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Live blog as genre in pursuit of credibility

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Live Blog as Genre in Pursuit of Credibility

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Liveblog as Genre in Pursuit of Credibility

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"Are you covering the council meeting tonight with a live blog?", asked a councilman expectantly, just before I climbed the stairs towards the press stand, one floor above the council hall in Leiden, The Netherlands. I was covering the council meetings live almost weekly, and while writing down and immediately publishing what was said, I often received messages with advice from politicians, background information, and suggestions concerning language and grammar errors via WhatsApp—all an indication of the seriousness with which the politicians downstairs followed my report of their meeting. My live blog was published on the website of *Leidsch Dagblad*, a regional paper, leading to even more suggestions and advice from people reading my live blog at home. Due to the constant and often immediate—but very valid—political and public suggestions for improvements during production time, live blogging was often an exhausting undertaking as well. After coming home at night, it took a while to fall asleep after frantically typing, understanding, and summarizing what was said and meant throughout the evening.

"What are you doing when you live blog?" asked Jaap de Jong, the professor of *Journalism and New Media* at Leiden University, where I taught students how to become journalists. "How do you know if people accept your version of the council meeting as credible? And how can you make sure that these live blogs are credible and immediate at the same time?" Relevant, and topical questions.

Live blogs are a relatively new and very popular format for journalists and the public alike (Bahr, 2021; Flower & Ahlefeldt, 2021; Knight, 2017; Lee, 2022; López, 2022; Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Pantic, 2020b, 2020a; Pantic et al., 2017; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Vaahtoranta, 2017; Weaver, 2020; Wilczek & Blangetti, 2018). Often free content, live blogs proliferated from sports beats to other beats, now covering a wide array of subjects and themes, like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, political debates, the global pandemic of COVID-19, or the crisis in Ukraine on a daily, sometimes hourly, or even minutely pace. Live blogs are an established choice for journalists to cover events, and for the public to follow them.

The technological possibilities sped up the coverage of news from retrospective to immediate, covering events while they developed. Live blogs differ in form and function from regular online formats or live news on the radio or television. Live blogs are built up by posts, with the most recent post—either text, a photo, data visualization, embedded social, or other elements—placed on top, and the oldest posts at the bottom. A live blog is published on a stable URL (and therefore an online format) that refreshes automatically. Posts are standalones without a necessary narrative relation with posts before or after. Live blogs cover events as long as they take, which can vary from the duration of a match, game, or race, up to a political debate or breaking news event, which may take several days. Based on qualitative research of two live blogs (covering Brexit in the UK and the 7.8 magnitude Kaikōura earthquake in New Zealand, both in 2016), Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen (2020) conclude that live blogs are characterized by a fragmented and open narrative structure; temporality and overlapping moments in time; curated, multi-layered texts; networked journalism (using texts in live blog that comes from correspondents, Twitter, radio and television coverage, parent broadcaster or politicians or sport commenters); and a dynamic and temporary status of texts.

Consequently, the popularity of live blogs has some serious challenges for both producers and the public (Harper, 2013; Lee, 2022; Livingston & Bennett, 2003; Morpork, 2011). Previous research showed and theorized that when journalists evaluate events, they persuade the public to accept their account of reality by performing discourse (Potter, 1996; Broersma, 2010), using textual and productive conventions and routines to credibly achieve—as genre theory explains—communicative goals (Frow, 2015, Swales, 1990). Consequently, discourse communities of professional journalists are formed, indicating the crystallization of conventions to cover recurring events, and binding texts, writers, and the public in a web of reciprocal expectations and fulfillment (Swales, 1990, Beaufort, 1996). If we would look at live blogs as a journalistic genre it evaluate events (Bednarek, 2006; Wagner-Pacifici, 2017), but in contrast to other genres in journalism, live blogs do all the above immediately

(Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman & Walters, 2013; Usher, 2014). Therefore, the main question in this thesis is how is journalistic credibility established in live blogs?

Media, remarks Schudson in *The Sociology of News* (2003: 33) "are obligated (…) to maintain their credibility in the eyes of the readers." Media must not only obtain credibility with the public, but also with experts, politicians, or persons in sub-groups. Luckily for journalists, they do not have to reinvent the credibility of news again and again. The production of news is prescribed by routines and conventions (Broersma, 2010; Gans 1979 [2004]; Tuchman, 1978). News, according to Tuchman (1978: 1), is the combination of how the organizations of news work and news workers are put together. So, journalists produce news items or documentaries (video), make portraits (photos), have interviews, reconstruct, write columns, comment, and analyze. Or live blog. In short: journalists produce news in what Tuchman called a web of facticity, explained as "the mutual determination of fact and source" (1978: 84). Journalists, explains Tuchman, must question facts by going to sources, which lead to credible news that might be accepted by the public. However, Tuchman's web of facticity does not include the public—her "web of facticity" stops with the production of news (her seminal analysis of news production is titled *Making News*). Still, news is made for the public.

The concept of the *pursuit of credibility* encapsulates both the notion that credibility is produced by journalists, and once produced, evaluated by the public. I argue in this thesis that making news means that journalists perform discourse (Broersma, 2010), and by performing discourse, they strive for the pursuit of credibility (Frow, 2015), which are consequently evaluated (understood and accepted, or not) by news users (Braet, 2007). The pursuit of credibility closes the circle of makers, content, and the public, and to understand how credibility is established in live blogs, I study the three stages of the pursuit of credibility: the *realization of credibility* (by makers), the *content of credibility* (the live blogs), and finally, the *evaluation of credibility* (by the public). To do so, I first describe the emergence of live blogs as a format in journalism (see paragraph 1.1) and the adoption of this innovation (see paragraph 1.2). Then, I will introduce the theoretical concept of genre (see paragraph 1.3) that underpins my conceptual model for the pursuit of credibility.

1.1 EMERGENCE OF LIVE BLOGS

The history of live blogs is hardly academically researched, perhaps due to the poor state of archiving online news (Thurman & Shapals, 2017). Archiving web-only content—which live blogs are—is "spotty or non-existent" (Hansen & Paul, 2015). Consequently, its invention is mostly attributed in previous research to the *BBC*, The Guardian, and *The New York Times* (Matheson, 2004; Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman & Walters, 2013), making the live blog a predominantly Anglo-Saxon invention.

Live blogs started as a feature for sports journalists and proliferated towards other beats from there (McEnnis, 2016). For instance, in the '90s, *The Guardian* used this innovative format in the sports section of the website, under the name minute-by-

minute, although colleague journalists found evidence for the existence of live blogs in *The Guardian* all the way back to 1923. Then, the newspaper published an hour-by-hour account of the 1923 general elections updating an article every now and then and publishing its final report the next day in the printed newspaper (Owen, 2012). The *BBC* experimented during the '90s with live text input, done by one or several people during the weekend, mostly covering sports (football) (Scott, 2014). In 2005, the *BBC* started to call their *live text inputs* a live blog.

The format is distinct from live radio and television, because of the centrality of reporters and television stations as a source of authority (Lewis & Cushion, 2009), and an emphasis on written text. Due to its speed of production, texts are hardly reworked (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). Several studies show that this format is popular among the public; one study even showed that respondents preferred this format to regular online news because reporters, in the eyes of users of live blogs, hardly have time to interpret, and therefore manipulate information, due to the sheer speed of production (Thurman & Walters, 2013). Live blogs also appeal to journalists because they feel there are fewer obligations to their knowledge claims—journalists covering an event in a live blog feel they can report more uncertainties concerning developments than in regular (online) news (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Pleijter, 2011; Rammeloo, 2011; Rom & Reich, 2017).

1.1.1 Short history of Dutch live blogs

In the Netherlands, the live blog as a journalistic format gained attention in 2011 (Pleijter, 2011)—at least, in that year, professional pioneers of live bloggers in the Netherlands debated on the format for the first time; David Haakman (national newspaper *NRC*), Robert Engel (internet platform *EnDanDit.nl*), Paul Vereijken and Erika Massuger (regional newspaper *Eindhovens Dagblad*), and Jens Kraan (public broadcaster *NOS*) publicly discussed features of live blogs from their professional points of view in a pub in Utrecht. This dedicated discussion concerning live blogs was an early indication of the acceptance of the format as a journalistic genre, and even possibly the start of a new discourse community, as will be further explained in the second chapter of this dissertation. The meeting back in 2011 between the first "live bloggers" led to some agreement on a set of common goals, language, and procedures describing live blogging.

For instance, during the debate back then, journalists discussed the order of posts: the most recent information at the top of the page (as is a present convention) or the most recent post at the end (which did not survive as a convention). Both ways of ordering news information were—according to the journalists present at that time—closely related to the communication goal (Swales, 1990) of live blogs. Haakman (*NRC*) mentioned the public's wishes to follow the news in real time, hence placing the latest news on top; Engels mentioned the wish of the public to read the live blog at the end of the day as an oversight of what happened, starting with the first post, and ending with the most recent. Both journalists had the purpose of communicating as effectively as possible to the public.

Journalists also debated on the criteria for the status of news to be published in live blogs. Kraan (*NOS*) mentioned that the fall of Benghazi (during the civil war in Libya, 2011) was only confirmed by an informal source in the Netherlands who had contact with insurgents. The source's information was not confirmed by other sources, like international press agencies or governments. However, "we did put that information from [the informal source, SL] in the live blog, but we did not make a separate news item about it. We only did so when the international press agencies also reported this news two hours later" (Pleijter, 2011).

While 2011 was the first year the live blog was discussed as a serious journalistic format, the first form of live blog in the Netherlands dates to 2009. Then, Wouter Bax, journalist of the Dutch national newspaper Trouw, uncorked a bottle of champagne because the newspaper was, according to his own enthusiasm, "back in the frontline of news" (Bax, 2009). During a press conference covering the takeover of Fortis by the Dutch ABN bank, Bax witnessed live-blogging in action, done by a Belgian journalist, sitting in front of him. At that moment, Bax wrote, he realized that newspaper now had a format to cover breaking news, for long only done by radio and television. His newspaper, Trouw, used, later that same year, the format covering the crash of Turkish Airways Flight 1951 at the Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, February 25th, 2009:

> *"Throughout the day, internet users could take note of the latest news, photos and even the live blog of one of our editors who, until the evening, described what he saw and heard and exchanged thoughts with guests of his blog. It attracted crowds of people who came into direct contact with [journalists of] Trouw and the newspaper also benefited the next day. [Reporters] neatly reported the facts, but also testified to the fact that the journalists had been forced by their own live news service to do even more thorough and in-depth work for the next day" (Bax, 2009).*

And even further back, in 2005, the Dutch national newspaper *NRC* mentioned the *BBC*'s live blogs covering the horrendous terrorist attacks in London on their website. Three years later, in 2008, two students at the School voor Journalistiek in Utrecht, The Netherlands (School for Journalism), Loek Essers and Peter van der Ploeg, covered the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, only following social media such as Twitter and Flickr. They made the news by covering it in an innovative way. Then lector Piet Bakker told *NRC* (Dutch national newspaper) that he thought both students were present in Mumbai, so convincing was the liveness of their reportage (Klaver, 2008: 20).

1.1.2 Adoption of an innovation

So, early adopters of the live blogs in The Netherlands had to determine the basic order of their posts due to differing communication goals of live blogs (real-time news or reading news) and used live blogs as a place of not yet confirmed, but relevant information. In terms of linguist and genre-theorist John Swales (1990),

there was not yet a community's nomenclature; conventions and routines had yet to mature in these early days of experimentation. Most Dutch media started with the adoption of live blogs to cover the Arab Spring; the terrorist attack of Anders Breivik in Norway; Dutch state elections; the shooting in Ridderhof, a mall in Alphen aan den Rijn; the financial troubles in Europa; and the tsunami in Japan; all in 2011 (Rammeloo, 2011). At the same time, the use of mobile phones and social media was well-established by that time. Members of the public became "accidental journalists" (Allan, 2013:1), posting their eyewitness reports on social media for journalists to use as content for their reports. And they did so with success, in terms of visits to these live blogs. In 2011, eight out of ten most-read online articles in *NRC* (Dutch quality national newspaper) were live blogs (Rammeloo, 2011).

The adoption of live blogs in the Netherlands went relatively fast due to this perfect storm of news events combined with the establishment of social media use by the public. Explorative research confirmed that the immediacy with which these stories could be reported also for newspapers; the affinity of (parts of the) the public to be a part of that story by reading a live blog; and the technological developments that made it easier to start live blogs helped people to accept the innovation on Dutch political beats (Lil, 2023). The interaction of these three aspects sped up the innovation of live blogs.

Because live blogs and the events they cover are so closely related, a more recent development of the format is slow blogs. Slow blogs cover events that last long periods, varying in duration from two or more days to weeks, months, or even more than one-and-a-half years (Daams, 2023; Nab, 2021, Van Exter, 2020). So, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, news platforms started to cover COVID-19 in live blogs that lasted for months. For example, NU.nl (Dutch online news platform) started their live blog covering the pandemic in February 2020 and stopped it in August 2021. "The news flow around the coronavirus comes from fewer different sides," and became "smaller than before," according to a statement explaining the end of the lasting slow blog. After COVID-19, the war in Ukraine was also followed by live blogs with long durations—some started the first day Russia invaded eastern Ukraine, February 22, 2022, and are still covering the war at the time of writing in October 2023.

In conclusion, live blogs are a journalistic format in motion; they develop as a reaction to the immediate reality they cover. Starting as an online tool to cover sports, live blogs developed into an innovative, immediate, and sometimes highly uncertain journalistic genre. Despite these challenges, live blogs seem to be popular among journalists and the public alike to present and follow news, despite the challenges previous research mentioned. Live blogs, uncertain and fragmented, also seem to be the opposite of regular journalistic discourse that is characterized by its factuality and structuredness. To understand how and if they are credible, I argue that we must analyze live blogs as a genre. Genre is often seen as a classification of texts (or photos, or paintings), based on similarities between its members. Seen as such, things can be classified as a member of a genre based on characteristics they share with

other members of that same collection, like a taxonomist classifies plants, insects, or animals. However, genre is more than similarities between the classification of things. Genre does work.

1.2 WHAT GENRE DOES

A mind experiment might be useful to explain that genre not only classifies, but also "does work." Imagine that someone would like to see a movie—a Western, to be precise. Mentioning the word "Western" stimulates expectations about the content of the movie, and flying saucers are not part of that expectation (to name a genre confusion after the film *Cowboys & Aliens* (Favreau, 2011). In Westerns, bad guys wear dark hats, people ride horses, and some are fast shooters. The "world" of Westerns is clearly cut into good and bad (and, sometimes, the ugly). A "good" Western might let spectators forget they are watching a film and get sucked right into the story. In rhetorical terms, the moment spectators (or listeners or readers) forget the story is mediated, is called presence. The user is submerged within the narrative, and effects of credibility can emerge (Frow, 2015): what is being told is real in the eyes of the public. This, in a nutshell, is an important effect of genre.

