cited in Thelwall &amp; Stuart, 2007).</p>
<p><b>Kerkhof, Schults &amp; Utz, (2011)</b></p>	<p>Nowadays a crisis can take place within social networks platforms such as Twitter, Facebook or other blogs of interest. The author denotes that organisations need to act fast in order to avoid negative word of mouth communication caused by the crises. The organisation needs to adopt communication strategies that capture different types of public or stakeholders. This will enhance an effective and efficient response towards the public needs. It is important to consider that these approaches might also be depended on the various types of crisis. For instance, “in case of a crisis for which the organisation has little responsibility (e.g., cancellation of flights due to the ash cloud), informing the public might be enough”</p>

	<p>(p. 76).</p> <p>Therefore, it is important that prior to adopting communication responses the organisation needs to identify the nature of the crisis and understand the effects it has upon the external and internal environment.</p>
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Other researchers have directed their attention on the types of *the crises generated by human or accidental actions*. They also illustrate how companies can take measures in order to prevent or overcome these situations that damage their operations.

<p><b>González-Herrero &amp; Pratt, (1998)</b></p>	<p>In this study the authors analysed two types of crisis that affect organisations.</p> <p>Human or organisational crises are determined by individual's actions and they can be prevented or positively influenced "by an appropriate and a timely management intervention" (p. 14). Some examples of these crises could be strikes or problems regarding the quality of the services provided by the company. The authors suggest that in this situation the company should react immediately in order to avoid the crisis and reduce negative outcomes.</p> <p>Another type of crisis mentioned is accidental crises. Since this types of crisis is based on external factors and do not depend only on the individual's decisions, organisations are put in the position of not being able to avert the crisis. In conclusion the academics propose that organisations should act in an effective way in order to respond quickly to the situation, as well as evaluate the performance and identify future actions that will be taken after the crisis.</p>
<p><b>Greyser, (2009)</b></p>	<p>The focus of the research is put on the way in which crises affect the corporation and some suggestions are given upon the procedures the companies should take in order to save their brand reputation.</p> <p>First of all the company has to be aware of how their operations affect the market, by balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the brand.</p> <p>Communication is considered to be a very important factor in a crisis situation since it helps built the reputation and identity of the organisation. Therefore, more and more companies should engage in introducing social media networks into their crisis plans. This will enhance public trust and positive thinking towards the organisation and its actions, and will decrease the</p>

	<p>level of damage of the crisis.</p> <p>Corporations should act in a responsible manner towards the public and have leaders that are capable of persuading, control and understand the external environment. This will be extremely beneficial in a crisis situation since it will mobilise resources and people quickly, as well as it will transform the company in a powerful and credible source.</p>
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By analysing the work of mentioned researches the conclusion can be made that crisis plays an important role in the organisational life cycle. Corporations need to identify the types of crises and employ good communication strategies according to the needs and requirements of each of them. Therefore, organisations in crisis situations need to adapt to the necessities of their public by sharing information and show that they are reliable.

### 2.3 Communication

Within the previous section different aspects of crisis research have been offered. Nowadays crisis can result within the online media that engages people to communicate and share information about the negative or positive actions that companies take during troubling times. Therefore, organisations need to understand the online environment and learn how to effectively communicate with the broader public. Adopting a communication strategy in the online conversations with the public will minimise the effect of the crisis and will facilitate positive feedback. This section will provide information about earlier studies made by academics in regards to the importance of communication within social media and organisational crisis.

Researchers have directed their focus on *the communication strategies that companies adopt in turbulent times* and describe how these actions can affect the organisation.

<p><b>Benoit, (1997)</b></p>	<p>This author brought into discussion the “theory of image restoration discourse”, which encloses the commitment of the company to take corrective actions. During a crisis companies need to identify the key public and address their concerns according to their importance. The theory emphasises on five types of messages used by companies in crisis situations. These are: denial of the problem (this leads the company in shifting the blame on others); evasion of responsibility (the company responds to an offensive act); reducing negative and offensive messages, through the engagement past or future positive actions; taking corrective actions in order to remediate the situation and prevent future problems; and mortification which is based on the company’s actions of admitting mistakes and apologizing.</p> <p>In this case the author suggests that companies should avoid</p>
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	<p>the mortification phase since it might lead to law suits from the victims or attract more conflicts. Therefore, companies should take responsibility during crisis and communicate openly with the public, in order to gain trust and prevent more damage.</p>
<p><b>Huang, (2006)</b></p>	<p>The author emphasizes on communication strategies in relationship to the media and on the communication strategies adopted by companies. These are: denial (when the company refuses to take acknowledge the situation and to take action); excuse (when the organisation adopts statements that do not hold them accountable for the occurred problem); justification (when companies use messages to give explanation for their actions, in order to reduce the effect of the crisis); and concession (when the company takes total responsibility upon the situation and further involves in taking corrective actions towards the public and environment to rebuilt their trust and image). The researcher suggests that the use of these actions within the crisis situation will increase positive perceptions and reduce the damage upon the reputation of the company, if each of the strategy will be used in accordance to the specific situation.</p>

Other academics have emphasised on *the two-way communication approach and the type of messages* companies need to adopt in order to connect with the public and engage positive reactions.

<p><b>González-Herrero &amp; Smith, (2008)</b></p>	<p>These authors brought into discussion “whether the traditional one-way corporate approach and tone is still suitable in the new, more participative, online business environment, or whether companies should use a different tone, language, and attitude when engaging with their audiences on the Internet in a crisis situation” (p. 143).</p> <p>Within the research it is stated that when companies engage in communicating through social media networks (two-way communication) the audiences are expecting clear and transparent information as well as dialogs that contain a “human voice”. Thus “people want companies to take part in a conversation as human beings with names, points of view, and an ability to listen”(p. 150).</p> <p>In order to overcome crises companies must engage in direct and open conversations with the public, which will reduce the negative impact of the crisis and will enhance public trust. Rumours affect the organisation’s well function. They start online “or might also jump to the real world being considered as truthful by the mainstream media, which would thereby</p>
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	<p>multiply the negative impact of the crises” (p. 146). Therefore, it is essential to follow public conversations within social media and try to influence or control the negative word of mouth.</p> <p>The companies need to understand that taking social actions within “the online world require greater openness and a more human voice” (p. 146). The two-way communication process allows the companies to identify the key issues that need quick and honest responses that will lead to avoidance of negative world of mouth conversations.</p>
<p><b>Schoenberg, (2005)</b></p>	<p>The author expresses that in a time of crisis organisations need to engage in a two-way communication in order to monitor public discussions, and respond to the customer demands. Companies need to manage the information flow positively in order to provoke “desired reactions and responses that help regain control over the situation and people involved” (p. 5). The information during crisis needs to be regularly updated and the communication with the public needs to be constant.</p> <p>What is more, online rumours can require a demanding response, as well as they can produce more damage to the organisation. Therefore, companies need to be aware of the information that flows within the Internet about the crisis situation and keep up with the expectation of the public.</p>
<p><b>Yang, Kang &amp; Johnson, (2010)</b></p>	<p>The study focused on the individual perceptions about crisis communication messages and aimed to observe “how certain forms of crisis communication narratives (i.e., salience of narratives, openness to dialogic communication, and source credibility) can be optimally used to enhance better account acceptance of crisis responses” (p. 474).</p> <p>The authors found that individuals communicate more during a crisis for the following reasons: when the information about the crisis is poor; when the information shared comes from a credible source and when the conversation engages public feedback. It was concluded that using an effective communication during crisis would engage a public feedback and reduce negative public perceptions.</p>

Some authors have highlighted in their studies how organisations in crisis can *benefit from using blogs in order to communicate with the external environment*, and what *type of messages* should companies employ in their conversations with the public.

<b>Kelleher, (2009)</b>	<p>The author stated that when companies communicate through the use of blogs, people perceive the company as using a more informal language. It is emphasized that “conversational human voice and communicated relational commitment correlated positively with trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality” (p. 172). The use of blogs can lead “in lowering in participants’ perceptions of the severity of an organisational crisis” (p. 177). Therefore, companies need to show commitment in maintaining open and transparent discussions with their audience.</p>
<b>Sweetser &amp; Metzgar, (2007)</b>	<p>The research focused on the impact that blogs have in crisis communication strategies. The use of blogs during crisis can help companies send messages in a more personal or human voice way, and allow a fast response during turbulent times.</p> <p>The findings of this study indicated that when companies communicate through blogs the public perceptions that the organisation is in crisis would decrease.</p> <p>The authors suggest that “organisations in crisis should continue to employ open communication practices during crisis situations and consider adopting blogs as another tool through which to disseminate official messages” (p. 342).</p>
<b>Kelleher &amp; Miller, (2006)</b>	<p>The study emphasised on how blogs are used by companies in order to gain “relational outcomes such as trust, commitment, control mutuality, and satisfaction” (p. 396). Blogs are perceived by the organisations “as being open to dialog, welcoming conversational communication, and providing prompt feedback” (p. 399).</p> <p>In their finding the authors identified a connection between the type of message used and the relational outcomes. “In other words, conversational voice, which was perceived to be greater in the blog condition than in the non-blog condition, appears to be an appropriate relational maintenance strategy in online contexts” (p. 408).</p> <p>The researchers concluded that blogs offer companies the opportunity to maintain open and honest conversations, which “may be an important part of the process of building and maintaining computer-mediated relationships” (p. 410).</p>
<b>Stephens &amp; Malone,</b>	<p>The authors referred that during troubling times companies need to direct their focus on communicating with the wider public in order to protect their reputation. It has been noticed that the media where a company chooses to communicate and</p>

(2009)	<p>the types of messages they transmit have a great significance. The messages are built to target different types of audience and influence their perception on how the organisation is managing the crisis.</p> <p>Communication plays an important role in a crisis since “victims and other public can turn to each other for informational, technical, and emotional support, [...]” (p. 231). During crisis the participants in the conversations need emotional support and updated information. The study identified that when organisations use blogs in order to communicate with the public they will be able to react and respond quickly to the needs for their audience, by provide them with accurate information.</p>
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To conclude this section we can state that communication can be regarded as an important factor that helps the companies in crisis to communicate with the large public and convey messages in order to reconstruct their image and overcome further damages.

### 3 Method

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*The study at hand aims to examine why and how companies communicate in times of crisis by the use of social media through the assessment of one relevant case study (qualitative method) as well as incorporating a quantitative study based on a structured questionnaire addressed to different companies that operate in different industries around the world. The following chapter will elaborate on the research approach and describe the chosen research methods, sampling, reliability and validity issues as well as limitations of the study.*

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#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design has to be carefully chosen depending on the objectives of the study. In order to answer the research question the important information has to be collected. The research question as a first step of the research process has been formulated and defined in the purpose section. During this phase the emphasis was put on the familiarisation with the topic and choosing the appropriate factors that could be measured and which might have an influence on company's decisions regarding social media.

Based on the research question, the research design was decided upon. For this research exploratory design was chosen by the use of both quantitative and qualitative exploration. The qualitative research was conducted by analysing a case study built on observations of how Costa Cruises Company used social media to communicate in the crisis situation when the Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia partially sank on the night of 13 January 2012. The primary purpose of incorporating the case study was to investigate how the social media were used in the time of crisis. By exploring the way that the social networks were used in the recent crisis situation the authors were able to connect the qualitative research with the results from the case study in order to compare what similarities or differences can be found between companies' statements and a real example of using social media. Additionally, the qualitative design was chosen as the most appropriate to find an answer to the research question. This design enabled the examination of specific relationships between variables by the use of relevant variables and scales in order to answer the research question and achieve the research objective. The questionnaire had been constructed and a pre-test conducted to ensure its unambiguity.

The questionnaire was conducted once using a single sample by sending the questionnaire to the previously chosen set of the companies by social media websites. Hence the research was structured accordingly to the single cross-sectional design, which means that the information from a chosen sample was obtained only once (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This also implies that the study was based on a descriptive framework with the major objective to give a description of specific characteristics in order to answer a research question of why and how social media are used in the crisis communication.

#### 3.2 Research Method

Benoit and Holbert, (2008) stated in their article: that "two distinct quantitative or qualitative methods can be combined in mixed methods research" (p.615). In order to shed

light on how companies use social media to communicate in the times of crisis and to provide a better understanding upon the results of the research a quantitative and qualitative research methods were chosen (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Campbell and Fiske, (1959) are known as the first authors that introduce this new technique of multimethod matrix modelling, called triangulation, which uses more than one research method in order to arrive at the same conclusions by having a more in depth analysis and less variance errors (Benoit & Holbert, 2008). Also the limitations of the research methods can be better overcome by aligning quantitative and qualitative work together to provide a unique insight to the gathered information which could not be obtained in a separate way (Benoit & Holbert, 2008).

### **3.3 Quantitative Study**

A self-administered questionnaire allowed gathering data from a relatively large and wide-ranging sample and was fairly easy to administer. Moreover, this survey technique enabled the collection of data that is consistent due to the given fixed-response alternative questions, which simplifies the process of coding, analysis and interpretation (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

The quantitative research method enabled answering the research question by gathering the required data to quantify relationships among the sample. According to Benoit & Holbert (2008) quantitative research gives a more general overview across the studied context and focuses on analysing “variables such as size, frequency and intensity” (p. 622).

In order to answer the research question a descriptive quantitative research was conducted. Descriptive research illustrates the sample’s demography at a certain moment in time. This method has been employed to help discover the ways that companies use social media in times of crisis as well as why they are employed.

The companies have been chosen upon the researcher’s knowledge and perceptions. Hence the sample was not a random sample, which is another factor that prevents the authors from being able to generalise the results to a whole population. Since the sampling relied mostly on the personal judgement a non-probability sampling method was used. Moreover, this particular sample is an imperfect representation of the companies using social media in the times of crisis hence a random sampling error might occur (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). A sampling frame error may occur since the sample does not accurately represent the population.

The first step in the process to identify companies involved the creation of social network accounts on websites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. After the accounts had been created the appropriate companies were found and a connection with companies, organisations and corporate representatives established. The well-known international companies as well as smaller ones with a presence on the social media sites have been selected as appropriate to take part in the study. Random companies from the largest and best known which operate in countries all over the world to the smaller regional ones have which have been chosen. Additionally companies cooperating with the Science Park in

Jönköping were contacted to cover the regional operating companies. The authors made an effort to cover several different industries while deciding upon the sample. One of the reasons for differentiating companies over their size is the assumption that small companies are more likely to respond however bigger ones have been using social media more and often have specialised communication departments. Due to the origin of the researchers and the languages spoken besides big international concerns mainly companies from Sweden, Romania, Poland, Germany, Mexico and Spain has been contacted. When it was possible a Social Media Communication Department Team webpage was contacted. This approach enabled obtaining direct and specific information since the team's function is to integrate social media into the organisation's communication strategy.

### **3.3.1 Questionnaire Design**

As a prerequisite to the study the acknowledgment of the assumptions associated with the research question was made. Next step in the design process was to decide what kind of information was needed in order to meet the survey's objectives. The researchers gave a careful consideration to the topic and also examined previous studies to gain an understanding of the other researchers' perspective. Additional help was provided by the secondary data and the awareness of the previous work, similar problems described and what has not yet been examined or researched. The frame of references was an inspiration for the researchers, who gained information about which areas haven't been extensively researched and what can be done to fill the gap in the present studies. Consequently, other questionnaires were inspected to gather information and ideas about how to approach the topic and how to present the survey questionnaire. A list of objectives and goals was made in order to capture all information needed and the questionnaire was kept short.

