Internal organizational communication in a crisis context: 
*The influence of generation gap*
“Feelings are your guide. Trust your feelings and learn to express them, and do not blame anyone for how you feel. Be yourself, observe yourself. Look to understand any crisis you have been in or will be in.”

— Barbara Marciniak, 1998
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Antoine & Lin
Abstract

Nowadays crisis management is a major topic for all organizations. Both external and internal communication can play critical roles in coping with organizational crisis. Compared to external communication, there is a lack of consideration toward internal communication in both theoretical and practical field.

With the increasing number of Generation Y members within organizations, the coexistence of many generations within companies can have influences on internal crisis communication because of their different characteristics, living backgrounds, and experiences.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore what is the influence of the generation gap on the internal organizational communication during a crisis context. The analytical approach has been used to conduct our study.

We used an online questionnaire to gather the opinions from 162 respondents from different generations and countries. By exploring theoretical framework and by analysing the data, we found that both "old" generations and Generation Y, agree that internal communication is important for dealing with crises, because it can unite the members and improve the trust. By building good relationships with employees and managers, encouraging employees to take more initiatives, and by providing enough information, the effectiveness and efficiency of internal crisis communication can be promoted.

Another result of this research is that the generation gap exists within organizations, and both Generation Y and "old" generations think that this gap can affect the internal crisis communication. The influence of the generation gap on the internal crisis communication can be reflected in some aspects including: the communication way (Vertical VS Horizontal), communication tool preference (New technologies VS Conventional), and values (Group oriented VS Individual oriented). However the generation gap can also bring opportunities concerning the internal crisis communication.

Key Words: organizational crisis, internal communication, organizational communication, Generation Y, generation gap, management
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1 Introduction

1.1 Research question

Nowadays crises are not something unusual, it is a part of the daily life in the business world. Facing a crisis is inevitable. Crisis management gains more of the public’s attention every day.

In the current business world, organizational crisis has become almost routine. The business world changes constantly, and the control of the business world is illusory. Also, systems are increasingly complex, creating a constant increase in uncertainty. There's also a split between businesses and their environment, people,... (Heirerich 2010, p.4).

The consequences of organizational crises are destructive. For this reason, the companies make great efforts to manage the crises.

Communication is an important way to deal with crisis. But, in a crisis context, organizations typically think first about the external communication because of the pressure of the media. However, internal communication has a main role within organizations. In crisis situations, the lack of internal communication and consequently the danger of such feelings arising are essentially risky.

One of the essential methods is to build effective internal communication systems. Crisis management without adequate internal communication risks losing the support of strategic publics such as employees, which are the main force of organizations.

According to expert opinions (Łukaszewski 2000, p.15), "internal communication is key to the success of the crisis resolution process". Effective internal communication during a crisis aims to preserve own members’ trust and loyalty.

In modern business society, the coexistence of many generations within organizations is normal. Due to the various characteristics of different generations, a wider gap appeared between the generations.

Communicating in the same way with different generations could be dangerous and inefficient for organizations; especially in a crisis context. Most of people from Generation Y (born after 1980s) have a lack of working experience, especially the experience to cope with organizational crisis even if they grew up in an environment full of crises.

The generation gap is a great cause in the challenges age groups face in finding a common field to set up an effective dialogue within or among generations.

Our research question is linked to this new challenge about the internal crisis communication and the generation gap:
"What is the influence of the generation gap on the internal organizational communication during a crisis context?"

1.2 Why did we choose this topic?

We are two international students from two different countries (Belgium and China). We wanted to find a topic that concerns both of us and that affects us directly or indirectly in our daily life, no matter what country we come from. Choosing a topic linked to crises appeared as something obvious and very interesting to us.

Also, from the academic perspective, there is still a deficiency of researches about the influence of generation gap on internal crisis communication.

We realized that a lot of studies have been conducted about external communication in a crisis context but very few about the internal communication. Very few studies take into consideration the generational aspect. Organizations only start to think about the influence of the Generation Y now because managers are realizing that this generation has increased influence due to the increasing number of people from this generation within the employees. There is deficiency of articles talking about how it applies in real practices.

1.3 Objectives and purposes of the research

With this thesis we want to understand which role and which influence the internal communication has during a crisis context.

Another objective is to understand how the generation gap within organizations can influence the internal organizational communication in a crisis context. The audience targeted is all the people working in an organization, despite of if they have already faced a crisis or not, because it is essential to be prepared to face a crisis. They are inevitable and it will be further discussed in this thesis.

With this thesis we would like to help employees have a better understanding of their co-workers and especially the people from the Generation Y. We would like to give the employees the possibility to understand the importance of the internal communication, especially during a crisis context and to show how it can be useful.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Our thesis will be constituted by: methodology, theoretical framework, reasoning and hypotheses, data analysis and discussion.

First, in the methodology, we will talk about the research method and approach we used in this study, and how we selected samples, collected data and analyzed data.
The theoretical framework will be divided into four parts:

- The first part is a theoretical framework about organizational crisis. In this part we will define the concept, we will talk about the frequency and influence, characteristics, typology, phases of crises, but we will also go through the eventual responses to organizational crises and the different ways to deal with that kind of crises.

- The second part is a theoretical framework about the internal communication. In this part we will define the concept of communication and internal communication, its roles and functions, the common tools used within organizations in order to communicate internally, and the barriers faced by that kind of communication.

- The third part is about the internal communication in a crisis context. This part is the connection between the first and the second parts of the theoretical framework. We will talk about the necessity of this communication, the different steps required to set up a good internal crisis communication, the audience targeted by this communication, the responsibilities,...

- The fourth part is about the challenges/opportunities of the generation gap concerning the internal crisis communication. We will develop and talk about the different generations within organizations, the generation gap and its influence on the internal crisis communication,...

The next chapter is the part about reasoning and hypotheses. We will mention all the hypotheses that we are going to verify through the data analysis of our survey and we will explain our reasoning.

Then, we will present the “data analysis and discussion” of our survey. In this part we will verify our hypotheses.

Finally, in the “conclusion” we will talk about the lessons of our study, and draw the theoretical conclusion about our study. We will return to objectives in order to verify if we reached them, and we will answer our research question. Then, we will link it to the leadership field and discuss about the connection between our study and leadership. In addition, we will also talk about the contributions and limitations of our study. Then, we will indicate improvements for future researches and future possibilities.


2 Methodology

This chapter explains our research method and specific approach that we used to conduct our study. The content of this chapter is sorted into four different parts. We are going to discuss the research method and analytical approach first. Then, we will cover the process of sample selection and data collection. In the end, we will talk about how to analyze the data.

2.1 Research method and analytical approach

The main part of our master thesis can be divided in two parts. One part is about the analysis of literatures and theories concerning our topic in order to propose hypotheses and provide reasoning for them. The second part is about data analysis. Through the data analysis, we can draw our conclusions and then link them to the leadership field. Our research method is illustrated in Fig 1:

![Research Approach Diagram]

Fig 1: Research Approach

We used the analytical approach to conduct our study:

“Analytical view is based on the assumption that reality is factive” (Arbnor and Bjerke 2008, p.86), it means the topics we focus on should be seen as facts. Moreover, the “analytical view aims at exploring, explaining and predicting the factive reality” (Arbnor and Bjerke, 2008, p.221). In our study, we developed two main topics, the internal crisis communication and the generation gap within organizations. Both are facts. The purpose of our study is to explore the content of internal crisis communication and the influence of generation gap on internal crisis communication. Both are aligned with the requirements of analytical view.
Moreover, the internal crisis communication is important and the generation gap within organizations may have an influence on internal crisis communication as we will analyze in this thesis. Both “are indisputable, not questionable and not influenced by somebody’s opinion” (Arbnor and Bjerke’s 2008, p.86). Also, we wanted to start our study by reading different theories and developing a good theoretical framework before starting our analysis. According to us, it is a good way to have a better understanding of the topic in order to develop a meaningful and relevant analysis. The analytical approach gives us the opportunity to proceed in this way. Also, it allows us to do a check-in of the theory with questionnaires in order to check our hypotheses.

First, we will read literatures and some secondary materials in order to build the theoretical framework. After this step, we will propose hypotheses, and a theoretical framework will help us to elaborate the questionnaire. Then, we need to collect data in order to verify or invalidate these hypotheses. In the end, we will draw the theoretical conclusion and link it to the leadership field. Our research method is similar to the analytical approach that is introduced in Arbnor and Bjerke’s (2008) book: Methodology for creating business knowledge. The three procedures of analytical approach that are described as the content of analytical approach by Arbnor and Bjerke’s (2008) will be represented in our study as well. They are:

1) Initial orientation study;

2) Resources and transformation of resources;

3) Evaluation and suggested remedies.

First, it is the "initial orientation study". The purpose of this study in our thesis is to conduct a study that includes a connection between organizational crisis, internal crisis communication, and the generation gap within companies. The methodical procedures are based on the following considerations:

- Going through the literatures, going deeper into the topic;
- Clarifying the academic items;
- Determining the objects of our study (which hypotheses we are going to test);
- Determining the method of data collection.

The second procedure is "resources and transformation of resources". An empirical study designed according to the analytical approach should follow the following steps:

1) Formulating the problem. It means we need to think deeper about our research question and the issue of our research;

2) Planning the study. In this phase, we focus on how to achieve our research objectives;

3) Designing methods for collecting data;
4) Collecting data;

5) Coding and arranging data. Before processing the data, we need to filter the data we collected.

In the end, it is the third step: "evaluation and suggested remedies". In this part, we want to analyze the data, explain the results, and draw our theoretical conclusion.

2.2 Sample selection

The sample selection is an important process of empirical study. There are many requirements, which are based on the purpose of testing hypotheses and understanding our research questions better. In our research, the samples should cover all the generations that exist within organizations, including baby-boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. We can gather the information about what they think and communicate in a crisis context. Whether they have been through organizational crisis or not, the respondents should have working experience or internship experience, so they know what internal communication within a company is.

The authors of this master thesis Antoine Mathot and Lin Jiang, are from Belgium and China respectively, and are learning in an international context. With that, we have the possibility to get access to samples from different countries. By making questionnaires into different languages, we can expand our survey to having an international scope.

2.3 Empirical data collection

During our study, our purpose was to collect information from as many people as possible, who have working experience and, if possible, have already faced organizational crisis (or crises), to test our hypotheses. We discussed how people from different generations handle internal communication in a crisis context to figure out if there is a generation gap within a company and if this gap will influence their preference about their communication behavior. In order to get access to all generations, we chose to use questionnaires to conduct the empirical data collection. This was in order to compensate for the geographical distance.

Using questionnaires to do the investigation is a way to understand what the samples’ opinions are about the questions asked in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is the same for all the respondents. Most of the questions are the same for all generations except for a few questions that were specific to the generation that the respondents belong to.

Questionnaires can have different forms: printed questionnaire and online questionnaire. During our data collection, we use online questionnaire because, our samples are from many different countries, such as China, Belgium, Sweden,
Germany. It is easy for the people from different countries to answer our questions in the same period of time, and it is helpful for us to get the answers quickly.

For the convenience of people who answered our questionnaire, we made our questionnaire in three languages: Chinese, French, and English. Given that they have different preferences of using website or APP, we shared the links of questionnaire on Wechat for Chinese and on Facebook, LinkedIn and by personal email for French and English speakers. The links of questionnaire are here:

In French: https://surveyplanet.com/571207a7b5a158961d406a07 ;
In English: https://surveyplanet.com/571006a7b5a158961d40655a.

We made a pre-test before conducting data collection. The objective of the pre-test was to check the words and phrases used in the questionnaire, to improve the coherence, and to make sure we can get the answers for testing hypotheses.

This process gives the opportunity to collect information from a large amount of people in a short period of time. It is also more objective.

The anonymity makes people, feeling more comfortable in answering with their real opinions and without worrying about divulging. The possibility of getting access to all generations is our first priority, which can be completed by the questionnaire.

2.4 Data analysis

During the collection of the empirical data, we had access to people from China, Europe and North America. And it is not difficult to notice that they all have different opinions about the questions we asked. We used two files to organize all the data: one for Chinese respondents, and another one for the respondents of western countries. In each file, all the answers are also sorted into two categories: Generation Y and "old" generations (including baby-boomers and Generation X). It gave us the possibility to compare the difference between generations and cultures.

Also, we will use LIKERT scale in our questionnaire. In survey research, the LIKERT scale (also called "rating scale") is the most used approach. The answers of respondents are scored along a range. There are few types of LIKERT scales based on different ranges of answers. In our research we used a 7 points scale. This means the respondents’ attitudes towards questions could be represented in a 1-7 range. Each number can be seen as the level of intensity of their feeling for a given question. For the answers of a LIKERT 7 points scale, we calculated the mean value of each type of respondents, to see if there was any obvious otherness. For the multiple choices or single choice questions, we counted the proportion of each choice, then made charts or figures to compare the results. There are still some open questions in
our survey, which are also the main method to gather information about opinions and attitudes. For this part of data, we made special documents for each question to sort every answer into certain categories, then comparing the similarities or differentiations of generations and cultures.

From the analysis of the empirical data, we were able to test all the hypotheses we proposed in the reasoning and hypotheses part. The confirmation or non-confirmation of our hypotheses is the basis of our conclusion about what is internal crisis communication and its influence and what the generation gap is within companies and its influence on internal crisis communication. By comparing the opinions of respondents from different generations and cultures, we may have a better view about our research topic.
3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, we will build the theoretical framework, which is also the foundation of our empirical study. The content of this chapter is sorted into four different parts. First, we will discuss about organizational crisis (3.1), then internal communication (3.2). The third part is about the internal communication in a crisis context (3.3). In the last part of this chapter, we will develop the generation gap within the organizations and its influence on the internal crisis communication (3.4).

3.1 Organizational Crisis

3.1.1 Importance

The crisis management has gained public’s attention since 1982, after Johnson and Johnson’s pain relief capsules were poisoned by a terrorist. The Tylenol incident became the starting point of urging the organization management to booming industry (Burnett 1999, p.475). In the late twentieth century, with the deepening global economic environment complication, the organizational crises have almost become routine (Mishra 1996, p.1), which are usually caused by human mistakes, either through faulty decisions, technological complexities or both (Mishra 1996, p.1, cited in Janis 1989, Perrow 1984, Pauchant and Mitroff 1992).

Also, due to internet there is an increasing complexity of the systems within organizations and everything is more and more fast.

However, because of their reputation, their size and so on, a lot of organizations think crises cannot reach them. A main problem regarding crises is that several organizations do not take crises into serious consideration because these organizations have a short term view and it means about objectives which are imminent according to the organization.

The hard-to-foresee accidents may lead to catastrophic consequences within the companies. Under the growing economic non-determinacy, “the impact of organizational crises is stronger than ever” (Lagadec 1993, p.23). Like the events which happened on the evening of 20th April 2010, a gas release and subsequent explosion occurred on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig working on the Macondo exploration well for BP in the Gulf of Mexico. It has been recognized as one of the most serious environment disasters in the human history. It not only affected BP’ image, but also destroyed the ecological equilibrium and millions of people’ lives.

Organizational crises are no longer recognized as small probability events in the current business world (Lalonde 2007, p.507, cited in Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1996). The increasing of crisis occurrence and types, the expanding of crisis time frame, along with the spreading geographic scope will drive the organizational crisis to

“Crisis events are often critical turning points in a business’ life” (Caremeli & Schaubroeck, 2008, p.178), which can be interpreted as it creates a choice between reorientation and rehabilitation (Weitzel & Jonsson 1989, quoted from Caremeli & Schaubroeck, 2008, p.179). The turning point means it can lead to a better or worse situation, which all depends on the actions which will be applied to it.

Some of the crises have the potential to affect collective perceptions of the company (Sohn & Lariscy 2014, p.24), mostly into a worse direction, which in other words is threatening the corporate reputation. It is a negative divergence from the normal state (Antonová & Zapletalová 2014, p.9; Ulmer 2003, p.177; Valackienne 2010, p.99-110). The crisis represents an unstable situation which can cause the emotions of nervousness and fear among the organizational members. Due to that the working efficiency will decrease and the company operation will go to an unstable situation.

On the other hand, a crisis can contribute to the development of organization. According to Burnett (1999, p.486), “Crisis creates heroes. They also, however, provide myriad learning opportunities for the organizations”. Helping the members of the organizations to reflect about what goes wrong and how to adapt to the threats is one of the benefits. Besides the crisis may make the company more aware of the enhancement about the sensitivity and responsiveness of the organization structures and policies to cope with the new problems that could happen in the future.

To sum up, many companies are facing the increasing tumultuous external environment. Frequent and cumulative crisis-prone situation is the cost and result of the change (Hwang & Lichetenthal 1999, p.4). Although it will bring organizations opportunities to learn and improve, the losses caused by manmade disasters (which definitely will lead to a crisis or crises) equal about 1% global GDP (Coleman 2004, p.3). This loss of value will embody in the shareholder values as well. It is not an insignificant business issue.

According to the survey of 114 Fortune 1,000 companies made by Mitroff, Pauchant and Shrivastava (1989), there were 10 crises of large companies in America; ICM counted around 7000 organizational crises in 2002 (Coleman 2004, p.3). But the statistics shows that ICM counted more than 223,000 crisis news stories in 2013 (ICM Annual Crisis Report, 2014). Obviously, the organizational crisis is on the tendency to increase nowadays.
3.1.2 Definition of an organizational crisis

There are several differentiated disrupt routines of the company. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992, p.15) proposed the disrupted situations as a closed continuum according to the severity level, so the proper order is incident, accident, conflict then crisis. The organizational crisis may have various interpretations and definitions and one of these definitions is "a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core" (Pauchant & Mitroff 1992, p.15). However, Lagadec et al. (1993, p.3) said crisis cannot be defined like a precise dictionary definition because of its complexity.

The word “crisis” derives from the Greek word “krisis”, which means judgment, choice or decision (Paraskevas 2006, p.893). Everybody can have a personal definition of crisis. However, all the definitions of crisis are usually similar to each other. A crisis is a certain state of a situation in a certain amount of time, there can be tension, smooth sailing, and flow.

In the pioneering research work, crises were defined as situation where the members of decision-making feel the threat and time pressure (Hermann 1969, cited in Hwang & Lichtenthal 1999, p.6). Billings et al. (1980, cited in Hwang & Lichtenthal 1999, p.6) illustrated the significance of perceptions in crisis. There is no crisis until someone of the organization perceives it. The perception includes the perceiving value loss, probability of loss, and the restriction of time (Billings et al. 1980, cited in Hwang & Lichtenthal 1999, p.6). Based on this explanation, the trigger event of crisis is vital and indispensable; it is the straw that will break the camel's back.

Hwang and Lichtenthal (1999, p.4) tried to use punctuated equilibrium theory to explain the organizational crisis. Under the view of punctuated equilibrium theory, corporate/organizational crisis is a menace to organization's continued existence, caused by the gap between operations and environments, it is imperative to take actions to get companies back on track. They also put it out not all the crises happen suddenly, some of the crises are under the process of accumulation before being perceived. There are always signals released before being perceived (Hensgen et al. 2003, p.67).