The rise of the internet has fueled academic interest in genres and genre analysis (Bawarshi, 2000; Bonyadi, 2012; Mast, Coesemans & Temmerman, 2017; Miller & Kelly, 2017; Steensen, 2011), also within journalism studies (Broersma, 2008; Buozis & Creech, 2018; Smeenk et al., 2018). Genre analyses are in themselves as old as Aristotle's classifications into his Poetics (Tragedy, Comedy and Epic) (Huys, 2011) or Rhetoric (speech before the people's assembly, occasional speech and speeches before the court) (Huys, 2011), and as modern as shreds, in which videos of rock concerts are used to poke fun at the musicians, the audience, just one song, or the entire concert, with self-created music dubbed over the original soundtrack (Skageby, 2013).

In *Analysing Genre* (1993), Bhatia sees genre analysis as discourse analysis. It has evolved, "moving from a surface-level description to a more functional and grounded description of language use, often bringing in useful explanation of why a particular type of conventional codification of meaning is considered appropriate to a particular institutionalized socio-cultural setting" (Bhatia, 1993: 5). Thus, to provide more in-depth attention to the social situation of language use, genre analysis was created. According to Bhatia (1933: 40), genre analyses have an eye for socio-cultural and organizational constraints and expectations that determine choices in language use. Genre analyses detect conventions and expose the (often) predictable ways in which communicative events are shaped, combining the work of producers of discourse (in this thesis: journalists) with the content they produce and the public's reception.

It does so, however, without a crystallized method for analyzing and classifying language use into genres. Harrell & Linkugel (1978) even see a danger in this: "In short, 'generic' seems to be loosely taken to mean 'classification' and little has yet emerged to organize and systematize the development of generic criticism" (Harrell & Linkugel, 1978: 262). This lack of a uniform method is a major methodological weakness in genre analyses. Nevertheless, studies have been carried out that always

serve as a starting point for genre analyses, especially concerning pedagogical approaches to writing various texts. One such concrete approach to the classification of text into genres is *Genre Analysis* by John M. Swales (1990). Swales (1990:58) defines genre based on approaches of genre in folklore, literature studies, linguistics, and rhetoric, and describes "genre" as

> *"a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the (...) discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discoursed and influences and constraints choice of content and style."*

Seen as such, live blogs are a class of communicative events, where journalists—as expert members of a discourse community—share the willingness to present news as immediately as possible (fulfilling the communicative purpose). Following Schudson (2003), Tuchman (1978), and Gans (1979), their rationale for "genre" is the pursuit of credibility, and translated to live blogs, genre influences and constrains the choice of content and style for makers. So, far from being merely "stylistic" devices, genres create effects of credibility "which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or philosophy or science, or in painting or film or prayer or in everyday talk" (Frow, 2015: 20). Consequently, genre channels strategic responses when such responses are necessary, based on a recurrent situation. Terrorist attacks, natural disasters, political debates or political campaigns, a football match, a Formula 1 race, or a judo tournament are examples of recurrent events—and seen as such, live blogs are strategic responses from journalists. To understand how journalistic credibility is established in live blogs, I propose a conceptual model of the pursuit of credibility, grounded on the literature of genre and genre analysis.

1.3 A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE PURSUIT OF CREDIBILITY

As mentioned, the pursuit of credibility encapsulates both the production and public evaluation of credibility. Consequently, the pursuit of credibility exists of the realization of credibility by journalists; the resulting live blog or the content of credibility; and the public evaluation of credibility. These are three building blocks for a conceptual model to analyze the pursuit of credibility in live blogs (see *Fig. 1 Stages in the pursuit of credibility in live blogs*). The conceptual model explains the pursuit of credibility as a model, starting with an event (left), and ending with the acceptance (or not) of the public of the version of reality presented in the live blog by journalists (right). At the same time, these three building blocks correspond with the chapters in my thesis. The elements of the conceptual model are hereafter theoretically underpinned with concepts from genre studies.

Genre prescribes, determines, and limits possibilities of language use that are available as soon as something needs to be said in a social situation or concerning an event. These situations are defined by and are consequences of interpretations

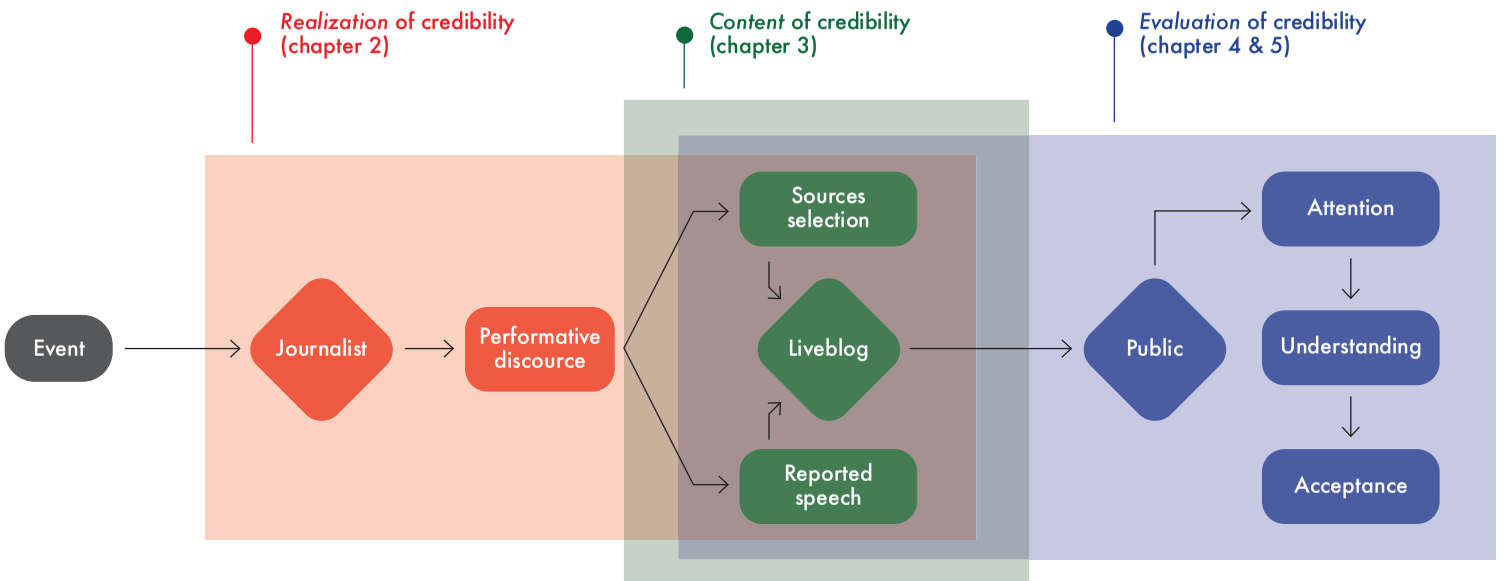

FIG. 1 Stages in the pursuit of credibility in live blogs

(Miller, 1984). Genre establishes a relationship between a (recurring) situation and discourse (written and spoken word, but also image and art). "Genre," explains Frow (2013: 15), "shapes strategies for occasions; it gets a certain kind of work done." So, the first step in our conceptual model concerning the pursuit of credibility is the question of whether an event must be covered by a live blog in the first place (starting left in the conceptual model with 'Event', on the previous page). Genre does not only prescribe the use of language concerning an event, but it also constitutes this situation. With the choice to cover an event with a live blog, a specific situation is defined by journalists as urgent, immediate, and newsworthy.

But why should journalists choose live blogs (or any other genre)? One answer to the question of why a specific genre is chosen given a specific event or situation is provided by Miller (1984) and Giltrow (2017), among others. They proposed genre as a social action. This approach is based on the recurrence of situations or events. "Recurrence is implied by our understanding of situations as somehow 'comparable', 'similar', or 'analogues' to other situations" (Miller, 1984: 156). Events, such as a football match, a tournament, a debate, a terrorist attack, or natural disaster are newsworthy and "ask" for discourse. These situations or events require social action because they share a sensation that something needs to be said or written, called exigence (Bitzer, 1968).

Exigence is regulated by conventions, and according to Giltrow (2017: 2017), these conventions arise in and prescribe activity at the same time (see also: Devitt, 1993). Genre is not the form of substance of discourse, but, according to Miller (1984: 151), the action used to accomplish it. Bawarshi (2000) states that genres reproduce activities in such a way that the public recognizes them. Swales (2004) claims that genre is not a social action but a frame for social action. The frame is just a starting position, an orientation with no guarantee that what needs to be done will happen, except that speakers and writers can shape their plans and ideas, and the audience can have certain expectations (Fowler, 2007). This, of course, is all done by people, and in my case: journalists.

1.3.1 Discourse Community

Swales (1990) and Askehave & Swales (2001) argue that genres differ in discourse community and communicative purpose. A discourse community (see Chapter 2) has six characteristics (Swales, 1990: 24-27). First, a discourse community shares the same communicative purposes. This purpose, for instance, was not yet clear in 2011 (see paragraph 1.1.2 Short history of Dutch live blogs), when pioneers of the format disagreed about the order of live blogs based on the goal of the format (bring news immediately or present news orderly).

Second, the members of a discourse community communicate with each other. Translated to my study of live blogs: journalists follow each other's live blogs or write articles in professional literature about the format and the experiences with it. In doing so, members give feedback on each other's work. Third, members use their participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and receive feedback. Swales then

mentions, fourth, that more than one genre can be used by a discourse community. Again, translated to this thesis, journalists covering an event in a live blog might use interviews and reportage, or embed socials and photos to report events. Fifth, Swales mentions jargon among members of a discourse community as a necessary condition for a discourse community. In the community of live bloggers, terms such as "'post," "embeds," or "slow blog" are examples. Finally, one should take into consideration the adoption of new members and thus, the renewing of the community (Swales, 1990).

With this concept of discourse community, Swales deepens the concept of genre by considering not only texts, but also the social conditions, routines, and conventions under or with which an achievement must be accomplished. Other examples of discourse communities held together by (strict) communicative purposes, routines, and conventions to establish effects of credibility are law and academics. The last category is educated in routines and conventions to do and present research at conferences, in journal articles, or theses like this one, and in doing so, are expected to convince others of their credibility as an academic. The discourse community of live bloggers is empirically underpinned in my second chapter, where I will present routines and conventions used by journalists covering evolving events in live blogs.

1.3.2 Routines and Conventions

These routines and conventions explain and show what journalists do to translate a recurrent event (first stage of my conceptual model) into a live blog (the second stage of my model) to convince the public (third stage of my model) of a credible presentation of their version of reality. Journalism, in essence, is a trait of persuasion; confronted with a (evolving) reality, journalists perform discourse (Broersma, 2010) by following routines and conventions to persuade the public of a credible representation of facts. That is the one thing the public has: a representation of facts—they can only believe what is provided by journalists because (most of the time) they themselves are not present. "Events and facts do not have 'intrinsic importance' but become important because they are selected by journalists who adhere to a culturally and ideologically determined set of selection criteria" (Broersma, 2010: 16). So, news is hard work: selecting, filtering, choosing words or frames, and then molding it into media formats suitable for an audience busy doing other things. Form and stylistic devices are central to "legitimize valid representations of the social world" (Broersma, 2010: 16).

Seen as such, journalism is rhetorical in nature, and journalists try to persuade the public of their specially crafted version of reality. Journalists do so by hiding shortcomings or inadequacies by presenting facts as natural (content), and they use specific forms to prove the truthfulness of their productions. This is the news the public can act on, and this is, according to Broersma (2010: 18), a linguistic representation that has "the power to describe and produce phenomena at the same time." Between an event and the discourse performed by journalists to persuade the public of a credible representation is a reciprocal link.

The reciprocal link between situation and discourse can be analyzed with what Frow (2015: 79) calls "expressive capacities of genre." These expressive capacities

offer "frame works for constructing meaning and value in one or another medium" (Frow, 2015: 79). These frameworks are alternatives to each other and are chosen one above another because specific expressive qualities are—given a specific situation—valued above others by journalists. Hence, one can report (or learn from) an event with a documentary, an item, a data analysis, or a photograph—all these genres have specific expressive capacities with their "own" effects of credibility. How can we understand these effects to choose the right genre for the desirable effects with the public?

1.3.3 Effects of Credibility

Frow (2015: 79-80) distinguishes three analytical sets of features for effects of credibility: a formal feature, a thematic structure, and a structure of address. A formal feature of genre includes the use of a voice-over, interviews with informants, hand-held cameras, or certain rhythms in editing (examples are from Frow, 2015: 80). Following these examples, a formal feature of effects of credibility in live blogs is, for instance, the order of posts, with the most recent at the top and the oldest post at the bottom. A second formal feature is the timestamp that all live blog posts have, exacting the time the post was published by the author, and therewith signaling urgency and immediacy.

Thematic structure, the second feature of effects of credibility, concerns the topics or topoi of genre. Thematic structures of stories (Frow, 2015: 83) are, for instance, the kind of actions of actors who perform them, and both the significance of these actions and their actors for an unfolding story. "Together, actions and actors form a world with a particular organization of space and time and a particular mode and degree of plausibility: it will be symbolic, or exemplary, or empirically factual, and it will be presented as historically true, or as possible, or as probable" (Idem: 83). Translated to live blogs, the topics of (most) live blogs are evolving events (planned or what-a-story news) like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, war, revolution, political campaigns and debates, sports games, matches, or races. Actions and actors (in live blogs: sources) are then organized in space and time, making the coverage of an event presented in a live blog possible, probable, and credible. The selection of sources in live blogs covering breaking news, politics, and sports is central to my third study concerning the content of live blogs (see Chapter 3).

Finally, the effects of credibility are also organized by structures of address. These structures of address concern who (what kind of person) is speaking—and with what authority and credibility—to whom. "This speaking position brings with it a certain kind of authority and moral force (…)" (Frow, 2015: 10). Examples of authority and force are suggested by Austin (1962 [1975]) as performatives. A performative does not describe, but it does something. "When I say, before the registrar or altar, 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it" (Austin, 1962 [1975]: 6). This structure of address is also a central theme in my content analysis of live blogs (see Chapter 3), where I analyze not only the source selection (thematic structure, see above), but also the reported speech, or the way they are represented in live blogs.

How can you evaluate the work done in the live blogs that are published? The last step in the pursuit of credibility is the evaluation by the public. Braet (2007, following McGuire 1989; O'Keefe, 2002) distinguishes three stages when the public is confronted with a speech or text: first, attention, then understanding, and finally, acceptance. These are stages to understand the success of persuasion: without attention, there is no understanding, and without understanding, there cannot be acceptance. And, finally, without acceptance, there is no persuasion. Consequently, these three stages can be seen as criteria for successful persuasion and are therefore used in this dissertation: first, to understand the pursuit of credibility of live blogs, and second, to assess if they succeed in persuading the public to accept the reading of reality by its makers.