The most important aspect while designing the questions is the fact that they should be shaped in a way to secure the respondents capability and willingness to answer them. Additionally questions must ensure obtaining sufficient information in order to investigate the purpose of the research.

Moreover, the questionnaire design should aim to minimise possible errors. To minimize random sampling errors the survey targeted mainly to the companies who were already using social media. By distributing the survey via social media websites and asking what type of media companies are currently using, the random sampling error could be avoided. Furthermore, an easy to understand language has been used while creating the questions. However, since the survey was addressed to the companies' using social media it was possible to include some business language.

The questions did not have forced answers, which mean that a survey participant could continue the survey with an unanswered question. This was to prevent companies from feeling constrained to answer all questions since some organisations are legally controlled and forbidden to share some information. The neutrality of the questions was ensured by avoiding incorporation of leading questions into the questionnaire in order to prevent them from suggesting to the participants a particular answer and therefore to create bias. The authors did not provide a neutral response since it was supposed that a considerable

amount of the respondents would not choose this answer. This helped to avoid bias in the results by choosing the neutral answer while feeling indifferent. Instead the respondents had to take a position either positive or negative towards a certain statement.

The answers are constructed according to a balance Likert scale with an even number of answer possibilities since both positive and negative answers are of interest for the study. A scale from 1 to 6 was used without a neutral response. In addition to interval scale, nominal scale was used. The respondents were asked to choose the answers from a range of alternatives. Several open-ended questions were given to ask the respondents to formulate their own reflections about the way in which social media can be used in the time of crisis and to state a country that they operate in and their industry. The answers were coded into a response scale after the data collection.

A brief introduction in the beginning of the survey was made explaining the intentions, why the data has been collected and to reassure respondents that the information is entirely anonymous. The researchers were aware that asking for personal information such as demographics may irritate respondents and negatively influences the response rate. Hence these questions had been placed at the end of the survey questionnaire to encourage the companies to complete the survey, since these questions do not require major effort to fill in. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

### **3.3.2 Question Categories**

For a better understanding of the factors influencing the way in which the social media are used in times of crisis fifteen questions were grouped in six question categories. By defining the question categories the key elements that are involved in the process of communication with the public via social media could be determined. Questions were grouped according to the objective and the goal that they help to investigate. All questions in a particular category provide the researchers with similar types of information. The description of each category is presented in the Appendix C.

### **3.3.3 Sample and Data Collection**

Before the survey was distributed among the companies using social media like Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn a pre-test was conducted in order to ensure the unambiguity and clarity of the questions and the question order. The pre-test was performed with three companies whose constructive feedback led to introducing some changes and ensured the meaningfulness and validity of the questionnaire to the respondents within the sample (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This allowed detecting errors connected to phrasing of words, order of questions and the structure of the questionnaire (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

A direct message or a tweet containing information about the research and a link with the questionnaire was sent to 132 companies on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Additionally 80 companies cooperating with the Science Park in Jönköping were contacted by sending an e-mail with the short description of a study and the purpose and a kind request to fill the questionnaire. The list of the companies that were contacted can be found in Appendix B. When it was possible social media departments were addressed. The regularity can be

observed concerning the existence of the social media teams on the different social websites. Research showed that this kind of department is more common to be present on Twitter rather than Facebook or LinkedIn. Furthermore, responses were voluntary and all data was treated confidentially. All responses were compiled together and analysed as a group hence the identities of representatives and organisations that took part in the research has been kept private.

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. The sample control, which refers to, the ability of the survey to reach the units within this particular sample effectively and efficiently can be seen as rather low (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). As the online questionnaires were used in the study the researchers had no control of who was giving the answers, if the units responsible for external communication were addressed or if they were not influenced by anyone or disturbed by anything during giving the responses.

In total, 212 surveys were distributed with 72 respondents and 54 valid surveys that contributed to the research. Surveys with many missing answers or not completed were discarded. The survey response rate which is defined as the percentage of the total attempted interviews that are completed (Maholta & Birks, 2007). Low response rates can lead to creation of non-response bias (Maholta & Birks, 2007). Non-response error is formed when potential respondents included in a study do not respond. The scale of non-response bias increases when the response rate decreases (Maholta & Birks, 2007). This can negatively influence the validity of the study and might be viewed as one of the most significant problems in every survey research.

The response rate for this study was 25,47 per cent. According to Maholta and Birks (2007) mail surveys can has response rate even less than 15 per cent hence the response rate for this study can be considered as rather good for the online questionnaire. However non-response error which occurs when some of the respondents do not respond might be present and create a non-response bias since the actual respondents might differ from those who refused to take part in the survey and result in different results (Maholta & Birks, 2007).

After collecting the data it was analysed, open questions were coded (See Appendix E - Analysed and categorised answers for the open-end questions) and transcribed in order to produce specific implications and conclusions (Benoit & Holbert, 2008). Answers were transferred into an SPSS file and categorised as interval and categorical scaled data. The following section explains the techniques that were applied while the data analysis using SPSS was conducted.

### **3.4 Qualitative Study**

Furthermore the qualitative research method was used by including a case study. Within the study the data collected from different social network web pages was combined in order to explore the two-way communication approach used by the organisation to effectively inform and interact with the public and overcome the crisis situation.

Costa Cruises is a well-known Italian cruise company that seeks to target new markets and customers by offering customised and diversified services. The organisation achieved global attention when one of the cruise ships, Costa Concordia hit a reef and partially sank near the island of Gigli on the western Italian coast (BBC news Europe, 2012).

The authors decided to incorporate a case study in order to explore the real life example how a company is engaged in using social media in the crisis communication strategy to enhance public trust and protect reputation and the image of the organisation.

This case will add to the quantitative specific facts of how companies can integrate social media into their crisis plans. Therefore, the examination of the real situation allowed a comparison between how different companies would react in unsecured times and how a certain company used social media in the crisis.

A communication timeline has been included in order to make it easier to gather and present the data and information from the company's different network websites and to follow the communication line. The authors closely researched the following:

1. The type of media employed by the company;
2. How fast the corporation took actions and shared information after the crisis occurred;
3. How often the information was updated and what type of language was used in the dialog with the public;
4. How informative and human were the messages in addressing to different publics and key stakeholders (victims and families of the victims).

The data was carefully collected from the social websites that the company was present; YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and also from the corporate website. All the data was collected in a chronological way from the first day that the crisis occur until the last statement of the company in regards to the situation. The timeline for each website can be found in the Appendix D – Communication timeline. First the authors reflected on the corporate website where it was discovered that the company had a press room where one statement about the crisis was made, and the information about the company's connection with YouTube broadcast was provided. Then the authors researched if the company has any presence on other social media networks.

It was discovered that Costa Cruises used intensively Facebook in order to keep the public up to date with proper information. Twitter was less used to provide information instead it was more involved in the process of replying to short messages to followers, and showing a gratitude for the public support.

What is more, the qualitative research method allowed gaining a deep comprehension of the use of social media in a crisis situation. The observation and interpretation of data made on the social networks by description of the case study can be seen as a qualitative research since messages used on these sites were codified and analysed.

“We adopted a mixed (both top-down and bottom-up) categorization process to create a non-exclusive classification scheme for discussion threads in the forum, based on both existing literature and our analyses of message content in the forum” (Qu, Wu, and Wang, 2009, no page).

Our study is based on the method used by Qu, Wu, and Wang, 2009 that developed a classification scheme and manually categorised the messages from a Chinese forum during the first week after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. They categorised the messages connected to the 4 roles they played; information related in which the individuals seek and share information, opinion related shaping public opinions, response and feedback, action related in regards to how the company takes responsibility and action upon the situation and emotion related how the company offers support for the victims and public.

Two researchers then independently coded 100 random threads from the 4300 sets using the initial coding scheme. Cohen's kappa was acceptable in the information categories, but lower in others. The two researchers discussed the inconsistencies in their coding of the 100 threads. After refining the coding scheme, they used it to each code another 50 random threads from the 4300 set. They compared their coding and revised the classification scheme one more time before using it on the full sample. A similar approach is used by Heverin & Zach, (2010) that gathered qualitative data about micro blogging as a way to communicate during a crisis, by observing and codifying the Tweeter messages, with the help of the scheme created by Qu, Wu and Wang, (2009).

To support the decision of incorporation a qualitative method into the study the statement of Benoit and Holbert (2008) can be presented. They considered that the qualitative work is more “interpretative and examines the relationships among the same variables” (Benoit & Holbert, 2008, p.622) than quantitative method. Additionally Hall and Rist (1999) stated that the qualitative work incorporates observation in order to “collect data on behaviours and interactions without the subject’s knowledge” (p.300).

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability**

Establishing the validity and reliability of the data is important to determine the stability and quality of the data obtained and analysed (Riege, 2003). Various criteria have to be examined in order to be able to evaluate the quality of the information and to achieve objectivity during the process. A high degree of validity and reliability provides confidence in the data collected and supports the trust in the recommendations and future applications or the results to managerial decision-making (Riege, 2003).

High level of reliability informs that other researchers would be able to reproduce the same results under a similar methodology and conditions (Maholta & Birks, 2007). Any significant results should be repeatable. Reliability is inversely related to random error hence it can be stated that the research is reliable if there is no random errors. Validity shows if the obtained results meet all of the requirements of the scientific research method,

such as randomization of the sample group or the structure of the experimental design (Maholta & Birks, 2007).

To increase validity multiple sources of information in the data collection phase were used; triangulation protects against researchers bias (Flick, 1992). The use of triangulation, which is incorporating multiple sources of data can also enhance credibility. Further, a comparison of the evidence with the relevant literature discussed in the literature review section was made in the data analysis phase in order to clearly state contributions of the study. Additionally, to assess validity of the study the comparison of the goal of the conducted research and the conclusion should be done. The goal of the research was to examine why and how companies use social media in a time of crises, which is consistent with the findings since the results gave answers to these questions.

In order to increase reliability the authors made an effort to use relevant theories within this study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Researchers tried to ensure the reliability by conducting a pre-test of the questionnaire with cooperation with three companies. It is noteworthy that random errors are always present in a measurement and can influence the study and lead to lower reliability. In order to measure reliability the Cronbach's alpha was used. The result of 0.850 indicates satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Maholta & Birks, 2007).

### **3.6 Limitations**

There are several limitations inherent in this thesis that should be kept in mind when evaluating obtained results.

Quantitative research aims at representing any given population. The main limitation of this study is sampling issues for quantitative study. The sample size, which can be viewed as inadequate since it is fairly small. Only 54 valid responses were examined. . Due to the limited timeframe, data was collected only from chosen social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. It was difficult to construct a sampling frame that will permit a simple random sample to be chosen from the companies present on the social networking sites. The sample was drawn from a population based on the researchers' knowledge and preferences. Also local companies from a Science Park in Jönköping were contacted. Therefore, not every social media has been covered by the analysis hence further study with larger and more varied samples might be needed in order to confirm the results and be able to generalise the findings to the whole population.

Moreover, the sample control is low because the study used an Internet survey, which has many limitations. The researchers had no control if the kind request to fill the questionnaire was read and taken into consideration. There was no possibility to assure the proper understanding of the questions since it is self-completion questionnaire. This issue is connected to another limitation of the research, which refers to fact that the questionnaire was designed in English. Although companies from all over the world were contacted the questionnaire was not translated into other languages, which can possibly lead to random errors within the obtained results that can negatively affect the reliability of

the conducted research. Since the study was conducted by the use of the Internet there was no possibility to help the respondents in understanding the right meaning of the sentences. Hence random errors within this research might occur if the respondents gave incorrect answers when they did not understand the questions and interpreted them wrongly.

Furthermore, the data retrieved illuminates the current usage of social media and the possible applications in a time of crisis. It did not examine the previous actions in turbulent times. There is a probability that the planned solutions would differ from the ones applied in the real crisis situation.

A limitation can also be detected in the question categories, as some fields might not have been included. Also the questionnaire was design in a way to allow obtaining detailed descriptive data. Further research is needed to find relationships between the measured factors.

In addition, the qualitative study has only been conducted based on the data available on the social networks' websites without cooperation with the analysed company. Private messages on Facebook and Twitter were sent however there was no response from the Costa Cruises. The company's point of view might provide the researchers with relevant information and give further insight on how the company shape their decisions and actions during the crisis situation in order to overcome the problem.

Due to the aforementioned shortcomings, the findings presented in the study may not be viewed as representative for the respective target group. Consequently, in order to obtain richer and deeper understanding of the topic more research is needed that can be explored with questionnaires or a qualitative study. Furthermore, qualitative studies with the cooperation of companies, for instance in-depth interviews, can be performed by using social media in a crisis situation.

## 4 Results

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*This chapter presents the results of the survey and the case study. First section portrays the results of the quantitative study that were obtained by the use of regression analyses. While the results of the examination of the Costa Concordia's actions and messages sent during the crisis situation can be found in the second section.*

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### 4.1 Results of The Quantitative Study – Regression Analyses

In the process of analysing the collected data several types of statistical methods can be incorporated, which depend on how the data is collected as well as on the research problem (Peck, Olsen, & Devore, 2011). For this study, data will be analysed utilizing different statistical methods: univariate, bivariate – each of them is outlined in the following. All figures referred to in this part are illustrated in the Appendix E – Univariate data analysis.

#### 4.1.1 Univariate Regression Analysis

Univariate techniques are used in the process of analysing data from observations or measurements on a single variable. Each variable is analysed separately even if there are several measurements of each component (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The clearest and the best way to analyse and understand univariate data is to construct graphical displays. The sample of  $n$  observations on a variable  $x$  can be displayed on a graphic to facilitate the examination of the sample distribution (Jobson, 1991). In order to describe variables univariate data analysis was conducted and the results were gathered and examined on the basis of seven question categories to assure a better and deeper understanding. Descriptive statistics have been used to enable the description of the characteristics of the sample.

##### Question category 1 – Q 1, Q3, Q7

For this question category, three questions were posed relating to the aspects most valued by the companies to communicate in a time of crisis with the external environment and how much importance organisations emphasise in these terms. The data shows that the credibility, coherence and truthfulness are the most important for companies when communicating with the public. Almost 60 per cent of the respondents think that credibility is extremely important while coherence got 44,4 per cent. Companies stated that customization is the least important aspect when communicating with the public. However, only one company thinks that sensitivity is an essential factor of the company's message.

The next analysis sheds light on how important are the listed steps in order to achieve better communication with the external environment in the crisis situation. From the prepared set of the answers respondents valued the most “the explanation of the problematic situation” and “corrective actions being taken to repair the source of the crisis” with 85,2 and 78,3 per cent of respondents considering these steps as very or extremely important. The least important for the analysed companies is to connect on

social networking sites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace) with only 7,4 per cent of answers for the extremely important category.

Question number 7 showed that over 59 per cent of companies would adopt an objective language while optimistic and customized to a specific audiences scored accordingly 46,3 and 44,4 per cent. Only 9,3 per cent of the companies would incorporate emotional tone to their crisis messages.

#### **Question category 2 – Q2, Q4**

The questions in the second category supported the analysis of which type of media is more preferred by companies in crisis situations to communicate and share information. It can be observed that most commonly used media in times of crises are a corporate website (72,2 per cent) then social networks (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter) (66,7 per cent) and traditional media (press conferences, newspapers, TV news) (59,3 per cent). There was no company that would use dark sites while experiencing a problematic situation and only 7,4 per cent of organisations stated that they would use chat rooms. Blogs also scored high with 38,9 per cent of responses, collaborative projects (e.g.: Wikipedia) and audio effects, videos (e.g.: YouTube) were placed in the middle with accordingly 20,4 and 18,5 per cent of answers.