When the term is used in different situations, it may have different connotations or paraphrases (Preble 1997, cited in Paraskevas 2006, p.893). Crisis calls for action and it is not permanent! There will often be conflicts rooted in a crisis, on the other hand you can have conflicts without a crisis going on.

We can describe crises as a transition and decisive moment. The minimum required to exist is an eventual rupture and the worst situation can be the final shutdown of the organization's activities (Heiderich 2010, p.9). Crisis is the result of the accumulation of fragilities and ignoring (ideology, belief,...) (Roux-Dufort 2003 cited in Heiderich 2010, p.9).
Even if crises are no longer unusual in the business world, we can say that crisis is a situation unusual in an organization (in the sense that usually managers do not have to face a crisis everyday within their organization) with critical risks and which requires exceptional and specific processes in order to be managed.

Crises can have various origins, internal but also external. The internal origins can be: Bad communication, illegal activities, problem with the CEO (death, corruption,...), critical accident, a strike, risky changes that are a part of the development strategy, problem in the organizational process, etc. The external origins can be: Hostile tender offer, rumors, attack, financial or natural disaster, problem with the main supplier, boycott,...

Many forms are taken by organizational crises (Hensgen et al. 2003, p.67), such as inferior products, industrial accident, office scandals, earthquakes and so forth. According to ICM annual crisis report (2014, p.2), the mismanagement is the major source of organizational crisis (see Figure 2).

![2014 Crisis Categories Pie Chart](image)

**Fig 2: 2014 Crisis categories**
(Source: ICM Annual crisis report 2014)

As Carmeli and Schaubroeck (2008, p.177) discussed in their article, an organizational crisis disrupts the basic assumptions of the working system. By saying that two fundamental requirements should be met when a crisis happens. The first; the operations system and the participants (including managers and
employees) are both disrupted (Pauchant & Mitroff 1992, p.15). The second; there must be a serious threat to the continued existence of organization.

The Chinese term for crisis is “weiji”, which translated in English literally is “risk and opportunity” (Moscatelli 2015, p.1). Although a crisis calls into question the survival of a system, it can lead to either positive or negative organizational outcomes (Pauchant & Mitroff 1992 p.15). It can also bring opportunities for companies, so there are also some definitions referring to this aspect.

Milburn, Schuler and Watman (1983, p.1144) defined organizational crisis as (1) the opportunity for the organizations to achieve its current goal (2) the threat for preventing the organizations from achieving its current goal or decreasing the organization’s capability to achieve its current goal, make it incapable to continue pursuing current goal without any change, so the company needs to take actions, because the outcome is crucial and the decision making of coping strategy is full of aspect.

By defining the organizational crisis, it is not difficult to find the difference between normal situations and crisis situations, which reflects in perceived time pressure, the ability of control, and the threats to goals (Burnett 1999, p.480). This is the most prevalent definition of organizational crisis, which embraces the most aspects of organizational crisis and was quoted by a lot of scholars as well.

“An organizational crisis is a low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly.” (Pearson & Clair 1998, p.60). This definition is the one we use in our questionnaires in order to define organizational crisis.

3.1.3 Attributes and characteristics of organizational crisis

Crisis has abundant features when it happens within the organizations. According to Wybo (2004, p.25), the “risk of crisis” includes uncertainty and the perception gaps among stakeholders, public and the participants of the crisis.

Besides, the decision-makers can feel the restriction of resources and flexibilities, which could lead to the deficiency of communication (Wybo 2004, p.25). Crises are a dynamic process and it does not give the possibility to foresee everything in details. It is the responsibility of organizations to implement the actions required to prevent and to manage the risks which are known.

Crises are unexpected. It is important to be able to understand and analyze the signals because each unusual event is likely to be the origin of a crisis. It can have a bad impact on the reputation and performance of organizations because crises reveal the weaknesses of the organization's structures. Also, crises are managed in a context of emergency by a lot of different actions and decisions. Their complexity can have a negative influence and impact on the hierarchical structures of organizations.
The organizational crisis is a term full of inconsistencies. It is both objective and subjective, and it does not exist until perceived. It is a risk and opportunity, it can lead to financial problem, and it can also bring the chance to change. As Fink (1986, p.15) said, the organizational crisis is "a turning point for better or worse, described as a “decisive moment” or “crucial time”".

“Surprising” or “sudden” is one of the most common of crisis situation attributes. They suddenly shine the major problems in the design and operational activities of organization system (Caremeli & Schaubroeck 2008, p.178), which means they may not occur instantly while most of them perceived by the organization members at a certain moment. It is precisely because of the “surprising” features, the organizational crises are recognized as infrequent and unique events rather than acceptable and normal operational issues (Coleman 2004, p.2).

What motivates employees is not the same in a normal context than in a crisis context. In a normal context, rewards, extra holidays, and the like are the main tools of motivation. In a crisis context, these motivations are less important because of the insecurity and stressful situation employees have to face. This change of atmosphere can affect the quality and the productivity of employees in a negative way (Arankhedar 2011 & Meyerson 2012). In a crisis context employees are more looking for a job security, a good atmosphere and communication in the workplace and the like. It is less about monetary rewards than in a normal situation.

### 3.1.4 Typology of organizational crisis

Organizational crisis has various features; it can influence the organization operation and management. But not all of them represent in a same way, there is a great diversity of organizational crises. The value of classification lies in the fact that it can explain the complex context into an easy understanding situations, it can help the organization to collect information, applying the insights to diagnose problems, and it makes people to prefer collaborating and learning from crisis (Burnett 1999, p.482).

The easiest way to classify crisis is to judge the cause of it: human mistake or natural disaster. However, the typology developed by scholars is far beyond that. The pioneering work of Milburn, Schuler and Watman (1983, p.1156-1157) developed three-dimension classification (see Figure 3), which includes:

- Organization’s control over the external environment;
- The outcome of the crisis (positive vs negative). Positive crisis-proneness is more about opportunity while the negative crisis-proneness is more related to threat for preventing the organization from attaining its goals;
- Organizations’ susceptibility: the probability to have a crisis within the company.
The three-dimensional classification divides organizational crises into eight categories. Each of the cells from the figure can represent one type of problems, so it is beneficial for companies to analyze the essence of differentiated crises.

Burnett (1999, p.482-483) proposed a four-dimensional classification matrix (See Figure 4), the dimensions are as follow:

- Threat-level (high versus low), which represents whether the threat is serious or not;
- Response-options (few versus many), which represents whether the company have enough alternative response options or not;
- Time pressure (intense versus minimal), which represents whether the company under the limited time can solve the crisis or not;
- Degree of control (high versus low), which represents whether the company can easy control the situations or not.

This matrix divides the organizational crises into 16 cells; each of them has a set of specific characteristics, like the first cell in the Figure 4 with low threat level, many response options, low degree of control and intense time pressure. Burnett (1999, p.483) also put some examples of certain organizational crisis category (See Figure 4).
Hwang and Lichtenthal (1999, p.4) discussed the difference of abrupt and cumulative crisis in their articles. They think abrupt organizational crisis happens suddenly, and the cumulative organizational crisis is cumulated gradually (Hwang & Lichtenthal 1999, p.4).

When it comes to the application field, Smith and Elliott (2007, pp.520-521) provided us a creative angle to dissect the organizational crisis, by sorting out organizational crisis into 3 categories:

1) Crisis of management, the regular management process, especially the decision-making unit can produce the crisis proneness;

2) Operational crisis, some problems happen in the operational activities may beyond the operators or managers’ ability to cope with, which will turn into crisis situations;

3) Crisis of legitimation, one of the basic needs for company is to secure legitimacy among their stakeholders, so that lack of legitimation is one of the organizational crises that the companies experienced.

### 3.1.5 Phases of organizational crisis

Organizational crisis can be identified as a disease, so its phases can be classified into four stages which sound medically rooted (Fink et al. 1986, pp.20-26):

The prodromal crisis stage: this is the warning stage, where some signal will be released to "sniff" the existence of crisis.

Acute crisis stage: some damage has been done, and whether it will continue or not depends on the organization’s action.
Chronic crisis stage: this stage is also called clean-up stage, after the crisis, the organization step into the period of recovery and self-analysis.

Crisis resolution stage: after the self-healing phase, the whole process may be repeated again if the signals of the prodromal stage cannot be seized.

By analyzing managers’ behavior, it is not hard to find four distinct phases of organizational crisis situation: crisis recognition, crisis definition, planning, and reaction (Hwang & Lichtenthal 1999, p.5). Seeger et al. (2003, p.97) described a three-stage model of organizational crisis: pre-crisis, crisis, post-crisis.

The pre-crisis stage is also the incubation period if the foresight detection fails, the uncertainty perception is not successful, some issue, problem or threat is emerging, or the communication is not efficient, then the uncertainty and threat may grow into an extremely abundant level.

The crisis phase is the onset of harm during which the company must use restricted time and resource to response. When a crisis situation happens in an organization, it is essential to react directly. In a crisis context the time is precious and not easily manageable. The emergency management is characterized by three critical terms: communication, coordination, and control. These terms require an interdependent and evolving process of organizational management (Comfort 2007, p.191). In the next part of this chapter we will develop the communication term. During this phase, the organization should choose a strategy of communication. The organization should set up a monitoring for the people involved (through a constant communication...).

In the post-crisis stage, the organization will assess the cause, try to restore or legitimize again the image. The organization must evaluate the impact of the crisis. However, the organization has to be careful about the communication of the impact because the impact might be not the same in the short-term and in the long-term. The post-crisis stage requires specific methods of communication to avoid the resumption of the crisis or the beginning of a new one linked to the previous one.

3.1.6 Responses to organizational crisis

There are two types of organizational crisis responses: individual and organizational responses. The individual response to crisis can influence how the organization responds to crisis (Milburn, Schuler & Watman 1983, pp.1162-1163). Three stages about both individual and organizational responses were discussed, which differentiate from short-term, intermediate-term to long-term.

For individuals, the short-term responses are the symptoms of “far from equilibrium”, such as fear, anger and denial; the intermediate-term is the phase about deciding what to do; as to the long-term response, it becomes self-satisfaction, self-esteem... (Milburn, Schuler & Watman 1983, pp.1163-1167). For organization, the responses are listed in Figure 5 (Milburn, Schuler & Watman 1983, p.1169).
After the trigger events shine the spotlight of the major crises within the company, both of the organization and individuals need to adjust their basic assumption of the working system as responses, and these behavioral and emotional responses should be managed (Carmeli & Schaubroeck 2008, p.179). If the context-dependent crisis response is implied ineffective by feedbacks, readjustment will be in the requirements list (Paraskevas 2006, p.902). Paraskevas (2006, p.903) illustrated a framework of response system, in which organization’s goal was described as organizational robustness and resilience rather than correction or solution. It provides the structure for the information to flow and the feedback to diffuse. The organization can correct their actions and behaviors with the help of enough operational structure and self-correct driven.

The attitudes of organizations about crises depend of the experiences of the organization. For example, an organization with risky activities such as nuclear has a risk culture. Organizations that face a crisis already will prepare the next crisis (however that kind of organizations should not only focus on the type and characteristics of their previous crisis). Also, organizations which have never faced a crisis can think that they are not concerned by this threat and problem.

3.1.7 Strategies: Dealing with organizational crisis

Solving the organizational crisis involves a lot of consideration. Burnett (1999, pp.480-481) explained that managers should focus on the following aspects:

1) strategic control; 2) strategic implementation; 3) strategy evaluation; 4) strategy formulation; 5) environment analysis; 6) goal formation.
Also, at the same time, they may feel the limitation of finding a suitable strategy, because of the time pressure, control issues, threat level and response options.

The most significant way by a lot of scholars to cope with organizational crisis mentioned is organizational learning and knowledge cumulating.

For example, “the better sharing of knowledge about understanding of the merits and drawbacks of the company” is beneficial to resist crisis (Wybo 2004, p.22); “learning from failures” can help organization check the signals in the crisis preparedness, and leaders play important roles in it (Carmeli & Schaubroeck 2008, p.179); “building a learning model” to transfer knowledge flow, concrete experience as well as reliable data is one of the solutions (Ladonde 2007, p.510).

According to Wybo (2004, p.25), the prediction helps to avoid crisis while devices and procedures of the organization need to be set up to master crisis. There is a resilience layer that contributes to resist the crisis (see Figure 6). The resilience layer can help the organization adapt to the new situations under pressure and uncertainty. He explained the formation of resilience layer as two main factors:

- External factors: pressure of events, uncertainties and organization overwhelming.
- Internal factors: individuals’ commitment and the aspiration to minimize the consequences.

**Fig 6: The resilience layer to organizational crisis**

Based on this perspective, the deep involvement of people in crisis management is the effective strategy to master crisis. Mishra (1996, p.14) indicated that the decentralization may help to build trust among organization, which contributes to improve employee’s willingness to figure out the crisis problems.

Milburn, Schuler and Watman (1983, p.1174) divided the strategies of coping with organizations into two categories: preventive and management considerations. Preventive considerations include the following aspects:
Understanding the organization needs and values, then integrate them into organization goals;

Establishing and maintain the effectiveness, diversity and flexibility of structure. Providing suitable alternatives before for emergence;

Organization planning;

Keeping aware of extent environment and assuming the control over it, being careful about the signals of crises;

Being careful about internal environment, and reducing the susceptibility of the company.

Management considerations contain the following content:

- Individuals should be capable of aware of crisis situation, and accept it;
- Making right decision by reducing the time pressure; putting employees into the suitable position of the company; gathering information as many as possible; identifying the resources of possessing and requiring;
- Building social support group for individuals;
- Decentralizing the decision-making;
- Sharing information and knowledge;
- Developing the common commitment within the group.

3.2 Internal communication

3.2.1 Communication

Communication is about expressing information, ideas,... Sharing a common goal is not enough to succeed in a company. An effective communication is required to avoid the conflict of misunderstanding,... Organizations need a good communication to progress.

The communication is very important in the modern business management because managers have to build a relationship with the workers, and the managers can do that through a good communication. Comfort (2007, p.194) says that "The concept of communication clearly includes the creation of shared meanings among different members of an interacting system".

Communication is an exchange of messages between a sender and a receiver (Blundel 2004, p.3). Communication is a strategic lever for the management and for the performance! It boosts motivation by giving meaning to the daily activities of the members of the organization. This facilitates adherence to the organization's strategy
by creating a common language. It is also the process that allows the information to be fluid in the organization. Valackiene (2010, p.502) says that "Communication is a social institution system and a strategic management function which can solve modern socioeconomic challenges in a business environment". Communication is a social affair (Forssberg & Malm 2001, p.25), the content can influence participants’ relationship.

However, it is important to keep in mind that communicate involves risk-taking (indeed the communication can be about very sensible topics and the consequences of a bad communication could be critical) but it is a real necessity.

The problem of the communication, especially in a crisis context, is that for the majority of managers the communication is secondary. A French study has shown that in France less than 50% of managers are convinced by the impact of communication on the performance of their team (Baromètre Afci ANDRH Inergie 2013 on the corporate communication). However, the results of this study can easily be transposed to other countries. Managers are not aware of the importance of communicating with their employees. Also, according to the same study, 20% of the working time of a manager is spent to communicate.

They communicate the message but they do not care how it is done and how it is perceived by the audience.

Most of the managers only care about the message not about the channel, the generation, personality and culture of the audience, the context,... However, as it will be explained in the following pages of this thesis, the context has a big influence on the organization and it is important to adapt the communication.

The process of communication is a mix between content and a relation, the both are linked. Indeed, the content can be rejected, ignored or biased if the relation is not good.

Forssberg and Malm (2001, p.24) modified Fiske’s (1990) model. They gave us a clear way to understand the communication process (see Figure 7). From the model, there are many vital aspects of communication, including source, channel, and response. But the influence of noise is always an obstacle of communication. And the whole process is happening in a certain context, which means the communication is context-linked.
It is important to keep in mind that communication departments vary depending on their size and expertise. Indeed, usually the communication department of a big multinational company will be different than the communication department of a small regional company.

The best communication forces you to listen and must be based on logic, compassion and sound reasoning (De Pree 2004, p.112). It also gives the opportunity to be significantly involved in the working of the system.

People in an organization have the right to know and to understand their mission, the strategy, the direction but also the opportunities and how they can realize them. It is better to give a lot of information than not enough because information is power. However if information is hoarded by few people it is pointless.

3.2.2 Internal communication

The internal communication is a part of the corporate communication.

The more optimal is the internal communication the more optimal is the performance of the employees. Both are linked. As Asuero (2013) says, "The majority of internal problems in organizations are directly related to poor internal communication management".

The internal communication is a close exchange of information between people within a company in order to unite these people around the corporate values to optimize their motivation and involvement around the company's strategies. In order to illustrate the importance of internal communication, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989, cited in Forssberg & Malm 2001, p.23) talked about internal communication and information flows as the lifeblood of the organization.

An internal communication can not be optimal if the communication is not dynamic, active and effective. The internal communication is the basis of the relation between managers and employees.
The most frequent problems of poor internal communication in organizations are (Asuero 2013): confusion, distrust, lack of connection and credibility, demotivation, loss of interest and passion about the tasks to execute, loss in productivity, and deterioration in the work climate (gossip, negativity,...).

The quality of the information transferred through the internal communication has an influence on the decisions and that's why in the current business world the internal communication is an essential support and an ally to the management in organizations. Management and internal communication are linked.

The internal communication can be downward, upward and horizontal (Moch 2015, p.30):
The downward and upward communications are vertical communications and they spread the information according to the hierarchy. The difference between the both is that in the downward communication the flow of information is from a higher to a lower-level inside the company. The upward communication is the other way around (from a lower to a higher-level).

However, the horizontal communication means the flow of information is between people inside a company from the same level of organizational hierarchy.

According to Hartley and Bruckmann (2002, p.2) there should be an effective balance between downward and upward communication.

**Role/functions**

The role of the internal communication is more complex now than before. It is not anymore only about sharing information through the organization. Now the main goal is the adhesion of the people within the organization to the projects, values, and strategies of the organization. The internal communication must; unite on a project, reinforce the sense of belonging, boost the efficiency and the creativity of employees, improve the general atmosphere and the performance of the company and valorize skills (Moch 2015, p.30). It should be an ongoing process and it should improve the fluidity of the information between all the different levels of hierarchy, departments,... It should also inform the stakeholders in the organization about the objectives to reach and the strategies of the company, and facilitate the understanding and the commitment to the strategy and goals of the organization. This communication can be sense giving and due to that improving the motivation of stakeholders.

By informing, the communication explains (a strategy, an idea, a context...) and this explanation can convince the audiences. Once the audiences are convinced, they will be more committed and motivated to the ideas, strategies,... of the organization.

According to Erikson (1992, cited in Forssberg & Malm 2001, p.27), the functions of internal communication can be divided into 5 parts, as follow:

- Work communication, the need for the employees to complete their daily work;
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- News communication, the need for sharing the latest news within the company;
- Change communication, something outside routine is happening;
- Control communication, the need for modifying the organization work to achieve the common goals;
- Culture communication, mostly invisible, about people regards things and their value.

For the manager the internal communication is not only about conveying a message. It is also about motivating the collaboration within his/her organization and being able to listen to the people of the organization.