So, the public must first find a live blog (attention), the first necessary condition for acceptance (as will be explained in Chapter 5). News organizations therefore often promote their live blogs in contrasting colors on their websites (often in red), and for free (contrary to other news on their sites) hoping it will pull the public in for the next necessary condition for acceptance: understanding the presented version of reality. They do so when the live blogs answer their need for information. Previous research showed different motivations for using news and for using news in times of crisis specifically. I analyzed in Chapter 4 motivations and needs during the first four months of the pandemic while it raged around the world, impacting the lives of millions of people. We explored these motivations, habits, and needs further in Chapter 5. In this chapter, we conclude that fulfilling attention, understanding, and acceptance (Braet, 2007) leads to a possible effect of credibility. However, along the way, the public can also miss the live blog (no attention), not understand what is covered (or how it is covered), and thus, not fulfill the pursuit of credibility. Therefore, this dissertation will empirically study all three stages of live blogs in the pursuit of credibility.

1.4 THIS THESIS

The chapters of this thesis (excluding the Introduction and Conclusion & Discussion) are submitted or published as an article in an academic peer-reviewed journal. Because the articles are written with co-authors, I use "we" in these chapters. The authorship of these studies are shared, all studies, however, are conducted by me. The co-authors were consulted and gave feedback on my work. The introduction and conclusion of this thesis are mine, and therefore, I use "I" in both. Chapter 2 concerns the discourse community of live bloggers: journalists covering breaking news, politics, and sports immediately. Chapter 3 concerns the content of live blogs of breaking news, politics and sports and the performing discourse of source selection and reported speech. Chapter 4 concerns live blog use during times of crisis (COVID-19). The fifth chapter concerns avid live blog users evaluating the credibility of the format.

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CHAPTER 2

A Discourse Community of Live Bloggers? Routines, Conventions, and the Pursuit of Credibility in Dutch Live Blogs

2.1 ABSTRACT

Live blogs are very popular with the public and journalists alike. The problem, though, is their credibility, given the uncertainty of the covered events and the immediacy of their production. Little is known about how journalists routinize the unexpected—to paraphrase Tuchman (1978)— when journalists report about an event that is still unfolding. This paper is about makers of live blogs, live-bloggers, so to speak, and the routines and conventions they follow. To better understand the relationship between those who do the "live-blogging" and how the "live-blogging" is done, we interviewed a selection of nine experienced live-bloggers who cover breaking news, sports, and politics for the three most-visited news platforms in the Netherlands. Based on our results, we conclude that journalists working at different platforms follow similar routines and conventions for claiming, acquiring, and justifying knowledge. Journalists covering news in live blogs must have expert knowledge, as well as technical and organizational skills. Liveblogging—in contrast to regular, online reporting—is best summarized as a social process instead of an autonomous production. These findings are important for three reasons: first, to understand how journalists cope with uncertainty covering events under immediate circumstances using live blogs; second, to understand the workings of this popular format; and third, to contribute to literature about journalistic genres, discourse communities and, more specifically, generic requirements of live blogs for effects of credibility to take place.

Lubben, S.P. van der; Haan, Y. de; Jong, J. de & Koetsenruijter, W. (2023). A Discourse Community of Live Bloggers? Routines, Conventions, and the Pursuit of Credibility in Dutch Live Blogs, *Digital Journalism* (in press)

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Political debates, sports games, terrorist attacks, and pandemics are events characterized by a combination of fast progression of new facts, insights, immediacy, and uncertainty. To cover these fast-progressing and sometimes complex news events, journalists do not constantly update articles, but use live blogs (Thurman & Waters, 2013; Thurman & Newman, 2014). A live blog is a stable URL with short updates, structured chronologically with timestamped posts. Each post presents a new development, fact, or changed circumstance of the reported event, thereby expressing a sense of urgency (Thurman & Walters, 2013; Thurman & Newman, 2014; Bennett, 2016; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018).

Live blogs have become a popular format for journalists to cover breaking news events and to keep the public updated on specific events or topics while they unfold (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman & Shapals, 2016; Thurman & Walters, 2013). This format differs from other journalistic formats in several ways. First, the format is temporal, and "involve[s] a temporal coincidence between addresser, event and addressee, which is lacking in other genres of written journalism" (Lopez, 2022: 2). Second, it is fragmented and immediate (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgenson, 2020); live blogs are made up of a sequence of posts and do not provide a coherent story or narrative. Thirdly, live blogs are quite playful and informal in their tone of voice. Fourthly, the nature of the format allows the journalists to insert different media such as tweets and other socials in the storyline. Consequently, live blogs provide features of interactivity with journalists reaching out to the public for more information during breaking news events. Finally, live blogs built on a range of more and different media formats, and other inserted documents that represent a diversity of more and different voices (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018).

While this format has been established in practically every news organization, little is known about how journalists produce these live blogs. One way to fill this void in knowledge about the production and credibility of live blogs is by following the theory of journalism as a performative discourse (Broersma, 2010). Journalistic discursive performance is an ongoing effort of textual quality and the persuasion of the public that the journalist's version of reality is true. To do so, journalists follow routines and conventions "to ensure the effect of authenticity and truthfulness" and "to guarantee that this process of construction or representation is as accurate (…) as possible" (Broersma, 2010: 17). So, it is not the facts that journalists represent (descriptive discourse), but it is the routines and conventions journalists use to convince the public of their best version of reality (performative discourse). Both routines and conventions of news production have a long research tradition in journalism studies (Westlund & Ekström, 2019).

One specific way to look at these routines and conventions is from a social view on writing. Then, routines and conventions not only produce discourse, but also contribute to a shared communicative goal, and thereby form so-called discourse communities (Herzberg, 1986; Swales, 1990). Bizell (in: Swales, 1990: 29) remarks that "(…) what is most significant about members of a discourse community is not

their personal preferences, prejudices, and so on, but rather the expectations they share by virtue of belonging to that particular community." This "belonging to that particular community," Bizell remarks, is embodied in routines and conventions, "(…) [w]hich are in turn conditioned by the community's work" (Idem). Based on this social view of writing, we want to know, to what extent is there a discourse community of live-bloggers? To answer this question, we first must understand routines and conventions in producing live blogs, hence our first research question: what routines and conventions do live-bloggers adhere to? Following this is our second research question: who are the live-bloggers who keep to these routines and conventions?

2.3 ROUTINES AND CONVENTIONS

Central to our argument are two concepts: routines and conventions. Here, we will first theorize how we define routines and conventions that prescribe a performative discourse. Then, we will theorize how routines and conventions form discourse communities, and vice versa. In essence, both journalistic routines and conventions answer the questions of how the work of producing news is done. The difference between the two is a matter of scale and quality: routines are repeated practices and actions that order and organize work on an individual level, while conventions are repeated routines that prescribe how work must be done on a collective level, despite alternative ways to do so, but which are not chosen (Marmor, 2009). The study of routines and conventions in journalism studies is widespread (Becker & Vlad, 2009; Broersma, 2019; Gans, 2004; Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016; Tandoc & Duffy, 2019; Tuchman, 1973). All share, in essence, that routines and conventions block alternatives, and thereby constrain and order work.

Routines and conventions are at the core of "making news by doing work", to cite Tuchman (1973). Tuchman (1973) explains that journalists are confronted with unexpected events on a routine basis and transform this unexpectedness in news by matching the sometimes highly uncertain input (events) with a highly structured organization (the news floor). Tuchman (1978) concluded that journalists routinize this unexpectedness as a strategic ritual to ensure not only a steady and credible flow of information and sources, but to also make sure journalists are protected against critique or claims. Important in this analysis of news work is the concept of "rhythm" (Tuchman, 1978: 41-45); reporters are "temporally concentrated" and planned to project and control work in time and space. Only so, can they "routiniz the unexpected" every day.

Gans (2004) concluded that news work was constrained and ordered by a combination of socialization, professionalization, the need for predictable content, source relationships, and economic factors. Both authors characterize routines and conventions on a practical level— for delivering texts, selecting sources, and choosing words.

More recently, scholars also named routines and conventions on an organizational level; for instance, how journalists deal with advertisements, communicate with staff members, or find their place in the hierarchy of the organization (Westlund

& Ekström, 2019). To summarize this long tradition of research: routines and conventions are important for organizing and ordering regular journalism, and validating how truth is constructed. Routines and conventions strengthen and justify the credibility of journalism.

However, due to technological developments, "creating news in a digital world requires adjusting to rapid flows of information in a networked information environment" (Usher, 2014: 23). Routines and conventions leading to journalistic stories are being challenged; there must be continuous concentration, with an important downside: journalists must deal with epistemic challenges because their need for speed leads to uncertainties and increased risk of incorrect information. This might have negative consequences for the credibility of journalists, their organizations, or even the professional field at large (Rom & Reich, 2020). To cope with this trident of speed, uncertainty, and epistemic challenges, journalists rely on routines and conventions to break news.

Ekström, Ramsälv & Westlund (2021) conclude that, for example, a convention in breaking news is to rely on authoritative and pre-justified sources. Therefore, journalists fulfill claims of accuracy, and can cope with epistemic challenges due to the speed of, for instance, the production of live blogs. The authors suggest an analytical framework to analyze "how news journalism knows what is claimed to be known and how these knowledge claims are articulated and justified" (Ekström and Westlund, 2019a). To do so, they distinguish between claiming knowledge, acquiring information, and justifying knowledge. Claiming, acquiring, and justifying construct credibility, which can be seen as a journalist's attempt to persuade the public to accept their representation of reality (performative discourse) and, thereby, fulfill its communicative goal. We will explain them shortly.

The authority (or ethos) of journalists, news organizations, and even journalism as a profession, is based on the fulfillment of claiming knowledge, which is valuable for a wider audience. Journalism is about representing reality and fact construction (Potter, 1996). In the case of breaking news, the epistemic claims made by journalists are immediate, fact-based information and continuous updates on a specific event. Often, editors working on breaking news get the information from agencies or emergency services.

In addition, these claims must be acquired. Information must be gathered to produce news. Therefore, journalists are constantly searching for and updating information by following competitors, interviewing sources for research or publications, or checking and validating information and sources. In breaking news, it can be difficult for journalists to know exactly what is going on. Therefore, their fact formulations might be cautious, or they will attribute their knowledge to specific sources (Rom & Reich, 2020).

Knowledge, finally, must be justified, which is, according to the authors, a practice of "achieving acceptable reasons to believe and claim knowledge" (Ekström, Ramsälv & Westlund, 2021: 177). Note that justification of knowledge has strong similarities with Broersma's performative discourse (2010). According to the authors, justifying

knowledge can be done in different ways: verification of information and sources or choosing the right wording. Wording using attribution or modals expresses measures of doubt and uncertainty about presented information.

These routines and conventions are "socially conditioned and variable" (Ekström, Ramsälv & Westlund, 2021: 175). "Variable" means that various formats and genres have different routines and conventions. For instance, live-bloggers routinize and conventionalize differently than interviewers, broadcasters, or investigative reporters do (Ettema & Glasser, 1984). "Socially conditioned" means that routines are not individual inventions, but are instead norms held by a group, of which an individual journalist is a member. With this analytical framework in mind, our first research question is this: what are the routines and conventions of journalists producing live blogs?

2.4 THE ACTORS OF A DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Despite numerous studies analyzing live blogs' style and content (Bennett, 2016; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman, 2014; Thurman & Newman, 2014; Thurman & Shapals, 2016; Thurman & Walters, 2013), typology (Matheson and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020), impact (Flower & Ahlefeldt, 2021), the public (Lee, 2021; Pantic, 2020; Pantic & Pjesivac, 2009; Pantic, Whiteside & Cvetkovic, 2017), and even the question of when media platforms started live blogs (Wilczek & Blangetti, 2018), little research has been done about the producers of the format. Theoretical and empirical research about live-bloggers doing live-blogging are absent in journalism studies. This omission might be reflective of the relative newness of the format. Due to this lack of research (Evans (2015) is an exemption; see below), it is unclear who follows which routines and conventions to produce live blogs and how these producers relate to each other.

McEnnis (2015) studied the professional ideology of sports journalists producing live blogs. He thereby characterized a possible discourse community of sports bloggers that shared three distinctive characteristics. First, there was a gender imbalance, which was reflective of sports journalism in general, a profession dominated by male reporters. Second, not all respondents were employed (some were freelancers), which was, according to McEnnis, reflective of contingent employment practices. Third, all respondents were identified as online journalists. McEnnis only studies sports journalists: studies of journalists live blogging in other disciplines (breaking news or politics) are absent.

More evidence for a possible community of live-bloggers comes from journalists themselves. So, for instance, Matthew Weaver (2020), writing for the British newspaper *The Guardian*, explains the evolution of live blogs and gives some more details about live-blogging-as-a-group. Starting as a *minute-by-minute* in the nineties for covering football, but not for hard news, the format was "initially frowned on by some senior figures in *the Guardian*" (Idem). The popularity of football live blogs, and an important development in online news production changed that. "(…) [W]hen the website and print reporters integrated into one team, live blogs became central to the way the site covered major breaking stories" (Idem).

So, the proliferation of live-blogging started with some initial online experiments that were "frowned on," and was only accepted after proven popularity and the convergence of online and print journalists in new live blog teams. Better software and the involvement of correspondents all over the world popularized the format, which won more respect from colleagues and the public alike (Weaver, 2020). As a result, the format proliferated in news organizations and on the internet. To understand how live blogs are produced, not only do we need to know what the routines and conventions are, but also who works according to these routines and conventions. Therefore, our second research question is this: who are the live-bloggers that keep to specific routines and conventions leading to a live blog?

2.5 THE WORKINGS OF A DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Similarities between live blogs imply a community of journalists following similar routines and conventions when immediately covering events. To form a community, though, individuals must follow the same or very similar routines and conventions, and thereby contribute to a common communicative goal (Herzberg, 1986; Swales, 1990). So, routines and conventions are not only constitutive for discourse, but also for discourse communities.

According to Beaufort (1997: 487), these discourse communities can be found in the "mid-space, beyond the level of immediate rhetorical context but not as broad as entire cultures (…)". Situated between discourse (too specific) and culture (too broad), discourse communities can be implicit or explicit, and are used in specific or general settings. Sometimes, they are institutionalized or codified, with clear organizational boundaries; other times, they are informal (Beaufort, 1997). Killingsworth (1992) makes a further distinction between local and global discourse communities where routines and conventions prescribe discourse within or between organizations. Discourse communities determine routines and conventions for people who do the work and are groups that produce for the public, with three constitutive characteristics.

First, a discourse community is a group of individuals with a common communicative goal. This goal, or communicative purpose, can be explicit or tacit; it can be specified or more general (Swales, 1990; Askehave & Swales, 2001). Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen (2020: 300) suggest that the communicative purpose of live blogs is to reflect "particular moments in time" and to "gain coherence from (...) often informal authorial voice or voices" to "generate claims to knowledge of events which are simultaneously dynamic and fragile." This communicative goal defines a possible community of live-bloggers.