The next question provided information about how often companies' social media webpages' are updated in order to keep public correctly informed. In general companies' webpages are updated often with 37,7 per cent of the companies updating social media pages 2-3 times a week and 30,2 per cent daily. Moreover, 16,9 per cent of the respondents updated their social media pages once or less than once a month.

#### **Question category 3 – Q5, Q6**

The third category focuses on providing insight into the type of crisis and time of reaction to communicate with the external environment. Only 18,5 per cent of the companies stated that they did not experience a crisis situation in the past. Exactly half of the respondents were involved in a product or service failure before. Accidents (35,2 per cent), Rumours (31,5 per cent) and Government issues (29,6 per cent) were also the most common problems that occurred in the past. Food poisoning was the least frequent answer (3,7 per cent) due to the companies' profiles and industries that they operate in.

It can be said that companies consider a fast response on the crisis situation as the important factor to deal with the negative condition. Two categories had 46,3 per cent of the responses; within first 4 hours and within first 24 hours. Only 7,4 per cent of companies consider first 9 days as a sufficient period of time to inform the public about the company's actions. More than 9 days is an inadvisable time to begin the dialog with the external environment.

#### **Question category 4 – Q8, Q9**

For this category, two questions were formed relating to the identification of benefits and usefulness of incorporating the social media into communication strategy during the time

of crisis. The opportunity of getting a public feedback was valued most by companies (72,2 per cent) hence it may be stated that two-way communication is perceived as essential in the recovery process. A two-way communication enables an interaction between a public and a company and by engaging people the company has a chance to gain public trust, which is also highly appreciated by the respondents with 63 per cent of answers. Low costs with 42,6 per cent of responses can be also viewed as an important benefit from the usage of social media. One company stated that the main benefit is a possibility to have an open dialog with the customers, which can be classified as a part of the public feedback category. Over one third (35,2 per cent) of the respondents stated that brand recognition and a global reach could be the factors that will help to deal with a crisis. Contact building and flexibility obtained accordingly 24,1 and 22,2 per cent.

After the analysis of the usefulness of particular web pages in reducing the potential damage of the crisis situation it is clear that the companies value the most corporate websites. Over 50 per cent of the respondents stated that corporate websites are very useful and almost 27 per cent answered that they are useful. TV came in second with 48,1 per cent of very useful and 23,1 per cent of useful responses. Next was Facebook followed by newspapers and Twitter. The newest media were not valued as high as traditional ones in sharing more precise information to help companies control and shape public opinion that ultimately would reduce the damage created by the crisis. LinkedIn and Youtube got only 10,4 and 11,5 per cent of answers in the very important category and additionally 13,5 per cent of the respondents thought that Youtube is useless in the recovering process.

#### **Question category 5 – Q 10, Q 11**

The fifth question category focuses on providing information about the perceived ease of implementing social media in the company's crisis communication structure and to present some of the limitations that can make the implementation of the social media more difficult. Extensive obstacles can result in the avoidance of adopting certain types of media. Most of the companies see the implementation of the social media as a somewhat difficult process (37,0 per cent) however a considerable number of respondents (31,5 per cent) stated that it was somewhat easy to incorporate the use of the social media into the communication strategy. 16,7 per cent of the companies have an opinion that this process is easy when 9,3 per cent consider it as difficult. There were no responses indicating that the implementation process is very difficult.

The companies considered legal restrictions as the most important limitations during the integration of the social media into the crisis communication strategy with 29,6 per cent of the answers for the extremely important and 37 per cent for the very important category. 32,3 per cent of the respondents gave a negative answer; either not at all important, very unimportant or somewhat unimportant. The next factor that the companies were afraid of is a potential lack of control. Since social media represent a two-way communication everybody can participate in the creation of information and a company cannot shape the whole content that will be present on its pages. Most answers were given in the somewhat important category (35,2 per cent) and only 20,4 per cent of respondents do not think that

lack of control is potentially dangerous. Technological limitations came in third with 29,7 per cent in the either not at all important, very unimportant or somewhat unimportant category. Most companies considered this aspect as very important (31,5 per cent) and less than 15 per cent gave the answer in the extremely important category. Fear of copycat attacks was not perceived as an important threat by 44,5 per cent of companies. 3,7 per cent of respondents consider this factor as extremely important when very important and somewhat important obtained accordingly 29,6 and 22,2 per cent.

#### **Question category 6 – Q12**

The purpose of question number 12 was to discover companies' proposals on how social media can be used in a time of crisis. Only 7 respondents answered this question and their responses can be grouped into 4 topics. In the respondents' opinion authentic, reliable and trustworthy information has to be assured during the crisis. Flexibility and concision are also vital when creating a communication strategy. The companies also suggested to hire highly qualified IT and communication specialists to overcome a problematic situation. Furthermore, feedback and an audience's participation in finding a solution can result in a faster response and increase the chances of overcoming a crisis.

#### **Question category 7 – Q 13, Q14, Q 15**

The test has been run to shed light on the companies' country of origin. The results show that 22 (40,7 per cent) respondents of the survey operate in Romania, whereas 8 (14,8 per cent) are from Mexico. From Poland and Sweden 4 ( 7,4 per cent) companies have been analysed and 3 (5,6 per cent) from Germany. The remaining countries; Canada, USA, Finland, Lithuania, Spain, The Netherlands and Venezuela have been represented only by a one or two companies. The country's distribution is not even hence no analysis can be based on this variable. The analysis whether the way of usage the social media differs for companies from different countries cannot be assessed.

The next investigation concerned information about the industry that the company operates in. The reason for investigating this data was to find out whether there were various patterns of using social media in different branches. The data showed that most of the companies 27,8 per cent operate in IT and Design industry and in FMCG segment 11,1 per cent. They were closely followed by Marketing and Media 9,3 per cent, Consultancy, Finance, Law and Insurance and Other, all with 7,4 per cent of the analysed companies. In every of subsequent industries which are Education, Electronics and Telecommunication, Manufacturing and Pharmaceutical industry operated 5,6 per cent of the companies.

The third test served the purpose of obtaining information on a size of the companies. The results showed that 52,9 per cent of the survey respondents had 50 or less employees, 17,6 per cent had 51-250 employees and 29,4 per cent of the companies had over 250 employees. Data from larger companies can differ from the smaller ones since they usually operate in many countries and have more customers hence the information flow has to be assured by the incorporation of dissimilar communication strategies.

#### 4.1.2 Bivariate Regression Analysis

A bivariate data set involves measurements or observations on two variables. This kind of analysis enables the investigation of the relationship between the two variables and the way they affect each other (Peck et al., 2011). Hence the main purpose of bivariate data analysis is to search for any relations and to explain the connections between the two variables. A Chi-square test for independence was used to explore the relationship between categorical variables.

After conducting the analysis the results had been checked if they do not violate the assumption of chi-square concerning the “minimum expected cell frequency” which value should be 5 or greater for at least 80 per cent of cells and the Significant value needs to be .05 or smaller (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Following relationships did not fulfil requirements for significant results and will not be further analysed:

- “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” with “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”
- “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” with “How often are the company's social media pages being updated?”
- “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” with “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”
- “Please chose the size of your company.” with “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?”
- “Please chose the size of your company.” with “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”
- “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?” with “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”

Only subsequent valid results will be further described:

- Relationship between “How often the company’s social media pages are being updated?” and “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”
- Relationship between “Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?” and “How often are the company's social media pages being updated?”
- Relationship between “Please state in what kind of industry do you operate in?” and “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”

All results and SPSS output can be found in Appendix E – Bivariate data analysis.

**Is there a relationship between how often are the company's social media pages being updated and the perceived difficulty in integrating new media into the company's crisis plan?**

For 25 per cent of companies who updated their webpages once a week and for 15 per cent of those who updated them 2-3 times a week the implementation process was difficult to conduct. The respondents in other categories did not find this integration so demanding. When analysing the somewhat difficult category it was found that as much as 80 per cent of companies that updated their webpages less than once a month fell into this category when exactly half of the respondents from once a week and once a month category gave this answer. For companies who were most active on social webpages the integration seemed easier with 37,5 per cent for the companies with daily updates and 20 per cent for the companies that updated webpages 2-3 times a week in the somewhat difficult answer.

The most respondents for the somewhat easy answer were found in the 2-3 times a week category (50 per cent) followed by daily (32,1 per cent), once a month (25 per cent) and once a week (12,5 per cent). No company from the less than a month category gave this answer. The differences between companies were not that visible within the easy category, answers ranged from 10-25 per cent with the most respondents (25 per cent) in the daily and the once a month category. The least frequent answers were in the 2-3 times a week category (10 per cent) closely followed by the once a week (12,5 per cent). 20 per cent of the companies that updated their social media pages less than a month consider the implementation of social media into their communication strategy as easy. Only 3,8 per cent of all companies thought that the integration was very easy to conduct with accordingly 6,2 and 5 per cent in the daily and the 2-3 times a week category.

Pearson chi-square value was 16,645, with an associated significance level of .0409. To be significant the Significant value needs to be .05 or smaller (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In this case the value was smaller than the alpha value of .05 and it could be concluded that the results were significant. This means that the differences between the perceptions of difficulty of integration of social media into communication strategy among companies with diverse frequency of updating the webpages are significant. It can be concluded that the integration process was more difficult for the companies who updated their pages less frequently while the high activity can facilitate the implementation of social media into the crisis communication strategy.

**Is the frequency of updating the company's social media pages connected with the kind of industry that a company operates in?**

The companies that the most rarely updated their social webpages were from consultancy (25 per cent), pharmaceutical (33,3 per cent) or other industry (25 per cent). Additionally from the companies that did not state their industry 25 per cent also answer that they updated their webpages less than once a month. When analysing once a month category it was noticed that the high percentage of the answers was within manufacturing (66,7 per cent) and consultancy (25 per cent) industry. IT and design got only 7,1 per cent in this category whereas other industries did not give any answers in this category. The companies

from Education, Electronics and Telecommunication, Finance, Law and Insurance, FMCG and Marketing and Media industry updated their social media pages at least once a week.

The most frequent updates were observed within the companies from Electronics and Telecommunication and Finance, Law and Insurance industries. All these companies answered that they updated their webpages either every day or 2-3 times a week. Also Marketing and Media, FMCG and Education scored high. All companies from these categories updated their social media pages at least once a week. Companies from several branches put new information on the webpages once a week, which are: Education (33,3 per cent), Manufacturing (33,3 per cent), Pharmaceutical (33,3 per cent), Consultancy (25 per cent) and Marketing and Media (20 per cent). Also 25 per cent of the companies that did not state their industry fell into this category.

Pearson chi-square value was 44,425, with an associated significance level of .0291 and it was smaller than the alpha value of .05 and it could be concluded that the results were significant. That indicates that the differences between the frequencies of updating social media pages by companies from diverse industries are significant. Therefore, it can be stated that companies from Education, Finance, Law and Insurance, FMCG, IT and Design and Marketing and Media tend to provide the most recent information to the public whereas Pharmaceutical, Consultancy and Manufacturing companies update their social media pages the least frequent.

**Is there a relationship between the kind of industry that a company operates in and the perceived difficulty in integrating new media into the company's crisis plan?**

There were no companies who considered the integration process of social media into their crisis communication strategy as very difficult. Only companies from three industries perceived this process as difficult which were Education (33,3 per cent), Finance, Law and Insurance (per cent) and IT and Design (20 per cent). Somewhat difficult answer was chosen often, the only companies that did not select this answer were firms from Finance, Law and Insurance branches. The highest frequency of this answer was for Manufacturing companies with 100 per cent of answers and for FMCG with 66,7 per cent. 50 per cent of the companies that did not state in which industry they operate or were classified in the other category chose this answer. Additionally, Marketing and Media had 40 per cent of somewhat difficult responses. All other companies had more than 25 per cent of answers with a one exception, which was IT and Design (20 per cent).

The somewhat easy category either got many or no answers. Companies that did not choose this answer were from Manufacturing, Marketing and Media and Pharmaceutical industry. The highest percentage of the somewhat easy answers can be seen in Finance, Law and Insurance industry (75 per cent), Consultancy industry (50 per cent) and Other category (50 per cent). All companies from following industries had 33,3 per cent of answers in this category: Education, Electronics and Telecommunication, FMCG, IT and Design. Moreover, organisations that did not fill the industry field in the questionnaire got 25 per cent of answers. The easy category did not get so frequent responses, however two

industries scored high: Pharmaceutical and Marketing and Media with accordingly 66,7 per cent and 40 per cent of the answers. They were followed by Electronics and Telecommunication (33,3 per cent) and IT and Design industries (20 per cent). The companies with a missing answer for the industry question got 25 per cent of the answers. The rest of the companies did not choose this option. The very easy category was not frequently selected. Only companies from three industries chose this answer, which are: Consultancy (25 per cent), Marketing and Media (20 per cent) and IT and Design (6,7 per cent). The other companies did not perceive the process of incorporating social media into their crisis communication strategy as very easy.

Pearson chi-square value was 39,659, with an associated significance level of .0485 and it was smaller than the alpha value of .05 and it could be concluded that the results were significant. That means that the differences in the perceptions of difficulty to integrate social media into company's crisis communication strategy between companies from the different industries are significant. Consequently, it indicates that the process is most difficult from companies from Education, FMCG and Manufacturing industry when companies from Pharmaceutical and Marketing and Media branches perceive it as rather easy to conduct.

## **4.2 Results of The Qualitative Study**

As stated before the case has been observed and built by the authors in order to acquire comprehensive knowledge about how and why companies use social media networks in order to communicate and share information with the public when the crisis strikes.

The Italian cruise company Costa Cruises had faced a human induced crisis, since a human mistake caused this accident. Additionally the captain of the cruise ship Concordia did not take immediate action to evacuate and secure the safety of the passengers in the moment of the impact with the reef. This particular case gained rapid attention worldwide within traditional and modern media, engaging consistent negative rumours and word of mouth communication that affected the image of the company.

González-Herrero and Pratt, (1998) suggest that human induced crisis can be overcome if the organisation takes immediate corrective actions and provides proper and consistent information for the public concerned. This will also allow a fast recovery process and protect the reputation of the organisation.

Within the process of investigating the steps Costa Cruises took in engaging social media and communicating efficiently with the public in order to protect their integrity we have focused on the following aspects: identifying which media was most used by the company, the time reaction to the crisis and messages used to respond to the public, as well as the consistency of the provided information.

Although some authors suggest that companies should offer more information through their corporate website, since it will show greater credibility to the information provided and reliability of the company (González-Herrero, & Ruiz de Valbuena, 2006; Callison,

2003); Costa Cruises directed their focus on the social network sites, since they provide a two-way dialogue and attracts a large audience.

Within their corporate website, the organisation included a link that references the presence of the company on YouTube. The authors researched and discovered that Costa Cruises is connected also through Facebook and Twitter using these as communication channels with the public. After identifying the social networks employed by the corporation the authors examined each of them in individually.

The crisis situation struck around the midnight of 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2012. Since the focus was to analyse only the media that covers the social networks and not the traditional media (news, TV, newspapers) the first report made available by the company was on January 14<sup>th</sup> around 13:00 p.m., within the Facebook webpage of Costa Cruises.