3.2.3 Classic tools of the internal communication

Even if their goals are the same (informing, reassuring, developing a sense of belonging,...) we can distinguish the verbal communication, the written communication and the non-verbal communication.

The verbal and non-verbal communications are direct because the participants (speaker(s) and audience(s)) have a direct interaction with each other (for example, face to face, but also giving a phone call...). There is a possibility for an immediate interaction. However, there is not a direct interaction during a written communication.

3.2.3.1 Verbal communication

The person selected to realize the verbal communication has to be credible, prepared and legitimate because he/she represents the organization. Usually the organization protects the CEO because if his/her communication fails nobody will be able to fix it. That's why usually it is better to select someone else, but still with a lot of experience and preferably from the high level hierarchy of the organization.

Each verbal communication also has a non-verbal message (Mornel 2001, p.117).

When verbal messages are ambiguous or unclear, people tend to look for non-verbal cues (body language, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, touch, space) (Lebaron 2003). It is even more accurate and likely to happen during an internal communication between people from different generations, different departments, different cultures... because the languages used can be different.

Below we will develop the most important tools of this kind of communication in a crisis context. With this kind of communication, it is possible to emphasize key parts of the communication by varying the volume, the tone, etc.

Business pitch

Business pitch is a dynamic explicit, simple and short presentation (maximum two minutes) about a project, change, idea, evolution, strategy,... Only the main points are
mentioned. By doing that regularly, the organization can convince employees and keep contact with them. The employees can have a better understanding of the evolution of the eventual crisis. The vocabulary used has to be simple and understandable by everybody. In order for the audience to have a better understanding and to attract their attention, the use of metaphors by the speaker is helpful. Indeed, the utilization of metaphors can guide the perception and the understanding. Also, emotions can be embodied through metaphors.

It is important to stay positive. It is the minimum, especially during a crisis context, to keep the employees motivated. The "pitch" has to captivate the audience and this captivation can be the result of a mix between ethos, pathos and logos.

Ethos is linked to ethics. It is a way for the communicator to legitimate himself/herself by convincing the audience of his/her credibility and skills about the situation.

Pathos is linked to emotions of the audience. It is about convincing an audience through the creation of an emotional atmosphere.

Logos is linked to logic. It is a way of convincing the audience by something logical.

A good pitch requires the characteristics of ethos, pathos and logos.

Meeting

This is one of the best ways for meeting people of the company to share opinion, information, advice, develop collaboration, stimulate people, etc. It can stimulate employees and bring collective solutions to individual problems.

However, a lot of people within a company think it is a waste of time and think it is not good for their productivity and performance. Nevertheless, during crisis context, meetings reassure employees because it is an opportunity for them to learn more about the current situation and to share their opinions with other people of the company.

Nowadays, more and more people are doing teleworking and a meeting gives them the possibility to face the reality of the working place again, to be less isolated and to have a contact with the other employees.

However, the organization should not organize too many reunions because it could have a negative effect on the motivation of the employees (Moch 2015, p.77). For example, organizing a meeting is good in a crisis context because there is a real need of information...!

Organization should be sure about the necessity and the relevance of the meeting before organizing one.
The organization of a meeting can not be improvised. It requires an antecedent reflection about the topic, the content, the environment (place in which the meeting will be organized), time management, etc.

3.2.3.2 Written communication

Written communication is an essential function of the internal communication. Managers and employees are constantly writing through different tools such as enterprise social networking, notes, email, letter, report, company newsletter, etc. It is one of the main challenges of the managers to be able to use effectively these writing tools.

The differences between these tools are for example: the level of precision of the information and the way to communicate (directive way, promotional way,...). However, even if each tool of written communication have their own characteristics, each of them has to be structured in order to be effective, clear in order to be understood, attractive in order to be read, contextualized and having a target in order to reach the desired people (Moch 2015, p.83).

The advantages of the written communication are that it is verifiable and more permanent than the verbal communication. It is useful especially when the message is complex or long.

However, that kind of way to communicate is slower than the oral communication. For example it is possible to express more ideas in 30 min by talking than writing. Also, the oral communication gives the possibility to react directly and faster than the written communication. Thus, it is easier to give a feedback.

It is however difficult to convey emotion and show empathy because the only way to express the message is through words. It is not possible to see the reaction of the people with whom you communicate when you use the written communication.

The use of the email is very common in the organization especially for messages which do not need a direct answer and which require a short answer. Also, this tool is good if the message has a lot of receivers and needs a support such as an attachment. This tool should be used if there is not a better way to communicate. As the results of The Internal Communication and Technology Survey 2014 (conducted in partnership with Melcrum) shows, "E-mail is the most effective channel for communicators, followed by intranet, leadership communications and team / line manager briefings" (2014, p.3).

Email messages remain in the receiver's device and they can read it when it is convenient for them. It is a cheap and fast way to communicate.

The internal communication has to maintain the motivation, the collaboration, the implication and the cohesion in the company because these characteristics can be used as a protection to face crisis in a crisis context. Written and electronic
communications are not enough to maintain everything and it should be a combination with direct social contacts.

3.2.4 Barriers of the internal communication

Communicating internally is not easy and it can be even more difficult due to different elements:

Language

Depending of the culture, age, the level of hierarchy, education, background,... the same word can have different meaning and interpretations. It is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of the sender is not necessarily the interpretation of the receiver. Also, sometimes some words are only understandable by a small part of the employees of the organization. It is what happens with the jargon use in different departments. For example, the jargon of the marketing department is probably not the same than the jargon of the financial department.

Time

Managers do not spend enough time to communicate internally because they think it is not a priority and a waste of time in their working daily routine.

Emotions

The emotions of the receiver will influence the reaction and the interpretation of the receiver about the information. It can bias the communication, its objectivity and efficiency.

Withholding and filtering of information by managers

For example, most of them think that owning more information give them the opportunity to keep their power and control on the people in a lower-level of the hierarchy.

Filtering is something very usual in organizations. Robbins, DeCenzo and Coulter (2008, p.327) define filtering as "The deliberate manipulation of the information to make it appear more favorable to the receiver". The filtering will be more or less intense depending of the levels of hierarchy (the more levels of hierarchy in the organization the more intense is the probability of filtering) and of the culture.

The inability to communicate

There is a big difference between sharing information and communicating. As Eikenberry and Harris (2011, p.109) state, "You have not communicated the information until you make sure that the information is 'getting through'".

The problem is that too many people within an organization only simply share information.
Information overload

There are more and more ways to communicate (chat, e-mail, phone call, notes, memo, conference,...) and due to that employees get a lot of information (sometimes at the same time) and it is sometimes impossible to manage and assimilate everything. It is a problem when information exceed the processing capacity of the receiver (Robbins, DeCenzo & Coulter 2008, p.328).

The gap between business theories and reality

There is a lack of consideration from the top management about the business reality. Most of the managers are too highly focused on the daily management and the business plan of their organization but they forget to think about the specific challenges about the needs of their employees. Managers should improve their collaboration with them because this behavior deteriorates the internal communication.

Selective perception

Depending of the personal characteristics, needs, personal experiences, motivation,... it may have a selective perception of the information by the people within the organization.

The wrong use of communication tools

There are more and more tools to communicate (new technologies) but the problem is that some people are not able to use these tools effectively and in a good way. This wrong use disturbs the communication.

3.2.5 Overcoming barriers

Robbins, DeCenzo & Coulter (2008, pp.329-332) suggest different methods (such as managing and understanding your own emotions, giving feedback, listening actively, simplifying language) to overcome barriers. The main condition to have an effective communication is that the intended audience gets and understands the message.

Managing and understanding your own emotions

As said before, emotions can have an impact on the quality of the communication. That is why it is important to be able to manage and to understand yours. One solution is to be able to know when the emotions are too important to be objective and to communicate in a good way. The best thing to do is to calm down and to communicate when you feel you are able to manage your emotions.

Whether if the communication is verbal, non-verbal or written, the people in charge of the communication should not let his/her deep emotions about the context takeover. It is even more accurate in a crisis context because usually it is a very stressful situation.

Feedback
Since most of the communication problems are due to a misunderstanding, giving feedback can be very helpful to solve the misunderstanding. The feedback can be verbal or non-verbal and it gives the possibility to have an interaction with the receiver of the message directly after the communication in order to be sure that there is no misunderstanding,...

Feedback should not be general. It should be specific and precise, goal oriented and objective. The feedback has to be given at a good timing. It is important to be sure that the receiver fully understands it.

Active listening

That kind of listening requires a lot of concentration. In a conversation the receiver hears the sender but too often the receiver of the message does not listen. Listening is an active process unlike hearing that is passive. Active listening avoids doing early interpretation, it gives the possibility to think about the full meaning and ideas of the message. Too often the receiver is not thinking about the real meaning of the message but about the answer he/she is going to give.

Intensity, empathy, acceptance and a willingness to take responsibility for completeness are four essential elements required for active listening (Rogers & Farson 1976 cited in Robbins, DeCenzo & Coulter 2008, p.335).

Simplify language

One of the best ways to ease the understanding of the same meaning is to use a simple language. The sender has to take into consideration the characteristics of the audience in order to adapt the vocabulary (avoiding slang and jargon that are not understandable by everybody for example) and the structure of the messages to be sure to have a clear and understandable communication.

3.3 Internal communication in a crisis context

3.3.1 Necessity and reasons to set up a powerful internal communication in an organization during a crisis context

During a crisis, there is an increasing number of members of the organization using the communication system. It is due to some elements such as "internal staffing changes undertaken by the organization to meet the demands of the crisis situation" (Quarantelli 1986, p.2).

In a crisis context, organizations use to think first about the external communication because of the pressure of the media. However, the internal communication should be the priority because if employees learn about the crisis through media and people outside the organization they will be upset (they will feel betrayed, abandoned and not
respected by their organization) and it will develop the creation of rumors around the situation (it can escalate quickly and having critical consequences!).

In their study about the internal crisis communication for Danish companies, Johansen et al. (2012 cited in Coombs 2014) found that "67% of Danish organizations had explicit policies for external crisis communication while only 31% had similar polices for internal audiences". This study shows a real lack of consideration of organizations about the internal aspect.

Internal communication is linked to the collaborative working. In an organization this way of working is when employees and managers, from the same organization, share their information, knowledge, skills,... with each others in order to face and to solve together a problem, a crisis,...

It is very common to have a gap between the interpretation of the employees and the interpretation of the managers about the internal crisis communication. Mazzei and Ravazzani (2011, cited in Coombs 2014) confirmed this gap in their study, "Managers felt they have been effective at crisis communication with employees while employees felt the crisis information was of poorly quality and were negative toward the internal crisis communication they experienced".

The sharing of information, knowledge, skills,... allows to reduce this gap.

In that kind of context the internal communication is essential and has a very important and serious role. The effects and consequences of a crisis within an organization can be felt longer internally than externally.

When problems happen the internal communication becomes a defense process.

The internal crisis communication is important to warn people of the organization that the organization is facing a crisis. The internal communication in a crisis context can protect its integrity, its reputation and image, its people, its critical activities, the trust of people towards the organization,... for a short-term, mid-term and long-term.

The internal communication can not be effective if there is a lack of credibility and trust. Different notions such as ethic, trust and integrity have to be a part of the process in order to face a crisis.

An example to show the consequences of a bad internal crisis communication and the importance of the credibility is the BP case.

In 2010, BP faced a big crisis because of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The communication (internal and external) during this crisis was a disaster. BP lost all its credibility and the trust and the support of their employees toward their organization because BP shared incorrect information to them. Indeed, they published pictures manipulated with Photoshop during their crisis communication with their employees. The organization distorted the reality of the crisis.
The internal communication in a crisis context can reassure these people because this crisis context can have consequences on the performance, motivation, mood, ... of the employees. In order to avoid rumors, panic, and stress, a good internal crisis communication is required. Good internal communication can prevent crises, and miscommunication may aggravate the crisis.

3.3.1.1 Need to feel involved

Sometimes, during a crisis context, employees have the feeling to be sidelined by their organization. The problem is that this lack of consideration of organization will have a bad influence on the motivation of the employees. They need to feel they are involved and the best way for an organization to show to employees they are an important part of the organization is to communicate them the changes, projects, health and situation of the organization,... When people feel they are involved in a change process they are less likely to resist to the change that appears with the crisis.

Making employees feel they are important and believe that their vision matters to the organization are essential to keep their willingness and their productivity in a crisis context. The organization can do that through different actions such as interaction between senior managers and employees, the development of communication skills in teams,... Indeed, as Závadský, et al. (2015, p.58) say, "Employees' motivation starts with effective communication among individual team members. Lack of team support and coordination decreases motivation and creates tensions. Acquaintance and communication help overcome barriers and keep the team together in difficult times".

Each employee in the company is useful and has an importance. Employees are a part of the organization and this organization can not be optimal without the involvement of each of them. That is why it is important to communicate with them to convince them of their utility in order to reach the goals of the company. This is even truer in a crisis context because in that kind of situation employees really need to stay focused on a goal and to be aware of the importance of their involvement and collaboration.

If the organization communicates and shows to its employees that they are essential for the organization, it can reinforce and develop the relationship between them and the crisis can give the possibility to the organization to become better and stronger.

The internal crisis communication has an impact on how employees identify themselves as a part of the working community of the organization:

If employees feel they are important for the organization, it can develop their sense of belonging, which will make them more willing to be faithful to their organization in a crisis context. Otherwise, employees will be more likely to export their skills to another organization.

Also, if employees have a strong sense of belonging they may share the same goal that their organization. The internal communication has an influence on the coordination of actions which allows the organization to achieve a shared goal. The ability to share...
a common goal will depend on the capacity of the communication processes to elicit sufficient shared understanding among the people in the organization (Comfort 2007, p.194).

3.3.1.2 Need to have a good atmosphere in the workplace

The atmosphere in the workplace is more and more important, especially in the current business world with the growing number of the Generation Y among the employees within organizations.

The internal communication has an essential role in the interpersonal relationships between people from the same sector, but also between people from the different departments, and between the people from the low-level of hierarchy and from the high-level of hierarchy.

Usually in a crisis context the atmosphere within the organization is very stressful. Keeping a good atmosphere can help people to stay motivated and focus on their task instead of the eventual tensions and problems.

The crisis is one of the main causes of the change in the employees' motivation. In a normal situation without any crisis it is easier to motivate employees. However, a crisis has a big influence on the organization, especially in the workplace atmosphere. Therefore, it will be more difficult to increase the motivation of employees in a crisis context. Nevertheless, if the organization manages to keep enthusiasm among the employees during a crisis, the organization would face less serious damage and would be able to recover faster. The enthusiasm within the organization can be maintained through a good internal communication.

Managers should not forget that their communication with employees can have a big influence on them. That is why the organization has to maintain a good communication with the employees especially during a crisis.

In order to be able to develop an effective internal communication in a crisis context, the organization should provide the best environment possible to facilitate the understanding, the decision, the reaction, the spreading of information, the fluidity, the integrity, etc.

Ensuring a positive and a good relationship among employees and ensuring a job security is very important in a crisis context and it is possible to do that through an effective internal communication.

However, as Závadský et al. say (2015, p.64), "Employers don't pay enough attention to this need" and their research shows that "Employers rarely allow employees to meet this need and it can demotivate them".
3.3.1.3 Need to learn about the changes

Usually crisis means changes and one of the consequences of these changes is the resistance of the people within the organization. If these people get information (their interests, their pertinence, etc) about these changes, the acceptance should be easier because employees will feel more familiar with it. Indeed, one of the reasons why people resist to the change is because they do not like the "unknown" and by communicating internally, employees will learn and know more about what is going on. Spreading information within the organization about changes an internal communication is required!

When there is a crisis there is a need of reducing uncertainty and it is possible to do that through a strategy of internal crisis communication. The goal of this strategy is to "respond to the crisis, resolving it, and learning from it" (Ulmer et al. 2003, p.177).

3.3.2 Organization of the internal crisis communication

A part of the organization of the internal crisis communication is to think about the different possibilities of scenarios in order to be able to be ready as soon as possible to face each situation. The internal crisis communication has to take into consideration the current situation and to project itself into the future. It is possible by imagining its possible evolutions (the worst, the best and the median).

Several phases are required in order to set up an internal crisis communication (Heiderich 2010, p.85): Collection of information, evaluation, determination of topics of the crisis, development of the strategy, development of messages, communication plan.

3.3.2.1 Collection of information

In order to be able to communicate internally about the crisis, the first phase is to get as much information as possible. This phase should start as soon as possible and since the beginning of the crisis. Before thinking about the strategy, it is necessary to manage the flow of information from outside and inside (for example, the organization can get information from its different departments) and to analyze these data about this specific situation.

Two different kind of information should be analyzed: factual information and opinions.

In a crisis context there are a lot of biased information due to the gap between the reality and rumors. Getting reliable information is a real challenge in that kind of context. Using a methodic approach to get information is required to avoid mistakes. This information should be analyzed and linked with the crisis context.

The organization should look for information in order to have a better understanding of the crisis. The collection of information takes into consideration information such
as impacts of crisis, cause(s), people involved, information about the environment and organization, information about the coordination, information about the means of action and crisis logistic, when, where and how, information about decisions which are currently taken in the organization, and more.

It is also essential to centralize the information and to identify the missing information.

Even if the collection of information is the first phase of the crisis communication, this is an ongoing process during the entire period of crisis. Indeed, sometimes people in charge of the internal crisis communication use to make conclusion too quickly. Also, crisis is an unstable and a constantly changing context, and taking a conclusion too quickly could generate even more problems. People should communicate carefully when they take a conclusion.

During a crisis there is a lot of uncertainty because of the chaos generated. However in that kind of context people think they know, forget that they don't know, and they don't take into consideration what is known (Heiderich 2010, p.86).

The management of information is as important as the management of the crisis! Both are closely linked together.

3.3.2.2 Evaluation

The organization should analyze and verify the reliability of the information collected.

Due to the complexity of a crisis context it could be useful for a company to hire someone who owns the expertise and skills required for a deep understanding of a crisis context.

Even if consultants can be useful in each phase of the organization of the internal communication in a crisis context and crisis management, we can already mention their importance in the evaluation phase.

The first difficulty in a crisis context is to get organized as soon as possible to be able to face this unusual situation and to take decisions. That's why it can be a good decision to hire a consultant. That kind of person has an expertise and a lot of experiences on specific topics. One of the advantages is that their decisions and evaluations are not influenced by emotions because usually in a crisis context there are a lot of emotions among people of the organization and it can bias the decisions and evaluations. It is possible to hire consultants who are specialized about the specific context that the organization is facing. Consultants can help the organization to structure itself. Due to that it will be easier for the organization to take decisions and to evaluate the reliability of its information. These steps are required to be able to have a successful crisis communication.

Consultants identify the crisis in order to analyze it. Then they will generate potential solutions. They will select and plan the solution and implement this one. Finally they will evaluate the solution.
At the beginning of the crisis the role of consultants is to find the best way to reunite all the people required for the decision taking. Then they have to help the organization to define and to manage the operational aspect in a realizable way. The both are going together.

Consultants are more objective than people who are working for the organization which is facing the crisis. Due to that they have a better hindsight. Consultants can challenge the different options, issued previously by the organization, in order to determine better possibilities and way of communication to set up but also discover hidden opportunities. It is even more difficult for an organization to face a crisis without that kind of person.