Second, to be a discourse community, members must know what routines and conventions to follow; a discourse community is, therefore, characterized by channels of communication. These channels not only facilitate communication between members, but socialize them as well, "shaping (…) their character within that discourse community" (Porter, 1986: 40). Membership of a discourse community is not accidental; members are recruited by persuasion, training, or relevant

qualifications (Swales, 1990: 24). For instance, scientists undergo a "normalization-through-discourse" when starting their careers, which not only requires the proper qualifications and understanding of the ways scientists communicate (on conferences, or journals like this one), but it also calls for a scientific attitude, all of which are necessary to participate within this community. Discourse communities not only shape texts, but also character. Another example of shared conventions and routines that form the fundamentals of a specific discourse community is the characterization of investigative journalism by Ettema & Glasser (1984). They contrasted daily reporters with investigative journalists, naming differences between both traits (or, following our theoretical approach: communities) based on their routines and conventions. For example, news produced by daily reporters "tends to be more time-bound than the hard news produced by the investigative reporter" (idem: 186); daily reporters are not able "to utilize as many organizational resources as his or her investigative counterpart" (idem). A daily reporter, organized in beats, accepts empirical beliefs or propositions at face value; the investigative reporter, in contrast, "not only shoulder[s] the burden of justification, but also creates a method for doing so" (Ettema & Glasser, 1984: 190).

Third, having a communicative purpose and being able to communicate, members of a discourse community share assumptions on which objects or events are appropriated for examination, how this examination is done, what counts as evidence, how this evidence is presented (form, style, timing, place), and which routines and conventions are followed to do so. Translated to our main question, this means that journalists producing live blogs form a discourse community when they share criteria for the use, production, subject, and episteme of live blogs. "A text," writes Porter (1986: 39), "is "acceptable" within a (...) [discourse community] only so far as it reflects the community episteme," meaning that knowledge is accepted as it is presented, following certain formatting conventions that follow the standards of the community. So, our main question is this: to what extent is there a discourse community of live-bloggers?

2.6 METHOD

To discover if and which routines and conventions are used by journalists producing live blogs, and to what extent these journalists are forming a discourse community, we held semi-structured interviews with a sample of experienced live-bloggers working at three national news platforms in the Netherlands to answer our empirical research questions.

2.6.1 Respondents

We chose these three platforms for their (highest) number of unique monthly visitors, and their diversity (newspaper, radio & television, and online), resulting in *Algemeen Dagblad* (Dutch newspaper), *NOS* (Dutch public radio & television), and *NU.nl* (Dutch online news platform). From these, we selected live-bloggers (see Table 1) who covered breaking news, politics, and sports for over five years. These are the most experienced

journalists in these organizations covering events in live blogs. We chose experienced live-bloggers for two reasons: first, they had the professional ability to reflect on their own practices, and second, they were often part of the first live blogs in the organization. So, they formally (and informally) initiated routines and conventions. Four respondents liveblogged at the newspaper, three at RTV, and two at the online news organization. All nine respondents were male (reflecting the gender bias of the format, as mentioned by McEnnis, 2016). Their average experience is 8.8 years at the platform, 6.6 years online, and 5.6 years with live blogs. We chose live-bloggers covering sports, politics, and breaking news, and so maximized the differences between respondents, looking for similarities that point to a community of live-bloggers.

Table 1. Respondents, experience, and organization they worked at during the interview

	Experience At Platform (Years)	Experience Online (Years)	Experience Live blog (Years)	Organization
R1	6	6	5	AD
R2	16	13	10	AD
R3	10	5	5	AD
R4	3.5	3.5	3.5	NOS
R5	17	7	<1	NOS
R6	13	11	11	NOS
R7	4.5	4.5	4.5	AD
R8	5	5	5	NU.nl
R9	5	5	5	NU.nl

2.6.2 Interview protocol

Based on our theoretical framework of discourse community, we designed an interview protocol. We started each interview by asking which live blog the respondents produced last. We did so to make the conversation as concrete and practical as possible. We were primarily interested in experiences with the production of live blogs, approaching the interviewees as practitioners. Therefore, we gave the respondents the possibility to constantly refer to their most recently published live blog, asked questions about the prerequisites for starting a live blog (who decides, what topics, technical aspects, etc.), and inquired about specific routines and conventions for working on live blogs. This included questions about the editorial choices for posting, sourcing, and attribution practices, the evaluation of source credibility, the issue of the event's proximity, the collaboration between colleagues, and the correction and evaluation of mistakes. Finally, questions were asked about the overall purpose and communicative goal of live blogs.

The interview protocol was first debated between the researchers and then tested with two respondents. Each interview took between an hour and an hour and a half,

and was, due to COVID-19 restrictions, held online (Teams, Microsoft). Respondents were used to extensive conversations online—most of them were working at home because of the same pandemic restrictions. We recorded the audio of the interviews, transcribed the interview using software, and corrected the text manually.

2.6.3 Coding

We coded the transcribed interviews in three rounds (following hereafter) in Atlas.ti (Friese, 2019). We first open coded our data, based on our interview protocol. We coded it following the questions concerning editorial choices for posting, sourcing and attribution practices, evaluation of the credibility of sources, issue of the event's proximity, collaboration between colleagues, correction and evaluation of mistakes, and, finally, questions concerning the overall purpose and communicative goal of live blogs (Saldaña, 2016). The results of this first round of coding were discussed among the researchers.

We then axially recoded our material following the analytical framework proposed by Ekström, Ramsälv & Wetslund (2021), distinguishing between claiming, acquiring, and justifying knowledge. We followed Freeman's (2017) suggestions for a categorical model of qualitative data analysis, by relating the items of our first open coding round with the classification of Ekström, Ramsälv & Westlund. As stated in our theoretical framework concerning routines and conventions, claiming, acquiring, and justifying construct credibility, and this construction of credibility can be seen as a journalist's attempt to persuade the public to accept their representation of reality, and, thereby, the performance of discourse (Broersma 2010). The results of this second axial round of coding were discussed among the researchers, which led to a new coding frame, containing codes of individual practices (like sourcing, attribution, proximity, and organization of live-blogging) in relation to their epistemic challenges (claiming, acquiring, and justifying knowledge) (Saldaña, 2016). This led to the results presented.

2.7 RESULTS

The results show clear routines and conventions followed by journalists producing live blogs. Moreover, journalists covering news events in live blogs also share recurring characteristics. This section answers two research questions: first, who are the live-bloggers that keep routines and conventions leading to a live blog, and second, what are the routines and conventions of journalists producing live blogs? Our main question, to what extent is there a discourse community of live-bloggers, will be answered in our conclusion.

2.7.1 Who are the live-bloggers?

As stated in our theoretical framework, the proliferation of live-bloggers started with some initial online experiments that were "frowned on," and they were only accepted after the convergence of online and print journalists in new live blog teams (Weaver, 2020). Livebloggers for radio and television, newspapers, or online news

platforms are most of the time also situated in online news departments. Being a part of the online news team makes sense: this is the place where all news comes in (telex, social media, correspondents), and where all content goes out. Livebloggers are the "spider in the news web." When journalists do not cover an event with a live blog, they provide content for the regular website. Data showed three more recurring characteristics shared by all respondents who produce live blogs: they have technical skills, expertise, and organizational skills.

Journalists producing live blogs must know the content management system (CMS), where posts are composed, and information is published in a live blog. Writing and publishing posts, with embedded tweets of interest, illustrative photos, or explanatory videos, requires technical skills. All journalists must know how to embed tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts, pictures, videos, or infographics.

CMSs also have more and more possibilities for linking within live blogs (so-called anchors), between posts and summaries at the top of the live blog or linking between posts and articles elsewhere on the site. One respondent thought that everybody knows how the system works, but when there is a breaking news situation, "we look for the most senior journalist who is the steadiest [live-blogger]". To cover live events, one must be capable of using the CMS under pressure, and not only know which button to press, but also to press the right buttons immediately, as an effortless and automatic practice. This amount of automatic casualness requires a certain level of experience not all journalists have at that high level.

Liveblogging is also about expertise. Knowing the technicalities is not enough; knowing what to blog about specific events (breaking news, political debates, or sports) is just as important. Expertise is a necessary condition to report under pressure and punctually. It is an important quality to "understand a situation", especially because events develop fast: "The speed with which you cover the events is determined by the knowledge and experiences you have" (idem).

> *"I am not a specialist for Formula 1. I once covered a race, won by Max Verstappen, I do not dare to reread it anymore. I reported what happened, but to cover the sport well, you must know the sport … You must know about changing tires or race strategy."*

Another example of expertise to win time is the importance of an early or late tire change during a Formula 1 race: this requires knowledge about the sport, and the tire-changing tactics that can be immediately used in live blogs.

> *"(…) he [the F1 specialist] is our Formula 1 reporter. (…) As editors, we let him do as many Formula 1 live blogs as possible. Because we know that is widely read and he has the most expertise in that. I've done it a few times too. A live blog does not immediately become dramatic. But all those kind of tems like cubstones, I dont understand them. I have to google them a few times beforehand."*

To establish urgency, have the right timing, and assess a development's impact, journalists rely on the knowledge they have about these events: they do not have to ask or search—they know. For instance, to cover the siege of The Capitol in Washington by Trump supporters (January 6th, 2021), one respondent asked a journalist who had an affinity with American politics and access to American sources to cover the events. "You choose this colleague because of the speed with which sources are found". Knowledge about the American political system and history was an important quality for the reporter who covered the story with the necessary speed.

Liveblogging also has an organizational or managerial dimension. Covering sports, politics, and breaking events requires good contact with colleagues:

> *"You are a spider in a web, digitally connected to everyone in the organization. But you need people to check and to discuss with, especially when you receive important information. So, when a shooter [Utrecht tram attack] yelled 'Allahuh akbar!', you need to discuss with others: 'Do we bring this? What should you do? Check this out!' You must discuss this with your chief and even your chief editor."*

To live blog breaking news requires clout in the organization; respondents explained that more experienced journalists are in the lead when covering these events. Respondents explain that during breaking news, they ask for expertise from colleagues or correspondents, asking them to check information or find reliable sources, and follow up on previously asked questions. Pressing colleagues to deliver on time—especially during the follow-up process—requires some organizational and managerial skills.

> *"We are not going to let someone [live blog] who has only been with us for a few months. You must know the organization, how communication [between colleagues] works, with whom you must keep in touch."*

2.7.2 What are the routines and conventions of journalists producing live blogs?

Covering breaking news (terrorist attacks, natural disasters), politics, or sports demands high-speed news production and presentation, and inevitably leads to uncertainty about the knowledge that is published. Covering news events immediately is, according to respondents, a constant tradeoff between (un)certainty and (ir)relevance, and thereby fulfills an important communicative goal of live blogs: the direct and immediate report of an event. Respondents explained that they cope with these tradeoffs by wording and attribution of knowledge claims regarding the news event.

> *"You must tell the reader very well that you are presenting information that is known at that time. So (...) don't say: there are five dead, but 'according to the reports', or 'according to the police'. You should not put it so firmly that you present*

it as fact, unless it is a fact. If someone is under a tram with a sheet, and you know from the police that someone has died, then it is a fact"

When uncertain, respondents' claim to knowledge is based on the authority of the (formal) source. To balance the importance of the information ("five deaths") with its questionable factuality, the ethos of the police's spokesperson legitimizes the claim. Therefore, the possibility of being wrong and the possible fallout that might follow is transferred to the source: "... when a police spokesperson says something, you can assume that that person is trained to think about it in what he says and that the information he says is also correct." This finding confirms findings that go as far back as Ettema & Glasser's (1984) concept of pre-justified claims of what is. But respondents also explained that these pre-justified claims sometimes are not as pre-justified as they seem.

Sometimes, even authorities are uncertain about developments, for instance, during terrorist attacks. Uncertainty is high (as is the relevance) regarding the number of terrorists and their exact whereabouts. Some live blogs use eyewitness accounts to deal with this uncertainty. However, the demand for eyewitness claims to be published were higher than for formal or official sources because eyewitnesses have less authority (ethos) than formal or official sources. Therefore, not much authority can be transferred from an eyewitness to claimed knowledge in the live blog, due to a lack of confidence live-bloggers have in the unknown eyewitness. To deal with their lack of authority, live-bloggers must check eyewitness claims.

Respondents indicate that they check the coherence of the eyewitness's stories, meaning they want more of them to tell the same story before they use the information in their live blog, or they want to know the development of the situation to make checking the eyewitness accounts possible. Consequently, eyewitnesses are used at the very beginning of an event or much later, when more is known about the event, as a retrospective.

"But if only an eyewitness reports X was shot in place Y' you can't load it in yet, unless you already have [a lot more] people there who have the same kind of image. Then you might be able to switch a bit there too."

Sometimes, eyewitness reports are the only information at hand. Their information or knowledge is unique, so to speak. Then respondents still claim the knowledge, but "(...) then you can choose to keep it more general, such [as with an] eyewitness story – not very detailed, because those details may not be quite right". In these situations, the level of detail is an indication of the strength of the knowledge claim.

Respondents explained that there is a constant tradeoff between the level of uncertainty of claims and their relevance for the public. One respondent tried to signal this tradeoff between a high degree of uncertainty and a high-level relevance by using quotation marks around claimed knowledge, not to indicate that it was said by someone else (attribution), but to indicate the status of the claim. This convention

failed, though, "because we've noticed that many visitors to our site do not know what those quotes actually stand for; so, it was not as productive to do it that way anymore."

The characterization of the event has an influence on acquiring knowledge. There exists a distinction between planned and unplanned events in relation to acquiring knowledge. Breaking news, such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters, are unplanned events or a what-a-story (Berkowitz, 1992), while political debates or sports games are planned events. Covering politics or sports is what journalists see and hear, sometimes even ad verbatim.

> *"A report or a live blog of a [political] debate will run more on text and some videos of certain moments, but there is much more text in it than [in the live blog covering] Beirut [the explosion of munition in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, August 4th, 2020]."*

Live blogs covering sports and politics (planned events) are also characterized by a high degree of editorial autonomy (MacEnnis, 2016). Journalists covering a match, game, or debate are often direct witnesses of the event. "For (...) live blogs [covering politics], the game is about 90 percent (...) just the debate itself in the arena, and colleagues making additions." This remark implies that journalists are embedded in a network of expertise. For sports, this expertise resides in the individual live-blogger covering a game, match, or race. Sports journalists covering football often use services to embed facts (yellow and red cards, fouls, goals, but also (historical) statistics about players, trainers, managers, and clubs) on the go, constantly including knowledge from commercial parties. So, live-bloggers covering football matches do not have to keep track of essential statistics. Consequently, journalists covering sports can concentrate on the game.

For politics, journalists covering debates with a live blog have expertise that resides within a network of colleagues. Journalists acquire knowledge to deepen their live blogs by contacting expert colleagues on the spot. So, acquiring knowledge for planned events (sports and politics) is part expertise (knowing about the game and politics), and part technical dexterity (embedding statistics delivered by third parties and colleagues) done by individuals with a high degree of editorial autonomy.