The report contained an official statement where the organisation presented their apologies, support and condolences to the families and people affected by the tragedy. At the same time the company issued messages of gratitude towards the officials that took part in the evacuation of the passengers. Additionally, the statement included information about the evacuation of the on board members as well as the responsibility of the company to further cooperate with the Authorities in order to determine the causes of the situation (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

The information on Facebook during and after the crisis was continuously updated and contained useful information for the public concerned about the situation. The company used short messages posted on their main Facebook page that contained the following:

- overall apologies for the circumstances of the accident;
- information that contained additional links to YouTube videos of press conferences statements;
- information that enclosed a link to the corporate website where the official written statement could be found;
- emotional messages of gratitude and appreciation towards the public that supports the company and the solidarity thoughts for the victims;
- messages that create the awareness and responsibility taken by the company to remediate the situation and to further avoid a similar incident.

Under the Notes section on the Facebook webpage, the company provided more detailed information that included:

- updated statements about the crisis situation and actions that are taken continuously to repair the created damage;
- information about the lines where the costumers and the family members of the victims could contact the company;
- clarifying negative rumours that emerged about the organisation actions towards their stakeholders and shareholders;
- taken action in providing the victims compensations and psychical support for the suffered tragedy;

- actions taken to keep the environment safe;
- an overall report that contained measures and actions taken from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the incident and that described further engagements.

Looking upon these facts, it can be stated that Costa Cruises had identified great benefits by integrating Facebook in their crisis communication strategy. Since this site does not have a limited amount of words, it allowed the organisation to share extensive information about the events through notes, postings and links. In the same time Facebook is a well-known and intensely used website that permitted the company to reach a large audience, to gather public feedback and monitor the online conversations.

On YouTube the company presented press conference videos regarding the situation and what measures were taken. The communicator was the CEO and Chairman of the company, Pier Luigi Foschi. He attended eight press conferences in which he gave clear information and responded to the public concerns about:

1. the companies law suits, and future directions of the organisation;
2. the actions taken to repair the environmental damage and to evaluate the conduct of the person that was responsible for this situation;
3. details regarding the evacuation process and the crew behaviour within the crisis, as well as direct apologies, condolences and sympathy towards the victims and large public.

Within their Twitter website the corporation provided short messages that contained appreciation for the followers' sympathy and thoughts on the victims. Also small information regarding the evacuation of the on board members, statements, call centre lines and regrets, were provided. Other messages offered links connected to the YouTube press conferences, Facebook posted statements and links to the news pages that contained articles about decisions, sustainability and the commitment of Costa Cruises further operations (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

From what it could be noticed the corporation did not engaged in communicating and sharing information through Twitter very much. One of the reasons might be that Twitter allows only short character message, which limits the company to give comprehensive information about the outgoing situation. Therefore, on this micro blog the company was engaged more in direct conversations with the followers, by replying to their messages and thoughts; as well as adding some informative links that redirected to other social networks that contained more details about the crisis.

According to the research made by Palen, Vieweg, Liu & Hughes, (2009), when the company communicates through social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, individuals will benefit from having accurate and up to date information that will engage positive feedback. Thus by evaluating all the actions took by Costa Cruises during and after the crisis situation, we can state that they have identified the need to communicate through social media networks and benefited from employing the mix of the three media by offering the public a broader perspective and better understanding about the actions and

situation of the company during the crisis. In accordance with the information provided within the Communication Timeline (see Appendix D), it could be easily observed that Costa Cruises kept their public constantly up to date with latest information.

Further the approach of the message were analysed in accordance to the encrypted classification scheme proposed by Qu, Wu, and Wang, (2009). The tables indicating what types of messages were used more within the communication process during the crisis period can be found in the Appendix D.

Stephens and Malone (2009) indicate in their research that within a crisis situation, the public feels the need to receive emotional support and updated information. As it can be noticed most of the messages were concentrated in offering the public the most accurate information, but in the same time being focused in touching upon the emotional side in order to minimise the negative thoughts and indirectly encourage positive and solidarity messages towards the company. The other two types of messages were regarded as well, but not in the same manner, and as can be noticed their presence is only within the Facebook website. However, by monitoring the online conversations and identifying the negative word of mouth communication, Costa Cruises has managed to respond to the public needs in a proper way.

Several authors that emphasised the importance of the type of messages used by the company in communicating with the public stated that a conversational and human tone approach will engage trust and commitment of the public as well as will reduce the perception that the organization is in crisis (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Stephens & Malone, 2009; Kelleher, 2009; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). These actions helped Costa Cruises to offer the public quality information and build strong relationships with the external environment.

To conclude the findings showed that during the crisis situation, the corporation has been prepared to take immediate action and engaged in the most useful social networks in order to reduce the damage and maintain their reputation. The information shared by the company in this case can be considered to be accurate and consistent and the messages used were combined in order to positively shape public perceptions.

Thus the authors of this thesis suggest that the company should connect to their corporate website all the social networks where they have a presence. This recommendation can be made since in most of the cases individuals might appeal first to the organisation website and then follow the company for more information through the indicated networks.

## 5 Analysis

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*In this chapter an attempt to find significant connections between the results and the relevant literature was made. The authors carefully extracted the most vital information obtained during the study and made an effort to find linkages with the previous academic work in order to create a valuable discussion as well as to find an added value of this study.*

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Social media can be regarded as a fast growing phenomenon, which can influence the communication strategy of a company. Recently companies implement social networks into their crisis plans in order to facilitate the process of recovering from a crisis situation.

Several authors agreed that when companies integrate into their crisis communication plans corporate websites and social media platforms into their crisis communication plans it is easier to monitor conversations and keep the public up to date. Therefore, this will enhance public trust; positive word of mouth communication and constructive feedback that will help organisations overcome the crisis (Hong & Rim, 2010; Campbell & Beck, 2004; Kent et al., 2003).

In comparison to the analysed case study of Costa Cruises, the company made extensive use of social media to communicate with the public during the recent crisis. It can be observed that the use of Facebook and Twitter was considerable while on the corporate website only one document connected to the crisis can be found.

Additionally, the results of our study indicate that the most common media used in a time of crisis is a corporate website followed by social networks and traditional media like TV news, or newspapers. The research indicates that the traditional media are seen as the most useful in the crisis situation closely followed by Facebook and Twitter. LinkedIn and Youtube were perceived as the least useful in the communication process. In this case González-Herrero and Smith, (2008) stated that traditional media offers one-way stream communication, which can lead to more interpretations and negative rumours that can potentially harm an organisation. Therefore, it is suggested by the authors that organisations should make an efficient use of both online and traditional media in order to better communicate and inform the public (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008). Other authors emphasise on the fact that companies should engage more in adopting social media networks in order to complement the information provided by the traditional media and facilitate the communication between the press and the organisation (González-Herrero, & Ruiz de Valbuena, 2006; Baron & Philbin, 2009; Callison, 2003).

There was no significant relationship between the type of social media used and the fact that a company experienced a crisis situation in the past. 81,5 per cent of respondents stated that they had a crisis before with the most common answers for a product or service failure, accidents, negative rumours and government issues. This shows that there is a great need for having a communication strategy that prepares the organisation to respond quickly and efficiently to the public needs and expectations during turbulent times. Within the paper of Liu et al. (2011) it is stressed that the “blog mediated crisis communication

model” assists companies in observing the online media in order to respond to the public need for information and communication. Also, Kerkhof et al. (2011) suggested that organisations need to take immediate action in order to avoid negative rumours and other damages that crisis situations can generate. Hence a fast response is considered as an important factor in overcoming the crisis.

The response time for the Costa Concordia can be categorised as short since the first message appeared after 14 hours. In addition, it has to be taken under consideration that the crisis occurred during the night. The first message was placed on Facebook containing the report with general apologies and information regarding the incident.

The company focused on connecting to the vast audience by incorporating social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube in their communication processes. On the corporate website only one press release connected to the crisis is provided. Additionally, only a link to follow the organisation on YouTube is provided on the corporate website with no connection to other social media webpages. This can negatively affect the organisation since the public is not aware of the additional sources of the information and how to communicate directly with the company. Limited access to the social media sites can indicate that the implementation of the social networks in the communication plan is insufficient which can have its source in implementation difficulties.

The findings of this study showed that most of the companies perceive the process of integration the social media either as somewhat difficult or somewhat easy. The results showed that the integration process is more difficult for the companies who update their networks less frequently while high activity can facilitate the implementation of social media into crisis communication strategy. Furthermore, it was found that the integration process is the most difficult for companies from Education, FMCG and Manufacturing industries when companies from Pharmaceutical and Marketing and Media branches perceive it as rather easy to conduct. The perceived difficulties can be the result of the limitations of using social media. The most important obstacles stated by the companies are legal restrictions, lack of control and technological limitations. According to the study made by Taylor and Perry (2005), it is stated that even if adopting social media into the crisis communication plans of a company can bring great benefits and some organisations refuse to integrate it because of their inability to control the online environment, lack of expertise or because of the risks that the online media presents (copy-cat attacks or hijacks). González-Herrero and Ruiz de Valbuena’s (2006) research revealed that even if social media is a fast growing phenomenon that allows a two-way communication, companies seem to be unaware of the benefits and significance that it can bring when integrating into the crisis plans. Thus organisations need to learn more about how the virtual communication can improve their status in time of crisis.

Several authors agree upon the benefits that engagement in social media platforms can bring. Perry et al. (2003) have an opinion that social media allows a faster response and open communication, that reduces the negative outcomes of the crisis. Mangold and Faulds (2009) stated that employing these networks will help the company positively influence the public perceptions.

The companies valued the most the opportunity of getting a public feedback, low costs, gaining public trust and open and direct communication from the potential benefits of utilizing social media. On the other hand Baron and Philbin (2009) give the suggestion that if the company decides to integrate social media they should balance it in accordance with their goals and purpose the negative and positive aspects as well as the impact on communication online media will have upon the organisation with the public. It is important that the organisation engages efficiently into the communication process and built relationships with the large audience by continuously keeping people informed and gathering feedback (Baron & Philbin, 2009).

The findings of the research show that credibility, coherence and truthfulness are the most important for companies when communicating with the public. The message sent to the public during a time of crisis has to be authentic, reliable and contain trustworthy information. This information correlates with the suggestions brought by Thelwall and Stuart (2007) that in times of crisis organisations should provide constant and consistent information regarding the situation, as well as engage in an open communication with the public that will enhance trust and reliability.

Therefore, organisations need to adapt a flexible structure that allows an undisturbed flow of the information with the external environment. In the analysed case study the company adopted a clear and transparent communication that supported the engaged and responsible image of the company.

The data shows that messages should be customised to target specific audiences. This finding can be supported by Huang (2006) that recommends the messages used to communicate with the public should target various audiences, in order to manipulate the perceptions of individuals about the crisis situation of the company.

Moreover, the respondents value most an explanation of the problematic situation and corrective actions being taken to repair the source of the crisis. According to the “theory of image restoration discourse” proposed by Benoit (1997) the company has to take responsibility upon its actions, to identify the main public and engage in an open communication, which will prevent more damage to the organisation.

The other important factor aside the language in the effective communication is the frequency of information update. Stephens and Malone (2009) shows that during crisis individuals engaged in the communication feel the need to stay informed. It can be concluded that companies tend to frequently refresh the information. The most of the analysed corporations update their social platforms at least 2-3 times a week.

## 6 Conclusion

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*This chapter aims at providing conclusions by answering the main purpose of the thesis regarding why and how companies use social media in times of crisis. The results are based on both quantitative and qualitative methods.*

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This thesis uncovers that social media form a significant part of communication process of a company. Social networks play an important role during the crisis since they can facilitate the recovery process and enhance trust along with reliability. Organisations should adopt a flexible and transparent structure that can allow acquiring a good amount of information flow by using customised messages that target previously identified audience.

However, if a company takes insufficient actions to satisfy the public needs during the crisis it could create a negative word of mouth that can potentially harm and even further damage the company's image. Therefore, to prevent the possible negative outcomes the corporation should plan the communication strategy in advance to be capable of providing an immediate response.

Companies can encounter several limitations during the implementation of social media into their crisis communication plans such as legal restrictions, lack of control and technological limitations. Despite of several precincts, they can still benefit from the possibility of the immediate connection with the public and by obtaining the essential feedback on their actions.

The study has also shown that the companies prefer engaging with the traditional media and corporate websites. However, the popularity of the social networks cannot be ignored. For this reason the combination of online and traditional media can assure an efficient and effective communication.

To conclude companies can greatly benefit from deploying social media. Corporations have to be aware of the requirements for the effective communication and understand the impact that these media have on the public opinion. Being engaged and active are the key components to be present in the social platforms' environment.

## 7 Implications for Practitioners and Further Research

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*Several implications for better understanding the usage of social media in terms of research and practice had been delineated.*

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The study examined the usage of social media in crisis communication and generated new insights that improved the authors' understanding of why and how companies employ social media in times of crisis in order to overcome the problematic situation. The quantitative study as well as Costa Concordia case study provided a solid foundation for understanding the companies' perception concerning crisis communication and the impact of company actions on that process.

Communicators can become aware of the importance of social media as a facilitator and relationship-building tool in the recovery process. In this situation it would be advised to increase the commitment to public dialogue by the use of a two-way communication.

In order to be accurate an organisation in crisis first needs to value the potential that new media has upon the environment, and secondly to learn how to properly use it in order to respond to the requirements of the audience. Additionally the engagement of social media into crisis communication plans should be done beforehand and messages should be shaped accordingly to the target audience. This will permit the organisation to gather public feedback and to faster establish a connection with the external environment.

The study shows that the traditional media are still preferred by companies to communicate in time of crisis; however, the Internet has major implications for companies. Crisis strategies should be adapted to take advantages from both one-way and two-way communication presented by the media to prevent or ease the crisis situation.

Within the thesis only a limited number of companies was analysed therefore, further study with larger and more varied samples might be needed in order to confirm the results and be able to generalize the findings to the whole population. The companies were chosen from selected social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) hence additional studies should make an effort to cover every social media by the analysis.

Since the importance of the Internet and the perceived trust in information placed on social media webpages can vary among different countries and cultures there is a need to further research the relationship between a country in which a company operates and the use of social media. In this particular thesis, the not even distribution of the country of origin made it impossible to explore this connection.

Finally, it would be recommended to approach companies, which are in the middle of crisis and closely follow their actions throughout the recovery process. The further research can also focus on gathering data from the public and asking their opinions about the companies' actions, in order to analyse the communication process from different perspectives. Additional case studies containing organisations from various industries and countries can be examined to get a wider perspective and obtain richer and deeper understanding of the topic.

## 8 Reflections in Retrospect

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*The authors present the willingness to learn by the identification, observation and examination process, which have occurred while elaborating on this thesis. After giving a thoughtful consideration of the creative process, reflections about the fundamental purpose, the essential methods and actions have been made. The educational benefits as well as a reflection upon possible changes that could be employed, if the authors had an opportunity to approach the topic once more were investigated.*

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After conducting this study, a notion of a wide range of previous researches has been developed. The authors gained a deeper understanding of why companies value the incorporation of social media into their crisis communication strategy and how they are employed to facilitate the recovery process.

The extensive knowledge about how to connect qualitative and quantitative methods in one study has been acquired. The theoretical information from marketing research field was put into practical investigation. The authors' efforts were to strengthen the existing skills and develop awareness of the different methods to gather and analyse the data.