The best way to be prepared to face that kind of situation is to train and also to have a lot of experiences. One of the characteristics of consultants is that they have a lot of experiences in very diverse situations.

Consultants can bring a methodology about information management and communication strategy. They can also help the organization with the redaction of arguments and messages that will be used during the crisis communication towards its different publics.

Also, consultants have a lot of freedom to express their ideas and due to that they are more able to correct the responsible of the organization. Indeed, as an employee from the low-level of hierarchy it could be a lot of pressure to say to his/her manager that he/she (manager) is doing something wrong or that he/she has a flaw. The manager could be very upset. However, if a consultant says the same things there is a bigger probability that the manager takes this advice in consideration.

The consultant is not supposed to stay during all the project of crisis management. It is a transfer of skills from the consultant to the organization. However, the consultant will check the global validity and the efficiency of the crisis project at the end of this one.

It is important for a consultant to keep in mind that a plan and project that are working in an organization is not supposed to work in another, even if the context and the situation are the same. Indeed each organization has its own specificities and organizations are constantly changing. So even if a consultant is working in an organization in which he/she has already worked, he/she has to keep in mind that the organization is not the same anymore.

For example, few years ago, the Rolls-Royce Company had a lot of problems because the company used the corporate speech of the past and it was irrelevant for the majority of its workforce.

The use of external contractors such as consultants should be considered in the crisis management but the scope of intervention and the duration of intervention should be fixed.
3.3.2.3 Determination of topics of the crisis

Even if the internal crisis communication focuses on the main topic of the crisis, it is also important to take into consideration the side topics (topics which can be affected by the crisis and which can have an impact on the organization) in order to avoid eventual critics if there are unexpected questions about these topics (Heiderich 2010, p.88). It is possible to know what these side topics are by doing a quick checking of the current situation of aspects (in the organization) such as ethical, social, strategical, economical, logistical, political, environmental.

3.3.2.4 Development of the strategy

According to Libaert (2001, pp.58-71) there are three strategies for the crisis communication; the acknowledgement, the "lateral project", the refusal. These strategies are also valid for the internal aspect.

1) The strategy of acknowledgment:

It is an acknowledgment of its own responsibilities and of the crisis on its main topic. The acknowledgment is total or partial (acknowledgment of the origin but not of the consequences) and it has to be done quickly. This acknowledgment allows this strategy to have extenuating circumstances and sometimes to improve its likability. Explications should go with this strategy.

2) The "lateral project" strategy:

This strategy tries to change the way of thinking of the public about the problem. It is about changing the point of view of publics. The communication will be about the strengths and not anymore about the weaknesses of the situation. The goal of this strategy is to convince employees that the organization is the victim of the situation. The organization involved tries to take the attention of the employees away and especially on something external and different to the organization. Some techniques used are the discrediting of accusers and minimizing the impact of the crisis.

3) The refusal strategy:

This strategy is about denying and rejecting all the responsibilities and charges. This strategy could also be realized by the organization involved by refusing to communicate. For example, it happens when the company thinks the pressure from the media will happen during a very short period of time (Cobut & Donjean 2015, p.112).

These both ways to realize this strategy are very risky because the organization has to be sure there are no suspicions regarding to it or that the source of accusation is not at all credible.

Also, the fact to deny something that is under its responsibility is a risk of developing the intensity of the crisis. However, if the crisis is due to a bad behavior of a member of the organization, it could be acceptable for this organization to reject
Responsibilities or to refuse to communicate because the public would link easily this individuality with the whole organization and it could be an important issue for the reputation of the company.

In 2009, in France, there was a problem with a dozen of screens of IPhone because the screens exploded without any reason. Despite the expectation of a reaction from Apple and the proof the company was aware of the problem; Apple faced this crisis without communicating and by denying its responsibilities. The company has never confessed the manufacturing defects.

In order to choose the best strategy, people can use different criteria such as the level of crisis, the knowledge about the topic, the possible risks, the time, the predictability of the future of the crisis, etc.

Lukaszewski (1999, p.65) focuses on seven critical dimensions of crisis communication management: operations, victims, trust/credibility, behavior, professional expectations, ethics and lessons learned.

During a critical business scenario, these seven dimensions provide a reflection about eventual strategies and decisions and these dimensions help to set up an internal communication.

3.3.2.5 Development of messages

Messages are important because it is what the public will remember. Messages should be developed according to the strategy and the main ideas of the organization. This coordination requires a lot of work but it is necessary in order to avoid a negative effect of the message. These messages should be consistent and valid during the entire period of crisis because the message has to make sense and to stay coherent no matter what happens and how the situation evolves. The more precise the message is, the less wrong interpretations will be made. It is not enough to mention facts so the messages should give explanations as well.

The target audience should be able to understand each part of the content of the messages. It should be very easy to understand and clear (for example, avoiding the use of slang specific to a department because it could bias the understanding of another department). It can be very useful to create a dictionary resuming all the words required to describe and understand the crisis by the audience. The message can be elaborated when the people in charge of the communication agree on the ideas, style and vocabulary of the message.

The first step is to set the main ideas of the message. According to Heiderich (2010, p.93) and Bernstein (2013), it should not have more than three main ideas in each message. These ideas should hold out and be valid during all the period of crisis.

This step is also about the comprehension of the crisis and about knowing the guideline of the organization in order to face crisis. These ideas will support key messages throughout the crisis. These ideas will ensure the consistency of messages.
It is important that people within the organization are aware about it because it should give them an orientation.

A message should sound honest and authentic and should not create a gap between the person in charge of the communication and the employees. Indeed, "internal crisis communication must be characterized by honesty and openness" (Regester & Larkin 1998, p.198 cited in David 2011, p.76). A message without any empathy is not good to keep a relation of proximity with the public. The human aspect is important.

Also, an image, graphic, schema,... could be used as a support of the communication to make the communication easier. However, it is important to use these supports (Prezzi, Power Point,...) in a good way because it can also create and illusion and a biased ideas of the real situation. Even if there is not a crisis in the organization, it is important to have schemas about risks identified in order to be able to react faster if a crisis happens.

The message gives the possibility to the organization involved to give information about the causes, consequences,... known and also about the first reactions of the organization to face the crisis.

The transmissions of messages are set up to ensure the communicational security and it allows to reach each public adequately.

Before starting the process of communication, the message has to be defined. This message is send through a channel and this channel will be the connection (the way by which the message is transferred) between the sender and the receiver. It is important to find the most suitable and convenient tool and channel to communicate the message and to reach the audiences targeted.

Once the message is transferred, the receiver will translate the message. Communicating is not only about the transfer of a message between at least two persons. The process of communication is also about being sure that this message is understood by the sender of course but by the receiver as well. It is the transfer of a meaning between a sender and receiver.

Successful person in charge of the internal communication in a crisis context should "continually look for opportunities to repeat the prepared key messages" (Covello 2009, p.152).

That kind of message is the transition with the communication plan. Sometimes, the transmission of a message gives more time to the organization to set up a powerful communication plan.

The organization should have a specific message (for the transition period) already prepared for each public in order to reassure them and to show that the organization is aware about the situation and that the organization is working on it to solve it.
3.3.2.6 Internal communication plan

The internal communication plan sets goals/objectives to reach, how to behave (due to the constraints,...), the person in charge of the internal communication, procedures, responsibilities,... It will give all the information required to know how to communicate internally.

The internal communication has a critical impact on the preservation of the image of the company, the reputation, and the atmosphere within the company during a crisis context.

The quality of the planning depends on the communication as well. And the solving of the crisis depends of the planning.

There are a lot of tools to share information and to communicate inside the organization. Despite the fact that the majority of these tools are assimilated, common and used in the daily process of the organization (email, phone call and so on), few organizations use them in an optimal way in order to be effective. This crisis communication plan will require an update of several tools such as the website.

The internal crisis communication plan is a part of the process of crisis management. Effective crisis management is a function of five independent interrelated variables: public relation model, communication strategy, affected publics, organizational structure, organizational infrastructure (Valackiene 2010, p.497). As we can see the communication is a required variable for an effective crisis management. As said before, the communication strategy has specific environments (various publics and message strategy) and expressions.

According to Staks (2004, p.39), "Proactive crisis management begins with a communication professional taking part in the development and subsequent dissemination of the crisis management plan".

In order to realize an effective internal crisis management plan it is important to understand the characteristics of the organization (way the organization communicates, type of organization,...). The communication of the crisis management plan should be shaped on these characteristics. The reaction of the organization towards the crisis communication could be very different depending on the type of the organization.

Once the internal crisis communication plan is done and validated, it will be transmitted to the internal audiences. As Staks (2004, p.39) states, "The effective crisis management plan must include not only extra organizational communications, but also internal communications to ensure effectiveness".
3.3.3 Audience of the internal communication in a crisis context

The audience of the internal communication in a crisis context are the various internal publics of the organization which are facing the crisis. As says Bernstein (2013) about the internal crisis communication, "Employees must be the most important audience, because every employee is a PR representative and crisis manager for your organization whether you want them to be or not".

It is important to know who is going to communicate, who are the audiences with whom the communication is going to be done and what communication channels are going to be used during a crisis context in order to reach them.

Each member of the organization should be ready to face a crisis. Usually, the solution to face a crisis is internal, not external and that is why it is important to focus on the people within the organization and their particularities since each person is unique.

Identifying the audience is essential for a communicator in order to develop a good internal communication. It will allow identifying the personality and characteristics of each person involved within the company. Knowing about the personality and behavior of someone allow to know how we are perceived by this person and to understand the gap between what we think about our communication and what the audience think about it.

This identification optimizes the interpersonal relationships through a knowledge of behaviors, expectations, needs, weakness and strengths, reaction to the crisis,... of everybody (Moch 2015, pp.42-43). Understanding the personality of employees can help managers to be more effective. Indeed, managers who understand the personality of their employees know why the employees are acting in a specific way. For example why an employee is not comfortable to take a decision quickly or why the employee needs to get a lot of information before trying to solve a problem.

That kind of manager will be able to help employees in order to be more effective.

Employees should be considered by their organization as active participants and not as passive receivers. Indeed, as Johansen et al. (2010, p.273) say, employees "take their own communicative initiatives trying to make sense of crisis situations", and they can be "mobilized communicatively by the organization in crisis".

To have an effective internal communication it is important to segment the audience. Indeed, the communication with the audience outside the organization (which is linked to the external communication with an audience such as customers, general public,...) will not be the same that the communication inside the organization (employees such as workers, managers and so on). The tools and the channels of communication but also the way (spokesperson, vocabulary used, timing, key messages,...) to communicate can be different.
Usually, a good communication arises when the communication reaches and has an impact on the intended audience.

Outside the organization its members will represent the organization. They can become ambassadors of the organization during a crisis. However, this aspect is underrated by organizations, as Johansen et al. (2012 cited in Coombs 2014) found in their study, "only 40% of organizations thought employees could be external ambassadors during a crisis while 47% thought employees could be effective internal ambassadors". Due to this very useful aspect for the organization, it is important to reassure the employees and to give them the same information (the internal communication in a crisis context should allow each member of the organization to have the same version and idea about the crisis) to avoid contradictions and biased ideas. So that the internal members become the external allies of the organization when they are outside this one. The organization should give them instructions about the way to communicate because employees are an important asset for their organization.

As we can see the internal communication is linked to the external. When media arrive in the organization, it may cause even more chaos because the company will have a tendency to neglect its internal communication and its employees to focus mainly on the media. It is unthinkable to manage a crisis by focusing only on the media and external communication.

An internal communication in a crisis context is first about a relationship with the employees of the organization. The relationship with them should be set up and maintained not only at the beginning but during all the period of crisis management.

3.3.4 Rumors

Rumor is a consequence of bad internal communication in a crisis context. When the crisis is declared the organization should communicate as soon as possible in order to do that before the others (media, people outside the organization,...), to show that the organization is aware of the situation, to avoid rumors and information biased, to be the main interlocutor,...

A crisis increases even more the probability of rumors. It can spread itself even more easily if there is a weak communication with the "secondary" audience. The organization should avoid giving too much importance to rumors. A simple refutation is enough because it should take more attention than the crisis communication. However, the organization should not publish a refutation about a rumor if it is still unknown by the internal and external audiences. The organization should only prepare an answer (Heiderich 2010, p.126).

The damage caused by rumors within the organization can be critical. Rumors are unfounded information and the communication, by providing official information, can
reduce the impact of rumors because the official information can gainsay biased and unfounded information.

3.3.5 Responsibilities of internal crisis communication

Internal crisis communication has some responsibilities and goals that are almost impossible to realize if the organization involved keeps silence:

Alerting and informing

Alerting is a part of informing. It is about letting the employees know that their organization is facing a crisis in order to prepare them and to give them the possibility to face perturbations and eventually to change their way of doing.

Informing is about defining and letting the employees know what is going on; type of crisis, reason(s) of crisis, risks and consequences predictable, estimated duration,... It is also about giving information such as actions taken by organization in order to face the crisis, giving details about what is biased in the organization due to the crisis in order to protect stakeholders,...

The best internal crisis communication practices have some characteristics in common:

The response to the crisis is quick, accurate and consistent (Coombs 2009, p.28). If there is no quick response it will give the opportunity to others to provide their own information and it will influence the perception that others have about the crisis. The people who take advantage of this lack of rapidity to respond and to share information will have the possibility to control the crisis.

It is possible to build and reinforce the credibility by utilizing accuracy and consistency in the way to communicate during a crisis.

Coombs (2009, p.29) states that “Inconsistencies create confusion and make crisis managers appear to be incompetent”.

Lukaszewski (2000, p.15 cited in David 2011, pp.74-75) states that "internal communication is key to the success of the crisis resolution process: the most effective support needed by the respective organization can come from the employees themselves, provided that they are given appropriate information and become aware of the fact that they represent a part of the solution”.

Protecting

The internal crisis communication has to protect the image of the organization and the employees by avoiding misunderstanding, rumors, controversy,...

The internal crisis communication should also protect the person in charge of the communication. A crisis situation requires a chief which will give directives, orders, instructions,...
In order to have the people in charge of the communication operational and effective, the organization should make a distinction between them and the responsibility of the decision. The responsibility of the direction should be a part of the activity of the crisis director. The possibility to not having the responsibility of the decision allows the people in charge of the communication to play their role with less pressure and it increases their ability to make rational propositions (Heiderich 2010, p.152). They will feel more comfortable to communicate and due to that they will feel more self-confident.

**Reassuring the audience**

As often as possible the internal crisis communication has to reassure the different publics involved within the organization (it gives the possibility to avoid the panic,...). By giving a direction, the organization can also reassure its audience.

The internal crisis communication should also take the concerns (anxieties, fear, uncertainties,...) of the members of the organization into consideration and show empathy and respect about these concerns, keep the employees updated about the efforts set up to recover and to face crisis,...

Internal crisis communication can help to mitigate the stress crises produce for employees.

**Limiting**

It is essential to limit the spread of the crisis: limiting the rumors, avoiding to involve the sectors/departments which are not concerned,... Indeed it is important to determine the field of crisis to avoid involving a safe area in the crisis context. For example, if the crisis is "only" about one department, the organization should not say that the entire organization is facing a crisis. It is important to don't generalize.

**Humanizing**

The crisis communication should go further than the strictly juridical and business logic. The human and social aspects are also very important because the impact of crises and the ease to face it will depend mainly of the people involved.

In 2015, within the company HSBC, the employees had a feeling of mistrust towards senior executives (the result of a survey showed a 50% drop in trust in leadership). The team in charge of the internal communication wanted to find a way to set up a communications line between people in the low level of the hierarchy and people in the high level of the hierarchy in order to change the "top down" culture of the company.

The internal communication team created the "HSBC Exchange Programme". This programme gave employees the possibility to discuss with the leaders anything and everything about the company without being counteracted, corrected or interrupted by...
them. Leaders are only allowed to listen, take notes and doing updates in the online platform.

This example shows the importance of the human aspect of the internal crisis communication. It can be very important to take the time to listen and to forget the business logic, positions, and everything that can influence the communication in a bad way.

Helping the restoration and renewal of the reputation and the trust

At the end of the process, it is essential to restore or, even better, to improve the reputation of the organization.

There is a bigger probability of renewal when the organization is more focused on the learning from mistakes and opportunities than when the organization is more focused on blame. Being able to look ahead of the crisis and having an optimistic attitude towards coping with crises is helpful to have a better recovery from the crisis and to keep the employees motivated. However, it does not mean that the organization should not be realistic.

As the crisis goes down, during the duration of this phase people of the organization will make a list of the damage which may have been done during the crisis. People of the organization will also think about how the communication can help to repair reputation, meet the needs of victims,... (Moscatelli 2015, p.15).

During this phase the organization starts to face the next crisis by reconstituting resources, by an understanding of the lessons learned and what could be done better. It is also very important to not neglect to thank people who helped the organization during the crisis.

This is a cycle because this phase of recovery leads organization back to the recognition phase. Indeed, as Moscatelli (2015, p.15) says, “Crisis communication and crisis management are never finished; it is just a matter of where you are in the cycle”.

Also, the internal communication can have different roles and responsibilities depending of the phase of the crisis (Valackiene 2010, p.501 but it is an adaptation of the ideas of Borda and Kallis 2004, p.120):

During the crisis the organization can do a background research, designate and maintain a spokesperson and define short and long term problems. The organization should disclose information, tell the truth, show concern about the employees,... The message should be given quickly.

The effectiveness of the internal crisis communication and the restoration will depend on the communication skills of the designated spokesperson. The spokesperson is the person who conveys the message. This person has to remain calm and should take
ownership of the problem. Even if the selection of the spokesperson is usually made after the crisis started, it is essential to identify and train in advance the potential spokespersons in order to be prepared and ready to face in an optimal way the eventual reactions, questions, ... of the employees and to be able to start the renewal and restoration process as soon as possible in the better conditions.

3.3.6 The internal communication at the end of the crisis

After the crisis, it is time to evaluate and to manage the consequences, the effects and impacts of the crisis, to congratulate employees within the organization and to prepare by adjusting what was ineffective for preventing the same mistakes.

In order to communicate about the end of the crisis, the responsible of the communication has to communicate a powerful, clear, strong and positive message. The goal of this message is to show that henceforth everything is back to normal.

A refusal to communicate about failures can be done to avoid maintaining debates. It is a very sensible period because the crisis is still very recent and due to that the organization is still a bit weak. That is why it is important to communicate about changes which have been done and lessons learnt in order to avoid a new crisis and to prepare the employees for the future. In order to prepare the future, the organization can think about what they did well and what they would have done differently if they could do it over again (Clark 2015, p.15).

It is as difficult to communicate about the end of the crisis as to communicate about the beginning of a crisis. The declaration of the end of the crisis is considered with the same criteria than for the declaration of the beginning of a crisis. However, there is one more criteria: the cost of the crisis (financial, human, technical).

The crisis has always more internal impact than external impact at the end of the crisis. After a crisis, the organization has to regain the trust with its employees.

