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## MANAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE OF MEDIA IN CRISIS SITUATIONS OF ENTERPRISES

**Анотація.** Добре організовані канали зв'язку, які забезпечують швидкий і ефективний потік інформації, є основою для розвитку позитивних відносин на різних рівнях управління в компанії. Спроба балансування в кризових ситуаціях зводиться до гри зі ЗМІ. ЗМІ грають із кризою чи формують і визначають їх? На це запитання достовірну відповідь не змогли б дати учасники ЗМІ, а також окремі групи, які мають можливість з ними співпрацювати. Немає підприємства, якого б не торкнулася криза. Тривалість кризової ситуації залежить від менеджменту, стейкхолдерів, громадськості, відносин із ЗМІ, загального стану економіки, навколишнього середовища та ряду факторів, які епізодично виникають і вимагають зусиль для пошуку виходу з кризи. По суті, криза — це подія з потенційно негативними наслідками, які впливають на організацію, компанію, галузь, державу, цільову аудиторію, продукти, послуги та ін. Засоби масової інформації відповідають за передачу важливої інформації, тому слід приділяти особливу увагу комунікації іноземних сторін, інструментам комунікації та функціям комунікації. Тут можна провести паралель між комунікацією та інформацією, оскільки все у функції ЗМІ ідеально проникає і набуває унікальної якості. З іншого боку, знаменитості, прихована реклама та соціальні мережі є одними з найпоширеніших сьогодні форм інформування широкого загалу про продукт чи послугу, сучасну молодь. Кризова комунікація — це інтерактивний процес, який можна визначити як обмін інформацією та думками до, під час і після спалаху кризових ситуацій. Менеджери з маркетингу часто вміють скористатися несприятливими умовами в економіці, природі, суспільстві, знайшовши рішення для подолання певних проблем. Метою дослідження є спостереження за впливом засобів масової інформації на функцію управління в кризових ситуаціях певних компаній на території Сербії, Республіки Хорватії та Боснії та Герцеговини, а також запропонувати заходи щодо дій у таких ситуаціях у майбутньому. У роботі використано результати попередніх досліджень у цій галузі. У дослідженні поставлено задачу визначити, якою мірою на території Республіки Хорватії, Сербії та Боснії та Герцеговини існує ця форма впливу, а також як вона використовується як позитивна чи негативна сторона публічності.

**Ключові слова:** менеджмент, підприємство, ЗМІ, комунікація, пропаганда, криза.

**JEL Classification:** M00, L26, H12

**Absztrakt.** A jól szervezett kommunikációs csatornák, amelyek biztosítják a gyors és hatékony információáramlást, alapját képezik a pozitív kapcsolatok kialakításának a vállalat különböző vezetői szintjein. A válsághelyzetekben az egyensúlyra való törekvés a médiával való játékban merül ki. A média játszik-e a válsággal, vagy formálja és meghatározza őket? Erre a kérdésre hiteles választ tudnának adni a média szereplői, illetve bizonyos csoportok, akiknek lehetőségük van együttműködni velük. Nincs olyan cég, amelyet ne érintett volna a válság. A válsághelyzet meddig tart, az a menedzsmenttől, az érintettektől, a nyilvánosságtól, a médiával való kapcsolatuktól, a gazdaság