However, there were factors that had a great impact on the overall construction of the research, such as time limitations. The time had the impact on the creation of the questionnaire that was constructed to specifically provide the answers to the purpose of the study. Academics and practitioners can focus on finding other correlations among variables as well as planning ahead the designing of a new questionnaire to prevent having limited options of conducting analysis. A more extensive study would permit an in depth analyse of each of the factors (language, messages, medium) that social media influences.

Additionally, the response rate for e-mail surveys are considered low since respondents are usually reluctant to fill in the survey when not seeing the interviewer. Sending a follow up that could possibly increase the chances of obtaining fully done questionnaires should be considered. Perhaps other ways of contacting the respondents would complement the study for instance phone or direct interviews.

A further reflection can be made upon the case study of Costa Cruises. The authors made an effort to approach the company via short messages on Facebook and Twitter unfortunately without any response. Therefore, the contact can be seen as insufficient and the authors should be more persistent in getting to contact with the company.

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## Appendix A

### Definitions

**BLOGS** – “It is a type of a Web site that is frequently updated and usually maintained by an individual. Conversational in tone, a blog contains commentary, descriptions of events and other materials such as video or graphics”(Tinker, McLaughlin & Dumlao, 2010, p. 113).

**CHAT ROOMS** – Represents an online and interactive environment, where participants are engaging in discussing different topics and interact with the media (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes, 2004).

**COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS** – “Enable the joint and simultaneous creation of content by many end-users [...]” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 62).

**CORPORATE WEBSITE** – Represents a site that is employed by a company in order to share a broad amount of information that usually contains company history, press releases, annual reports, videos, range of stakeholders in order to support the company’s reputation and to keep the public and media updated (Campbell & Beck, 2004).

**COSTUMER-GENERATED MEDIA** - Blackshaw & Nazzaro (2004) explain this form of media as “a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues” (Cited in Mangold & Faulds, 2009, pp. 357-358).

**CRISIS** – “A crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat” (Coombs, 2007, p. 164).

**CYBERSPACE** – “Can be defined as diverse experiences of space associated with computing and related technologies” (Strate, 1999, p. 383).

**DARK SITES** – “Is a web site that ‘sleeps’ offline but can be activated in a matter of seconds when a crisis strikes. It can serve as the central location for regular situation updates during the crisis”(Borremans, 2010, p. 33).

**FACEBOOK** – Is an “online social network application that allows users to create their profiles, display a picture, accumulate and connect to friends met both online and offline and view each other’s profiles, and is ranked as the seventh most popular site” (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 200).

[...] Is also an application platform, attracting developers who create tools that influence the social networking aspects of the site [...] or push in content from other sites (e.g., Twitter feeds can be routed to update Facebook status)” (Skeels & Grudin, 2009, no page).

**FOLLOWER** – “Being a follower on Twitter means that the user receives all the messages (called tweets) from those the user follows” (Kwak et al., 2010, no page).

**INTERNET** - Refers to “the electronic system of networks that links people and information through computers and other digital devices allowing person-to-person communication and information retrieval” (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman & Robison, 2001, p. 307).

**LINK** - It “refers to a piece of specially coded text that users can click on to navigate to the webpage or element of a webpage [...]” (Link, 2012).

**LINKEDIN** – Is a social network site that “allows users to create a profile based on their professional affiliation and connect to professional contacts within and outside their professional networks” (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 200).

**MEDIA PLATFORM** - Is a technology that has been designed to smooth the progress of social activities of the users (the information can be shared or created) (Landau, 2011).

**MICROBLOG** – It is “a form of blogging (e.g., Twitter) that allows users to write and publish brief (i.e., up to 140 characters) updates that can be viewed and commented on and by the community or by a restricted group” (Tinker et al., 2010, p. 113).

**MYSPACE** - Is an online social media network “that allows users to create profiles in order to connect, interact and exchange information” (Tinker et al., 2010, p. 113). A Myspace profile consists of a default picture and allows users to communicate by posting comments on pictures or by sending private messages. What is more, Myspace has a strong audio component, which differentiates the site from Facebook since people can personalize their Web pages with “graphic backgrounds, picture slide shows, movie clips and song list which plays as the profile is being viewed” (Davis, 2010, p. 1106).

**NETWORK** - Represents a virtual community that shares and exchanges common or collective data (Wittel, 2001).

**NEW MEDIA** – Goggin and Newel (2003) provide the definition of new media as: “[...] new digital communication technologies that include the Internet and broadband networks [...] advanced telecommunications networks (offering services such as caller ID, digital mobile phones, third-generation mobile telecommunications, video telephones), and digital broadcasting (with digital television)” (cited in Mei et al., 2010, p. 144).

**PUBLIC** - Represents a large audience of people who might have a direct or indirect contact with the organisation, and that by using word-of-mouth communication can affect the reputation and brand image of the company (Wells & Spinks, 1999).

**RETWEET** - Refers to “a common practice in Twitter to copy someone else’s tweet as one’s own, sometimes with additional comments. [...] Retweet is considered the feature that has made Twitter a new medium for information dissemination. People often write a tweet addressing a specific user. We call such a tweet a mention” (Kwak et al., 2010, no page).

**SHAREHOLDERS** - Are defined as persons that own a part of the organisation of company, and that that can take important decisions about how the organisation is managed.

**SOCIAL MEDIA** – “Represents the various electronic tools, technologies and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange” (Tinker et al., 2010, p. 113).

**SOCIAL NETWORKS** – “Are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63).

**STAKEHOLDER** - Represents “any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization’s objectives” (Freeman & McVea, no year, work in progress).

**TWITTER** – “Is an online social network that is used by people around the world to stay connected to their friends, family members and co-workers through their computers and mobile phones. The interface allows users to post short messages (up to 140 characters) that can be read by any other Twitter user [...] A user who is being followed by another user does not necessarily have to reciprocate by following them back, which make the links of the Twitter social network directed” (Huberman, Romero & Wu, 2008, pp. 2-3).  
”A *tweet* can be just a statement made by a user, or could be a reply to another tweet” (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010, no page).

**USER GENERATED CONTENT** – “Is applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

**USERS** - Represent individuals that are viewed as consumers of content, and which are engaged in the information dissemination provided by the Internet and social media network sites (Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Ginois & Mishne, 2008).

**VIRAL MARKET** - Represents “the technology that creates a positive or negative buzz around a brand, a product or service” (Dobele et al., 2005, p. 143).

**WEB 2.0** – “Is a term that describes a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; [...] a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, pp. 60-61).

**WEBPAGE** - Is an electronic medium that is used to present ideas and interact with people.

**WEBSITE** - Is a collection of web pages that aligns different information (e.g.: text, image, video, audio) (Website, 2012).

## Appendix A

**WIKI** - Represents “collaborative Web pages or collection of pages that allow all users to contribute or modify the content” (Tinker et al., 2010, p. 113).

**WORLD WIDE WEB** - Represents “a platform created in order to facilitate information exchange between users” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60).

**YOUTUBE** – “Is a public video-sharing website where people can experience varying degrees of engagement with videos, ranging from casual viewing to sharing videos in order to maintain social relationships” (Lange, 2007, p. 361).

## Appendix B

### The List of Contacted Companies

Contacted companies by Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn		
1&1	Firefox	Odwalla
Accenture Social	Fraport AG	OMV Petrom
Acer	General Electric	Opera
Activa Sistemas	General Motors	Orange
Adobe	GlaxoSmithKline	Oriflame
Allianz SE	Gtech By Hitachi	P&G Media Team
Altex	H&M	Panasonic
American Express	H+K Strategies	PassAlong Networks
ApplusRTD	Henkel	Patrice Cloutier
Arla Danmark	HONDA	Porche
ASUS	HP	Profina
AUDI AG	IAB Spain	PUMA
Ayesa	IBM	PWC
Bagues	Ica Maxi	Raiffeisen Bank
Banca Transilvania	Ikea	Reuters Deutschland
Bancotel	Infineon Raceway	Rheinmental Ag
BCR	ING Asigurari	Ryanair
BD Barcelona Design	Intel Official News	S.C. Colosal & M SRL
Bilfinger Berger	IVision	Sala Cuarta Pared
Bite Communications	Johnson& Johnson	Salzgitter AG-HR
BMW Group	Jupiter Networks	Samsung Support
BP America	KFC	Scania Group
Brenntag LA	KIA Motors Corp.	Siemens Enterprise
Canon	KLM Royal Airlines	Siemens_Energy
Cisco Systems	KPMG US	Sony
CITI	Lanxess	Starbucks Cofee
Citrix Systems	Lenovo	Staufenbiel Institut
Clinique	Linux	Sunnytrail
Continental tires	Logs of Panama	Syncrude Canada
Cosmote	Lufthansa US	Tarom
Costa Cruises	Lukoil	Telenor Group
Dacia	Luxoft	Telia
Daimler AG	MALÉV Hungarian Airlines Ltd.	The Coca-Cola Co.
Danone	MarkusWalter@Allianz	Togum AG
Dell	McDonald's	Toshiba
Deloitte	Merlin.pl	TUI Austria
Deutsche Telekom	Michelin	Unilever

## Appendix B

Disney Channel PR	Microsoft	United
Dove	Monnari	Vodafone
DVB Bank SE	Nancy Spooner	Vueling Airlines
E.ON Talking Energy	Naturi Health	VW Group
El dorado inc	Nestle	Wilcox Group
Electrolux	Nikon	XeroxCorp
Ericsson	Nivea	ZARA

Table 1 Contacted companies by Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

Contacted companies from the Science Park in Jönköping		
Oedge	Ehn & Land	Nordic Gym
Abelko Innovation	Emerson Process Management	Olsson & Linder
Academic Work	eSmart Scandinavia AB	Össur Nordic AB
Advokatfirman Glimstedt	Exoro System AB	Parcon Sweden AB
Agima Management AB	Expedit Retail Solutions AB	Pocka.se
Applied Engineering AB	Familyfood	Produktställ AB
Atollic	Festo	Qrtech AB
Avtramp	Fraktjakt AB	Quickmatch Bemanning AB
Axellent Engineering AB	GBF Redovisning & Deklaration	Radpoint AB
Azent Mobile AB	GearWheel AB	Ramböll
b.r.a. Innovation Lars Junelind	Helena Boström Reklam & Design AB	RekryteringsHuset i Sverige AB
BAB Elektronik	HSA data AB	SBPR
Basic Care Unit	Imano	Skill
Berge Consulting	Ina Promotion AB	SP Technical Research
Bergenstråhle & Lindvall AB	Infospread	SP-systemet i Jönköpings län
Bitwise/BWL IT AB	Inventech Europe AB	SSC – Shop Service Center
Boströms Redovisningsbyrå	Invicia Information Systems	Starbright Consulting
CombiparQ	KiwanoTech AB	TechPay AB
CombiTeam AB	Lanthandeln.se	Teklanova
Datachassi AB	Logistikkirurgerna	Toxic Interactive Solutions
Developia	M_SOLUTION	Underworld Productions
Direkten	Mectec Elektronik AB	VeproX AB
DLM – Daniel Lindau Media	Miljöstrategen	Verendus
Dm3 Solutions AB	Mr. Fågel	Wivalco
Dometic AB	My Exchange AB	Wroomberg AB
Dreamy Dot	National Netforms AB	Xperientia
Ecocom	Netpublicator AB	

Table 2 Contacted companies from the Science Park in Jönköping

## Appendix C

### The Questionnaire

#### Crisis communication

We are two students from Jönköping International Business School in Sweden currently working on our master thesis within Business Administration.

The purpose of the survey is to get a deeper understanding on how companies use social media to communicate in times of crisis. The results can be useful to create an appropriate communication strategy that can help companies to overcome a crisis situation. Hence, obtaining feedback from companies is essential to our research.

We would appreciate if you could take the time to complete the following survey, which will take approximately **five minutes**.

Your responses are voluntary and all data will be treated confidentially. All responses will be compiled together and analysed as a group and will be used solely for the purpose of our master thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Roxana Stefania Danila at [roxanadw21@gmail.com](mailto:roxanadw21@gmail.com).

Thank you!

*Please click the “>>” button below to continue.*

#### Q1 How important are the below listed aspects in the external communication of your organisation, in a crisis situation?

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)
Continuity (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Truthfulness (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensitivity (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coherence (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Credibility (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customization (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q2 What type of media would you use to communicate with the external environment in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.**

- Blogs (1)
- Chat rooms (2)
- Corporate website (3)
- Social networks (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter) (4)
- Collaborative projects (e.g.: Wikipedia) (5)
- Audio effects, videos (e.g.: YouTube) (6)
- Traditional media (press conferences, newspapers, TV news) (7)
- Dark sites (8)

**Q3 How important are the below listed steps in order to achieve a better communication with the external environment in a crisis situation?**

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)
Corrective actions being taken to repair the source of the crisis (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the problematic situation (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share information openly (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apology (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connect on social networking sites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gaining public feedback (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q4 How often are the company's social media pages being updated?**

- Daily (1)
- 2-3 Times a Week (2)
- Once a Week (3)
- 2-3 Times a Month (4)
- Once a Month (5)
- Less than Once a Month (6)

**Q5 Have you been facing one of the stated crisis situations in the past? More than one answer can be chosen.**

- Natural disaster (1)
- Accidents (2)
- Rumours (3)
- Consumer group protests (4)
- Government issues (5)
- Food poisoning (6)
- Product or service failure (7)
- None (8)
- Other (9) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q6 In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation (e.g. : food contamination, product recall)?**

- Within first 4 hours (1)
- Within first 24 hours (2)
- Within first 9 days (3)
- More than 9 days (4)

**Q7 What kind of language would you adopt when communicating through social media in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.**

- Usual (1)
- Objective (2)
- Cautious (3)
- Customized to specific target audiences (4)
- Optimistic (5)
- Emotional (6)

**Q8 In your opinion, what are the main benefits that the company can gain from using social media to communicate with the public in the time of crisis? More than one answer can be chosen.**

- Brand recognition (1)
- Gaining public trust (2)
- Low costs (3)
- Global reach (4)
- Public feedback (5)
- Contact building (6)
- Flexibility (7)
- Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q9 How useful, in your opinion, would be the below mentioned types of media to minimize the damage on the company's reputation?**

	Very Useless (1)	Useless (2)	Somewhat Useless (3)	Somewhat Useful (4)	Useful (5)	Very Useful (6)
Facebook (1)	<input type="radio"/>					
Twitter (2)	<input type="radio"/>					
Youtube (3)	<input type="radio"/>					
Blogs (4)	<input type="radio"/>					
Linkedin (5)	<input type="radio"/>					
Corporate website (6)	<input type="radio"/>					
TV (7)	<input type="radio"/>					
Newspapers (8)	<input type="radio"/>					

**Q10 How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?**

- Very Easy (1)
- Easy (2)
- Somewhat Easy (3)
- Somewhat Difficult (4)
- Difficult (5)
- Very Difficult (6)

**Q11 How important are the listed limitations in integrating social media to company's communication strategy?**

	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)
Legal restrictions (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technological limitation (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear of copycat attacks (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of control (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q12 Please provide further suggestions on what would be the best way to incorporate social media in the communication strategy in order to overcome a crisis. The answer to this question is optional.**

**Q13 In which country is your subsidiary situated?**

**Q14 Please state in what kind of industry do you operate in?**

**Q15 Please chose the size of your company.**

- 0-50 employees (1)
- 51-250 employees (2)
- Over 250 employees (3)