3.3.7 Limitations

The internal communication is one of the best ways to manage a crisis. However, it is important to be careful. Indeed, a successful internal communication to one form of crisis does not guarantee success in another form (it could be the other way around!). One of the reasons is that the business world is constantly changing and usually the context is never exactly the same and it is unstable because of the unexpected and impulsive reaction of the participants.

There are as many ways and modalities to communicate, and as many social relationships as there are organizations.

Also, due to the previous scandals people trust less and less the person in charge of the communication.
During a crisis in an organization, people from this organization expect from the communication to solve all the problems. The crisis management takes time and internal communication is an important part of it.

If there is a bad internal management, members of the organization will become individualistic, demotivated,... it can be a critical issue for the future of the organization and sometimes as a result a dissolution of the organization.

Also, Järvinen (2013, p.6) states internal crisis communication "does not eliminate the crisis, but rather makes it possible for the organization to continue its operations successfully despite of the crisis".

Even if in this thesis we focus on the internal communication, it is important to keep in mind that there is no successful crisis communication without taking into consideration the internal and external publics of the organization which are facing a crisis.

3.4 The generation gap within organizations and its influence on internal crisis communication

3.4.1 The different generations within organizations

Baby-boomers

This generation is characterized by people born between 1946 and 1964. Usually, people from this generation are not really up to date with new technologies and they need more time to adapt themselves to changes. They are loyal, career focused, motivated by prestige and position and they are committed, goal oriented and do not like to change the status quo. They give a lot of importance to the stability, planning and quality. They are also seen as workaholics by the other generations.

Many of them are in the top management positions now, so they play very important roles in company communications. Because they have experienced a lot of problems and crises, these people have a credibility to speak. Taking charge of making decision, distributing the strategies, communicating with the other members of the group are their major responsibilities during the crisis.

Generation X

This generation is characterized by people born between 1965 and the early 1980s. They typically use tools such as computers, cell phones, email,... to communicate. Usually, they are flexible and tolerant with alternatives and able to adapt to changes. The motto of this generation is "work to live rather than live to work" which is the opposite way of thinking of the baby-boomers.
This generation is the mainstay of the companies in both western and eastern countries. They are full of energy and have experiences, most of them are in the middle management or top management positions within the companies. The connecting link between the preceding and the following generations makes their role decisive. They have the authority to communicate and know their subordinates very well.

**Generation Y**

Generation Y is the developing main force of the company. They are born between 1980s and 1995. The people from the Generation Y are born with the new technologies and they are constantly connected with it and due to that they can communicate with anyone at any time. They typically use constantly and simultaneously several tools of communication. Therefore, they can find the required and useful information quickly.

This generation is looking for challenges. Millennials are ambitious, want to be successful and to learn and experiment. They need positive attitudes and encouragements. They can have a positive influence on the other employees by teaching them how to react quickly.

The characteristics of the communication of the Generation Y are interactivity and innovativity (Tapscott, 2008). The management of the company has to take into consideration the characteristics and the needs of this generation. Therefore, companies have to put human in the center of their strategy. People from the Generation Y are looking for more collaboration, close relation between the members of the company, horizontal communication to ease the sharing of information, participation, cooperation, autonomy,… Also, people from the Generation Y want a mutual trusting relationship with their managers. They are looking for close relationship with their partners, and for partners easy to reach whatever the context. In this new kind of management, the communication is fundamental.

People from the Generation Y are looking for managers who are open-minded, experts in their field of activity even if they are not specialist about new technologies, but also for managers who are like a coach and who give them feedback and communicate in an interactive way with them. They are looking for someone who takes into consideration their need of balance between professional life and personal life.

Most of people from this generation have a lack of working experience, especially the experience to cope with organizational crisis even if they grew up in an environment full of crises. They may become anxious and nervous when the crisis happens, and sometimes they do not only follow the instruction from the high positions, but also want to use their own way to deal with it which mostly make happen discordant actions.
3.4.2 The emerging generation gap

Even if three generations\(^1\) coexist in the organizations (baby-boomers, Generation X, Generation Y), the Generation Y, also called digital natives, millennials,... will be the main generation and the main collaborators in the working environment in 2020 (Moch 2015, p.101). In the following years this generation will be the main interlocutor of managers.

It can have an age gap of 50 years sometimes in an organization between the youngest and the oldest employees. Due to the various characteristics of different generations, a wider gap appeared between the different generations. The coexistence between these generations is sometimes difficult because they are very different in way of thinking and acting, experiences, attitude, mentality,...

Communicating in the same way with different generation could be dangerous and inefficient for organizations. Indeed, differences about aspirations and attitudes of the different generations have an impact on organizations and their functioning (Dejoux & Wechtler 2011, p.1). The communicators need to adapt their communication ways to different generations. Indeed, depending on the generation, the expectations will be different. It is important to focus on the features and characteristics of Generation Y in communication process, since this generation will have more and more importance in the organizations.

The future trends within companies have to change into a participative management because the characteristics of directive management are too different of the expectations of the Generation Y. This generation will not follow someone who gives direction without having a contact with employees. They are looking for a work place in which the freedom, trust, and communication are possible. The participative and delegative management and leadership style correspond to that wish.

People from the Generation Y want an equal access to all necessary information. They want transparency within their company and a balance between their private and working life. They know how to find and share information. They are impatient so they do not like and do not use to wait to get information, an answer, a feedback, a directive,... There is nothing worse for them than being ignored and not receiving information. Setting up an effective communication with them is essential! They need to follow a real leader instead of just a manager (all managers are not necessarily leaders).

Their sense of belonging to their company is less intense than baby-boomers and Generation X. They are enthusiastic if their responsibility is to realize tasks that have a direct impact on the project in which they are involved.

\(^1\) We do not take into consideration the Generation Z (people born after 1995) because the number of workers from this generation is not significant.
It is better to communicate with them as someone skilled about the topic than as the boss or manager of the company because they do not believe in someone who simply gives a task or information. Indeed, they like the collaboration so they expect someone qualified to communicate with them because they are looking for people who will be able to push them forward.

The Generation Y likes to talk in a virtual way to solve a problem (for example, it is the other way around for the baby-boomers which prefer to use the face-to-face to solve a problem). If this generation is very comfortable with new technologies, this generation is much less comfortable with the oral and the "classic" written communication (Dejoux & Wechtler 2011, p.28).

However, the most of the leaders belong to other generations and they are not so familiar with the new technologies. The different preferences of communication tools may make the communication inefficient and less productive.

It is important to show them a possibility of evolution during the communication especially in a crisis context because if they know their actions can have an important impact they will feel more involved and more motivated and it could be helpful for the company to face the crisis.

Hence, the generation gap is also a challenge about finding a common field in order to set up an efficient and effective dialogue within or among generations. A good atmosphere in the workplace is very important for the Generation Y. The internal communication has an essential influence on the atmosphere within the organization and the welfare of the employees. However, the lack of information contributes to a bad atmosphere and demotivation within the workplace. The integration of the new communication tools is essential to optimize the dynamic, the productivity, the relation within the organization but also to reach the objectives.

3.4.3 The influence of generation gap on internal crisis communication

3.4.3.1 The influence on information flow

Information is the core of internal crisis communication. The purpose of using information is diverse: understanding situation, analyzing problems, expressing opinions, giving orders, etc. The communication facilitates the formation and development of information flow. But it is affected by the generation gap, especially during crises.

For the "old" generations (baby-boomers and Generation X), when a crisis happens, most of them are in the top or middle management position, so they have the responsibility to unite the organization members in order to face the crisis together. They prefer when the internal crisis communication is vertical (when the information is spread upwards or downwards). In this information flow, the employees only have the responsibility to understand the order and give working reports to their superiors.
The Generation Y would like to see themselves as the center of the circle, they share and receive information at the same time. Mutual communication and feedbacks are rather important for them. Everybody has the rights to express their opinions about how to deal with crisis. The information flow is horizontal. No one can be missing because of the unique individual role during the crisis management.

Communication preference unconformity, caused by generation gap, will be the obstacle of internal crisis communication. Usually, the "old" generations have experience and authority, but they avoid taking risks and changing. Usually, people from the Generation Y have the motivation and courage to challenge. They would like to try new things while they have a lack of patience and experience. It is a challenge to align their thoughts and action about internal crisis communication.

3.4.3.2 The influence on the preference of internal communication tool

**New technologies about internal communication tools**

The people from Generation Y are very comfortable with new technologies, so they may prefer to use communication tools with new technologies. However, it is not the same for all generations in the workplace, especially for the baby boomers. They like to avoid change and therefore they may prefer to avoid this adaptation to the new technologies in their communication tools. They may prefer classical or official way to communicate, such as email, oral speech, meeting, etc.

In order to understand what the new technology tools of communication are, we will explain three examples of it: entreprise social networking, instant messaging, and meeting 2.0.

**Enterprise Social Networking**

More and more companies abandon their traditional tools of internal communication in order to develop their enterprise social network (Moch 2015, p.128-129). These are online open-spaces that allow and encourage interactivity and collaboration between employees (exchanging and sharing information and knowledge).

The goal of this tool is to develop the communication and the collaboration in the organization. By joining this social network, employees have access to a huge quantity of information from the managers, CEO, partners,... of the company. Enterprise social networking breaks down barriers about hierarchy and generations. It creates fluidity, proximity and it sets up a collaboration between employees around a project in which they feel involved and can share information, opinions,... as equals with the other employees.

The enterprise social networking will give the possibility to the employees to participate. Indeed, on this social networking, employees will have the possibility to ask and answer questions, share their skills and experiences, create and spread and manage information,... . There will have a real interaction and it facilitates the
interpersonal relationships. This tool can reinforce the motivation inside the organization because employees know they have a responsibility about the management and the quality of information, knowledge and collective intelligence within the organization.

**Instant messaging**

Instant messaging is also a kind of social network. The conversation with the instant messaging can be between two persons but also with a bigger group because instant messaging allows the creation of groups of conversation. This possibility allows members of the organization to do not waste too much time because it is very simple and quick to share information. Indeed, if they want to share a specific information with a specific group they just need to create a group with the instant messaging tool (Yahoo! Messenger, Gtalk, MSN Messenger, Spark, Wechat,...) (easier than giving the same call to 40 different person for example). It is even faster than email. The information is instantly communicated. However, communicating by instant messaging requires that sender and receiver are connected at the same time on the chat.

This kind of tool has an archiving system and it gives the possibility to find the information required easily in case of urgency. The messages shared with this tool should be short and clear. This tool will not be used for debate.

**Meeting 2.0**

Bringing together employees around a table is not easy. Video-conferencing (Meeting 2.0) is a good alternative because it allows people to do not waste time to have a meeting if they are far away. Also, as Robbins, DeCenzo and Coulter (2008, p.333) say, it is often "much less expensive than incurring travel costs for bringing members together from several locations”. It is important to equip the computers of the employees with that kind of tool (for example: Skype) or to equip a specific room to facilitate that kind of meeting. Videoconferencing allows to take a decision quickly because meetings are postponed less often. The video chatting can be also interesting to help the understanding of the different environment within the organization. For example, if you have to communicate with another department located in another building or facility, the video chatting is an easy way to break the language barriers. Indeed, it gives the possibility to understand the context in which they communicate and it can facilitate the understanding of the internal communication.

However, the meeting 2.0 affects the non-verbal communication because it is less natural and the quality of the equipment (internet, camera, microphone,...) can bias the communication.

**The influence of new technologies on internal crisis communication**

These new technologies facilitate the working place and it gives a possibility of development in order to face the new challenges and difficulties organizations have to
face.

It is essential to develop these new tools and technologies of communication, used daily by the Generation Y, within organizations. Senior executives should understand that these new tools are going to be the norm and to influence the way to communicate in their organizations in the following years.

Another advantage of these tools is that the people from the Generation Y use it already. Even the members of this generation who are not really familiar with it have no problem to adopt these way of communication.

Information Technology (IT) influences and modifies the internal crisis communication in organizations. With the IT, people of the organization are fully accessible everywhere at any time.

It is also easier to keep the control on the performances. Information technologies removed the obligation to be in a specific working environment. Technology allows to realize an evolution of the way to manage your team, especially with the employees which have to work outside the organization as well.

It can keep them aware of a change. It can be useful due to the development of the teleworking for example. If a crisis starts, the leaders of the organization has to get the information directly to be able to give the instructions to the rest of the organization.

It is a new challenge for managers to use these technologies to have an effective internal communication and in order to be sure that the objectives are reached by the employees even if they are temporarily outside the organization.

This new way of communication involves a change in the social and public relationships. There will be more proximity and the language used will be less "corporate". The target audiences become partners with the organization. It will be a long term approach (Heiderich 2010, p.140).

In the current business world, internal crisis communication has to adapt to the new technologies. It is important to adopt and to use tools adapted to the change of the society and that allow people to be optimal. The new trends will be the tools linked to the web 2.0.

Due to the smartphones and the 4G availability there is almost everywhere an intense acceleration of the diffusion of multimedia information. The information and communication are more and more minimalist, decontextualized,... therefore, the way to communicate and the language are changing.

The new technologies and media can be used in a crisis context only if the organization used to use it before the crisis happens. Indeed, starting to use these new technologies during a crisis is too complex because it requires training and understanding.
A study realized by Capgemini Consulting (2012, p.8) states that technophile companies have a profitability 26% higher than its competitors. However, it does not mean companies can stop using "classical" tools because these tools are still very important for the communication.

A wrong use of a tool can have very bad effects on the internal crisis communication. People should keep in mind that it is not because they are using a good tool that their communication will be automatically good. It could be the other way around and it could damage the process of communication if they do not care about how they use it.

People in charge of the communication have to remember that it is not possible to see the reaction of the receiver when they use chat or email. With the classic methods of communication (physical interactions with the audience) it is possible to learn more about the attitude of the audience than with more virtual communication. A combination of "classical" and new methods is required to realize an effective approach.

**The various preferences about communication tools in crisis context**

Usually these new tools (social network, instant messaging, apps on smartphone, blogs and so on) are tools that collect personal and individual information and make information available in shared knowledge bases. These new tools are very collaborative and give the possibility to spread information very quickly within the organization.

With the increasing amount of employees from the Generation Y, the organizational learning ability and motivation is getting rising. The trend of communicating with new technologies appears gradually.

Once the crisis happens, the leaders, which are mostly from the "old" generations, are the people who have the experience and authority to lead the team to face crisis. They have the possibility to make strategies and to distribute tasks, and of course take charge of how to communicate internally and externally during this situation. The decades of years of working experience and management thoughts about crises make them confident about using conventional way to communicate with their subordinates, which may be challenged by the new generation of employees.

The crises situations let Generation Y the chance to demonstrate their ability. They are motivated and encouraged by these unexpected situations. Usually, people see the crises as threats and disorders but for this generation crises can also be perceived as opportunities to demonstrate their ability, achieve self-actualization and gain self-satisfaction.

The traditional communication way may be experienced by them as not fast enough, lack of mutual interaction, passive reception. They cannot wait to solve problems; they may use instant communication to get the information they want without the permission of leaders. Individualistic "heroism" from the Generation Y can make it
even worse. Some small isolated groups will emerge, they work alone and do not obey the orders, and it can badly influence the unity of organization.

In 2015, despite the fact that Adidas was doing a lot of things (team briefing, director visits, conferences, personalized letters, email and videos bulletins) to communicate permanently with the employees of the company, Adidas failed in its internal communication. Adidas created an employee survey in order to understand the employees and how they want to be talked to,... In this survey the company asked "Do we listen?" and employees said "You are hearing us but not listening".

Adidas did not give enough consideration about the characteristics of their workforce. Since 94% of their employees were from the Generation Y the solution was to set up a mobile app which give the possibility to get updated information with content of interest permanently on their smartphone.

In this case, the company shows a lot of acceptance and proactivity. Even if finding other solutions requires investment, sometimes what is needed is a new approach.

This example also confirms what we developed in the previous parts: Listening to the audience is a critical part of the communication and it is necessary to listen carefully.

The different ways of communication have positive and negative aspects. The traditional ways can get enough information required, and communicate in details and that makes everybody understand their responsibility and role clearly. New technology tools give the possibility to react quickly and to meet the needs in order to cope with crisis fast enough to limit the impact of the crisis. The quick response of organizations can minimize the damage of crises and get the organizational operation and management back to the track in time. As the communication tools, the different generations have their positive and negative aspects.

People from Generation Y may have a lack of experience about dealing with organizational crises. They are impulsive and typically take quick actions without thinking about the consequences of their actions. They see crises as opportunities rather than threats. Motivation and passion may encourage the whole team to be brave in order to face the crises.

During crises situations, the different generations have uncommon preferences about the selection of communication tools. It will create a division to some extent within the organization, and it is opposite to the requirement of facing crises.

However, even if the new technologies (preferred by the Generation Y to communicate) create the need to modify crisis communication, as Coombs (2014) states "The old crisis communication knowledge base remains viable. The basic elements of crisis communication are not changing. What is changing is the way we execute many of those basic elements".
3.4.3.3 The influence of values

Different studies show that, in theory, within organizations the diversity is a competitive advantage (more ideas and creativity, different backgrounds and experiences, capacity to solve problems and to face difficulties,...). However, in practice, organizational difficulties that create problems and difficulties to the companies’ performances and to the decisional process can be consequences of this diversity (Cox & Blake 1991, pp.45-56; Cox, Lobel & McLeod 1991).

The diversity can be visible such as the age, gender, nationality/ethnicity,... or invisible such as religion, educational level,...

Generation is one of the obvious and vital differences. Everybody has a specific background according to his/her culture, gender, experience, age and the living background. This background has an influence on the personal interpretation of the world and the way people think and act. The people from different generations may have different notion and cognition, which also can be another barrier to communication.

**Individual oriented VS Group oriented**

People who are individual oriented define themselves as "I". They celebrate the accomplishment of the person rather than the group. As Schneider and Barsoux (2002, p.42) say, people with that kind of orientation "remain emotionally independent from groups, organizations, and other collectivities". In individualistic cultures people are encouraged to be independent, to have their own opinions, to make their own decisions by taking initiatives,...

Most of the Generation Y employees within organizations are more focusing on self-actualization and self-accomplishment, the starting point of their action is the benefits of themselves. Self-interest is the dominant motivation (Schneider & Barsoux 2002, p.42). Some of them respect the hierarchy, the others require equality.

People who belong to group-oriented culture identify themselves as a "We". The relationships at work are considered to be family like. The goals of the collective are more important than those of the individual for the group-oriented people. In group-oriented culture people value harmony, patience,... There are strong and intense feelings of involvement between the people of a same group. In such culture people feel loyal and responsible toward each other.

These characteristics are aligning with generation of baby boomers and Generation X. They have intense relationship with their organizations, they would like to dedicate to achieve the common goals rather than their own ones.

As Schneider and Barsoux (2002, p.42) state, “The decision-making is based more on group concern. Individuals define their identity by their relationships to others, through group membership, and strive for a sense of belonging".
People from different generations hold the different notion and cognition about themselves and groups. This may lead to conflicts because of the distinctive opinions and the different way of doing things as well as communicating, especially during a crisis context.