általános állapotától, a környezettől és számos olyan tényezőtől függ, amelyek szórványosan megkövetelik a válságból való kiutat. A válság lényegében egy olyan esemény, amelynek potenciális negatív következményei lehetnek, amelyek érintik a szervezetet, vállalatot, iparágat, államot, célközönséget, termékeket, szolgáltatásokat és nevet. A média felelős a fontos információk továbbításáért, és szigorúan oda kell figyelni a külföldi felek kommunikációjára, kommunikációs eszközeire, kommunikációs funkcióira. Itt párhuzam vonható a kommunikáció és az információ között, mert a média funkciójában minden tökéletesen áthatol és egyedi minőséget nyer. A többi párt közül a celebek, az álcázott reklámok és a közösségi oldalak jelentik az egyik legelterjedtebb formát a nagyközönség, a mai fiatal lakosság tájékoztatásának egy termékről vagy szolgáltatásról. A válságkommunikáció egy interaktív folyamat, és úgy definiálható, mint a válsághelyzetek kirobbanása előtti, alatti és utáni információ- és véleménycsere. A marketingmenedzserek gyakran tudják, hogyan tudják kihasználni a gazdaság, a természet és a társadalom kedvezőtlen körülményeit úgy, hogy megoldást találnak bizonyos problémák leküzdésére. A kutatás célja, hogy megfigyelje a média befolyását a menedzsment szerepére egyes vállalatok válsághelyzeteiben Szerbia, a Horvát Köztársaság, valamint Bosznia-Hercegovina területén, valamint javaslatokat tegyen intézkedésekre a jövő. A cikkben az ezen a területen végzett korábbi kutatások eredményeit használtuk fel. A kutatás célja annak megállapítása volt, hogy a Horvát Köztársaság, Szerbia és Bosznia-Hercegovina területén milyen mértékű a befolyás ilyen formája, illetve azt, hogy ezt pozitív vagy negatív publicitásként használják fel.

**Kulcsszavak:** menedzsment, vállalkozás, média, kommunikáció, propaganda, válság.

**Abstract.** Well-organized channels of communication, which ensure a fast and efficient flow of information, form the basis for the development of positive relations at different management levels in the company. An attempt at balance in crisis situations boils down to playing with the media. Does the media play with the crisis or does it shape and define them? On this, a credible answer to the question could be given by participants in the media, as well as certain groups who have the opportunity to cooperate with them. There is no company that was not affected by the crisis. How long the crisis situation lasts depends on management, stakeholders, the public, relations with the media, the general state of the economy, the environment, and a number of factors, which appear sporadically demanding an effort to find a way out of the crisis. A crisis is essentially an event with potential negative consequences that affect the organization, company, industry, state, target public, products, services, and name. The media is responsible for the transmission of important information and strict attention must be paid to foreign parties' communication, communication instruments, and communication functions. A parallel can be drawn here between communication and information because everything in the function of the media permeates perfectly and acquires a unique quality. From the other parties, celebrities, disguised advertising, and social networks represent one of the most common forms today of informing the general public about a product or service, today's younger population. Crisis communication is an interactive process and can be defined as the exchange of information and opinions before, during, and after the outbreak of crisis situations. Marketing managers often know how to take advantage of unfavorable conditions in the economy, nature, and society by finding a solution to overcome certain problems. The aim of the research is to observe the influence of the media in the function of management in crisis situations of certain companies on the territories of Serbia, the Republic of Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as proposing measures on how to act in the future. The results of previous research in this area were used in the paper. The purpose of this research was to determine to what extent in the areas of the Republic of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is this form of influence as well as whether it is used as positive or negative publicity.

**Key words:** management, enterprise, media, communication, propaganda, crisis.



**Problem statement.** The results of previous information on crisis situations of certain companies related to products sold in these areas were used in the work and that do not meet the quality according to the current standards. The purpose of this research was to determine to what extent this form of media influence exists in the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and whether it is used in the competitive battle between companies as positive or negative publicity. The observation period is 2021-2023 in the period during and after the COVID crisis.

According to the opinion of the citizens of BiH, the media is saturated with untrue information, hate speech, and non-objective information, and the safety of journalists is assessed as unsatisfactory. One reason for this is the great political pressure on the media, and on the other hand, non-application or the absence of legal frameworks that would regulate the field of media. [1].

**Literature review.** The company has its own formal structure, and formal communication follows it. Communication enables exchange, understanding, elimination of conflicts, and their reduction to a minimum. Communication traces the future path for the achievement of set goals. Communication within a company among employees is internal communication. A prerequisite for the functioning of each organization is communication, and it forms its essence. A company without communication does not exist. For successful communication, which will result in good business success, it is primarily necessary to create a system that will allow the free flow of information and ideas in all directions, and the most important is vertical in both directions. [2].

Many authors and researchers of propaganda often state that after the end of the First World War, world public opinion was taken aback by the scale and manner of using propaganda techniques as powerful means of communication that contributed to the successful end of the war. The reason for that is certainly the lack of previous historical experience in understanding the potential of the strong combinations of social, political, and economic potentials combined with newly established powers of the mass media. Of course, it is necessary to keep in mind that not all techniques and skills of persuasion in itself are also propaganda, and that in ancient times rhetoric was not considered propaganda in today's sense of the word. [3].