## The Question Categories

Category/Numbers of questions	Description
<p><b>Q1</b> How important are the below listed aspects in the external communication of your organisation, in a crisis situation?</p> <p><b>Q3</b> How important are the below listed steps in order to achieve a better communication with the external environment in a crisis situation?</p> <p><b>Q7</b> What kind of language would you adopt when communicating through social media in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.</p>	<p>The answers to these questions provided information about which terms are used more by companies to communicate in times of crisis with the external environment and how much importance organisations emphasise on these terms.</p>
<p><b>Q2</b> What type of media would you use to communicate with the external environment in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.</p> <p><b>Q4</b> How often are the company's social media pages being updated?</p>	<p>These questions supported the analysis of which type of media is more preferred by companies in crisis situations to communicate and share information. Additionally, the information about how often companies' social media webpages' are updated in order to keep public correctly informed and to avoid misunderstanding or public judgment was discovered.</p>
<p><b>Q5</b> Have you been facing one of the stated crisis situations in the past? More than one answer can be chosen.</p> <p><b>Q6</b> In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation (e.g. : food contamination, product recall)?</p>	<p>A clear view on the type of crisis faced before and time of reaction to communicate with the public was provided. The fast response to the problematic situation may result in greater chances to overcome the crisis.</p>
<p><b>Q8</b> In your opinion, what are the main benefits that the company can gain from using social media to communicate with the public in the time of crisis? More than one answer can be chosen.</p> <p><b>Q9</b> How useful, in your opinion, would be the below mentioned types of media to minimize the damage on the company's reputation?</p>	<p>Supported the identifying process of some of the benefits that the companies can gain from using social media, as well as which of the various social media web sites are trusted more by companies to share more precise information and help them better track the public opinion, that eventually will reduce the damage created by the crisis.</p>
<p><b>Q10</b> How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?</p> <p><b>Q11</b> How important are the listed limitations in integrating social media to company's communication strategy?</p>	<p>Followed the organisation capability of implementing social media in their crisis communication structure and present some of the limitations that can stand in the way of the integration. That can result in avoidance of adopting certain types of media by the companies.</p>
<p><b>Q12</b> Please provide further suggestions on what would be the best way to incorporate social media in the communication strategy in order to overcome a crisis. The answer to this question is optional.</p>	<p>To discover the respondents' proposals how the social media can be used. Gives an insight in the company' perception of the way that social media can be incorporated into the communication strategy. The open question tried to identify new opinions or strategies of how companies use nowadays social media in order to overcome crisis.</p>
<p><b>Q13</b> In which country is your subsidiary situated?</p> <p><b>Q14</b> Please state in what kind of industry do you operate in?</p> <p><b>Q15</b> Please chose the size of your company.</p>	<p>Provided insights in the provenience of the company which brought more information on how different organisations in different countries see the use of social media in crisis communication. The questions revealed also the field that the company operates in and the size of it, which were the important factors to take into consideration for the purpose of this research.</p>

Table 3 The question categories

## Appendix D

### Company Details

Costa Crociere or Costa Cruises dates from 1854, when the Italian company was very successful in trading fabrics and olive oil, reaching a large geographical area by that time. Later on Costa moved its operations to the typical transatlantic passengers' transportation and ever since it developed its business by building a cruise line (Costa Cruises, The Company history, 2012).

From the moment it was acquired by the American firm Carnival and by the English firm Airtours, Costa Cruises grew significantly and launched new luxurious ships, targeting new markets and costumers, until it became one of the largest and successful cruise companies in Europe. Currently their headquarters is based in Genoa, Italy, preserving their original roots (Costa Cruises, The Company history, 2012).

“The company gained international attention on January 13, 2012 when one of its cruise ships, the Costa Concordia, partially sank near the western Italian coast, and lead to the death of 32 passengers” (Costa Crociere, 2012). The mistake was made by the crew captain, on not evacuating the passengers within 30 minutes as the international maritime law requires, but after one hour from the ships impact with the rock. Even though the evacuation of the passengers took 6 hours, it was impossible for the all the people to abandon ship (Costa Concordia, 2012). Another negative effect that the sinking of the ship had on the media was the pollution of the environment. Since the reef affected the engine and generators, “a floating oil-barrier took place, affecting the quality of the water” (Costa Concordia Disaster, 2012).

### Communication Timeline

In this section we are focusing on observing how the corporation managed this crisis situation by integrating and communicating with the public through the different social media networks.

#### 1. When the crisis occurred

The crisis situation of Costa Cruises started on 13<sup>th</sup> of January around hours 22:45 when one of the company's cruises ships Concordia hit a reef near the western Italian coast.

#### 2. When the crisis first report was available

Since we analyse only the media that covers the social networks and not the traditional media (news, TV, newspapers) the first report was made available by the company on January 14<sup>th</sup> around hour 13:00 p.m. The report contained an official statement where the organisation sent apologies, support and condolences to the families and people affected by the tragedy, but also showed gratitude for the officials that took part on the evacuation of the passengers. Additionally the statement included information about the evacuation of

the on board members as well as the responsibility of the company to further cooperate with the Authorities in order to determine the causes of the situation.

### **3. The medium of the first report (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)**

The medium of the first report was made on the corporation Facebook social network.

#### **The 1<sup>st</sup> post on 14 Jan, 2012**

### **4. Media coverage of the crisis (media used for continuous communication and information sharing)**

Costa Cruises used social media to better inform and engage in the communication with the public. Three social networks Costa Cruises integrated are: Facebook where the organisation only shared information about the events through notes, postings and links; on Twitter the company was engaged in direct conversations with the followers, by replying to their messages and thoughts, but also some informative links were added; on YouTube, Costa Cruises posted press conferences that contained apologies, actions and situation of the company during the crisis. On the corporate website we could notice just one document released on 15<sup>th</sup> of January, under the Press releases page that contained information about the incident and how the company will take social responsibility for this. What's more, even though Costa Cruises used communication through various types of social networks, on their corporate website only a link to follow the organisation on YouTube is provided.

### **5. Communication timeline on the Costa Cruises Social Networks**

In order to investigate how often the information was updated on different websites we observed the three types of social media and gathered information from each of them, based on days and posted messages from the company. This also further helped us on analysing the type of language they used in their messages.

#### **1. Facebook webpage of Costa Cruises.**

The Company is liked on Facebook by 17,685 people.

##### **a. Posts on Facebook Timeline**

**The first post on 14<sup>th</sup> of January contained general apologies and information regarding the incident.**

“It is a tragedy that deeply affects our company. Our first thoughts go to the victims and we would like to express our condolences and our closeness to their families and friends [...]. The emergency procedures started promptly to evacuate the ship. We would like to express our profound gratitude to the Coast Guard and all the forces [...]. The company will fully co-operate with the relevant Authorities in order to determine the causes of what happened.” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On January, 16<sup>th</sup> the company had posted 2 links that directed to their YouTube webpage and contained press conference statements.**

“Today, Jan. 16, a press conference was held at the headquarters of Costa Cruises in Genoa, Italy. View condolences from our Chairman and CEO Pier Luigi Foschi (available in English)” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On January, 18<sup>th</sup>, the company posts a link where their statements regarding Costa Concordia could be found** (Costa Concordia – update, 2012).

“For those who would like to read all of our statements regarding Costa Concordia click here: [http://www.costacruise.com/B2C/USA/Info/concordia\\_statement.htm](http://www.costacruise.com/B2C/USA/Info/concordia_statement.htm)” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On January 23<sup>rd</sup> the company posts a message of appreciation towards the support and thoughts of followers about the company’s situation and for the victims.**

“[...] we are grateful for your demonstrations of solidarity with the men and women of Costa Crociere. Your expressions of sympathy are truly precious to us in these trying times. Your commiserations are touching, and they encourage us to work hard to continue to earn and deserve your trust” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On February ,13<sup>th</sup> the organisation post a message that contains awareness and regret of the incident that happened and commitment to take more safety measures in the future.**

“One month after the tragic night, everyone at Costa Cruises renews our sincere condolences to the families and friends of our guests and crew members who lost their lives in this heartbreaking incident [...]. We are committed to ensuring that nothing like this ever happens again” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**b. Posts on the Costa Cruises Facebook page under the Notes header.**

**On 14<sup>th</sup> of January the company posted a note that contained a latest statement about the incident and actions took, as well as a call centre hot line were friends and families of members involved could directly contact the organisation for more information** (Costa Cruises Statement Regarding Costa Concordia Jan. 14 - Update #2, 2012).

“This is the latest statement issued regarding Costa Concordia by Costa Crociere’s Corporate Communications Department. [...]

“I want to express our deep sorrow for this terrible tragedy,” said Gianni Onorato, President of Costa Crociere. “I am only now able to speak on behalf of Costa because, as you will understand, I have been at Isola del Giglio to be close to the rescue operations.

“First, I would like to thank all the authorities, law enforcement and volunteers who provided assistance to our guests and crew involved in this terrible event.

[...]

For information, friends and families members can contact the U.S. call centre at 800-462-6782 “(Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012)

**On the date of 15<sup>th</sup> of January the note contained more call centre lines from different countries where the family members could contact the company (International Contact Numbers for Costa Cruises, 2012).**

**On 16<sup>th</sup> of January more up to date information was added about the company's commitment to passengers' safety and rescue as well as solidarity messages and taking social responsibility about the minimizing environmental impacts, also the collaboration with the authorities was stress out to help into the investigation case (Costa Cruises Statement on Costa Concordia - Update #3, 2012).**

“[...]Our immediate priority is to account for all passengers and crew, and to secure the vessel to ensure that there are no environmental impacts. We have engaged the services of a top specialized salvage company to develop an action plan and help establish a protection perimeter around the ship.

We are working with investigators to find out precisely what went wrong aboard the Costa Concordia. While the investigation is ongoing, preliminary indications are that there may have been significant human error on the part of the ship's master, Captain Francesco Schettino, which resulted in these grave consequences. The route of the vessel appears to have been too close to the shore, and in handling the emergency the captain appears not to have followed standard Costa procedures.[...]

In light of these accusations and the continuing investigation, it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this time.

As we are learning more about the event and the evacuation, however, it is becoming clear that the crew of the Costa Concordia acted bravely and swiftly to help evacuate more than 4,000 individuals during a very challenging situation. We are very grateful for all they have done.

Costa is committed to ensuring that no such incident ever occurs again. Our number-one priority is always the safety and security of our guests and crew, and we comply with all safety regulations. (See background on Costa safety below).

### **Background on Costa's Commitment to Safety**

Costa complies very strictly with all safety regulations and our personnel are committed, first and foremost, to guest safety and security.

All crewmembers hold a BST (Basic Safety Training) certificate and are trained and prepared in emergency management and to assist passengers abandoning the ship with numerous drills. Roles, responsibilities and duties are clearly assigned to all crewmembers. Every two weeks all crewmembers perform a ship evacuation simulation. A lifeboat and evacuation drill for all guests is conducted within 24 hours of embarking, as required by law. Costa has a computerized system that ensures all passengers undergo this drill.

The skills of Costa crew are periodically tested by Coast Guard authorities and an independent classification organisation, per SMS (Safety Management Systems) requirements.

There are lifeboats and jackets on board in excess of the number required for all passengers and crew. Lifeboats are equipped with food and water supplies, first-aid kits and communication and signalling equipment. All life-saving appliances meet international standards and are subject to close, regular inspection by shipboard personnel and certification authorities. All Costa ships are certified by RINA and have been built to the highest standards and technologies” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On 18<sup>th</sup> of January Costa Cruises adds a note where they express their regrets and efforts to take action to protect the environment and search for the lost passengers** (Costa Cruises Statement on Costa Concordia - Update #4, 2012).

“We are deeply saddened to learn that additional people have been found during the search of the Concordia and extend our heartfelt sympathies to their families[...]Our main priority remains the location of those passengers and crew who have not yet been accounted for. While rescue efforts continue we are reaching out to all our guests and their families to offer further assistance” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On 24<sup>th</sup> of January the company posts a note in regards to a news rumours that accused the company on making discounts and promotional offers, and provided further clarifications on the company’s actions towards shareholders and stakeholders, also media and publicity right after the incident** (Costa Cruises North America Statement: Clarification on Discounts and Promotional Offers, 2012).

“In reference to news reports on discounts and promotional offers, Costa Cruises asserts that the company has never offered any discount on future cruises to our guests who were on board Costa Concordia for the cruise of Jan. 13 and involved in the tragic accident. The information originally published by a newspaper and reported in various news outlets is unfounded, as confirmed by the English passenger who was quoted by the newspaper.

[...]Subsequently, Costa Cruises contacted guests by telephone after they had returned home to check on their physical and emotional wellbeing, and to confirm that they will receive a refund for the cruise and all material expenses related to it.

As previously announced, the company welcomes discussion with its guests and all consumer-protection associations to determine indemnity for the hardship endured, with the support of tourism-sector trade associations with which it has been in contact for days.

Driven by its sense of ethics and the values of fairness and responsibility which guide it, the company also has given all customers booked on future Costa cruises the opportunity, if they have hesitations about cruising, to cancel their cruise booking by Feb. 7, 2012. All travel agents who work with the company were informed of those days ago.

Costa Cruises would also like to clarify that starting on the day after the accident, all advertising initiatives planned were cancelled out of respect for those affected by this tragedy. The company was unable to stop only one postal promotion, which had already been sent to some customers at the end of December”( Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On January 27th the organisation continued introducing into their messages towards costumers regrets, solidarity and sympathy, but also took action in providing the people involved in the accident compensations and psychological support for the tragedy they suffered** (Costa Cruises Details Costa Concordia Guest Reimbursement, 2012).

“Costa Crociere announced a compensation proposal for guests who have returned home after the Jan. 13 tragic Costa Concordia accident. This proposal is the result of negotiations between Costa Crociere and consumer associations protecting guests’ interests, with the support of multiple tourism and travel industry associations

The families of the deceased and guests who were injured and required medical treatment on site will be covered under a separate proposal that will take into account their individual circumstances.

This compensation package is higher than the current indemnification limits provided for in international conventions and laws currently in force. The 11,000 euro lump-sum payment is offered to all Costa Concordia passengers, including non-paying children, regardless of their age. Costa also has pledged not to deduct from this sum any amount paid by any insurance policy stipulated by guests. In addition, the company will return all goods stored in cabin safes, where retrieval is possible. Costa Crociere also has pledged to provide a program for psychological assistance to any guests that request it. The company has further agreed to offer customers the ability to cancel any upcoming cruise booked before Jan. 13, on any of its routes, without penalty through Feb. 7, 2012. Dedicated operation units will handle claims to ensure timely resolution. Payments will be credited by the company within seven days of receipt of the acceptance of the proposal. Guests should e-mail [careteam@us.costa.it](mailto:careteam@us.costa.it) or call 954-266-5693 for assistance” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On 3rd of February Costa Cruises post a statement regarding the remover plan for Costa Concordia by keeping the environment safe** (Statement: Costa Crociere’s Removal Plan for Costa Concordia, 2012).

”Immediately following the Costa Concordia accident Costa Crociere started working to ensure the least possible environmental impact to the waters surrounding Isola del Giglio and to safeguard the island’s business activities and tourism. [...]Costa has engaged leading international salvage experts Smit Salvage BV to remove the fuel contained in Costa Concordia’s tanks, and has presented a plan to remove other materials and potential pollutants to begin as soon as weather conditions permit. Costa Cruises also is working with the utmost speed on a plan to remove the ship itself — a top priority to protect the environment of Giglio and the island’s tourism industry” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On February 15th presents a statement about the extension of the deadline for the compensations regarding Concordia victims** (Costa Crociere Extends Deadline for Concordia Compensation. Costa Cruises, 2012).