When the crisis happens, people from the "old" generations, which mostly are group-oriented, have usually the right and authority to lead and to give orders. They focus on the great benefits of organizations and emphasize the unity of group to work together against the crises. Conventional communication way will be seen as the most effective and efficient tool to convey information and share resources, which however in the employees' eyes from the Generation Y, can be regarded as slow and inflexible responses to crises.

Some people at the low hierarchical position may feel unfair treated and their benefits will be damaged. Personal interests are their first priority that led to egotistical behaviors which disrupt the organization uniformity.

In the crisis situation, the individual oriented people's communication highlights the "what should I do?", while the group oriented people stress the "what should we/organization do?" when they communicate.

**High and low context cultures – direct and indirect communication**

As Hall (1990, p.6) says, there is a difference between low context and high context cultures and this difference is mainly about the direct and indirect communication. Under the high-context situation, the communication is indirect, the language is not the only focus. The main part of the information is communicated through the non-verbal communication: body language (eye contact, facial expression, gestures,...), tone, spacing,... The approach is intuitive and contemplative. The people from the "old" generations may tend to use this communication way. They have many years of working experiences, they know how to convey the information in a systematic way, and they can involve all the tools they can use to communicate, like the body language to improve persuasion, eye contact to get the audiences closer.

While in low-context culture, communication comes to the point directly, there is nothing linked to the situations. Everybody has the equal access to information. The communicator needs to be precise about the words, and the receivers can understand the meaning without the help of any extra tool or non-verbal signs.

As Bennett (1998, p.11) says, "In low-context cultures nonverbal behavior is unconsciously perceived more as a commentary on the verbal message than as a part of the message itself". The misunderstanding and communication difficulties could be the result of the difference between these two contexts.

This may be Generation Y’s preference according to their characteristic. In high context culture, people give a lot of importance to the organizational context, relationship status,... However, as mentioned previously, people from the Generation
Y prefer to communicate in a similar way with whomever they communicate. They want to have the same close way of communication whatever the context. They are looking for information available directly because they do not use to wait. Therefore, they may go to the point directly and focus on a direct communication and low context culture. Direct communication is fast and efficient to allow others understanding you. They are not so patient to talk in a roundabout way.

The generation gap is more obvious during a crisis context. If people of the Generation Y perceive the crisis, they will use their own words to describe the crisis, because of their lack of experience, some critical points of the situation will be missing. When the people from the "old" generations want to understand the content, the tone or body language will be taken into consideration which actually is not necessary for the Generation Y to convey information. Misunderstanding or conjecture can be the result of this communication. If the receiver is someone from the "old" generations, then the situation will be coded into two parts: language and context, while the decoding process by someone from the Generation Y is almost only focusing on language. So the critical content will be dropped. Both of these situations have high possibility to happen inside organizations and it will lead to disordered perception of crises. Without the unite cognition of the problems, there is no effective method to cope with crises.

Due to the difference of personality, living background, or the position within the organization, different people may perceive different things as crises and different level of severity of crises. The person who detects the crisis has to broadcast the information within the organization. However, depending of the way this person communicates, the receivers of the information may have different interpretations concerning the crisis and the severity of the crisis.
4 Reasoning and Hypotheses

4.1 Internal crisis communication and its effectiveness

Even if the external crisis communication is crucial, it is not enough. Indeed, internal communication is also essential for solving problems. However, inside organizations, employees and managers may have different opinions about the importance of these two kinds of communication.

With the H1 undermentioned we would like to test if the internal crisis communication has the same value as external crisis communication according to the members of the organization.

**H1: From the perspective of organization members, internal communication is as important as external communication during a crisis situation.**

Due to the diversity of position and working experience, workers may have different perceptions of the crisis and see different degrees of severity. If there is not a united view about crises, it will be tough to apply crises response strategies. By communicating internally, the group members can understand what are others’ opinions about the crises. It can create an uniformity in the employees’ perception. Thus, we can formulate our second hypothesis:

**H2: Internal communication can improve the unity of the perception of what a crisis is by the members of the organization.**

Delivering information within the organization is the main purpose of internal crisis communication. However, sometimes not all information can be obtained equally. Indeed, access to information may depend on the position and authority within the organization. Without enough information to identify the true or false of rumors, the trust and credibility of the declaration of the official person in charge of the communication will decrease. So in order to build a good atmosphere of internal communication, the organization should do its best to ensure that the information is shared equally and that there is enough information available.

H3 and H4 represent this perspective:

**H3: The equal access to the information among the members of the organization improves trust within the organization when facing crises.**

**H4: By providing enough information, the rumors can be reduced.**

Some organizations fail to make effective internal communication. First, it requires organization members to be active. They are not there waiting for orders, they have their opinions and motivation dealing with the difficulties of crises situations. Besides,
if employees and managers have good relationships, then they can communicate without being suspicious and they can avoid misunderstanding.

We have formulated H5 and H6 to test these propositions:

H5: Initiative of employees makes internal crisis communication more effective.

H6: The good relationship among employees and managers is beneficial to internal crisis communication.

4.2 Generation gap and its influence on internal crisis communication

Nowadays, the coexistence of different generations in organizations is not a rare phenomenon. Also, there is an increasing number of Generation Y within organizations.

The generations within the organizations can be divided into the "old" generations (Baby boomers and Generation X, who were born before 1980) and the "new" generation (Generation Y, people who were born between 1980 and 1995). Their different characteristics, living backgrounds, experiences,... can make them acting differently, especially when they face a crisis. This leads to H7:

H7: The generation gap exists within organizations. Cross-generation communication is much more difficult than communicating with someone from the same generation, especially during a crisis situation.

As we talked in the theoretical framework, during a crisis context the "old" generations may communicate in a different way than Generation Y.

H8, H9, H10 are going to test if the influence of the generation gap on internal crisis communication exists based on specifics indicators discussed in the theoretical framework.

H8: When a crisis happens, the "old" generations prefer vertical communication, while the Generation Y prefers horizontal communication.

H9: During a crisis context, "old" generations prefer to use conventional communication tools, while the Generation Y prefers to use new technology tools.

H10: During a crisis context, "old" generations focus on the interest of the group, and Generation Y focuses on their own interests.
5 Data Analysis and discussion

**Foreword**

In this chapter, we will analyze the data we collected to see if our hypotheses are confirmed or not. From page 61 to 69, we will analyze the data concerning internal crisis communication, its influences,... . The hypotheses 1 to 6 will be tested.

Then, from page 70 to 83, we will discuss about the generation gap within organizations and its influences on internal crisis communication. The hypotheses 7 to 10, which are linked to the generation gap, will be tested.

Moreover, from page 83 to 89, we will go further than the verification of our hypotheses in order to learn more about the effects of the generation gap within organizations.

For the reader who wants to go directly to the results of our hypotheses, there is a table (Table 22, Page 92) in the next chapter summarizing all the results of our hypotheses.

Nowadays, it is not an uncommon phenomenon to have many generations (such as baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) coexisting in the same company. Due to the difference of living background and age, an obvious gap emerged among generations.

Depending of the generation to which workers belong, their opinion may be different about the existence of a generation gap in the working place and how this generation gap could influence, or not, the internal crisis communication.

In our research, we conducted an empirical study to gather the opinions from different generations to test our hypotheses linked to this phenomenon. During our data analysis, we divided the different generations into two types: the "old" generations (including baby-boomers and Generation X, born before 1980s) and the Generation Y (people born between 1980 and 1995). With this distinction we can compare the result of different generations to see if there is a real generation gap and what are the specificities of this eventual generation gap. Also, isolating Generation Y allows us to focus a bit more on this generation which is becoming increasingly important within the organizations.
5.1 Internal crisis communication and its influences

**General information:**

- 29 people from the Generation Y from the western countries (Europe and North America);
- 97 people from the Generation Y from China;
- 126 people from the Generation Y.

- 18 people from the "old" generations from western countries (Europe and North America);
- 18 people from the "old" generations from China;
- 36 people from the "old" generations.

The gender of 53% of people from the Generation Y who answered this survey is **female**.

The gender of 47% of people from the Generation Y who answered this survey is **male**.

The gender of 42% of people from "old" generations who answered this survey is **female**.

The gender of 58% of people from "old" generations who answered this survey is **male**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working experience</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Working experience**

As you can see in the table 1, as expected people from the "old" generations have much more working experience than people from Generation Y. Most people from the Generation Y have 0 to 5 years of working experience while most people of the "old" generations have more than 20 years of working experience.

The organizations in which respondents from the Generation Y and the "old" generations work are very diverse and are more or less the same: education, IT,
transport, engineering, army, police, media, medical, communication, accounting, auditing, government, consulting, bank, SME, manufacturing, trading, marketing, finance, ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position within the company</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee or Intern</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Supervisor</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO or GM</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Position within the company

The results about the position within the company confirm what we mentioned in the theoretical framework. Indeed, as we can see in the table 2, workers from the "old" generations have more often than people from Generation Y a position with more responsibilities and the possibilities to give orders. 56% of the respondents from the "old" generations have a position within their company such as CEO/GM, manager or department supervisor, and only 21% of respondents from Generation Y have such positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever experienced an organizational crisis?</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Have you ever experienced an organizational crisis?

The results of the survey confirm what we mentioned before. When we see the results in the table 3, it is obvious that the "old" generations have more experience about organizational crises than Generation Y. Indeed, only 44% of the respondents from the Generation Y have already experienced an organizational crisis while the result is 75% for the "old" generations. It also confirms that crises are often inevitable because only 25% of respondents from the "old" generations have not experienced a crisis yet (it is important to mention that 100% of the baby boomers, which are a part of the "old" generations, have already faced an organizational crisis).

Moreover, since 56% of the respondents from the Generation Y have not experienced an organizational crisis yet, most of them may not know how to react in a crisis context or may think they are not concerned about crises. It could create organizational problems, also about the internal crisis communication between them and the "old" generations which know the critical aspects of crises.
The table 4 is about the kind of organizational crises experienced by respondents which have already faced an organizational crisis. Surprisingly, among the respondents from the "old" generations nobody has already experienced an organizational crisis due to an office scandal or a natural disaster. It is maybe because we did not have as many respondents from the "old" generations as respondents from Generation Y.

Downsizing, change of the people in the top positions, bankruptcy of partners, financial and administrative issues,... are other kind of organizational crises experienced by the respondents from the Generation Y.

Threat of bankruptcy, new management within the organization, shutdown, financial crisis, problem about trust, internal malfunction related to hierarchical management, personal conflict, change of the location of the workplace,... are other kind of organizational crises experienced by the respondents from the "old" generations.

H1: "From the perspective of organization members, internal communication is as important as external communication during a crisis situation."

Our results do not confirm the hypothesis 1.

According to the results of the survey and according to organization members, internal communication is more important than external communication during a crisis context (Table 5). The results are almost the same depending of the generation (5,2 for Generation Y and 5,5 for the "old" generations) and depending of the countries. The biggest difference is between the results of workers from western countries: 5 (Generation Y) - 5,5 ("old" generations).
During a crisis context, what is the importance of the internal communication in comparison to external communication? (1=less important, 4=same importance, 7=strongly more important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western countries</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
<td>5,3</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>5,2</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: During a crisis context, what is the importance of the internal communication in comparison to external communication?

Also, all organization members "strongly" agree that internal communication is important to cope with crises (Table 6). As we can see in the table 6, this is even more important for workers from the "old" generations. It may be because they have more experience about crises so they had the possibility to realize the real importance of it. There is not really a difference between the results of organization members from western countries and China excepted between those from the Generation Y: 6,6 (western countries) - 6 (China).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western countries</strong></td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>6,2</td>
<td>6,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Importance of the internal communication to cope with crises

Organization members (from the Generation Y but also from the "old" generations) all agree that internal crisis communication is important (Table 7):

In the first place because it improves the trust. In the second place because it unites the members. In the third place because it resists rumors.

These results confirm what we mentioned in the theoretical framework: Trust is very important for the organization members and they expect it within their organization and in the internal crisis communication.

Nobody said that internal crisis communication is not important!

Among the people who answered "other" (table 7), we got some answers such as "It maintains the working spirit", "It avoids misinterpretation".....
Internal crisis communication is important because of...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerting and informing</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting the members</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting rumors</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving trust</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The internal crisis communication is not important</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Internal crisis is important because of...

According to the respondents, whatever their generation and their country, there is a difference between the internal crisis communication and the internal communication during a normal situation (Table 8). The results are very similar excepted for workers from China: the difference of internal communication depending of the context is more important according to people from the "old" generations (6,4) than according to people from Generation Y (5,5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>5,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>6,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>5,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Do you think the internal crisis communication is different than internal communication during a normal situation?

This difference depending of the context can be due to different aspects according to the respondents.

According to the Generation Y, the main aspects that affect the internal communication during a crisis context are (Table 9):

In the first place, fear and nervousness (61%). In the second place, inadequate information (60%). In the third place, time pressure (50%).

According to the "old" generations, the main aspects that affect the internal communication during a crisis context are (Table 9):

In the first place, fear and nervousness (67%). In the second place, time pressure (56%) and disorder management (56%). In the third place, inadequate information (53%).

65
Again, we can see that the results about the general ideas concerning the internal communication in a crisis context are kind of similar between the different generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In which aspects do you think the internal communication will be affected during a crisis context?</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time pressure</strong></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destructive consequences</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inadequate information</strong></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disorder management</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear and nervousness</strong></td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Giving the priority to the wrong audience</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Aspects that affect the internal communication during a crisis context

**H2: "Internal communication can improve the unity of the perception of what is a crisis by the members of the organization."**

The results of the survey confirm this hypothesis (Table 10 and 11).

In the table 10, we can see that the respondents from the Generation Y have a very similar opinion whether they are from a western countries or China. It is the same with the respondents from the "old" generations, their opinions are also almost identical. In this case, the difference is more about the comparison between the generations than the comparison between countries. Indeed, people from the "old" generations are more convinced than people from Generation Y than during a crisis situation internal communication is helpful to form a united cognition about crisis (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>During a crisis situation, internal communication is helpful to form a united cognition about crisis. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western countries</strong></td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>6,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
<td>5,8</td>
<td>6,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>5,8</td>
<td>6,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: During a crisis situation, is internal communication helpful to form a united cognition about crisis?

Both Generation Y and "old" generations agree that internal communication can help the members of the organization to have the same understanding of the crisis by (Table 11):
1 - Sharing information
2 - Expressing different opinions
3 - Giving feedbacks

The percentages are always higher than 50% (Table 11), so it confirms that these behaviors are very important during a crisis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal communication can help the members of the organization to have the same understanding of the crisis by</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing information</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing different opinions</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedbacks</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: *Internal communication can help the members of the organization to have the same understanding of the crisis by...*

**H3:** *"The equal access to the information among the members of the organization improves trust within organization when facing crises."*

The results of the survey confirm this hypothesis (Table 12). However, the people from the western countries agree less than people from China about this statement. If we check the average of the results in the table 12, we can notice that people from the Generation Y agree a bit more than people from the "old" generations. However, the results of the table 13 show that the "old" generations agree more than Generation Y that during a crisis situation every organization members needs equal access to all information.

The biggest difference of opinion is within the Generation Y between people from western countries and China. Indeed, the average result of Generation Y from western countries is 4 (it means they do not really agree) while the average result of Generation Y from China is 5 (it means they agree).

The difference of opinion is significant between the Generation Y and the "old" generations from western countries (4 and 4.9) but the result is identical (5) for people from China.

These results show a bigger generation gap in western countries than in China about the opinion concerning the equal access to all information within organizations during a crisis context.
The equal access to information can improve trust during a crisis situation (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td>4,9</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>5,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5,4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Can the equal access to information improve trust during a crisis situation?

During a crisis situation, every organization member needs equal access to all information (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: During a crisis situation, does every organization member need equal access to all information?

H4: "By providing enough information, the rumors can be reduced."

The results of the survey confirm this hypothesis (Table 14). However, we can notice that the "old" generations agree more with this hypothesis than Generation Y. There is also a little difference depending on the country. Indeed, people from China agree more with this statement than people from western countries.

If there is enough information shared within the organization, the rumors about crises can be reduced (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western countries</td>
<td>4,9</td>
<td>5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>5,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5,3</td>
<td>5,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: If there is enough information shared within the organization, the rumors about crises can be reduced

These results are a bit different than what we mentioned in the theoretical part about the Generation Y. Indeed, we said that the sharing of information may be even more important for people from Generation Y because they have a real need of getting information constantly. However, with these results we can see that the "old" generations give a lot of importance about sharing information, and depending on the
situation, sometimes even more than people from Generation Y.

**H5: "Initiative of employees makes internal crisis communication more effective."**

The results of the survey partly confirm this hypothesis. If we focus on each results of the table 15, we can notice that the "old" generations from western countries do not really agree with it. The generation gap is also more important among people from western countries.

The fact that people from Generation Y agree more than the "old" generation about this hypothesis confirms what we mentioned in the theoretical part. Indeed, it confirms that people from Generation Y are convinced that having the possibility to take initiatives and that the empowerment of the employees are positive things. They like taking initiatives and are looking for opportunities of empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Western countries</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Old&quot; generations</td>
<td>3,9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: The effective internal crisis communication requires employees to be active and to take initiatives

**H6: "The good relationship among employees and managers is beneficial to internal crisis communication."**

This hypothesis is confirmed by the results of the survey (table 16). The "old" generations agree even more with this statement than the Generation Y. In the theoretical part we mentioned that people from Generation Y are more focused on themselves than people from the "old" generations. It makes sense if we pay attention to these results. Indeed, for someone who focuses more on him/herself than on others, having good relationships with people is maybe not the priority.

Also, we mentioned in the theoretical framework that having a good atmosphere in the workplace is important for the internal crisis communication. The relationships between the members of the organization are a part of the atmosphere in the workplace, these results confirm this importance as well.
the internal crisis communication may be more effective (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western countries</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5,7</td>
<td>6,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5,8</td>
<td>6,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: If the relationships between employees and managers are good, the internal crisis communication may be more effective

5.2 Generation gap within organizations

H7: "The generation gap exists within organizations. Cross-generation communication is much more difficult than communicating with someone from the same generation, especially during a crisis situation."

LIKERT 7 points scale was used to understand if people think that during a crisis context, the way to communicate used by other generations is different than the way to communicate used by their generation. 1 represents strongly disagree, and 7 represents strongly agree. Both "old" generations (Mean value=4.31) and Generation Y (Mean value=4.79) agree that there is a difference about the communication ways during a crisis.

In order to figure out in which way the communication of other generations is different, the participants were required to answer an open question. From the Generation Y’s point of view, the origins of differences can be sorted in the following categories:

- Culture, cognition, different perception towards problems, different way of thinking;
- Languages, people from young generation like to use cyber words, which are difficult to understand for the "old" generations;
- Communication tools, means of expression (direct or indirect), and technologies: The young generation is using the IT-Systems more efficiently and the "old" generations communicate less digital;
- Living background and habit: They usually have different backgrounds regarding experiences and taking risks. Older people might be less eager to take risks than a younger generation. “Younger people have a longer horizon to recover from the risks”; 
- Position and responsibility within the company: hierarchical position can lead to different interests and priorities of communication;
➢ Acceptance to new things: they think the “old guys” are “slow” about learning new things;

➢ Knowledge: the "old" generation are recognized as more knowledgeable, “they have a better vision about the future than us”;

➢ Needs, focus, and communication purpose: Generation Y focuses more on the self-actualization, and the "old" generations tend to realize the great benefits for group;

➢ Personality and rationality: some people think the "old" generations are “more rational and also maybe more theoretical” and “older generation is probably not as flexible as the Generation Y”. They think “our generation is probably more globalized and open-minded”.