> *"I'm busy typing. [I ask colleagues that] if [they] hear something interesting or something that [they] know from [their] own expertise, that's just not right, send a tweet about it, and I'll add it in. At the same time, I sometimes also ask them to also include a central point in a tweet if I was just a bit behind."*

Acquiring knowledge for live blogs covering unplanned events is, in contrast with live blogs covering planned events, a social instead of an individual process. First, live blogs covering breaking news are produced by at least two journalists. To do their work, they have a gatekeeping role in the production of live blogs: they are in

constant and continuous contact with other journalists in the organization, using apps like Slack (a communication platform for organizations), or at one of the three platforms, a dedicated e-mail address.

These channels are used to ask colleagues for specific information regarding an event that is covered by live blogs (input), to check information before it is published, or to deliver trusted sources. So, in contrast to planned events, journalists covering unplanned events have a lower degree of editorial autonomy. They are managing channels of communication and information.

> *"You really are a spider in the web. You are the one, you have all the tabs open. (...) you are fed by the people around you."*

This social process of producing live blogs covering breaking news is also indicated by the start of such live blogs. When it is decided to cover breaking news with a live blog, all colleagues are expected to collaborate. This collaboration has two pillars: access to trusted and credible sources, and access to trusted and credible knowledge or expertise.

In contrast to politics and sports, breaking news is covered in a team with distinct roles that actively acquire knowledge, indicating not only a lesser editorial autonomy of live-blogging journalists, but also of their direct colleagues, who now must share their knowledge and give access to (exclusive) contacts needed to acquire more knowledge.

> *"So, there's a live-blogger, there's an editor who writes the post, there's an editor who checks it and publishes it. In the past we have had the live blogger publish autonomously, but (...) nowadays everything publishes so quickly that (...) [an editor can look at it]. Look, if you just paste a tweet somewhere from our own reporter once, then it doesn't have to be checked. (...) Then you can quickly continue, but if text is included, then it just must be read of course."*

Respondents explained that they constantly struggled to balance (un)certainty of information with the (ir)relevance of it. Both terms—(un)certainty and (ir)relevance—were arguments to present information, or not. So, when information was regarded as uncertain and irrelevant, it was ignored completely. When information was certain and relevant, it was published immediately. In between, when information was either uncertain but relevant or certain but irrelevant, journalists justified their choices. Two examples clarify this wish for justification.

Covering the sudden death of football player Maradona (20th November 2020), one respondent appealed to the format of live-blogging to justify the publication of information that was highly uncertain but regarded by respondents covering the story as highly relevant as well. Very shortly after the news of Maradona's death, rumors spread across the internet that his doctor might be responsible. Despite the uncertainty, the knowledge was published due to its relevance.

"That [responsibility of the doctor for Maradona's death] will become important news; it doesn't always have to be factual (...), you can do that [in live blogs]."

A second example is live blogs covering the transfer period of players, which is characterized by an unprecedentedly high degree of rumors. Still, the live blogs covering these events are very popular and justified by checking the points for (1) relevance for the fans; (2) attribution and modality in the wording; (3) popularity with the public.

"We very much quote, using words like 'would', 'either', 'allegedly' or 'probably'. So, you indicate there that it is not true yet, but it does play. (...) it is very well read."

2.8 CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

Despite their fragmented narratives and uncertainty due to their immediate character, live blogs are as popular for media organizations as for the public. But this popularity is not without epistemic challenges, and we did not know how journalists covering news events in live blogs addressed these challenges. Previous research mainly focused on the content of live blogs, and little is known about the makers of live blogs—the live-bloggers, so to speak. Who are they and which routines and conventions do they follow when producing live blogs? And, finally, to what extent are journalists who live blog a discourse community of live-bloggers? We found indications in our data that respondents followed similar routines and conventions, despite the diverse events they covered, live blog production on various platforms (newspaper, radio & television, and online), and different production times. The data not only suggested similar characteristics of journalists covering news events with live blogs. We also found indications for a discourse community of live-bloggers that collectively found routines and conventions to cope with the epistemic challenges (claiming, acquiring, and justifying knowledge) posed by highly uncertain information that must be transformed under the high pressure of immediacy in credible news. Respondents shared in their answers the conceptualization of communicative goals, channels for communication concerning routines and conventions, and assumptions about subject and episteme concerning the use of the format. These theoretical starting points resonated with the results we found. Consequently, we had three arguments to assume there is a discourse community of live-bloggers who shared routines and conventions to cope with epistemic challenges posed by uncertainty, speed, and the urge to deliver news immediately.

First, the results suggest that live blogs are indeed the result of a social process of text production with a shared communicative goal. According to respondents, journalists with a high degree of editorial autonomy are still dependent on colleagues for ideas, suggestions, sources, or knowledge. When journalists cover breaking news, their dependence on other colleagues is even bigger and the process of writing is even more social. Respondents covering these breaking news events explained that they assume a role as a gatekeeper of knowledge, not only within their own

organization, but also outwards; respondents explained that while covering an event in a live blog, they are following live blogs by other media about the same subject. To cope with epistemic challenges, live blogging journalists are embedded in their own organization and are constantly looking out (on other media) for knowledge, underlining a social process of text production, determined by the communicative goal to cover events immediately.

Second, results also showed that live-bloggers have routines and conventions they follow concerning the claiming, acquisition, and justification of knowledge. These routines and conventions are communicated between journalists within the organization, but not outside of it. Still, we think that these findings are coherent with the theory about discourse communities (Killingsworth, 1992). These communities can either be local (within organizations) or global (between organizations). Although our results show there are only indications of a local discourse community based on the communication of routines and conventions, respondents follow the production of live blogs outside of their organizations (by other media organizations) meticulously.

In addition to this, when covering an event in a live blog, journalists monitor their colleagues working elsewhere, and by doing so, not only learn new information and check other information, but also, on a more meta level, see and learn (new) routines for covering events in live blogs. During our interviews, in terms of learning and knowledge, respondents continually named other live blogs from other news platforms covering the same events. Consequently, they do not share routines in a direct way (conferences, journals, personal communication), but in an indirect way, by following the live blogs of others.

Third, and finally, this social process of writing, following routines and conventions to cope with their epistemic challenges, is also expressed in three shared characteristics of journalists who cover events in live blogs: expertise, technical skills, and organizational skills. First, expertise is necessary to cover an event with knowledge, authority, and immediacy. Knowing things speeds up claiming, acquiring, and justifying knowledge, and thereby, the production process of news in live blogs.

Second, journalists covering events in live blogs need technical skills to post content in live blogs, due to the pluriform content, like text, photos, videos, infographics, or embedded social media posts. Constantly embedding socials might also point toward a transition phase among journalists and in newsrooms. Or, as Paulussen, Harder & Johnson (2016) conclude, "journalists grow accustomed to and more intensely consider new dialogic tasks as important in prospective newsrooms" (p. 233). The possible effects of embedding socials in live blogs go further than just their use in this format. Because live blogs are so popular among journalists, news organizations, and the public alike, constantly integrating social media in news work might possibly have the effect "that legacy news media change profoundly in their communicative orientation and refresh their journalism-audience relationship in light of new media use" (Idem).

Finally, journalists covering events in live blogs need organizational skills to organize flows of information from inside and outside the organization. Therefore,

they must manage the organization, people, and knowledge to produce live blogs. So, we therefore conclude that live blogs are social events, and their producers need social qualities to manage this process. To do so, they must manage information given about the subject they are live-blogging about, and also manage the epistemic challenges they face given the immediacy of the news production and uncertainty of the event. To paraphrase a respondent, they need to be a "spider in the web". Liveblogging, therefore, is not a trade for those who have just arrived in journalism.

Based on these results, we conclude that to produce live blogs, the journalists must manage colleagues (social process) to cover planned and unplanned events immediately, using routines and conventions to follow the same communicative goal—namely, to persuade the public of a credible reality, despite the uncertainties due to the immediacy of its discursive performance. One important point of discussion remains, though. Can we assume, based on these results, that there is indeed a discourse community of live-bloggers? To answer this question, we must first establish to what extent these respondents are a discourse community of live-bloggers specifically: why are these journalists not just online journalists who sometimes live blog?

Theory shows striking similarities between online journalists and journalists covering events with live blogs (who are all online journalists as well); they both constantly refresh information (Usher, 2014) and must cope with the epistemic challenges resulting from the speed with which they produce and publish news (Ekström, Ramsälv & Westlund, 2019). So, following these similarities, we can also interpret our results as indications for a discourse community of online journalists who happen to produce live blogs when they are needed. Consequently, a live blog is not a format with a specific performative discourse by a specific discourse community, but just a tool for a discourse community of online journalists. However, we think this argument will not hold.

A vital difference between writing an online article and producing a live blog is the social character of the latter. An online article is predominantly an individual product; a live blog, in contrast, is a networked or gatekept process that requires social skills to obtain a communicative goal together. This social setting of live blog production—its discourse community—requires expertise, and above all, managerial skills to organize this process of performing discourse. Liveblogging is an ongoing effort of textual quality and the persuasion of the public that the journalist's version of reality is true.

This brings us to one more point of discussion: is a live blog a journalistic format or a genre? The social character of live blogs requires routines and conventions for the performance of their discourse. These are shared by a group of online journalists and followed in similar ways when they are confronted with events they must cover immediately. By following these "rules of engagement," journalists form a discourse community: live-bloggers. Being a live-blogger means covering events immediately and with a high dose of uncertainty, performing discourse to persuade the public that their expectations are met: a credible version of reality. That is, according to

one respondent, a tough job, and not for those who just arrived in journalism. “I think everybody in this organization knows how to live blog, but not everybody is a live-blogger.” To qualify this effort as a genre requires a reception study: how are live blogs evaluated and accepted by the public? This question is our main suggestion for further research.

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CHAPTER 3

Sourcing and Reported Speech Practices in Dutch Live Blogs Covering Crisis, Politics, and Sports

3.1 ABSTRACT

Live blogs are a popular format for covering crises, breaking news, politics, or sports events. Despite their popularity among journalists and the public, the format has also been subject to scholarly debate regarding the conflict between immediacy versus credibility, resulting in a high degree of uncertainty for producers and consumers. Journalists cope with this paradox by performing discourse: imposing valid representations of the social world. One way to do so is by the use and representation of sources. In this paper, we uncover the performative discourse of live blogs through possible patterns of sourcing and discursive strategies among a range of live blogs and the way journalists cope with the mix of speed and uncertainty. Based on a quantitative content analysis of nine Dutch live blogs, we conclude that journalists follow the same conventions and routines as regular (online) articles, regarding sources use and reported speech. Despite the possibilities for polyvocality (more and more different voices in live blogs) due to the accessibility by social media, journalists choose predominantly formal sources and report their speech predominantly in a direct way.

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3.2 INTRODUCTION

While live blogs started as a format to cover football matches (Elliott, 2016; Rammeloo, 2011; Thurman & Walters, 2013; Vaahtoranta, 2017), they are now increasingly used to cover a much broader array of news events. The format is a popular choice for journalists to cover events under immediate circumstances, whether it is the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, a terrorist attack, a political debate, a sporting game, or a tournament (Bennett, 2016; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thorsen, 2013; Thurman & Newman, 2014; Thurman & Walters, 2013; Weaver, 2020; Wells, 2011). Online visitors of live blogs seem to like the immediacy and convenience of the time structured news (Lee, 2020; Pantic, 2020). Avid live blog consumers in the UK and US are interested in "breaking news associated with crisis events, unfolding political stories and sports events, in that order" (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018: 851). With the format, journalists can present news in real time through the curation of sources (Thorsen, 2013; Thurman & Walters, 2013). This way, consumers can follow the news as it unfolds.

A live blog is a stable URL (webpage on a website of a news platform), automatically refreshed when a post is placed. These posts are placed in a chronological order, the most recent at the top, the oldest post at the bottom. Posts have a timestamp, indicating the exact moment of publication. The content of a post varies. It can be text, a photo, or a video, a hyperlink, or graphs. Often, tweets or other posts from social media are embedded as a post in a live blog. Pantic (2017: 12) found in a sample of 150 live blogs as many as 1,420 photographs, 402 videos, and 643 other media items, making live blogs multimodal format. All posts taken together are called a feed, coming from other news sites, social media or (online) sources. Live blogs might be, as Beckett suggested more than ten years ago, "the new online frontpage" (2010: 3).

Despite its popularity and proliferation, the online format has also been subject to scholarly debate regarding the conflict between immediacy versus reliability, resulting in a high degree of uncertainty for producers and consumers (Simmerling & Janich, 2016). Critics claim that a high speed of news production trades rigorous verification with immediate publication, resulting in a negative effect on the quality of news (Barnhurst, 2011; Hermida, 2015; Karlsson & Strömback, 2010; Lewis & Cushion, 2009). Journalists are caught up in a "hamster wheel" (Starkman, 2010) and never wrong for long (Cohen, 2012) seems to be the new credo, resulting in fragmented news deprived from context (Phillips, 2010: Rom & Reich, 2020). Understanding what has happened is, especially for readers who come across a live blog in the middle of an event or story, difficult due to a "fragmented (…) structure, relaying information as it becomes available, rather than presenting a neatly organized news story" (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020: 301). Because of this 'potential for confusion' due to its 'fragmented structure', live blogs are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty in processes covering breaking news in live blogs. Still, journalists want to present live blogs as credible journalistic formats.

To do so, they perform discourse, rather than mirroring reality by using descriptive discourse (Broersma, 2010). As stated, live blogs are a specific discourse with high

degrees of uncertainty: facts have no intrinsic importance because a lot is still unknown when journalists cover reality in live blogs. So, the importance of facts is the result of implicit and explicit choices made by journalists on the go. Consequently, journalists are not mirroring reality in all its complexity, but persuade the public to accept their version of reality by presenting 'facts' as natural. By following conventions and routines, journalists guarantee that their process of news making is as mimetic as possible. Therefore, information is attributed, multiple sources are used and quoted or paraphrased, for instance.

In this paper, we uncover the performative discourse of live blogs through possible patterns of sourcing and discursive strategies among a range of live blogs. This provides us insight on the way journalists cope with the mix of speed and uncertainty. Our main research question is which sourcing and reported speech strategies are used by journalists covering events in live blogs? To answer this question, we will first present our theoretical framework concerning performative discourse of journalists, after which we discuss the routines and conventions concerning sources and reported speech.

3.3 PERFORMATIVE DISCOURSE

The sheer speed of production, the fragmented structure of the narrative, and therefore a potential for confusion is not translated in public avoidance of the format live blogs. Often it is the most popular article on the website of news organizations (Weaver, 2020). Still, this popularity obscures some sub-optimal characteristics of live blogs. The format is characterized by news-on-the-go with high degrees of uncertainty for both the producers of live blogs and the public. Because a lot is not known yet, journalists must find a way to tell a story that that is not a story yet. They cannot mirror reality because reality is something that unfolds over time.