“Costa Crociere has extended the Feb. 14 deadline for acceptance of its compensation proposal for guests involved in the Costa Concordia incident to March 31, 2012.

The decision was taken to offer passengers more time to evaluate the proposal and to exercise their claims with less urgency” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On 17th of February statements about the defueling of Concordia ship and environment safety actions are made** (Costa Crociere Statement on Concordia Defueling Operation, 2012).

“[...]According to the schedule drawn up by the Neri/Smit Salvage experts, if sea and weather conditions remain favorable, all of the fuel still on board the ship should be extracted within three weeks if operations can continue 24 hours per day.[...]

Since the outset Costa Crociere's priorities have been to guarantee maximum safety, the least possible environmental impact and protection of the environment of Giglio and the island's tourism industry, while carrying out defueling within a reasonable time frame” (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On March 22 a statement about the successful removal of the fuel from the ships tank that could have a negative impact on the environment. Also further actions on cleaning the environment and removing the ship** (Costa Concordia Defueling Operations Conclude; ‘Caretaking’ Operations Commence, 2012).

“Costa Crociere, the municipality of Giglio Island and the Costa Concordia Emergency Commissioner’s Office announce that the operations to remove the fuel from Costa Concordia have successfully been completed.[...]

“After the tragic incident involving the Costa Concordia we took immediate action to guarantee the least possible environmental impact and protect the environment of Giglio and the island’s economy and tourism industry, working productively and in full cooperation with the Emergency Commissioner’s Office and the Municipality of Giglio,” said Costa Crociere S.p.A. President Gianni Onorato. “We appointed the world’s leading salvage company to carry out the defueling operation, and this has been done successfully, preventing a potential ecological disaster.”[...]

“I wish to thank the inhabitants of Giglio, who, at such a difficult time, have shown a tremendous sense of responsibility,” he said. [...]

As previously announced, regarding removal of the ship, the six working plans submitted by the March 3 deadline are being evaluated. A short list is being developed and the best plan will be selected and announced in early to mid April.

All of the plans submitted prioritize the need to minimize the environmental impact, protect Giglio's economy and tourism industry, and guarantee safety.

The operation to remove the wreck is expected to take from 10 to 12 months, depending on which plan is chosen" (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**On 22 of March statements about actions taken from the 1st day of the incidents regarding the environment and further actions and responsibilities are described (BACKGROUND: Costa Crociere's Role in Defueling, 'Caretaking' and Ship Removal Operations, 2012).**

"Costa Crociere responded immediately to the Costa Concordia incident to minimize the environmental impact and protect Giglio Island's economy and tourism industry. With regard to today's news release announcing the completion of defueling operations, here are more details regarding Costa Crociere's activities:

1) DEFUELING: To remove the fuel from the ship, Costa Crociere hired the world's leading salvage company, Smit Salvage BV, which worked in collaboration with the Italian firm Tito Neri srl. The operations began Feb. 12, 2012, and were completed successfully. Costa Crociere made a multimillion-euro investment to extract all of the oil from the ship, with the primary focus on removing the fuel from the ship as quickly and cleanly as possible. Fuel removal was carried out by 20 marine vessels (platforms, tugs, transport ships, crane barges, tankers, oil-spill response vessels, etc.) and a team of 100 experts from several countries. Defueling operations were completed in 31 days, within the five weeks that were originally scheduled.

2) "CARETAKING": Costa Crociere has contracted Smit Salvage BV, in partnership with Tito Neri srl for "caretaking" operations. Eight marine vessels (oil-spill response vessels, crane barges and transport ships) will be deployed as well as containers, cranes and rubber dinghies and a team of 42 experts. Caretaking will be carried out after defueling and before commencement of the wreck-removal operation. The relevant activities are due to start in the next few days, the intention being to guarantee environmental monitoring and protection in the area around the ship. This also will include cleaning up the seabed and removing objects and material that have emerged from the hull. Caretaking operations are expected to last between one and two months.

3) REMOVAL OF THE SHIP: The Company set up a technical committee with representatives from Costa Crociere, Carnival Corporation & plc, Fincantieri shipyard, RINA (the Italian shipping register) and experts from industry and academia to determine the best plan for removal of the ship, in coordination with the relevant authorities.

[...]

The operation to remove the wreck will be complex and is expected to take from 10 to 12 months, depending on which plan is chosen.

The projects are currently being evaluated and a short list is expected to be chosen soon; the best plan will be selected and announced in early to mid April" (Costa Cruises, Facebook, 2012).

**2. Costa Cruises presence on YouTube. A link to the press conferences has been provided** (Press Conference Costa Concordia, 2012).

### **3. Costa Cruises Twitter timeline**

**14th of January- most of the messages were in replay to followers that mentioned the companies' name in their posts. These messages contained appreciation for the followers' sympathy and thoughts on victims, also small information regarding the evacuation of the on board members, statements, call centre lines and regrets (23 direct replays on this day)** (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“@RaulSchramm Thanks, Raul. We appreciate your sympathy in this time of great tragedy” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“Costa Cruises confirms the evacuation of about 3,200 passengers and 1,000 crew members on board of the Costa Concordia off Italian coast” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“Costa expresses deep appreciation to Coast Guard, Carabinieri, Guardia di Finanza, Polizia di Stato, Marina Militare and citizens of Giglio” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“@lynssie 27 Costa has not issued a statement about casualties yet” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“@samuelbaugh Thanks for the kind thoughts” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“@jgaylord Costa has converted its reservations lines into call centers for information for friends and family” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

“@CruiseMaven unfortunately sometimes it takes a tragedy to make people pay attention to safety measures already in place on planes & ships” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

**On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January the messages were giving information to followers concerning the passengers.**

“@reichmontano Costa has not released the names of those still missing, but the line has contacted the emergency contacts of all guests” (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

**On 16<sup>th</sup> of January the company offered two messages with links to YouTube press Conference** (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

**On 18<sup>th</sup> of January the company offered a message containing a link that had the latest statement of Costa Concordia** (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

**On 13<sup>th</sup> of February the organisation offered two messages that contained links. One to the Facebook page regarding a new condolence statement and another link that regarding an article about the sustainability and commitment of Costa Cruises further operations** (Haden, 2012).

On 17<sup>th</sup> of February posted a link about their statement regarding the action taken to clean the environment where the incident took place (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

The last statement regarding Costa Concordia was on 16<sup>th</sup> March where a link was provided that contained information about the CEO's decision to change the name of the company's brand name (Costa Cruises NA, Twitter, 2012).

## Types of messages used in the communication process during the crisis by Costa Cruises

### *Facebook posts*

Date	Information related	Opinion related	Action related	Emotion related
14 <sup>th</sup> of January	x		x	x
16 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			x
18 <sup>th</sup> of January	x	x		x
23 <sup>rd</sup> of January				x
13 <sup>th</sup> of February				x

Table 4 Types of message used by Costa Cruises during the crisis - Facebook posts

### *Facebook Notes*

Date	Information related	Opinion related	Action related	Emotion related
14 <sup>th</sup> of January	x	x	x	x
15 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			
16 <sup>th</sup> of January	x	x		
18 <sup>th</sup> of January			x	x
24 <sup>th</sup> of January	x	x	x	
27 <sup>th</sup> of January			x	x
3 <sup>rd</sup> of February	x		x	
15 <sup>th</sup> of February	x			
17 <sup>th</sup> of February	x			
22 <sup>nd</sup> of March	x		x	

Table 5 Types of message used by Costa Cruises during the crisis - Facebook notes

### *Twitter posts*

Date	Information related	Opinion related	Action related	Emotion related
14 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			x
15 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			
16 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			
18 <sup>th</sup> of January	x			
13 <sup>th</sup> of February	x			
17 <sup>th</sup> of February	x			

Table 6 Types of message used by Costa Cruises during the crisis - Twitter posts

## Appendix E

### Analysed and categorised answers for the open-end questions

New question category	Categorised answers
Hire specialists (IT, communication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a community manager that takes care of all your social customers.</li> <li>• Hire specialized IT staff.</li> </ul>
Authentic, reliable and trustworthy information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The important is not how, sino que la vía sea confiable y autentica.</li> <li>• Depending on the crisis, social media to be used should have coverage and should be trustworthy amongst the target audience in order to convey the proper message.</li> </ul>
Flexibility and concision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When communicating a solution/problem fixed/crises averted.</li> <li>• To be flexible, reliable and concise.</li> </ul>
Involve the audience to find a solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively involve the followers in finding a solution.</li> </ul>

Table 7 Categorised answers for question 12: “Please provide further suggestions on what would be the best way to incorporate social media in the communication strategy in order to overcome a crisis. The answer to this question is optional.”

The country in which a company operates
Romania
Sweden
Poland
Mexico
USA
Spain
Germany
Canada
Venezuela
Netherlands
Finland
Lithuania

Table 8 Categorised answers for question 13: “In which country is your subsidiary situated?”

New question category	Categorised answers
<b>IT and Design</b>	IT&C, Software industry/ Software engineering/Software development, Web development, graphic Design
<b>Electronics and telecommunication</b>	Electronics, Telecommunication
<b>Pharmaceutical</b>	Pharmaceutical, Medtech, FONACIT
<b>Marketing and Media</b>	Digital Media, Media, Internet marketing, Advertising, NGO / SOCIAL
<b>Consultancy</b>	Consulting services, Engineering Consultancy, Consulting/Internet services, As Consultant in small producing companies, Public business support
<b>Education</b>	Education, Olt (office for learning and teaching)
<b>Manufacturing</b>	Automobile, manufacturing, designing and selling children's products
<b>Finance, Law and insurance</b>	Insurance, Banking, Law, Economics
<b>FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods)</b>	Food industry, Sportswear, Beauty and Groom
<b>Other</b>	Automation Control, Mass customization, Security, Energy

Table 9 Categorised answers for question 14: "Please state in what kind of industry do you operate in?"

## Univariate data analysis

### Question category 1

**Q 1, Q3, Q7** The answers to these questions provided information about which aspects are valued more by companies to communicate in times of crisis with the external environment and how much importance organisations emphasise on them.

<b>Q1 How important are the below listed aspects in the external communication of your organisation, in a crisis situation?</b>							
	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)	Mean
<b>Continuity (1)</b>	1,9	3,7	9,3	31,5	40,7	13,0	4,44
<b>Truthfulness (2)</b>	0	3,7	3,7	14,8	48,1	29,6	4,96
<b>Sensitivity (3)</b>	3,7	3,7	9,3	40,7	38,9	1,9	4,15
<b>Coherence (4)</b>	1,9	1,9	5,6	18,5	27,8	44,4	5,02
<b>Credibility (5)</b>	1,9	1,9	1,9	9,3	25,9	59,3	5,33
<b>Customization (6)</b>	5,6	5,6	18,5	29,6	29,7	11,1	4,06
<b>Q3 How important are the below listed steps in order to achieve a better communication with the external environment in a crisis situation?</b>							
	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)	Mean
<b>Corrective actions being taken to repair the source of the crisis (1)</b>	0	3,7	1,9	9,3	50	35,2	5,11
<b>Explain the</b>	0	1,9	5,7	15,1	39,6	37,7	5,6

Appendix E

<b>problematic situation (2)</b>							
<b>Share information openly (3)</b>	1,9	3,7	7,4	27,8	37	22,2	4,61
<b>Apology (4)</b>	1,9	0	16,7	35,2	31,5	14,8	4,39
<b>Connect on social networking sites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace) (5)</b>	5,6	7,4	22,2	31,5	25,9	7,4	3,87
<b>Gaining public feedback (6)</b>	1,9	7,4	9,3	33,3	25,9	22,2	4,41
<b>Q7 What kind of language would you adopt when communicating through social media in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.</b>							
Usual (1)	Objective (2)	Cautious (3)	Customized to specific target audiences (4)	Optimistic (5)	Emotional (6)		
13	59,3	40,7	44,4	46,3	9,3		

Table 10 The analysis of the answers for the question category 1

**Question category 2**

**Q2, Q4** These questions supported the analysis of which type of media is more preferred by companies in crisis situations to communicate and share information. Additionally the information about how often companies' social media webpages' are updated in order to keep public correctly informed and to avoid misunderstanding or public judgment was discovered.

<b>Q2 What type of media would you use to communicate with the external environment in a crisis situation? More than one answer can be chosen.</b>							
Blogs (1)	Chat rooms (2)	Corporate website (3)	Social networks (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter) (4)	Collaborative projects (e.g.: Wikipedia) (5)	Audio effects, videos (e.g.: YouTube) (6)	Traditional media (press conferences, newspapers, TV news) (7)	Dark sites (8)
38,9	7,4	72,2	66,7	20,4	18,5	59,3	0
<b>Q4 How often are the company's social media pages being updated?</b>							
Daily (1)	2-3 Times a Week (2)	Once a Week (3)	2-3 Times a Month (4)	Once a Month (5)	Less than Once a Month (6)		
30,2	37,7	15,1	0	7,5	9,4		

Table 11 The analysis of the answers for the question category 2

**Question category 3**

**Q5, Q6** A clear view on the type of crisis faced before and time of reaction to communicate with the public was provided.

<b>Q5 Have you been facing one of the stated crisis situations in the past? More than one answer can be chosen.</b>								
Natural disaster (1)	Accidents (2)	Rumours (3)	Consumer group protests (4)	Government issues (5)	Food poisoning (6)	Product or service failure (7)	Not applicable (8)	Other (9)
22,2	35,2	31,5	16,7	29,6	3,7	50,0	18,5	3,7
<b>Q6 In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation (e.g.: food contamination, product recall)?</b>								
Within first 4 hours (1)		Within first 24 hours (2)		Within first 9 days (3)		More than 9 days (4)		
46,3		46,3		7,4		0		

Table 12 The analysis of the answers for the question category 3

**Question category 4**

**Q8, Q9** Supported the identifying process of some of the benefits that the companies can gain from using social media, as well as which of the various social media web sites are trusted more by companies to share more precise information and help them better track the public opinion, that eventually will reduce the damage created by the crisis.

<b>Q8 In your opinion, what are the main benefits that the company can gain from using social media to communicate with the public in the time of crisis? More than one answer can be chosen.</b>							
Brand recognition (1)	Gaining public trust (2)	Low costs (3)	Global reach (4)	Public feedback (5)	Contact building (6)	Flexibility (7)	Other (8)
35,2	63	42,6	35,2	72,2	24,1	22,2	1,9
<b>Q9 How useful, in your opinion, would be the below mentioned types of media to minimize the damage on the company's reputation?</b>							
	Very Useless (1)	Useless (2)	Somewhat Useless (3)	Somewhat Useful (4)	Useful (5)	Very Useful (6)	Mean
Facebook (1)	0	1,9	11,3	20,8	30,2	35,8	4,87
Twitter (2)	1,9	9,4	9,4	37,7	13,2	28,3	4,36
Youtube (3)	1,9	13,5	23,1	26,9	23,1	11,5	3,90
Blogs (4)	0	7,5	15,1	26,4	37,7	13,2	4,34
Linkedin (5)	4,2	8,3	29,2	25,0	22,9	10,4	3,85
Corporate website (6)	0	1,9	1,9	17,3	26,9	51,9	5,25
TV (7)	5,8	3,8	5,8	13,5	23,1	48,1	4,88
Newspapers (8)	5,7	3,8	9,4	11,3	39,6	30,2	4,66

Table 13 The analysis of the answers for the question category 4

**Question category 5**

**Q 10, Q 11** Followed the organisation capability of implementing social media in their crisis communication structure and present some of the limitations that can stand in the way of the integration. That can result in avoidance of adopting certain types of media by the companies

<b>Q10 How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?</b>							
Very Easy (1)	Easy (2)	Somewhat Easy (3)	Somewhat Difficult (4)	Difficult (5)	Very Difficult (6)	Mean	
5,6	16,7	31,5	37,0	9,3	0	3,28	
<b>Q11 How important are the listed limitations in integrating social media to company's communication strategy?</b>							
	Not at all Important (1)	Very Unimportant (2)	Somewhat Unimportant (3)	Somewhat important (4)	Very Important (5)	Extremely Important (6)	Mean
<b>Legal restrictions (1)</b>	5,6	5,6	11,1	11,1	37,0	29,6	4,57
<b>Technological limitation (2)</b>	5,6	7,4	16,7	24,1	31,5	14,8	4,13
<b>Fear of copycat attacks (3)</b>	5,6	7,4	31,5	22,2	29,6	3,7	3,74
<b>Lack of control (4)</b>	1,9	3,7	14,8	35,2	24,1	20,4	4,37

Table 14 The analysis of the answers for the question category 5

**Question category 6**

**Q12** To discover the respondents' proposals how the social media can be used. Gives an insight in the company' perception of the way that social media can be incorporated into the communication strategy. The open question tried to identify new opinions or strategies of how companies use nowadays social media in order to overcome crisis.