At the beginning of the last century, rumors and gossip were still an important means of transmission for many specific messages, and in addition to the relatively developed press, primarily newspapers, books, and publications that found their readers. The role of increasingly present mass media in these changes from traditional to modern human society was seen as a key moment in the downfall and disintegration of the value of life in a certain human community.

It is important to note that initially, researchers measured the effects of advertising whose primary indicator was consumer behavior. However, they could not find out the psychological dimension of marketing and purchase decision-making mechanisms. Short-term capacity limitations of memory - the brain is constantly busy collecting and processing data, of which only some will be long-term stored and



remembered and others will be forgotten - is a problem that marketing experts have been striving to solve for a long time. [4].

Spinning is a term that is most often used as a metaphor for the technique of manipulation that is characteristic for the needs of public relations as a specific type of misinformation. Listeners often receive a radio message at work, while driving, and concentrating on other tasks. Because the message must be interesting and memorable, an overly aggressive approach can cause revulsion. Humor can play a positive role. When conceiving the message, the advertiser should be identified at the very beginning and repeated several times [5].

The Internet, which directly connects end users and producers, is diminishing the importance of traditional intermediaries in marketing (agents and distributors). This is because an increasing number of companies have the ability to do business directly with their users. To survive, these middlemen start to offer a whole range of new services, which adds new value to their offer. This value is often no longer in the sector of physical distribution of goods, but in the activities of collection, processing, interpretation, and distribution of large amounts of information. The main resource possessed by this new breed of 'cyber broker' is information, not a product. Information becomes the pivot of the economy. The Internet has exploded with information and has become a powerful tool for supporting networks inside and outside companies. [6].

In expressing an opinion about advertising, one can point to our personality, or social and ideological position. Life in an economically advanced society is saturated with marketing communications. Advertising, in all its forms, offers a wide and dynamic cultural vocabulary of meaning from which to choose a personally tailored overview of brands that reflects and communicates a sense of social positioning.

In order for communication in a crisis situation to be effective and efficient, it is necessary to identify crisis noise, appoint a spokesperson, carry out spokesperson training, determine a communication protocol, identify key publics, address the public with clear and effective messages, and finally overcome the crisis. [7].

In order to resolve the crisis situation favorably, crisis and crisis communication experts suggest the following: appropriate preparation includes the creation of a crisis plan, the implementation of plans which are well done and regularly tested, contacts with the media and authorities, which will constantly search for fresh news and notifications, and paying attention to concerned relatives and friends, so that a special telephone line will be intended only for their calls. [8].

Advertising is the most expensive part of the marketing plan and it is important to be sure that the money will be spent where it will give the best results. The advertisement must convey the reason why one should buy a product. [9].

Crisis communication is an interactive process, and it can be defined as the exchange of information and opinions before, during, and after the outbreak of a crisis situation. Crisis communication includes individuals, groups, and institutions (organizations). Crisis communication aims at prevention or reducing the negative outcome resulting from the crisis and usually has an informative function. [10].



Universality, openness, availability of information, and its truth, above all, which they strive for in theory and codes - it is certainly not respected in practice, nor are they paying enough attention to business ethics. The intentions of commercial media will always be focused on profit, rather than the desires of their “consumers”, and commercialization only helps them in this, no matter how much some emphasize its positive aspects. Whether it is worth it, should or, in general, can be fought against, is a question, but is it worth trying - of course. Free media that would perform their activities in the right way could thus contribute more to society, encourage good changes, and raise awareness of important topics. [11].

Dramatic highlighting of the problem captures the public’s attention and if it is accompanied by an answer to problem-solving, it leads to the maximum effect. For example, environmental pollution is a problem at the global level. Constant pollution of the environment from exhaust gases from cars at one moment became a “burning” problem. The company “Toyota” made smart use of the situation and the “Toyota - Prius” model with electric drive “kicked out” the market as an ideal solution for the conservation of nature in 1997. [12] Today we have electric car models from almost every company that engages in the production of the same.