In the opinion of the "old" generations, the origins of the difference are almost the same, such as: “we are not giving the same importance to the different problems. What is a priority for me won't be necessarily a priority for my young colleague and vice versa ”; “Communication tools will be different (Generation Y uses more the new technologies)”; “The old employees give a lot of importance about the solidarity, and the people from Generation Y only think about their own interests”; “different vocabulary, different diplomacy, different frankness levels”. There are also few people who think “the difference is not that big”.

We used LIKERT 7 points scale to ask if it is more difficult to communicate about how to cope with organizational crises with people from another generation than with people from the same generation. 1 represents strongly disagree, and 7 represents strongly agree.

The mean value of Generation Y is 4.68, and the mean value of the "old" generations is 3.92. So from the perspective of Generation Y, it is more difficult to communicate with people from other generations. But, the "old" generation do not really think it is more difficult to communicate with people from other generations, because the mean value is lower than 4 (the scale is between 1 to 7, so 4 is the average value). By letting respondents choose what are the difficulties of communicating with others generations during a crisis context, we can have a better understanding about what is the generation gap within organizations during a crisis. In the Table 17, we can see what difficulties means to the "old" generations when they communicate with people from Generation Y during a crisis.
Table 17: What are the difficulties to communicate with people from the Generation Y during a crisis context?

Most of the respondents from the "old" generations think the difference about the way of communicating and the lack of experience about crisis of people from Generation Y are the main causes of the difficulties that create a problem in order to have an efficient internal crisis communication. Also, 3 people gave “other” answers, all focus on “the individual personality” or “individual characteristic difference”. In order to compare the results, we also asked Generation Y to answer what are the difficulties of communicating with the "old" generations during a crisis context. There are 126 respondents from Generation Y, and you can see the results in Table 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Options</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their characteristics: inflexible, serious, strict</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They avoid taking risks, always obey the orders</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They always give orders, there is no mutual communications</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way of communicating is different</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's easy to communicate with them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18: What are the difficulties to communicate with people from the "old" generations during a crisis context?

| Other | 7 | 5.56% |

The data in table 18 reveal that more than half of respondents from Generation Y think the difference in the way of communicating is the main difficulty to communicate with people from the "old" generations during a crisis context. The first three options all occupied considerable proportions. The “other” answers are more about the “cold” personality, such as “they think they are experienced, and not willing to listen to others”. Besides, some of the respondents think they do not have enough experience to understand the "old" generations.

It is also interesting to mention that according to 22.22% respondents from the "old" generation, it is easy to communicate with people from Generation Y while only 1.58% of respondents from Generation Y think it is easy to communicate with people from the "old" generations. These results show a real gap between generations. They have different opinions about difficulty of communicating with each other.

To sum up, for both "old" generations and Generation Y, it is not easy to communicate with someone from another generation in a crisis context, and their communication ways are not aligning with other generations, the origins of this difference are diverse. So, in other words, the H7 has been confirmed.

5.3 Influence on the way to communicate

H8: "When a crisis happens, "old" generations prefer vertical communication, while the Generation Y prefer horizontal communication."

There are two types of information flow: vertical and horizontal, which are the bases of classifying communication. Due to the diversity of background and experience, people from different generations may have their own preference of communicating in a crisis context. In our questionnaire, we asked the respondents to choose their favorite communication way during a crisis context (results in table 19).
In the table 19, we can see there is no difference about communication way preference in China and western countries whatever the generation.

These results are the opposite of our expectations about the preference depending of the generation. Indeed, people from Generation Y tend to prefer vertical communication in a crisis context, while the people from the "old" generations prefer horizontal communication. We mentioned exactly the opposite in the theoretical part about generation gap.

In order to understand better these results, we analyzed why did and didn’t they choose vertical communication or horizontal communication.

Since there are not cross-nationality differences, we combined the answers of respondents from China and respondents from western countries.

**Generation Y’s positive opinions towards vertical communication:**

- Vertical communication is more important for organizations, it is more helpful to find the roots of crisis;
- The communication between managers and employees is crucial, it contributes to fast responses to crisis and to unify the organization;
- People from the same level share the same information, we can get diverse information from higher positions;
- We lack of experiences, but vertical communication tells us how to do, we can learn from people in a higher position;
- Information communicated by different levels can be used more efficiently. Crisis shortens the time we have and vertical communication is more direct and clear;
- The vertical communication is more trustworthy;
- A lack of vertical communication can induce panic reactions. Clear guidance is important in a crisis situation.
Generation Y’s negative opinions towards vertical communication:

- It's stressful to communicate with leaders, and this situation may affect the effectiveness of communication;
- The gap of age can prevent efficient communication;
- People from different levels of hierarchy may perceive crisis in a different way, it will lead to misunderstanding;
- The process of vertical communication is complicated, and it can lead to information loss;
- Lack of equality.

Generation Y’s positive opinions towards horizontal communication:

- The horizontal communication can facilitate feedback (giving and receiving);
- Every opinion should be listened and respected;
- It's better to feel equal in order to freely express your ideas and find a solution together.

Generation Y’s negative opinions towards horizontal communication:

- It takes a lot of time till every employee gets the information;
- It is difficult for the whole organization to have a common view about the crisis;
- Employees from the same level can’t make decision, communicating with them doesn’t help to cope with crisis;
- Horizontal communication is a lack of authority;
- People from the same level are competitors, communicating with them is not beneficial to ourselves;
- People from the same level almost shared the same information, communicating with them can’t reduce rumors;
- Horizontal communication “is not useful enough in a crisis context and doesn't go straight to the point”;
- People from the same level have same experience and need a supervisor. Such as one respondent’s answer: “In the crisis which I was experiencing, the members of my hierarchical level were kind of acting like a bunch of chickens, running around and doing useless tasks or doing nothing at all. In a situation like this, I think it's better to have a superior who keeps everybody calm and acts like a guide.”
The "old" generations evaluated these two types of communication with different importance:

"Old" Generations’ positive opinions towards vertical communication:

- Some people think vertical information can inform all levels of the organization and allows providing the same information to all stakeholders regardless of their working position;
- Everyone gets the same information from vertical communication;
- The decisions are from the top, so the information should come from a high level of the hierarchy.

"Old" Generations’ negative opinions towards vertical communication:

- “Authority doesn't facilitate the communication”;
- “I prefer to avoid too many intermediaries because of the fear that the information be lost or misinterpreted. I think the vertical communication doesn't allow to be closer to the information”.

"Old" Generations’ positive opinions towards horizontal communication:

- It is easier to communicate with colleagues from the same level because the opinion can be more easily shared;
- The opinion is more objective than if it was shared with a "n + 1" (someone with a higher level within the hierarchy than you).

"Old" Generations’ negative opinions towards horizontal communication:

- Horizontal communication targets only a portion of the frame population which will have to transmit information to its teams;
- There is always a loss of information with horizontal communication.

Both "old" generations and Generation Y have different opinions about the reasons for which they choose vertical communication (see Figure 8).
Fig 8: **Reasons to choose vertical communication**

More people of Generation Y agree about all the advantages of vertical communication, but from the perspective of both "old" generations and Generation Y, the reasons to choose vertical communication can be ranked as follow according to the importance: help organization acting fast and unified; efficiency; unite the organization; sense of discipline. There are also other reasons. For example, Generation Y thinks it can motivate employees, but the "old" generations consider it because according to them it avoids rumors and there are fewer risks of misinterpretations.

About the question why do they choose horizontal communication, we can see in Figure 9, 80% of respondents from the "old" generations agree that the horizontal communication makes it easy to share information under crisis. However, only 57.45% of Generation Y mentioned it as a reason to choose horizontal communication. The diverse opinions can also be seen as one of the major reasons to choose a horizontal communication. There was an interesting answer from the Generation Y: horizontal communication is safer, because you do not worry about making mistakes when you talk to the people from same hierarchy rather than people from a higher level.
Fig 9: Reasons to choose horizontal communication

To sum up, there is a generation gap about choosing different communication ways (Vertical Communication VS Horizontal Communication) during crisis situations. The Generation Y tends to use vertical communication, while the "old" generations think the horizontal communication is better. This result is opposite to our hypothesis. It means H8 has not been confirmed.

5.4 Influence on the preference of internal communication tool

Due to the difference of age and living background, people from the "old" generations and Generation Y do not always use communication tools with new technologies. There are many communication tools or channels that employees or managers can use within the organization during a crisis context. But knowing if people from different generations have the same preference for the selection of their communication tools or not is still an unclear question.

H9: "During a crisis context, "old" generations prefer to use conventional communication tools, while the Generation Y prefers to use new technologies tools."

In our study, we asked the respondents about “the communication tool they prefer to use when a crisis happens”. Results are shown in Figure 10.
There is an obvious generation and culture gap about communication tool preference. Crisis is not a thing that easy to cope with, so all the generations are all strict about choosing communication tools. The most popular tool for both "old" generations and Generation Y is meeting which is a conventional communication tool. However, by comparing the results of the "old" generations and the Generation Y, we can see that respondents from Generation Y have a greater preference than the "old" generations to use communication tools with technologies in a crisis context, such as instant messaging app, enterprise social networking, and Meeting 2.0 (video). With the increasing of Generation Y in organizations, there will have a tendency to use more new technology communication tools during a crisis context.

The other interesting finding is that the "old" generations in western countries prefer conventional communication tools than the "old" generations in China. And the Generation Y in China is more likely to use new technology tools in a crisis context than the Generation Y in western countries. All the “other” options in the study are connected to “face to face” communication.

We tried to figure out why they choose conventional or new technology communication tools by investigating their major concern about choosing communication tool. The comparison of the Generation Y and the "old" generations is shown in Figure 11.
Both "old" generations and Generation Y give the most importance to effectiveness. The second important characteristic of communication tools is rapidity. Although both recognize effectiveness is the most important feature, the "old" generations seem more focus on this than Generation Y. However, Generation Y gives more importance to the rapidity than the "old" generations. It confirms what we mentioned in the theoretical part (Generation Y do not like waiting; they are looking for a way to get everything they want when they want). In the “other” options, respondents from Generation Y mentioned that: “privacy”; “safety”; “easy to understand each other” are also the factors that they will take into consideration when they choose how to communicate under crisis situations.

To sum up, when crisis happens, the "old" generations prefer to use conventional communication tools, and the majority of Generation Y from western countries as well. However Generation Y from China prefers using new technologies to communicate internally. Also, the percentage of people from Generation Y who prefer using new technology tools is higher than the percentage of the "old" generations. It means it is easier for Generation Y to adapt their internal communication to the new technology tools and that they are more likely to use new technologies.

In other words, the hypothesis 9 has been confirmed. Besides, there is an obvious culture gap about choosing communication tools during a crisis context. Also, in western countries people from the Generation Y prefer using meeting (conventional tool), so this hypothesis has to be nuanced if we take the difference of culture into consideration.

5.5 The Influence of values

People from different generations may have different values, which will influence the way they see things and react to problems. People who are individual oriented define themselves as "I", while people who belong to a group-oriented culture identify...
themselves as a "We".

In a crisis context, the differences about values or cognition can lead to different interests and focus, as well as different priorities to take actions.

**H10: "During a crisis context, "old" generations focus on the interest of the group, Generation Y focus on their own interests."**

In our study, we used LIKERT 7 points scale to ask respondents about: During a crisis situation, you can characterize your reaction by which of these following questions: “what should I do” or “what should we do”? 1 represents thinking about “what should I do”, and 7 represents thinking about “what should we do”. According to their answers, we made the figure about the mean value of different generations and cultures (see Figure 12).

![Fig 12: Mean value of “individual oriented” or “group-oriented” tendency](image)

In a context in which they are working for an organization, almost all the respondents think they have the responsibilities to think for the whole organization. All the mean values are over 4 (medium value of 1-7). The results of the Generation Y and the "old" generations from western countries are almost the same. There is no obvious difference about their mean values (5.22 and 5.17).

However, in China, there is a generation gap about group or individual oriented culture. The "old" generations think more about their group than the Generation Y, and the gap is obvious (Mean values: 6.28 vs 5.44).

If we compare the Generation Y from China and western countries, the gap still exists. The Chinese Generation Y is more group oriented. The gap is more significant when we compare the "old" generations from different cultures (Mean values: 6.28 vs 5.22). The "old" generations of China are more group-oriented.

According to the results, there is not an obvious generation gap in western countries depending if they are individual oriented or group oriented. The gap exists in China even if both Generation Y and "old" generations are group oriented.
In other words, the hypothesis 10 has not been confirmed. Indeed, even if the "old" generations are more group oriented, it is not correct to say that the Generation Y is individual oriented.

In order to understand the result better, we analyzed their opinions about why did or didn't they choose “what should I do” or “what should we do”.

**The Chinese Generation Y’s opinions:**

- The organization is an entirety, “We” is more important than “I”;
- Internal cohesion is crucial and unified opinions are necessary during a crisis, thinking more about the group can be helpful to deal with crisis;
- Nobody can avoid crisis, it is not wise to think only about myself, so it is important to think from the perspective of the whole organization;
- I am only a staff, I can’t make decision about how to cope with crisis, it is better to focus on my own responsibilities;
- We can’t influence others, it’s useless to think about “we”;  
- It’s fast to take first action by oneself.

**The opinions of Generation Y from western countries:**

- Thinking about “I” is for the efficacy of the crisis resolution; During a crisis it is important to know in what you can contribute to solve the problem;
- Thinking about “we” allows to unify people around a common goal; together we can achieve more;
- Team working is always better than doing your stuff alone;
- Everybody’s actions affect the company, not just mine, so it’s necessary to think about what should we do;
- In a stressed situation it is important to operate together, in conformity with each other;
- The group, we, can accomplish things faster, being more efficient and better than what I can do by myself. When resolving a crisis, it is very important to get everyone’s feedback and opinion in order to come up with the best solution;
- What should we do is more important as it generates a feeling of community.

**The Chinese "old" generations’ opinions:**

- Under crisis, the cohesion of working together is more necessary;
- Team spirit is helpful for dealing with crisis;
- Only group work can deal with crisis efficiently;
- We share the same interest as organizations, so we think from the organizational or group perspective.

The opinions of the "old" generations from western countries:
- The problem doesn't depend only of me. You don't manage a problem alone, especially when you are employee we have to react together, not individually;
- As a team manager, the crisis management is more about my responsibility managing myself in a global environment, the crisis has to be managed in a team, not alone;
- Team spirit and solidarity in a crisis context are important;
- We have to be a team; it allows managing the crisis together. It is certain that if all the people concerned are involved in the solution to solve the crisis, it is already 50% more chance to be successful;
- As a team manager I have to give solutions, it’s my responsibility to think for the whole group.

This last statement shows that sometimes the gap does not depend on the culture or the generation but also the position within the organization. In a corporate mindset, we can't think about ourselves only. We are a part of a whole; therefore, as a bee hive works, we have to work in such a way. But at the same time, we have to focus on our inner strength, what can I do to help "us".

Most people from the Generation Y agree that the group work is better, but some of them think they lack of authority, so it is useless to think from the group perspective because they can not make decisions and influence others. Besides, thinking "what can I do" is also focusing on what can I contribute to the whole organization, it will improve the efficiency of responding to crisis.

From the perspective of the "old" generations, they focus on the team spirit and their positions. Some of them talked about their position or role, as a team manager, they should think from and for the whole group.

5.6 The effects of generation gap within organizations

The existence of generation gap within organizations can’t be recognized as either only problematic or beneficial. By conducting our study, we tried to understand better the attitudes of different generations towards generation gap about internal communication in a crisis context.
5.6.1 Can generation gap create problems in a crisis context?

In the Figure 13, we can see most of the people from both "old" generations and Generation Y agree the generation gap can create problems. 80.15% of respondents from Generation Y agree with “generation gap can create problems”, but for the "old" generations it is "only" 58.33%. Here is the comparison of their attitudes:

**Generation Y’s opinions:**

Most of their opinions are negative, it can be concluded into following categories:

- Generation gap may lead to different understanding about the same thing. Therefore, it’s tough to understand each other. The difference in communication styles and sense-making might lead to the misunderstanding and decrease effectiveness;
- Generation gap may affect the efficiency of communication, make it hard to achieve the common goal, such as, “older people might be reluctant to listen to younger generations”;
- The generation gap between leaders and followers, may make it more difficult for the followers to understand clearly their responsibilities and tasks;
- Because of the generation gap, employees will be less willing to receive feedback, “people from the Generation Y are too much self-confident and are less looking for experience with their colleagues. This behavior creates a problem because people from the "old" generations feel less respected about their work and experiences acquired”;
- The generation gap may decrease team spirit;
The generation gap can lead to conflicts, because older people might avoid changes and risks, younger people can be too impulsive, or take too much risks.

However, there are also some positive opinions about the generation gap:

- Friendship can resist generation gap;
- Mutual understanding can decrease the influence of generation gap;
- We are all the same, we just need to know each other better and to use to work in collaboration more often;
- Innovative ideas from the Generation Y combined with experience from the "old" generations might give innovative solutions;
- With a good internal communication, the gap doesn't create problems.

The "old" Generations’ opinions:

Some people from the "old" generations think generation gap can create problems as well, such as “the different generations do not give the same importance for the same problems”; “misunderstanding creates disorders in the crisis management”.

However, most of the people from the "old" generations do not consider generation gap as a problem. They agree with ideas such as “everything depends on the personality of the person …”. As one respondent from the "old" generations said: “I strongly believe that personal/professional relationships in business environments are not related to (different vs same) age/generation but more on (similar vs different) characters and customary habits”.

However, there are some people from the "old" generations who think “people from the Generation Y don't respect the process” and “young guys are manic”. Also, some people from Generation Y consider their leader who are from the "old" generations as “cold” and “stubborn”. If there is no mutual understanding of each other, the generation gap could become a vital negative element which can affect the efficiency and effectiveness of internal crisis communication.

5.6.2 Can the generation gap create opportunities in a crisis context?

As said before, generation gap can create problems sometimes within organizations. But what about the opportunities? (see Figure 14)
Most of the people from both "old" generations and Generation Y agree that the generation gap can create opportunities under crisis.

The opportunities can be sorted into these following categories:

- Diverse opinions. People from different generations may have different understanding about the same problems, it helps to think about creative solutions in order to deal with crisis;
- If the management is focus on the balance between the different generations within the organization, it can combine energy and experiences;
- It is beneficial in order to build organizational learning and knowledge sharing system. "The older generation has lived longer and has more experience so maybe their strategies are more useful and effective. However, the new generation is more knowledgeable over the new ways and strategies of communication. They go or have been to college and have new information still fresh in their minds that can be helpful";

The Generation Y is not afraid of taking risks; sometimes it helps the organizations to move out of crisis situation.

Generation gap can create opportunities as well as problems during a crisis situation.