Consequently, more than with other journalistic formats, journalists producing live blogs must persuade the public of their version of reality. Schudson (1995: 109) mentioned, in more general terms, that the "power of media lies not only (and not even primarily) in its power to declare things to be true, but in its power to provide the forms in which declarations appear". To follow Mateus (2018: 73), performative discourse is not just text, but a system of discursive norms, routines, and conventions, that demands "the recognition of authority and credibility of journalism as a professional community and social field".

Broersma (2010), Mateus (2018), and Schudson (1995) overlap in their description of discourse strongly with the linguistic concept of genre (Buozis & Creech, 2018; Frow, 2015; Swales, 1990) Genre prescribes routines and conventions with which journalists produce discourse (news) and implies choices about a way in which subjects are represented on platforms or in newspapers. Genre is seen as a constituent set of routines and conventions to persuade the public of its truthfulness and leads to a more social view on writing, that "has increasingly less to do with personal genius or literary talents but instead became an almost industrial process (…)" (Broersma, 2010: 23). Two ways to express this performativity in discourse, is by the selection of sources and the way their speech is reported.

3.4 SOURCES

Source selection is the sine qua non of journalism; reasons to select sources (or not) is much debated and researched (Hertzum, 2022; Reich, 2009; 2011). Hertzum found, after an extensive literature review, accessibility, and quality as two most mentioned criteria for selecting sources. For quality, credibility was the most mentioned criterium to select a source (Hertzum, 2022: 4).

Three dimensions of credibility were mentioned in the studies found: credibility was ensured due to prior experiences with sources; credibility was ensured after being quoted in other media; and, finally, credibility was ensured because the status of eyewitness and therefore the first-hand experience of an event. This same study found that journalists predominantly choose internet and other media to source their stories, using 'news' already reported by others. Eyewitnesses and first-responders were less frequently found in other studies concerning source selection (Edem, 1993; Hertzum, 2022; Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016; Raeymaeckers, 2015).

Despite this variety of sources, some studies found biases in the selection of sources. Ethnic-minority sources and females were systematically underrepresented. Howell & Singer (2017) found, for example, that journalists prefer known, reliable, and overtly confident male experts over new, female experts, because "women are seen as difficult not only to locate but, once located, to negotiate with" (Idem: 1075). In Finland, Niemi & Pitkänen (2017: 355) found that "public expertise continues to be male dominated", in Argentina, Mitchelstein and colleagues (2019) found that the female byline is positively correlated to both women and men as sources, but still, male sources were more represented than female sources, confirming previous research along this line.

Sources frame stances and positions on issues. If only some are carrying out definitions of problems or solutions in media, the status quo might be reinforced rather than contested (Mitchelstein et al., 2019). Bias in source selection is important because sources not only structure news, but they also offer journalists opportunities to represent a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives on events covered, so-called polyvocality, for the public to act on (Bennett, 2016; Pavlik, 2001). Polyvocality, as opposite to bias, is therefore a litmus proof for the sourcing quality of journalistic productions. Social media could make the incorporation of more, and more different "people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2011) as easy as clicking the mouse, possibly escaping form this gender bias in source selection. Therewith, journalists could increase the polyvocality of online news (Bennett, 2016; Steensen & Eide, 2019; Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). However, online formats do not answer to this polyvocal potential. Lecheler & Kruikemeier (2016) conclude, based on an extensive literature review of empirical studies, that online sources did not change the news agenda and formal sources still dominate the narrative, following the same strategy for sourcing in offline news. Bennett (2016) and Thorsen & Jackson (2020) also found a journalistic preference towards formal sources, therewith re-producing the official and dominant narrative concerning the event covered or legitimizing the gender bias by presenting predominantly male sources as only possible representatives of an expert-elite.

One more explanation for this lack of polyvocality and the preference towards formal sources is the uncertainty by journalists when they cover a news story. Even though obtaining more information about events from more and different sources is a common way of managing uncertainty in communication, not all information from all sources reduces uncertainty (Brashers, 2001). Sometimes, more information adds to uncertainty; a phenomenon already noted by Gans (1979). Gans observed that the selection of sources by journalists is restricted through time (as found Hertzum (2022) as most important criterium for source selection). Reporters produce daily stories about unplanned incidents, and 'routinize the unexpected' (Tuchman, 1973). Doing so makes them more reluctant to contact unfamiliar or unofficial sources. They fear new sources "provide new or contradictory information that complicates the (...) reporter's ability to generalize and summarize" (Gans, 1979: 140).

Consequently, journalists mostly restrict themselves to sources already known and trusted, often being white, male, and representing institutional narratives (Howell & Singer, 2017; Mitchelstein e.a., 2019; Niemi & Pitkänen, 2017). This might explain a preference towards formal sources, which was and still is a way to manage uncertainty in information (Bennett, 2016; Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Van Dijk, 1988). Formal sources are under time pressure shortcuts to credible knowledge. So, "[w]hen a source is deemed trustworthy, this often means that the reporter eases journalistic practices such as cross-checking and using additional sources" (Wintterlin, 2020: 131), and therewith wins time in the production of news. Journalists' use of formal sources is often based on previous experiences and knowing sources is an important predictor for including their message, converging the credibility of the source with the credibility of the whole message (Pornpitakpan, 2006).

Previous research showed low levels of polyvocality in online breaking news, despite increased access to informal sources such as social media (Bennett, 2016; Pavlik, 2001; Rosen, 2006; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). We also know that journalists covering events in live blogs prefer formal sources, as do their colleagues covering the same events for regular, online news in the UK (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). However, to understand the performative discourse of reported speech in live blogs covering events for a Dutch public, we first must analyze which sources are used in live blogs written by media in the Netherlands. An important, additional benefit is that we can broaden the understanding of source strategy to Dutch live blogs; so far, research is mostly concentrated on live blogs published in the UK. Therefore, our first research question is this: What sourcing strategies do journalists use covering events in live blogs?

3.5 REPORTED SPEECH

Quoting (and paraphrasing) sources is since the invention of the interview in the 1870s a strategy to attribute speech and increase credibility of stories told, and since then allowing journalists to gather fast and reliable information (Broersma, 2010). Quoting in journalistic texts can be done in different ways: journalists can mimic

what is said using direct speech, placing words of sources between quotation marks, or they can interpret words and paraphrase what is said, using indirect speech (Calsamiglia & Lopes Ferrero, 2003; Harry, 2013; Keizer, 2009; Semino, Short & Culpeper, 1997; Waugh, 1995; Zelizer, 1995) (see for effects of credibility between reconstructive and attributive quotes in news narratives, Van Krieken, 2020).

Leech & Short (1997: 318) signal semantic differences between "direct speech to report what someone has said, one quotes the words used verbatim, whereas in indirect report one expresses what was said in one's own words." These different quotation modes form a continuum between a "relatively neutral, non-subjectivized, source-centered viewpoints" when direct quotes are used. And at the other side of the continuum lays a "moderately and fully subjectivized, more writer-centered propositional re-assertions when indirect speech is used" (Harry, 2013:1055). Reporters can 'move' along this continuum, between source centered direct speech, or for writer centered indirect speech. The former has a neutrality and objectivity as a desired effect, the latter centers the autonomous journalist as specialist and 'knower' more to the foreground (Idem, 2013). Both positions, between objectivity and autonomy also hold true for the selection of sources, as we will explain in the next section. Reported speech is an element of performative discourse with which journalists persuade the public to accept their version of reality by reporting what sources said ad verbatim and without intervention (or interpretation) by the author.

The performative discourse of sourcing includes the so-called deictic centers or points of view, other than of the journalist (Keizer, 2009). Therewith, journalists can quote or paraphrase others to say what they want them to say, because it is the journalist who selects the source and lets the selected sources 'speak'. Reported speech is a rhetorical strategy, and both direct and indirect speech have different rhetorical functions (Smirnova, 2009): "The quoted words are presented in such a way that they would most effectively influence the audience according to the author's intentions" (99). Either by suggesting a verbatim coverage of what is said, coded by using quotation marks, or without quotation marks, but still from another voice than the journalist, hence paraphrased.

If journalists report speech, the intended effect is that the public is persuaded that not the author of the text (journalist) says what is reported, but that the source does: the journalists 'just' pass these words through (White, 2012: 57). Harry (2013) mentions a tension in reported speech by journalists, with, on the one side, the plight to remain "objective, by keeping their own views out of the story", on the other end, "freely quoting, directly or indirectly, the raw opinion and openly persuasive, ideologically fueled rhetoric voiced by news sources, who may be as subjective as they wish" (1042).

Consequently, journalists can choose direct and indirect speech to reach the rhetorical effect of a 'neutral' and 'objective' reporter by quoting others, but still, with these quotes, rhetorically construct his or her version of reality using the words of others, and therewith marking the positions of the reporter on the continuum between a "simple ventriloquist" using direct speech, towards a "creative re-animator" using

indirect speech (Harry, 2013: 1056). Based on this literature overview concerning reported speech, our second research question is this: What reported speech strategies are used by journalists covering events in live blogs?

3.6 METHODOLOGY

We conducted a quantitative content analysis to answer two research questions: first, what are the sourcing strategies of journalists covering events in live blogs? And second, what are the reported speech strategies of journalists covering events in live blogs? We conducted a quantitative content analysis (N=3,144 sentences) across nine live blogs covering crisis, politics, and sports events, published by three different platforms in the Netherlands: newspaper, public broadcasting, and online news platform.

For crisis, we analyzed three live blogs: the coverage of a shooting in a tram in a large city in the Netherlands (Utrecht, 18th March, 2019) public transportation; second, the terrorist attack in Belgium national airport Zaventem and the city center of Brussels (22nd March 2016); and third, the explosion of ammonium nitrate in the port of Lebanon (4th August 2020). For politics, we analyzed the following three live blogs: the coverage of the opening debate of the parliamentary year in the Netherlands (25th January 2021); second, the crucial motion against Theresa May and her last debate as prime minster of the UK (15th January 2019); and third, election night and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States (November, 8-9th 2016). Finally, for sports we selected three live blogs covering, first, Ajax-Tottenham Hotspurs semi-final in the Champions League (9th May 2019); second, one-day coverage of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang (16th February 2018); and third, the Grand Prix Formula 1 in Bahrein (28th March 2021). These live blogs were chosen to maximize the differences between the theme of live blogs, the platform they were published on and the place where events took place, looking for comparable strategies for sourcing and reported speech.

These live blogs were published across the three largest online platforms of three national news organizations: a Dutch national newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad (AD)*; a Dutch public broadcast corporation, *NOS*; and finally, a Dutch online news platform *NU.nl*. The three online platforms have the highest percentage of weekly reach (Newman et al., 2021): AD has a weekly reach of 28 percent; *NOS* of 30 percent and *NU.nl* of 42 percent (idem). Dutch media landscape is characterized by a strong public broadcasting system (PBS) and highly concentrated newspaper ownership. Two (Belgium) publishers – Mediahuis and DPG Media – own the largest (national) titles and most of the local and regional titles in The Netherlands. The landscape has some commercial broadcasting organizations as well. The Dutch PBS has a strong position with *NOS* as the leading and most trusted news brand (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2022). All TV, radio and newspaper brands have an online news site.

The sampling unit of analysis for this study (Krippendorff, 1980: 57-58) is the sentence of live blogs. We had two main reasons to choose the sentence. First, the

source and the reported speech used by journalists are linked at the level of sentences. On the level of posts, we see a myriad of sources and reported speech which is hard to score in clear, individual cases. Second, analyzing sources and reported speech on the level of sentences gives us an eventual possibility to analyze their position in posts relative to other information (or narration) in the post. In total, we coded 3,144 sentences.

Each sentence was scored with a codesheet. We made an exception for embedded social media material like tweets, Instagram or Facebook. We did not score sentences within embedded material. Sources could be scored more than once, due to the journalistic practice to re-introduce sources using he or she in sentences after the first one. To summarize, we described our corpus in Table 1: Corpus Live blogs (Theme and Platform).

Table 1 Corpus Live blogs (Theme and Platform)

	Crisis		**Politics**		**Sports**		**Full sample**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Newspaper	343	10.9	184	5.9	252	8.0	779	24.7
Public Broadcasting	721	22.9	462	14.7	296	9.4	1479	47.0
Online	246	7.8	378	12.0	262	8.3	886	28.1

Sources were operationalized in four different categories: formal sources, informal sources, media sources, and expert sources. These categories were scored following the function of people who were presented in live blogs, and following the label used by journalists. People without a function were labelled 'informal'. Informal sources were often labelled by journalists as 'eyewitness', 'bystander', 'fan' or 'member of the public'. People with an official label (spokesperson, minister, major, trainer or player) were labelled as 'formal'. Formal sources commented about a situation of event from within organizations, officially representing these organizations. Media labelled as such ('other media', the name of news organizations, or 'correspondent') were labelled 'media'. Finally, we operationalized 'expert' source as sources that were introduced because of their special knowledge giving the reported event (crisis, politics, or sports). Experts commented from outside an organization about the situation. They reflected on the reported event but were not part of the event. We operationalized direct speech in eight different ways (see Table 2 Eight forms of direct speech).

Indirect speech reports what was said in the words of the journalists. In sentences with indirect speech, the quotation marks disappear, often the tense of the verbs in the sentence changes (to past tense) and, in Dutch, the 'that' is added in the sentence just before the clause that is represented. So, for example: Jan said that this is an example of indirect speech. We treated sentence with 'according to' also as indirect speech. The sentence: 'According to the police …' is an example of indirect speech.

Combined direct/indirect speech – or mixed or scarry quote – is a combination of direct speech and indirect speech within our unit of analysis, the sentence. Smirnova (2009) calls these combinations complex liberal structures. These structures combine characteristics of direct, indirect speech or narration (see below) (Smirnova, 2009). For example: Jan said that "mixed forms of direct speech" are also called scarry quotes. Jan is the source, the quote is about mixed forms of speech, but it is placed in a longer sentence that is narrated by the journalist.

Table 2 Eight forms of direct speech

Label	**Example**
Source followed by predicament	Jan said: "This is an example of direct speech"
Source without predicament	Jan: "This is also an example of direct speech."
Sources following direct speech	"Is this an example of direct speech", Jan asked?
Sources in middle of direct speech	"This is", said Jan, "also direct speech."
Direct speech without sources	"This is an example of direct speech."
More sentences with direct speech	"This first sentence is direct speech. But this second also. And this last one as well."
Embedded social media	(Bennett, 2016)
Quoted social media	(Bennett, 2016)

Finally, our last variable is narration. This is a default variable: all sentence that were neither direct, indirect, or mixed speech, were labelled narration. This does not make this an empty category. Narration is discourse directly from the journalists, as they narrate what happens, because they have something to share, but no sources to (let it) say. Below we present the intercoder reliability for source type, direct and indirect speech, combination of speech and narration (see Table 3: Intercoder agreement, next page).