**Research aims and objectives.** The aim of the research is to observe the influence of the media on the function of management in crisis situations within companies (as the media transmits information on the air) in the territories of Serbia, the Republic of Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research also proposes measures on how to act in the future.

**Research results and discussions.** The methods used in the realization of this work are: descriptive, comparative and theoretical analysis. Descriptive and causal methods were used to discover cause-and-effect relationships between media and the products, i.e defective products. The comparative method of comparing and collecting data, which determined data for writing this paper. The theoretical analysis included the theoretical basis of the research, while the combination of all methods leads to the data for the preparation of this work, relevance of media writing about a specific problem, as well as the formation of the final opinion. Primary sources will be used, such as various normative acts and secondary sources (articles, publications and Journals, data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.)

The decision to analyze the period from 2021 to 2023 stems from the global pandemic, known as SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), which struck the world, including the Republic of Srpska/B&H, Serbia, and Croatia, at the end of 2019. This pandemic brought about a shift in the business landscape, significantly affecting the operations of companies as they navigated through the changed environment.

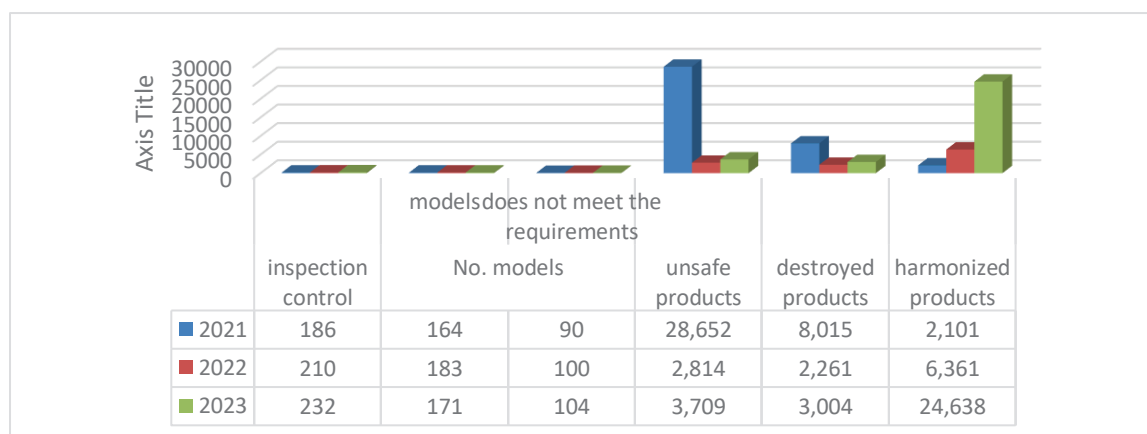
The operation and reach of the mass media in the conditions of an emergency situation are determined by their communication features, that is, technological and technical assumptions that determine the type of communication channel of a particular mass media and its availability (possibility of use).

The initial information on the basis of which the reports for the public are made is obtained by the media from the official agencies that deal with product safety issues,

these agencies are: Bureau of Statistics, Sanitary Inspection of the Ministry of Health, Market Surveillance Agency, State Inspectorate.

Area of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Market Surveillance Agency in BiH informed the public at the end of 2021 that 186 inspection controls were carried out where 164 different product models were controlled, of which 90 models (55%) did not meet the prescribed safety requirements, which makes 28,652 unsafe products, where 8,015 pieces were destroyed. products, while 1,201 pieces of products are in compliance with the requirements of the inspectorate, at the end of 2022, the agency informed the public that 210 inspections were carried out, 183 different product models were inspected, and it was determined that 55% of the 100 models did not meet the safety requirements, and 2,814 were withdrawn from the market. pieces of products, of which 2,261 pieces of products were destroyed, while 6,361 products complied with the requirements of the inspectorate, 2023 year that: 232 inspections were carried out, 171 different product models were inspected, it was determined that 53% of the products of 104 models did not meet the safety requirements, and 3,709 products were withdrawn from the market, of which 3,004 were destroyed, while 24,638. The Agency reminds that proactive surveillance of non-food products on the BiH market is carried out in cooperation with the competent inspection bodies of the Republic Srpska, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Brčko District, in accordance with the established annual plan of supervision of the market. As in all previous years, the annual supervision plan for 2023 has been determined. The market, according to which children's products, toys, household electrical appliances, power tools, sports and recreation products, pressure vessels, solid fuel grills, personal protective equipment, and construction products are included. [19].