<b>Q12 Please provide further suggestions on what would be the best way to incorporate social media in the communication strategy in order to overcome a crisis. The answer to this question is optional.</b>		
	Frequency	Per cent
<b>Authentic, reliable and trustworthy information</b>	2	3,7
<b>Flexibility and concision</b>	2	3,7
<b>Hire specialists (IT, communication)</b>	2	3,7
<b>Involve the audience to find a solution</b>	1	1,9
<b>Missing answer</b>	47	87,0

Table 15 The analysis of the answers for the question category 6

**Question category 7**

**Q 13, Q14, Q 15** Provided insights in the provenience of the company which brought more information on how different organisations in different countries see the use of social media in crisis communication. The questions revealed also the field that the company operates in and the size of it, which were the important factors to take into consideration for the purpose of this research.

<b>Q13 In which country is your subsidiary situated?</b>		
	Frequency	Per cent
Canada	2	3,7
Finland	1	1,9
Germany	3	5,6
Lithuania	1	1,9
Mexico	8	14,8
Poland	4	7,4
Romania	22	40,7
Spain	1	1,9
Sweden	4	7,4
The Netherlands	1	1,9
USA	2	3,7
Venezuela	1	1,9
<b>Q14 Please state in what kind of industry do you operate in?</b>		
	Frequency	Per cent
Consultancy	4	7,4
Education	3	5,6
Electronics and Telecommunication	3	5,6
Finance, Law and Insurance	4	7,4
FMCG	6	11,1
IT and Design	15	27,8
Manufacturing	3	5,6
Marketing and Media	5	9,3
Pharmaceutical	3	5,6
Other		7,4
<b>Q15 Please chose the size of your company.</b>		
	Frequency	Per cent
0-50 employees (1)	27	52,9
51-250 employees (2)	9	17,6
Over 250 employees (3)	15	29,4

Table 16 The analysis of the answers for the question category 7

### Bivariate data analysis

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” and “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2,725 <sup>a</sup>	4	,605
Likelihood Ratio	2,442	4	,655
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 7 cells (70,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,56.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” and “How often are the company's social media pages being updated?”**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2,373 <sup>a</sup>	4	,668
Likelihood Ratio	2,145	4	,709
N of Valid Cases	53		

a. 7 cells (70,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,75.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?” and “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”**

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,982 <sup>a</sup>	2	,612
Likelihood Ratio	1,710	2	,425
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 4 cells (66,7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,74.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “Please chose the size of your company.” and “Did you face a crisis situation in the past?”**

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,726 <sup>a</sup>	2	,155
Likelihood Ratio	4,039	2	,133
N of Valid Cases	51		

a. 2 cells (33,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,76.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “Please chose the size of your company.” and “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,995 <sup>a</sup>	4	,407
Likelihood Ratio	4,116	4	,391
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,008	1	,315
N of Valid Cases	51		

a. 5 cells (55,6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,53.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?” and “In your opinion, what period of time would be the best to inform customers in a case of a crisis situation?”**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9,889 <sup>a</sup>	8	,273
Likelihood Ratio	11,423	8	,179
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,195	1	,274
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 11 cells (73,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,22.

**Results of a Chi-square test: Relation between “How often are the company's social media pages being updated?” and “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”.**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How often are the company's social media pages being updated? * How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	53	98,1%	1	1,9%	54	100,0%

**How often are the company's social media pages being updated? \* How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan? Crosstabulation**

		How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?					Total	
		Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult		
<b>How often are the company's social media pages being updated?</b>	<b>Daily</b>	Count	1	4	5	6	0	16
		Expected Count	,6	2,7	5,1	6,0	1,5	16,0
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	25,0%	31,2%	37,5%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	50,0%	44,4%	29,4%	30,0%	0,0%	30,2%
		% of Total	1,9%	7,5%	9,4%	11,3%	0,0%	30,2%
	<b>2-3 Times a Week</b>	Count	1	2	10	4	3	20
		Expected Count	,8	3,4	6,4	7,5	1,9	20,0
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	5,0%	10,0%	50,0%	20,0%	15,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	50,0%	22,2%	58,8%	20,0%	60,0%	37,7%

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		% of Total	1,9%	3,8%	18,9%	7,5%	5,7%	37,7%
		Count	0	1	1	4	2	8
		Expected Count	,3	1,4	2,6	3,0	,8	8,0
<b>Once Week</b>	<b>a</b>	% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	0,0%	12,5%	12,5%	50,0%	25,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	11,1%	5,9%	20,0%	40,0%	15,1%
		% of Total	0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	7,5%	3,8%	15,1%
		Count	0	1	1	2	0	4
		Expected Count	,2	,7	1,3	1,5	,4	4,0
<b>Once Month</b>	<b>a</b>	% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	0,0%	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	11,1%	5,9%	10,0%	0,0%	7,5%
		% of Total	0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	3,8%	0,0%	7,5%
		Count	0	1	0	4	0	5
		Expected Count	,2	,8	1,6	1,9	,5	5,0
<b>Less than Once Month</b>	<b>a</b>	% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	0,0%	20,0%	0,0%	80,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	11,1%	0,0%	20,0%	0,0%	9,4%
		% of Total	0,0%	1,9%	0,0%	7,5%	0,0%	9,4%
		Count	2	9	17	20	5	53
		Expected Count	2,0	9,0	17,0	20,0	5,0	53,0
<b>Total</b>		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	3,8%	17,0%	32,1%	37,7%	9,4%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% of Total	3,8%	17,0%	32,1%	37,7%	9,4%	100,0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16,645 <sup>a</sup>	16	,409
Likelihood Ratio	20,186	16	,212
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,598	1	,206
N of Valid Cases	53		

a. 21 cells (84,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,15.

**Results of a Chi-square test: “Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?” and “How often are the company's social media pages being updated?”.**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Please state in what kind of industry do you operate? * How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	53	98,1%	1	1,9%	54	100,0%

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Please state in what kind of industry do you operate? \* How often are the company's social media pages being updated? Crosstabulation

			How often are the company's social media pages being updated?					Total
			Daily	2-3 Times a Week	Once a Week	Once a Month	Less than Once a Month	
Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	<b>No answer</b>	Count	2	0	1	0	1	4
		Expected Count	1,2	1,5	,6	,3	,4	4,0
		% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	50,0%	0,0%	25,0%	0,0%	25,0%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	12,5%	0,0%	12,5%	0,0%	20,0%	7,5%
		% of Total	3,8%	0,0%	1,9%	0,0%	1,9%	7,5%
		Count	1	0	1	1	1	4
	<b>Consultancy</b>	Expected Count	1,2	1,5	,6	,3	,4	4,0
		% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	25,0%	0,0%	25,0%	25,0%	25,0%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	0,0%	12,5%	25,0%	20,0%	7,5%
		% of Total	1,9%	0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	7,5%
		Count	1	1	1	0	0	3
		Expected Count	,9	1,1	,5	,2	,3	3,0
	<b>Education</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	5,0%	12,5%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%
		% of Total	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%
		Count	1	2	0	0	0	3
	<b>Electronics and Telecommunication</b>	Expected Count	,9	1,1	,5	,2	,3	3,0
		% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	33,3%	66,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%

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	% within	How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	10,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%
	% of Total		1,9%	3,8%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%
	Count		1	3	0	0	0	0	4
	Expected Count		1,2	1,5	,6	,3	,4		4,0
<b>Finance, Law and Insurance</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	25,0%	75,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within	How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	15,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	7,5%
	% of Total		1,9%	5,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	7,5%
	Count		3	2	1	0	0	0	6
	Expected Count		1,8	2,3	,9	,5	,6		6,0
<b>FMCG</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	50,0%	33,3%	16,7%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within	How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	18,8%	10,0%	12,5%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	11,3%
	% of Total		5,7%	3,8%	1,9%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	11,3%
	Count		2	9	1	1	1	1	14
	Expected Count		4,2	5,3	2,1	1,1	1,3		14,0
<b>IT and Design</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	14,3%	64,3%	7,1%	7,1%	7,1%	7,1%	100,0%
	% within	How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	12,5%	45,0%	12,5%	25,0%	20,0%	20,0%	26,4%
	% of Total		3,8%	17,0%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	26,4%
	Count		0	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Expected Count		,9	1,1	,5	,2	,3		3,0
<b>Manufacturing</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	33,3%	66,7%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within	How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	0,0%	0,0%	12,5%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,7%

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		% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	1,9%	3,8%	0,0%	5,7%
		Count	2	2	1	0	0	5
		Expected Count	1,5	1,9	,8	,4	,5	5,0
	<b>Marketing and Media</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	40,0%	40,0%	20,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	12,5%	10,0%	12,5%	0,0%	0,0%	9,4%
		% of Total	3,8%	3,8%	1,9%	0,0%	0,0%	9,4%
		Count	2	1	0	0	1	4
		Expected Count	1,2	1,5	,6	,3	,4	4,0
	<b>Other</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	50,0%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	12,5%	5,0%	0,0%	0,0%	20,0%	7,5%
		% of Total	3,8%	1,9%	0,0%	0,0%	1,9%	7,5%
		Count	1	0	1	0	1	3
		Expected Count	,9	1,1	,5	,2	,3	3,0
	<b>Pharmaceutical</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	6,2%	0,0%	12,5%	0,0%	20,0%	5,7%
		% of Total	1,9%	0,0%	1,9%	0,0%	1,9%	5,7%
		Count	16	20	8	4	5	53
		Expected Count	16,0	20,0	8,0	4,0	5,0	53,0
<b>Total</b>		% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	30,2%	37,7%	15,1%	7,5%	9,4%	100,0%
		% within How often are the company's social media pages being updated?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% of Total	30,2%	37,7%	15,1%	7,5%	9,4%	100,0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	44,425 <sup>a</sup>	40	,291
Likelihood Ratio	44,540	40	,287
N of Valid Cases	53		

a. 54 cells (98,2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,23.

**Results of a Chi-square test: “Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?” and “How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?”.**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Please state in what kind of industry do you operate? * How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	54	100,0%	0	0,0%	54	100,0%

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Please state in what kind of industry do you operate? \* How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan? Crosstabulation

		How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?					Total
		Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult	
Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	Count	0	1	1	2	0	4
	Expected Count	,2	,7	1,3	1,5	,4	4,0
	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	25,0%	25,0%	50,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	11,1%	5,9%	10,0%	0,0%	7,4%
	% of Total	0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	3,7%	0,0%	7,4%
	Count	1	0	2	1	0	4
	Expected Count	,2	,7	1,3	1,5	,4	4,0
	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	25,0%	0,0%	50,0%	25,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	33,3%	0,0%	11,8%	5,0%	0,0%	7,4%
	% of Total	1,9%	0,0%	3,7%	1,9%	0,0%	7,4%
	Count	0	0	1	1	1	3
	Expected Count	,2	,5	,9	1,1	,3	3,0
	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	100,0%
	% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	0,0%	5,9%	5,0%	20,0%	5,6%
	% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	5,6%
Count	0	1	1	1	0	3	
Expected Count	,2	,5	,9	1,1	,3	3,0	
% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	0,0%	100,0%	

Consultancy

Education

Electronics and Telecommunication

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	% within	How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	11,1%	5,9%	5,0%	0,0%	5,6%
	% of Total		0,0%	1,9%	1,9%	1,9%	0,0%	5,6%
	Count		0	0	3	0	1	4
	Expected Count		,2	,7	1,3	1,5	,4	4,0
<b>Finance, Law and Insurance</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	75,0%	0,0%	25,0%	100,0%
	% within	How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	0,0%	17,6%	0,0%	20,0%	7,4%
	% of Total		0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	0,0%	1,9%	7,4%
	Count		0	0	2	4	0	6
	Expected Count		,3	1,0	1,9	2,2	,6	6,0
<b>FMCG</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	33,3%	66,7%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within	How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	0,0%	11,8%	20,0%	0,0%	11,1%
	% of Total		0,0%	0,0%	3,7%	7,4%	0,0%	11,1%
	Count		1	3	5	3	3	15
	Expected Count		,8	2,5	4,7	5,6	1,4	15,0
<b>IT and Design</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	6,7%	20,0%	33,3%	20,0%	20,0%	100,0%
	% within	How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	33,3%	33,3%	29,4%	15,0%	60,0%	27,8%
	% of Total		1,9%	5,6%	9,3%	5,6%	5,6%	27,8%
	Count		0	0	0	3	0	3
	Expected Count		,2	,5	,9	1,1	,3	3,0
<b>Manufacturing</b>	% within	Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	% within	How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	15,0%	0,0%	5,6%

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		% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	0,0%	5,6%
		Count	1	2	0	2	0	5
		Expected Count	,3	,8	1,6	1,9	,5	5,0
	<b>Marketing and Media</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	20,0%	40,0%	0,0%	40,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	33,3%	22,2%	0,0%	10,0%	0,0%	9,3%
		% of Total	1,9%	3,7%	0,0%	3,7%	0,0%	9,3%
		Count	0	0	2	2	0	4
		Expected Count	,2	,7	1,3	1,5	,4	4,0
	<b>Other</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	50,0%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	0,0%	11,8%	10,0%	0,0%	7,4%
		% of Total	0,0%	0,0%	3,7%	3,7%	0,0%	7,4%
		Count	0	2	0	1	0	3
		Expected Count	,2	,5	,9	1,1	,3	3,0
	<b>Pharmaceutical</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	0,0%	66,7%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	0,0%	22,2%	0,0%	5,0%	0,0%	5,6%
		% of Total	0,0%	3,7%	0,0%	1,9%	0,0%	5,6%
		Count	3	9	17	20	5	54
		Expected Count	3,0	9,0	17,0	20,0	5,0	54,0
	<b>Total</b>	% within Please state in what kind of industry do you operate?	5,6%	16,7%	31,5%	37,0%	9,3%	100,0%
		% within How difficult is to integrate new media into the company's crisis plan?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
		% of Total	5,6%	16,7%	31,5%	37,0%	9,3%	100,0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39,659 <sup>a</sup>	40	,485
Likelihood Ratio	45,174	40	,265
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 54 cells (98,2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,17.