5.7 Additional information

Besides verifying the hypotheses, these results gave us the possibility to verify the theories and information mentioned in the previous parts of the thesis.

We went a bit further in our research on the preference about the way to communicate in order to have a deeper understanding concerning the internal crisis communication of the different generations.
Fig 15: Tendency to link language with context

The Figure 15 reveals that the people from the different generations and different countries use to link their language with the context.

We used LIKERT 7 points scale to ask: "During a crisis situation, when I communicate I use to link my communication to the context." (1 represents strongly disagree with that, 7 represents strongly agree with that).

There is a small gap between generations and countries. The people from Generation Y link less their language to the context than people from the "old" generations. Also, the Chinese people like to link the language to the context more than the people from western countries. And this culture gap exists both in "old" generations and Generation Y.

Also, through the results of our survey, we add the possibility to go deeper in the understanding of the attitudes of the different generations during a crisis context. For example, we realized that depending of their generation, people are looking for different improvement within their organization during a crisis context (Table 20).
What would you like that your organization improves about the internal communication to avoid/face a crisis?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using fast communication tools</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering employees to give them the opportunity to take initiatives</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing equal access to information to the members of the organization</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building good relationship with other members</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving and facilitating the communication between the different generations within the organization</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: What would you like that your organization improve about the internal communication to avoid/face a crisis?

In the table 20 we can see that improving and facilitating the communication between the different generations within the organization is not the priority (the Generation Y: 11%, while the "old" generations: 19%) even if it is in third position for the "old" generations. This result for the "old" generations shows a real need to solve the generation gap within organizations.

Building good relationship with other members is the most important for both Generation Y and "old" generations (33% vs 36%). It is also interesting to see that the "old" generations are more looking for an improvement about the rapidity of communication tools than Generation Y (25% vs 12%).

Among the other answers of the Generation Y we can mention: "doing an update every week (via email,...) and act accordingly", "more training", "sharing more information constantly in non-crisis situations", "making sure that internal communication is delivered before the external communication"....

We can also mention some differences about the interpretation of the main influence of internal communication in a crisis context (Table 21) even if according to the majority of respondents from both Generation Y and "old" generations the two main influences are "improving the trust" and "improving the team spirit and the collaboration".
What is the main influence of the internal communication in a crisis context?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>&quot;Old&quot; generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decreasing rumors</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving trust</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing tasks effectively</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving and receiving feedbacks</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the team spirit and the collaboration</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Main influence of the internal communication in a crisis context
6. Conclusion

6.1 Research findings

Organizational crises have been recognized as one of the most serious problems in modern business world because of its frequency and destructive consequences. According to the results of our study, most of the people from "old" generations have been through organizational crises, while the Generation Y age group lacks experience in coping with organizational crises. There are many origins of organizational crises: mismanagement and labor disruptors are the major factors that can lead to organizational crises. In comparison with natural disasters, most of the organizational crises are caused by human activities (almost 90%).

Although in the business world, the external crisis communication is the one that always attracts the organization's attention, from the perspective of organization members, both "old" generations and Generation Y, agree that internal communication is important for dealing with organizational crises. Our results show that they think internal communication is more important than external communication when they have to cope with a crisis.

During a crisis context, the internal communication will be affected by different aspects, such as time pressure, inadequate information, fear and nervousness of employees.

Our study showed that internal crisis communication is important because it can unite the members by sharing information, expressing diverse opinions, giving feedbacks and improving the trust when facing crises by making the people have equal access to all the information.

Rumors are one of the bad consequences that can be brought about by crises and by a bad internal crisis communication. It can have a bad influence on group working. By providing enough information, it can be reduced.

Not all companies have an efficient internal crisis communication. There are some ways that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of internal crisis communication, such as building good relationships with employees and managers, encouraging employees to take more initiatives, ...

With the increasing number of people from Generation Y within companies, the generation gap becomes an obstacle that prevents the internal crisis communication to be effective. The reason behind this is that people from different generations have different characteristics and preferences of communication. From the perspective of both "old" generations and Generation Y, it is more difficult to communicate with people from another generation during a crisis situation. Our findings show that the reasons why there is a generation gap are lying in the difference of values, languages,
habits and living background, communication tools, positions within the company, acceptance to new things, and experiences of facing crises.

The influence of generation gap on internal crisis communication can be concluded as follow:

- The Generation Y tends to use vertical communication, while "old" generations prefer horizontal communication. Indeed, employees from Generation Y think they need guidance during a crisis, and people from the same hierarchy have the same information and can’t make decisions. According to them, the horizontal communication lack of efficiency. "Old" generations think authority can’t facilitate the communication. This result is opposite to our hypothesis and the reasoning in the theoretical framework. If different generations prefer and use different communication ways in a crisis context, it will lead to troubles in the information flow. According to their preference, workers of the organization will find workers from the same or higher hierarchy to communicate with them. It can be the origin of dysfunctions about the internal crisis communication if the organization does not manage to create a way of shared communication among workers, despite their generations and preferences;

- The Generation Y prefers to use new technology communication tools more than the "old" generations during a crisis. This difference of communication tools may lead to communication disorders in a crisis context, because if you do not understand other people’s communication preference, it will be tough to work together to face crisis. Also, if people from the same organization use different communication tools due to their preferences during a crisis context, it could lead to a loss of information.

- Among people who work within an organization, almost all the people from both Generation Y and "old" generations, are more group-oriented. But some of the people from Generation Y think about “what can I contribute to the group because I am only a staff and can’t make decision”. It is the tendency among workers of this generation. Some people from "old" generations start to think for the organization because of their positions. In this case we can notice that the different generations are more influenced about their position.

By comparing the results of China and western countries, we can also see some differences. Chinese Generation Y is more willing to use new technology communication tools during a crisis than western Generation Y. And the Chinese "old" generations are more group-oriented than western "old" generations.
The summary of the results of our hypotheses are in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: From the perspective of organization members, internal communication is as important as external communication during a crisis situation.</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Internal communication can improve the unity of the perception of what a crisis is by the members of the organization.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: The equal access to the information among the members of the organization improves trust within organization when facing crises.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: By providing enough information, the rumors can be reduced.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Initiative of employees makes internal crisis communication more effective.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: The good relationship among employees and managers is beneficial to internal crisis communication.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: The generation gap exists within organizations. Cross-generation communication is much more difficult than communicating with someone from the same generation, especially during a crisis situation.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8: When a crisis happens, &quot;old&quot; generations prefer vertical communication, while the Generation Y prefers horizontal communication.</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9: During a crisis context, &quot;old&quot; generations prefer to use conventional communication tools, while the Generation Y prefers to use new technology tools.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10: During a crisis context, &quot;old&quot; generations focus on the interest of the group, and Generation Y focuses on their own interests.</td>
<td>Not Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Summary of the results (hypotheses)

If the generation gap has always existed, our thesis indicates its substantial presence within companies. This generational gap should not always be viewed as a source of trouble; on the contrary, it can turn out to be a real internal resource. In any case, communication remains fundamental whatever the context within the company and the potential generation gap. This may be obvious, but it is worth a reminder.

6.2 Gateway to leadership

As a leader, it is essential to understand the importance of internal crisis communication. Without internal communication, it is impossible to make group members know what the crisis means to the organization and to everybody. People perceive crisis with different severities. Therefore, for leaders it is necessary to use internal communication to unify the mind of every member. It will give the possibility to react and to face crisis quickly and in a united way.
Information sharing is one of the critical purposes of internal communication. Members will be nervous without enough information, and rumors will rise. The loss of trust is dangerous when facing crisis. Leaders should try to share enough information to their followers. In order to improve the efficiency of crisis communication, building good relationship with group members is a day-to-day job for leaders.

Without noticing the generation gap, the leaders will take the risk of losing sense when communicating internally during a crisis situation. Some people from Generation Y need guidance during a crisis, and some people from "old" generations do not like communicating with authority, so it is necessary for the leaders to know their preferences and judge which way is the best according to the audiences.

In regards to the communication tools, the conventional tools such as meeting are the most popular ways nowadays. It can be approved by most of the members no matter which generation they belong to. However, sometimes it is more efficient and faster to communicate with new technology tools. But if the receivers of the information don’t usually use this new way of communication, it may lead to unordered communication. Even if the meeting is still the most popular internal communication tool within organizations, it is essential for an organization to integrate the new technologies to the communication process, because it meets the expectations of a large part of the Generation Y.

Also, understanding what members think during a crisis may help leaders to motivate their followers. “What can I do” or “what can we do” both are good starting points, because they are thinking about how to cope with crises. By a better understanding of their followers, leaders may be able to motivate them more effectively. The people who are individual oriented are mostly focusing on self-actualization. They need to be encouraged, so it is better to let them taking initiatives. For the group oriented, the feeling of working together is the most important thing. They need to have a role that gives them the feeling that they are a part of the group in order to make them accomplish their responsibilities for this group.

We are working in a global environment. That is why it is necessary and useful to understand the different cultures. Leaders and managers should adapt their internal crisis communication to the organization members in order to have a powerful approach. That requires leaders to spend more time discovering the followers’ culture. Sometimes the difference is not only caused by generation or culture, but by personalities, positions within the organization, ...

The objective is to find the best way to manage the organization in order to create an environment in which employees work effectively together and are complementary. The leadership has to take into consideration the aging population, age diversity and generational conflicts (Dejoux & Wechtler 2011, p.15).

Everybody has a specific background according to his/her generation and culture.
This background has an influence on the personal interpretation we have on the contributions of other people but also on the way people think and act. According to their generation and culture, people see the world differently. Indeed, due to that people from different generations and with different cultures may react differently to the same event. As a person in charge of communication it is important to remember that the audiences can have a different interpretation. So it is very important to know the audiences with which we want to communicate. It is possible to have a better understanding of a generation and a culture through the interpretation of people from this generation or culture.

The behaviors variety of different generations may lead to conflict when they communicate internally during a crisis situation. However, it promotes the forming of organizational diversity. It is important for the group members to understand this point and take actions to use this advantage.

6.3 Contribution of our thesis

Our thesis contributes in helping understand the influence of the generation gap on the internal crisis communication. It can be helpful in order to understand the reactions of your partners and not spending too much time during a crisis context in thinking about the way to communicate internally in order to be effective.

This thesis gives different recommendations about internal crisis communication. It contributes to the development in the cross-generational approach during a crisis context.

Moreover, in our thesis, we compared the difference between China and western countries. It could provide a better understanding for the influence of culture.

6.4 Limitations

6.4.1 Limitations about the theoretical part

Our thesis is only focused on the internal communication, not the external. However, both are linked and it is important to understand the external crisis communication in order to understand the internal crisis communication and vice versa because some reactions depend of the impact of the other communication. Even if we mention the external communication, we did not go deeper about this aspect in our study.

There are many influences concerning generation gap on internal crisis communication, and we could not cover all the aspects. We discussed topics over the influence on information flow, preferences of communication tools and their values (individual-oriented VS group oriented).
6.4.2 Limitations about the data analysis part

Our sample of respondents is composed of "only" 162 people so even if our results can give an idea, it does not exactly represent the population. We also have more respondents from the Generation Y (126) than from the "old" generations (36), so the results about Generation Y are probably more significant. Among the respondents who belong to Generation Y most of them are from China (97) (in comparison with the 29 people from western countries). Due to that, the final average is always more influenced by the Chinese results.

Moreover, we are not doing a distinction between the different "old" generations (baby boomers and Generation X) because we wanted to focus on the Generation Y in comparison with the other generations. However, not doing a distinction can limit the nuance of the results.

Our thesis is only focused on the crisis context. For example, all our questions in the survey are linked to the crisis context, so there is a limitation to learn about the eventual differences between a normal and a crisis situation concerning the internal communication.

Our objective is to analyze the influence of the generation gap on the internal communication in a crisis context. The comparison between China and western countries is only an "extra" because sometimes it can also help to understand the results and that is why we are not going deeper about this comparison.

Also, when we compare China to western countries we have to remember that it is not the same than comparing two countries together! Indeed, among respondents from western countries we have eleven different nationalities for the Generation Y (two different nationalities for the "old" generations). These differences could amplify the generation gap due to the mix between personalities, culture, ... and it could explain why we noticed in most of the cases a bigger generation gap among people from western countries than among people from China.

6.5 Future researches

Based on our study, there are different possibilities in order to go further about this topic.

We hope that our study will be used as an opening and an interesting opportunity to develop new and other aspects and approaches about internal crisis communication but also about generation gap and its impacts and particularities in a crisis context.

It would also be interesting to develop the external communication. In a few years it could be interesting to make a similar study but focus on the generation Z (people born after 1995) and compare with the generations mentioned in this thesis. In this thesis we did not mention this generation, because they are not yet a significant part of
the working environment within organizations.

It could be also be interesting to better develop the cultural influence and link it with the generation gap. Another possibility would be to compare the internal crisis communication depending on the kind of organizations.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire (English Version)

Research topic: The influence of generation gap on internal organizational communication in a crisis context

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you so much for taking 15 minutes to answer this survey! The purpose of this survey is to support our master thesis research. This survey is anonymous and all the information will be used for our academic research. Thank you again for your support!

Best regards,

--Antoine Mathot & Lin Jiang, students in leadership and management in international contexts at the Linneaus University (Sweden)

Definition of crisis:

"An organizational crisis is a low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly."

(Pearson and Clair 1998, p. 60)

Q1: Gender:

Male;

Female

Q2: What is your nationality? _____________

Q3: Working experience:

0-5 years;

5-10 years;

10-20 years;

Over 20 years

Q4: Which generation do you belong to?
Q5: What kind of company are you currently working for?

Q6: What is your position within the company?
   - CEO or GM;
   - Manager;
   - Department Supervisor;
   - Employee or Intern;
   - Other__________

Q7: Have you ever experienced an organizational crisis?
   - Yes;
   - No

Q8: What kind of organizational crises have you ever experienced? (Multiple choices)
   - Natural disaster;
   - Hostile takeover;
   - Labor disruptors;
   - Office scandal;
   - Mismanagement;
   - Other_____________

Q9: Do you think the internal crisis communication is different than internal communication during a normal situation? (Strongly Disagree 1—Strongly Agree 7)

Q10: In which aspects do you think the internal communication will be affected during a crisis context? (Multiple choices)
   - Time pressure;
   - Destructive consequences;
   - Inadequate information;
Disorder management;
Fear and nervousness;
Giving the priority to the wrong audience;
Other___________

Q11: The internal communication is important to cope with crises. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q12: Internal crisis communication is important, because of: (Multiple choices)
   - Alerting and informing;
   - Unitng the members;
   - Resisting rumors;
   - Improving trust;
   - The internal crisis communication is not important;
   Other_________

Q13: During a crisis context, what is the importance of the internal communication in comparison to external communication? (1=less important, 4=same importance, 7=strongly more important)

Q14: During a crisis situation, internal communication is helpful to form a united cognition about crisis. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q15: Internal communication can help the members of the organization to have the same understanding of the crisis by_____ (Multiple choices)
   - Sharing information;
   - Expressing different opinions;
   - Giving feedbacks;
   Other_________

Q16: During a crisis situation, every organization member needs equal access to all information. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q17: The equal access to information can improve trust during a crisis situation. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q18: If there is enough information shared within the organization, rumors about
crises can be reduced. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q19: The effective internal crisis communication requires employees to be active and to take initiatives. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q20: If the relationships between employees and managers are good, the internal crisis communication may be more effective. (Strongly disagree 1—Strongly agree 7)

Q21: What would you like that your organization improves about the internal communication to avoid/face a crisis?____________

   Using fast communication tools;
   Empowering employees to give them the opportunity to take initiatives;
   Providing equal access to information to the members of the organization;
   Building good relationship with other members;
   Improving and facilitating the communication between the different generations within the organization;

   Other____________

Q22: What is the main influence of the internal communication in a crisis context?

   Decreasing rumors;
   Improving trust;
   Distributing tasks effectively;
   Giving and receiving feedbacks;
   Improving the team spirit and the collaboration;

   Other____________

Q23: Do you think it’s more difficult to communicate about how to cope with organizational crises with people from another generation than you than with people from the same generation? (Strongly Disagree 1—Strongly Agree 7)

Q24: Do you think the way people from your generation communicate during a crisis is different than the way other generations communicate? (Strongly Disagree 1—Strongly Agree 7)

Q25: In which way the communication of other generations is different?

   If you are born before 1980, answer question 26:
Q26: According to you what are the difficulties to communicate with people from the Generation Y (people born after 1980) during a crisis context: (Multiple choices)

- Their characteristics: impulsive, impatient;
- They have a lack of experience about crisis, so it’s difficult to make sense to them;
- They are very nervous during a crisis;
- They are disobedient, can’t act as required;
- The way of communicating is different;
- It’s easy to communicate with them;
- Other__________

*If you are born after 1980, answer question 27:*

Q27: According to you what are the difficulties to communicate with people from the "old" generations (people born before 1980) during a crisis context: (Multiple choices)

- Their characteristics: inflexible, serious, strict;
- They avoid taking risks, always obey the orders;
- They always give orders, there are no mutual communications;
- The way of communicating is different;
- It’s easy to communicate with them;
- Other_____________________

Q28: During a crisis situation, which communication way do you prefer?

- Vertical communication;
- Horizontal communication

*If you have chosen vertical communication, answer question 29 and 30:*

Q29: Why do you prefer vertical communication? (Multiple choices)

- Efficiency;
- Sense of discipline;
- Unite the organization;
- Acting fast and unified;
- Other__________
Q30: Why didn’t you choose horizontal communication?

If you have chosen horizontal communication, answer question 31 and 32:

Q31: Why do you prefer horizontal communication? (Multiple choices)

  - Equality;
  - Diverse opinions;
  - Motivation for employees;
  - Easy to share information;
  - Other_________

Q32: Why didn’t you choose vertical communication?

Q33: During the crisis situation, which communication tool do you prefer?

  - Business pitch;
  - Meeting;
  - Instant messaging app;
  - Email;
  - Phone call;
  - Enterprise social networking;
  - Meeting 2.0 (video);
  - Other_________

Q34: According to you, what is the most important characteristic(s) to choose a communication tool?

  - Rapidity;
  - Effectiveness;
  - Diffusivity;
  - Formality;
  - Other_________

Q35: During a crisis situation, you can characterize your reaction by which of these following questions: “what should I do” or “what should we do”? (what should I do 1— what should we do 7)

Q36: Why do you think "What should I do?" or "What should we do?" is more
important?

Q37: During a crisis situation, when I communicate I use to link my communication to the context. (Strongly Disagree 1—Strongly Agree 7)

Q38: During a crisis situation, when I communicate I use to use body language to make the audiences understand. (Strongly Disagree 1—Strongly Agree 7)

Q39: Do you think generation gap can create problems about the organizational aspect?
   Yes;
   No

Q40: What kind of problems is created by generation gap? Or why do you think it can’t create problems?

Q41: Do you think the coexistence of different generations within the organizations can create opportunities in a crisis context?
   Yes;
   No

Q42: What kind of opportunities could be created by generation gap? Or why it can’t create opportunities?

For further information, we may send you an email to ask questions. If you agree, please write your email address here (Optional): _______________
Appendix 2: Data File Example Western Countries Generation Y