The state of the observed period is presented - the inspection supervision of the Agency in the period 2021-2023 in the following table. [22].

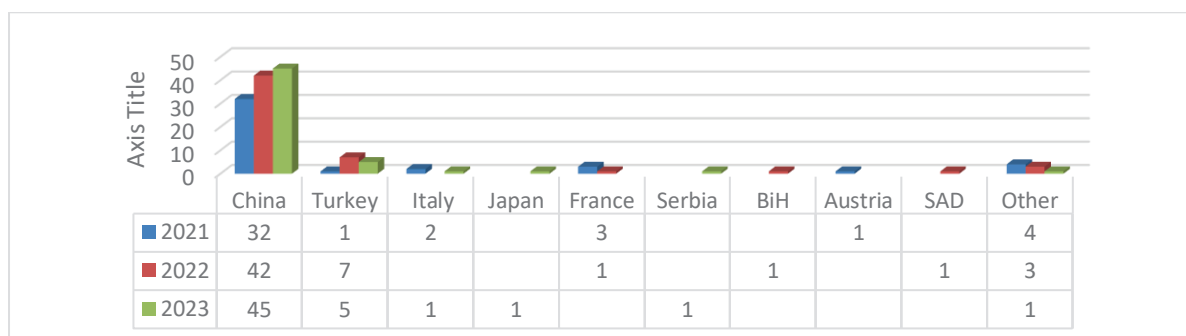


**Fig. 1. The inspection supervision of the Market Surveillance Agency in the period 2021-2023\***

\*Sources: systematized by the author based on The Market Surveillance Agency in BiH [22]



By analyzing the results of proactive and reactive market surveillance from 2021, 2022 and 2023, it was established that most unsafe products with a serious risk for consumers originate from China. The countries of origin of unsafe products with a serious risk are shown below: [22].

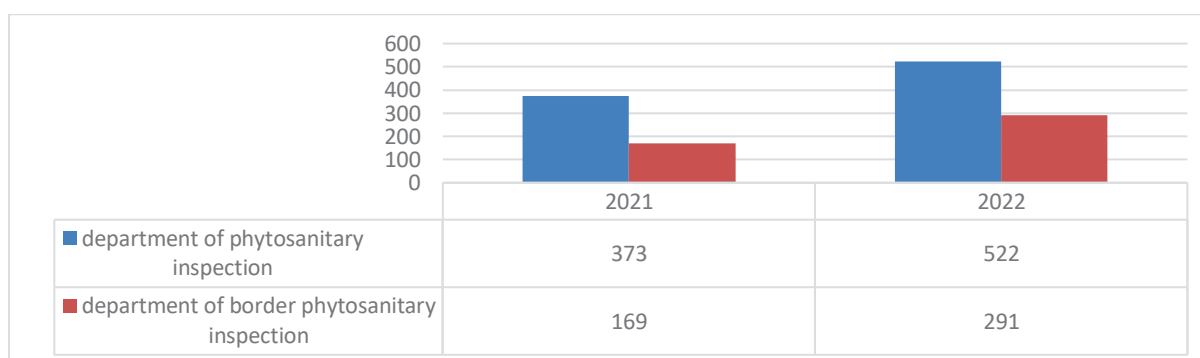


**Fig. 2. Origin by country - of unsafe products with a serious risk to consumers\***

\*Sources: systematized by the author based on *The Market Surveillance Agency in BiH* [22]

These results confirm the trend from previous years, where it is evident that goods manufactured in China constitute a significant share of dangerous products in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Area of Serbia. As stated in the report on the audit of business feasibility Food safety in the Republic of Serbia from 2023, the situation in the observed period is given in the following table.



**Fig. 3. Audit of business feasibility Food safety\***

\*Sources: systematized by the author based on *Letter from the Directorate for National Reference Laboratories dated* [16]

The table shows that in 2021, 542 inspections were carried out, while in 2022 there were 813 inspections in the area of food safety, data for 2023 were not published until the writing of the paper.