3.7 RESULTS

First, we will present the specific data concerning the use of sources in live blogs covering breaking news, politics, and sports (Source type and theme) and three different platforms (television, newspaper and online) (Source type and platform). Then we will present the results of the attribution of information and the use of direct and indirect speech, combined speech and narration in the different themes of the analyzed live blogs (crisis, politics and sports) (Reported speech by theme) and the platforms (television, newspaper and online) (Reported speech by platform).

Table 3 Intercoder agreements

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha	N Agreements
Source Type	78.2	0.64	0.63	0.63	122
Direct speech	88.4	0.56	0.57	0.57	138
Indirect speech	93.5	0.68	0.68	0.68	146
Mixed form	98.7	0	0	0	154
Narration	82.0	0.53	0.53	0.53	128

3.7.1 Source type

We operationalized four types of sources: formal, informal, media and expert sources. For over half of the sentences, we did not find a source (n= 1,763; 56.1 percent) (see Table 4: Number of sources in the corpus). Most sources we did find, were formal sources (n=858; 27.3 percent), and that is more than media sources (n=308; 9.8 percent) and informal sources (n=176; 5.6 percent). Expert sources were least often found. We found 39 (1.2 percent) of them in the live blogs covering crisis, politics, and sports on three different platforms (newspaper, public broadcasting and online). So, most sources used in live blogs were formal sources, followed by media sources, then informal sources, and finally, expert sources.

Table 4 Number of sources in the corpus

	Total sample	
	n	%
No source	1763	56.1
Formal source	858	27.3
Informal source	176	5.6
Media source	308	9.8
Expert source	39	1.2

Overall, most sources that journalists use in their live blogs, are formal sources. Second, they use more media sources than informal sources – confirming Bennett (2016, Thorsen & Jackson (2018), and Van Dijk (1988) findings about the preference for formal sources by journalists. Based on these first results, we can anticipate on our conclusion: live blogs have a potential for polyvocality (Bennett, 2016) due to the incorporation of the "people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2011) through social media. However, this potential to incorporate informal sources and their point of view on events in online news (Steensen & Eide, 2019) or, more specifically for live

blogs (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020) do not answer this potential. Journalists seem to follow well-established routines and conventions when sourcing live blogs (Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016).

3.7.2 Source type and theme

When we checked for themes (crisis, politics, and sports), we saw significant differences in the number of sources used (X^2 = (8, N=3,144), 189.830, p<.001, Cramer's V=.174) (see Table 5: Source type and theme). Formal sources were used most often in live blogs covering politics (n=331; 32.3 percent). That is more than in live blogs covering crisis (n=400; 30.5 percent) than in live blogs covering sports (n=127; 15.7 percent). Informal sources were mostly used in live blogs covering crises (n=108; 8.2 percent). This is more than informal sources in live blogs covering politics (n=56; 5.5 percent) and sports (n=12; 1.5 percent). Media sources were mostly used in live blogs covering politics (n=130; 12.7 percent). That is more than the number of media sources used in live blogs covering crisis (n=123; 9.4 percent) and live blogs covering sports (n=55; 6.8 percent). Finally, expert sources were mostly used in live blogs covering sports (n=19; 2.3 percent). That is more than expert sources in live blogs covering politics (n=15; 1.5 percent) and crisis (n=5; 0.4 percent).

Table 5 Source type and theme

Sources	**Crisis**		**Politics**		**Sports**		**Total sample**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No source	674	51.5	492	48	597	73.7	1763	56.1
Formal source	400	30.5	331	32.3	127	15.7	858	27.3
Informal source	108	8.2	56	5.5	12	1.5	176	5.6
Media source	123	9.4	130	12.7	55	6.8	308	9.8
Expert source	5	0.4	15	1.5	19	2.3	39	1.2

Despite the significant differences in the use of sources for crisis, politics, and sports, we see also a clear pattern: checked for theme journalists also use formal sources more than media sources and media s ources more than informal sources. Expert sources are used in live blogs covering sports (experts here operationalized as sources with knowledge about the evet covered, like trainers who comment on matches, games, or tournaments). The amount of expertise in live blogs covering crisis is very low – only 5 experts were used by journalists in three different live blogs covering three different crises.

3.7.3 Source type and platform

When we checked for platform, we saw significant differences in the distribution of source type used (X^2 = (8, N=3,144), 189.830, p <.001, Cramer's V=.207) (see Table

6 Source type in live blogs published by newspaper, public broadcaster (PBS), and online platform). Formal sources were used mostly in live blogs published on online only platform (n=376; 41.4 percent). That is more than the number of formal sources used in live blogs published online by a newspaper (246; 31.6 percent) and public broadcasting (n=245; 16.6 percent). Informal sources were used mostly in live blogs published by public broadcasting (n=114; 7.7 percent). That is more than informal sources used by live blogs published by newspaper (n=57; 7.3 percent) and online (n=5; 0.6 percent). Media sources were mostly used in live blogs published by public broadcasting (n=211; 14.3 percent). That is more than the number of media sources published by newspapers (n=52; 6.7 percent) and sports (n=45; 5.1 percent). Finally, expert sources were mostly used in live blogs published by public broadcasting (n=31; 2.1 percent). That is more than media sources used in live blogs published by online platform (n=7; 0.8 percent) or newspaper (n=1; 0.1 percent).

Table 6 Source type in live blogs published by newspaper, public broadcaster (PBS), and online platform

Sources	Newspaper		PBS		Online		Total sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No source	423	54.3	878	59.4	462	52.1	1763	56.1
Formal source	246	31.6	245	16.6	367	41.4	858	27.3
Informal source	57	7.3	114	7.7	5	0.6	176	5.6
Media source	52	6.7	211	14.3	45	5.1	308	9.8
Expert source	1	0.1	31	2.1	7	0.8	39	1.2

Despite significant differences in the use of sources, we again see a clear pattern: journalists covering events in live blogs for online platforms for newspapers, public broadcasting and online still use more formal sources than media sources, and more media sources than informal sources. Only journalists covering events for newspaper break with this pattern: they use more informal sources than media sources. Expert sources is, as with themes covered (crisis, politics, sports) only incidentally used.

3.7.4 Reported speech

If sources were used, we wanted to know how they were used: what attribution practices are used by journalists covering crisis, politics, or sports? Therefore, we scored reported speech, operationalized as direct speech, indirect speech, mixed form, and narration and checked, first, for theme and, second, for platform. Overall, we see that journalists most often use narration, indicating that they do not have a source to report speech from (n=1890; 60.1 percent). That is more than the use of direct speech (n=745; 23.7 percent); informal speech (n=436; 13.9 percent), or mixed form (n=73; 2.3 percent) (see Table 7: Reported speech).

Table 7 Reported speech

Reported speech	Direct speech		Indirect speech		Mixed form		Narration		Total sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
	745	23.7	436	13.9	73	2.3	1890	60.1	3144	100

3.7.5 Reported speech by theme

Narration was mostly used by journalist indicating they had no source in their sentence (see Table 8: Reported speech by theme). When journalists used direct speech, it was mostly used for sources in live blogs covering politics (n=259; 25,3 percent). That is more than direct speech in live blogs covering crisis (n=325; 24.8 percent) or sport (n=162, 20.0 percent). We also found that indirect speech was used mostly in live blogs covering crisis (n=236; 18.0 percent). That is more than in live blogs covering politics (n=182; 17.8 percent) or sports (n=18; 2.2 percent). For both direct speech (X^2 (2, n=3,144) = 8.452, p=.015, Cramer's V=.068) and indirect speech (X^2 = (2, n=3,144) = 123.911, p<.001, Cramer's V=.163) differences in the use.

A small surprise is somewhat hidden in our data. Indirect speech and mixed form are two variables that operationalize paraphrasing by the journalist. Indirect speech is an interpretation of words spoken by sources, as is mixed form when journalists only quote a part of what is said, but recontextualize this quote into their own words. So, we constructed a new variable – paraphrasing – adding up indirect speech and mixed form to compare crisis, politics, and sports efficiently. Results show that in live blogs covering crisis, journalists paraphrase 20.8 percent; in live blogs covering sports they paraphrase 20.9 for politics, but they only paraphrase 2.7 percent of reported speech in live blogs covering sports. Journalists covering crisis and politics paraphrase sources in almost equal number of cases, but journalists covering sport hardly paraphrase. Contrary, journalists covering sports use narration in 77,4 percent of the time, while their colleagues covering crisis and politics use slightly more than half of their reported speech for narration (crisis: 54.4 percent; politics: 53.8 percent).

Finally, we scored mixed forms of direct and indirect speech (or scarry quote with partial quotations). Differences in use of mixed forms between themes were significant, X^2 = (2, n=3,144) 33.382, p < .001, Cramer's V=.057). When covering politics, journalists used mixed form most often (n=32, 3.1 percent). That is more than in live blogs covering crisis (n=37, 2.8 percent) or sports (n=4, 0,8 percent). Finally, narration was most often used in live blogs covering sports (n=627; 77.4 percent). That is more than in live blogs covering crisis (n=712; 54.4 percent) or politics (n=551; 53.8 percent).

Table 8 Reported speech by theme

Sources	Crisis		Politics		Sports		Total sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Direct speech	325	24.8	259	25.3	162	20	746	23.7
Indirect speech	236	18	182	17.8	18	2.2	436	13.9
Mixed form	37	2.8	32	3.1	4	0.5	73	2.3
Narration	712	54.4	551	53.8	627	77.4	1890	60.1

3.7.6 Reported speech by platform

If sources were used, we also wanted to know how they were used: what attribution practices are used by journalists covering events for newspaper, public broadcasting or online platform (see Table 9: Reported speech by platform)?

First, we found that direct speech was used mostly in live blogs published by newspaper (n=201; 25.8 percent). That is more than direct speech used in platforms published by public broadcasting (n=366; 24.7 percent) or online (n=179; 20.2 percent). Differences were in the use of directed speech in platforms were significant, X^2 = (2, N=3,144), 8.782, p=.012, Cramer's V= .072).

Indirect speech was mostly used in live blogs published by online platforms (n=168; 19.0 percent). That is more than use of indirect speech in platforms published by newspaper (n=98; 12.6 percent) or public broadcasting (n=170; 11.5 percent). Differences between the use of indirect speech in platforms were significant (X^2 = (2, N=3,144), 27.304, p<.001, Cramer's V=.093).

When checked for platform, we again constructed our new variable paraphrasing, by adding up indirect speech and mixed form. Journalists covering events in live blogs published by newspaper paraphrased 16.5 percent of the sentences (n=128); 12.2 percent in live blogs published by public broadcasting (n=180), and 22.7 percent for journalists working online (n=201).

Mixed form was mostly used in platforms published by newspapers (n=30; 3.9 percent). That is more than the use of mixed form in online platforms (n=33; 3.7 percent) or public broadcasting (n=10; 0.7 percent). Differences between the use of mixed form were significant (X^2 = (2, N=3,144), 33.382, p<.001, Cramer's V=.103).

Finally, narration was mostly used in platforms published public broadcasting (n=933; 63.1 percent). That is more than the use of narration on platforms published by newspapers (n=451; 57.9 percent) or online (n=506; 57.1 percent). Differences in the use of narration in platforms were significant (X^2 = (2, 3144), 10.371, p=.006, Cramer's V=.208).

Table 9 Reported speech by platform

Reported speech	Newspaper		PBS		Online		Total sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Direct speech	201	25.8	366	24.7	179	20.2	746	23.7
Indirect speech	98	12.6	170	11.5	168	19	436	13.9
Mixed form	30	3.9	10	0.7	33	3.7	73	2.3
Narration	451	57.9	933	63.1	506	57.1	1890	60.1

3.7.7 Reported speech by source type

If sources were used, we also wanted to know which reported speech were used for which type of sources (see Table 10: Reported speech by source type). Most of the time, journalists had no sources at all, so they used narration (n=1763; 56.1 percent). If journalists reported speech, they used direct speech for formal sources most of the time (n=464; 14.8 percent). That is more than informal speech for formal sources (n=295; 9.4 percent) Or mixed form for formal sources (n=64; 2.0 percent). Journalists used direct speech for informal sources 135 times (4.3 percent). That is more than indirect speech for informal sources (n=23; 0.7 percent) or mixed form (n=6; 0.2 percent). Journalists used direct speech for media sources 125 times (4.0 percent). That is more than indirect speech for media sources (n=107; 3.4 percent) or mixed form (n=3; 0.1 percent). Finally, expert sources were quoted directly, using direct speech 22 times (0.7 percent). That is more than indirect speech for expert sources (n=11; 0.3 percent) or mixed form (n=0; 0 percent).

Table 10 Reported speech by source type

	Direct speech		Indirect speech		Mixed form		Narration		Total sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No source	0	0	0	0	0	0	1763	56.1	1763	56.1
Formal source	464	14.8	295	9.4	64	2.0	35	1.1	858	27.3
Informal source	135	4.3	23	0.7	6	0.2	13	0.4	177	5.6
Media source	125	4.0	107	3.4	3	0.1	73	2.3	308	9.8
Expert source	22	0.7	11	0.3	0	0	6	0.2	39	1.2

Despite these differences between reported speech and source type, we see a clear pattern. When reporting speech of sources, journalists use direct speech most often, then indirect speech. Mixed form was hardly ever used to report speech with. Sometimes, journalists reported about sources (narration). When they did, the most often reported about media sources (n=73; 2.3 percent). That is more than reporting about formal sources (n=35; 1.1 percent), informal sources (n=13; 0.4 percent) or expert sources (n=6; 0.2 percent).

3.8 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

We started our paper with the main research question which sourcing and reported speech strategies are used by journalists covering events in live blogs. Journalists, producing live blogs, construct an immediate and uncertain version of an ongoing and developing reality, using sources, and reporting their speech to persuade the public to accept their version of what is going on. Doing so, they cope with this uncertainty by falling back to well-established routines and conventions for source selection and reporting speech, using narration most of the time, reporting no speech at all, but re-tell what they find relevant and urgent in their own words, without reference to other voices than their own. Consequently, our results show that journalists' work in live blogs is highly interpretative.

If sources are used, journalists most of the time use formal sources, re-telling the formal narrative regarding the reality they cover. Journalists also use media sources, but hardly informal sources and only a negligible number of expert sources, confirming previous findings in literature reviews done by Hertzum (2022), Lecheler & Kruikemeier (2016), and specifically for live blogs, by Thorsen & Jackson (2018). Consequently, our findings point towards a lack of polyvocality in live blogs, despite the possibilities of social media to incorporate more and more diverse voices. An explanation for this might lie in the well-established routines and conventions of source selection: journalists regard informal sources as direct risk for the credibility of their information, do not have the time to check their information. Previous research supports this line of argumentation.

Brashers (2001) already mentioned that some sources add to uncertainty, because they are not known and therefore less credible. Time puts the selection of sources further under pressure (Hertzum, 2022). Live blogs routinize the unexpected immediately, to paraphrase Tuchman (1973), and heightening the journalist's fear to possibly "provide new or contradictory information that complicates the (...) reporter's ability to generalize and summarize" (Gans, 1979: 140). This journalistic reflex, so to speak, is clearly visible in our data as well, confirming a convention in the production of live blogs already found by Gans (1979) in offline and regular journalism forty years ago.