In the continuation of the paper, an example of media reporting on unsafe products for the health of the population is given.



In Serbia, the media are monitored - they are trusted completely and what they publish is blindly followed. They accept the attitudes and changes they propagate. Most of the population doesn't even think about what they watch, read, or listen to every day. They do not think about the accuracy and relevance of the information that they adopt. [13].

In Serbia, there are a small number of companies whose management realizes that communication is the key to success. With that, most companies base their PR activities on external communications, primarily with the media, and they neglect or omit work on internal communication.

An example of a crisis situation as the media reports in a company from Serbia is the company "Swislion - Takovo", the company "Swisslion" (company was founded in 1997, and now it represents one of the leading multinational companies in Balkan region, containing manufacturing business units in Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, trading branches in Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland and with over 7000 employees), which the media in 2016 at one point received negative publicity where the media presented details related to the toxic substances that were found in "Jovitana" baby food. Electronic and print media wrote about this situation and consulted the Ministry of Health in Serbia. The company denied the allegations that appeared in the media that after a certain period baby food, which was produced under certain conditions, was withdrawn from sale. When the situation calmed down, the company "Swislion - Takovo" continued with product advertising, not avoiding "Jovitana" baby food. "Jovitana" porridge for babies from the factory "Swislion - Takovo" was withdrawn from the market, because a larger number of certain types of pesticides were actually found in them than is allowed. [14] Sanitary inspectors of the Ministry of Health oversaw the withdrawal of this product in the plant operation "Swislion - Takovo" in Indjija. In the meantime, before the arrival of the Ministry, the price of baby food was further reduced by the company and placed to the parents, which is the basis for initiating criminal liability. [15]

The situation with the Swisslion company was repeated in the following period where, as stated from the Ministry of Health, product sampling of the "Jovitana" children's food factory from India, which was carried out with the City Institute for Public Health Belgrade, showed that the vials are defective.

The baby food factory 'Jovitana' in **Indjija** stopped production after the Ministry of Health found pesticides in its products, which are not suitable according to legal regulation. [16].

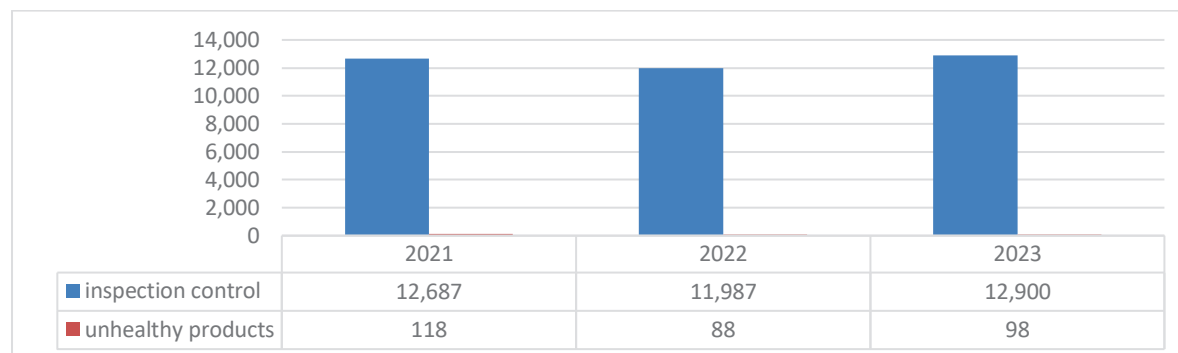
Today, in 2023, the company Swision applies, reviews, and improves the food safety policy system according to the requirements of the FSSC standard, SRPS ISO 22000:2018, ISO/TS 22002-1:2010, and HACCP. The media no longer reports on product defects.

#### Area of Croatia

In the last three years, according to the State Inspectorate (DIRH), 304 products were withdrawn from store shelves in Croatia due to non-compliance and health defects. Most of them were withdrawn in 2021, 118 of them, and interestingly, mostly those coming from the European Union market (53 products). [17]



Overview of the State Inspectorate of the Republic of Croatia, annual reports 2021-2023, shown in the following table.



**Fig. 4. Inspection control of unhealthy products\***

\*Sources: systematized by the author based on the State Inspectorate of the Republic of Croatia [17]

It should be noted that the Annual Report of the State Inspectorate of the Republic of Croatia states that out of a total of 12,900 planned official controls in 2023, 6,573 official controls were carried out, i.e. 56% of the planned number.

In the continuation of the paper, an example of media reporting on unsafe products for the health of the population is given.

An example of a crisis situation occurred in a company from the Republic of Croatia in 2021. The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia informed consumers about the withdrawal of the beverage ‘Jana Vitamin orange happy’ from the company Jamnica, due to the possible content of ethylene oxide. The Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food states that these products do not comply with European regulations on maximum levels of pesticide residues in food. Ethylene oxide is banned in the EU, but it can still be found in food due to the import of products from third countries. Ethylene oxide is poisonous and carcinogenic, and can cause infertility. This information had a great resonance in the media of neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a lower demand for these products was recorded.

At the end of 2023, the Republic of Croatia was shaken by media information related to Romerquelle mineral water. The media reported as follows: “Croatia has been shaken by a big affair since morning. ‘Poisonous water’ in which at least one person in Rijeka was seriously poisoned after drinking a bottle of Romerquelle mineral water in a cafe. As a result, her esophagus was badly burned and she is under the observation of doctors at KBC Rijeka, who told us that she is stable, but with a chemical injury of the esophagus. After several hours, Coca-Cola HBC Hrvatska, which is a beverage manufacturer, also called. Let us remind you that numerous services were involved in the case - the police, DORH, Sanitary Inspection, Institute of Public Health“. [18] The media in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina reported the same news, the publicity was negative and demand for these products declined in the coming period.



However, there are also examples of companies that were not affected by the crisis. One of them is a company from Bosnia and Herzegovina that has been doing well since the very beginning of its operations. This company has a developed awareness of the presentation of its products on the market. An example of promotion and success in times of crisis is the Herzegovinian winery “Vukoje”, which uses numerous opportunities to promote wine from its own production and achieve great success in conquering the domestic and European market. The fact that it is the winner of a large number of awards is proof that a quality product can be sold both on the regional and international markets, regardless of market fluctuations. They have won over 80 gold medals at all fairs in the region, as well as in Milan, Brussels, Paris, Geneva, and Prague for the quality of their products. They are also the winners of the “Golden Charter” for wine tourism, which was awarded to them at the 43rd Novi Sad Tourism Fair. Participation in domestic and foreign wine fairs also influenced propaganda and development. [20]

As stated on the official website of the European Union: National bodies of the EU can take action (by recalling the product or banning its sale) to fix the problem with products that pose a serious risk to the health and safety of consumers. And the producers themselves can recall their products. In any case, all measures taken are recorded in the database of Safety Gate data. Safety Gate does not monitor measures taken in relation to agricultural products or pharmaceutical and medical devices. [21]

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The arms race is exacerbating the global crisis, which is further deepened by the economic crisis. The refugee crisis and terrorism are pushing the situation to its limits. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an extremely conflicted environment at home leads to very complex inter-ethnic relations. The situation in Serbia is similar, while the Republic of Croatia is in a more favorable position, being territorially within the borders of the European Union.

The economy is reeling under the impact of emerging global economic risks. Investments are sporadic and even rare. Individual companies are going through the biggest crisis since their establishment. Communication between the media and companies is becoming more complicated day by day. Only intelligent reasoning, coupled with a large dose of patience, can bring about an improvement in relations and help overcome the crisis. Communication skills hold extraordinary importance in such circumstances.

In the future, it is necessary to conduct research that would attempt to explain the relationship between citizens’ trust in the media and the perception of their credibility and functions, from both the communication and communicative aspects. It is evident that there is a need among citizens for timely information in crisis situations, as well as a degree of trust in media that could ensure timely notification for the sake of preserving security, protection, and timely action in an emergency/crisis situation of the company.

Improvement is necessary in legal frameworks, and there needs to be a more consistent application of existing legal measures that regulate fraudulent and malicious information.



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