So, to answer our main research question, which sourcing and reported speech strategies are used by journalists covering events in live blogs, we conclude that the sourcing strategy of journalists in live blogs is the same as with other journalistic genres – mainly formal, confirming previous research done by Gans (1979), Lecheler

& Kruikemeier (2016), and Thorsen & Jackson (2018). This shows that even though new technologies provide journalists with new ways and formats to persuade the public, this does not mean journalists adapt new routines and conventions. Existing journalistic routines and conventions, like source selection, can be used to cover new events, or, as with live blogs, these same, old routines and conventions can be used to cover existing events in new ways. The latter seems to be the case concerning live blogs: existing routines and conventions are used to cover breaking news, politics, and sports in new ways: immediate, with high degrees of uncertainty, multimodal.

Journalists can choose between different ways for the reporting of speech, each with their own rhetorical effects to persuade. Two are direct, and indirect speech, both with different rhetorical functions (Smirnova, 2009). Direct speech signals neutrality and objectivity as desired effect; indirect speech put the autonomous journalist as specialist and 'knower' more to the foreground (Harry, 2013). Our data shows that live blogs are predominantly source centered because when sources are reported, journalists use (far) more direct speech than indirect speech.

However, journalists use narration almost twice as much than both direct speech and indirect speech combined. More than quoting or interpreting what sources said, journalists predominantly report their own speech in their own words, using no sources at all. So, within the subset of sources, journalists mostly use direct speech, leading to a source centered discourse, signaling objectivity and factuality by reporting speech ad verbatim. Within all live blogs combined, however, journalists use narration and no sources at all, interpreting developments they cover, presenting themselves as 'knowers' concerning developments they 'see'.

Our data also suggests significant differences between the use of reported speech in live blogs covering breaking news or politics, and sports – narration was far more used in the latter. McEnnis (2016) found that editorial autonomy is an important factor in the professional ideology of sport bloggers: participants in his research mentioned that live blogging sports was 'agency led' (977), characterized by "Drive it how you like" and "more creative and to allow personalities to grow" (idem). The high percentage of narration in live blogs covering sports, indicates that in our data these live blogs are also agency led, with a high degree of editorial autonomy, confirming McEnnis' findings.

This high degree of narration and low degree of direct and indirect speech in our data might be also explained by the way sport bloggers work: often they are spectators, watching a match, race, or game. Their sources are, during most of the time, inaccessible. In short: during sport, there is no speech to report, only what happens. These significant differences in source selection, reported speech and production of sport blogs, compared to blogs reporting breaking news and politics, might indicate that sport blogs are possibly a sub-genre, covering matches, games, and races with a different performative discourse, performing discourse that is aimed at the persuasion of the public by a 'knower', or even a 'specialist', narrating what happens immediately.

Based on our data, we suspect that live blogs are a new way to cover events immediately, using existing routines and conventions for online journalism (in source

selection and reported speech). We also see a development in the format, which is not only used for specific events, but also to cover longitudinal developments, like COVID-19, and the war in the Ukraine (Weaver, 2020; Wells, 2011). Consequently, despite different platforms, and different live blogs, covering different events at different times, different journalists follow similar performative discourses to persuade the public of their version of an immediate reality int their selection of sources and their reported speech. This sameness indicates, possibly, a discourse community of live-bloggers coping with the immediacy and uncertainty of live blogs in a similar way.

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CHAPTER 4

A Permanent Flow of Information: Motives for Using Live Blogs During COVID-19

4.1 ABSTRACT

During crises, people tend to use more news to reduce their uncertainty. In the current high choice media landscape, people have an abundance of platforms and sources they choose from to stay informed during a crisis. One format with which respondents followed the news caught our attention: live blogs. Live blogs are characterized by their immediacy and uncertainty, updating reality in posts that are temporary and fragmentary. During COVID-19 live blogs proliferated as a format that broke news concerning a wide range of developments immediately. Their audiences grew in very short times, to decline later. Based on the uncertain reduction theory we conducted a survey to understand motives to use and possible explanations for using live blogs during the first three months of the pandemic. This survey shows that respondents used more news than before, often choosing fast and immediate news (online, radio and television, and social media) over newspapers. However, users who sought answers in live blogs, stacked rather dan reduced their uncertainty. Possible answers on the question 'why' lies in their motives to follow news: results of our survey show that people who read live blogs tend to want to follow the news and do not want to miss out on anything, and the other way around: people who do not want to miss out on anything more often tend to read live blogs. In reaction to crises, people tend to follow more news: some stop after a while with following news altogether; a small but dedicated group, however, tend follow more than others, possibly starting new habits of news use, turning themselves on the way into news junkies.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

8.7 Million people watched the speech of Marc Rutte, prime minister of The Netherlands, on December 14th, 2020, announcing a total lockdown to cope with the spread of COVID-19 in The Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2020). Never before have so many people in the Netherlands watched a speech of a prime minister. Nine out of ten people who watched TV that night, tuned in on Rutte's speech – a unique market share of 87.8 percent (Idem). Past research has shown that when crises occur, people follow more news than before the crisis (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Bento et al., 2020; Van Aelst et al., 2021). This way people hope to gain more knowledge about the situation and reduce their uncertainty about the crisis (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Boyle et al., 2004; Kubey & Peluso, 1990).

Research on news consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic showed a similar pattern in which people consumed more news than usual in the first few months (De Bruin et al., 2021; Nelson & Lewis, 2022). However, several studies showed that people were not always able to cope with this flood of information. Some even felt stressed or helpless when reading the news and therefore chose to avoid the news (De Bruin et al., 2021; Nielsen et al., 2020; Van Aelst et al., 2021). Others kept on looking for news, trying to understand the uncertain situation and get some kind of grip on what the consequences of the spread of the virus and the lockdown might have for people's daily life (Ahmed, 2020; Anand et al., 2022; Bento et al., 2020; Chu et al., 2022; Fu et al., 2021; Groot Kormelink & Klein Gunnewiek, 2022; Kalogeropoulos et al., 2020; Schäfer et al., 2023; Strasser et al., 2022). There was a variety of formats journalists chose to inform the public, from breaking news releases, summaries of press conferences, and personal stories of care workers to animations explaining the role of the virus or vaccine. Also, a rather new format of live blogs proliferated widely on websites of many news platforms, monitoring and publishing *minute-to-minute* about new developments concerning the pandemic.

Live blogs provide (often) free information in an immediate form. However, an important characteristic of live blogs is not only their immediacy but also their uncertainty (Anderson, 2011; Bennett, 2016; Lee, 2022; Livingston & Bennett, 2003; López, 2022; Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Pleijter, 2011; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Vaahtoranta, 2017; Weaver, 2020; Wells, 2011; Wilczek & Blangetti, 2018). Live blogs report on a reality that is under development, constantly updating what happens in short posts. As Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen (2018) mention: "The contingent, temporary and fragmentary coverage of the live blog is therefore assembled somewhere between the blog editor and the reader." Generic differences, according to both authors, between live blogs and news stories, underlining the uncertain character of live blogs, are the temporality (ordered vs. overlapping and representing moments), and status of text (finished vs. dynamic and temporary). Consequently, people following live blogs during the first months of the pandemic were stacking uncertainty, using an uncertain genre to reduce their uncertainty in highly uncertain times.

We only know little about the consumers of live blogs in times of crisis, while crisis are the moments live blogs proliferate. As mentioned, people tend to use more news

in times of uncertainty, and this is what happened in The Netherlands as well. During the first three months of the pandemic, more people used more news than before the crisis (De Bruin et al., 2021). Van Aelst (et al.) found that in 17 European countries more people used more online news during the crisis. Ytre-Arne & Moe (2021) saw during COVID-19 evidence to introduce a the concept of pandemic news use that, more than regular news use, must be analyzed in terms of *doomscrolling*. Broersma & Swart (2022) wondered which and how new habits of news use formed during the crisis, and found evidence for a typology of news users, ranging from news avoidance to news junkies. So, while we know a bit more about these news consumers need for information in times of crisis, such as the pandemic, we know little on how the specific format of live blogs then was consumed.

The uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) can explain the information seeking behavior after major events, not only on a level of individual communication, (as the theory was originally suited for), but also on the level of mass media (Boyle et al., 2004: 157). After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, the dependency on media grew among respondents due to the ambiguity of the situation and perceived threat. This perceived threat, found Lowrey (2004), led to an increase of TV-use, interpersonal communication, radio-use, and use of the Web, in that order. This effect, the dependency on news after a crisis, was before the attacks of 9/11 also found by Kubey & Peluso (1990) analyzing the emotional responses on the tragedy with the exploded, live televised Space Shuttle Challenger, killing seven American astronauts. So, crises tend to make people follow the news more than before a crisis. Based on this reduction of uncertainty theory, and the proliferation of live blogs during the outbreak of the pandemic, the main question for this paper is this: who are users of live blogs during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic and what are the motivations for using live blogs as a news format?

We want to understand the surge in news use, and following on this surge the avoidance of news against the background of the COVID-19-crisis that raged through personal lives globally. Often locked in (at least, in The Netherlands), the only window on reality was trough media and personal communication. Understanding motives for media use is essential during times of crisis that seems to pair-up with threats of infodemics. The global COVID-19-crisis gave us a unique possibility to understand motivations for news use in general, and for live blogs specifically. We focus in our theoretical framework on explanations for news use, explained by motivations and habits during crisis, using the uncertainty reduction theory as a starting point. We begin, however, with live blogs – the format that is the fundament for this curious stacking of uncertainty.

4.3 LIVE BLOGS

The use of live blogs was very much proliferated during COVID-19 (Van Exter, 2020). Live blogs are an a-typical format that responds to uncertainty felt by individuals confronted with a crisis. It provides (hard) breaking news, the latest developments, and explanations, often for free, and immedia ely. The format is characterized by a

fragmented and open narrative structure; temporality and overlapping moments in time; curated, multi-layered texts within a network; network balance; and a dynamic and temporary status of texts (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgenson, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). Especially this last characteristic – the temporary statuses of text – makes the format uncertain in itself. Developments in live blogs are, unlike regular news, updated in short posts, and not in a coherent narrative with a known conclusion (López, 2022).

Live blogs are mostly used for breaking news or during a specific event such as football game or a court case (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). We also saw during the COVID-19 pandemic the proliferation of the format across media organizations. These live blogs, dedicated to the reportage of COVID-19, lasted for almost two years, covering news about the pandemic permanently, with numerous updates and posts per day. The past years, news media witnessed a popularity in people consuming news through a live blog (Lee, 2022; Pantic, 2020; Wells, 2011). During COVID-19 the format was widely used (Weaver, 2020; Nab, 2021). The format seems to fit the needs of the monitorial citizen that follows the news more closely during the pandemic, by (Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2018).

So, it can hardly be a surprise that the British newspaper *The Guardian* saw more than a doubling of unique visitors for their live blog covering the pandemic, started with 3 million visitors in April 2020, growing up to 7 million unique visitors in May 2020 (Weaver, 2020). In the Netherlands, the editorial staff of the news site *NU.nl* said: "When we started a liveblog in February 2020, we never thought we would keep it open for one and half year. The posts were watched about 235 million times at that time. We were quite astonished" (Nab, 2021). While these long lasting live blogs were popular, as shown by user metrics of news organisations, we know little of the news consumption of live blog during the global crisis of COVID-19.

4.4 NEWS USE DURING COVID-19

Numerous studies published on how people consumed news during COVID-19 (de Bruin et al., 2021; Ohme et al., 2020; Van Aelst et al., 2021; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). Several studies conclude consequences of the pandemic for both news consumption and news avoidance. In their study, Ytre-Arne & Moe (2021) for example, see that "some people became strongly monitorial citizens who followed the news more closely than usual, and equally strategic news avoiders seeking escape and disconnection" (1740).

Ytre-Arne & Moe suggest understanding pandemic news use (as contrasted with regular news use) through the concept of doomscrolling. The term was picked-up online somewhere in October 2018, and used by reporter Karen Ho (Quartz) to remind her followers between 11 and 1 p.m. to go to bed, sleep, and stop scrolling on Twitter. The term resurfaced in popular articles, advice, and academic papers, pointing in all its semantic appearances towards a "human impulse to stay in the information flow in the face of an uncertain world situation, and it is difficult to stop even though one ends up feeling worse" (Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021: 1741), suggesting a

possible surge in online, mobile news. De Bruin and colleagues (2021) concluded the same, based on surveys in The Netherlands: first a surge in news, followed by a surge in news avoidance thereafter.

Van Aelst and colleagues (2021) also confirm this surge in news use in a panel study conducted in 17 countries before and during the pandemic. However, this increase was not spread evenly across different media. Online news use, social media use, and television news use increased, the use of radio or newspaper stayed the same or even decreased compared with a period before the pandemic. Van Aelst et al. give three possible explanations: first, TV was popular due to the press conferences with policy information regarding measures taken to fight the pandemic; second, uncertainty and the will to learn about the pandemic might have boosted internet-use and online news use; third, and finally, radio and newspaper use might have suffered from lockdowns and the disruptions in daily routines and the absence of daily commutes. Ohme and colleagues analysed the patterns of mobile phone use in the first weeks of the outbreak and also conclude that people used to online (mobile) news more often af the beginning of the outbreak and increasingly for news purposes (Ohme et al., 2020).

Overall, all the studies on news consumption behavior during COVID-19 show both a surge in news use, following an increase in avoidance (Bruin et al., 2021, Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020; Mannell & Meese, 2022;), Based on open ended questions among more than 1200 Dutch respondents, Broersma and Swart (2022) come with a typology of five different types of news users during the pandemic. While the news avoiders and followers turned avoiders consumed less news, the frequent news users and news junkies consumed more, and the stable news users hardly changed their news habits (2022). In this paper we want specifically understand what role live blogs played in people's news use, a format that was widely offered by news organizations during the pandemic. So, our first research question is this: who are the users of live blogs during COVID-19?

4.5 MOTIVATIONS FOR NEWS USE

"As the news about the pandemic becomes grimmer and the measures to combat it ever more drastic, the interest from readers has only grown", writes Matthew Weaver, journalist of the British newspaper *The Guardian* (2020). "At the start of March, the coronavirus live blog was already attracting 3 million page views each day. At that time, daily figures for the blog were more than 7 million" (Weaver, 2020). Intimidating numbers, he writes, knowing that so many people following every keystroke in the daily live blog his newspaper publishes. This number – growing with 4 million visitors in one month – is not an isolated effect only found in statistics of *the Guardian*'s live blog.

Confronted with tragedy, crisis or an event with substantial emotional impact, people often start searching for information to cope with uncertainties concerning the situation. Media play a key role in this attempt to reduce people's uncertainty during a crisis (Lowrey, 2004). For instance, after the terrorist attacks of September

11th, 2001, the dependency on media grew among respondents due to the ambiguity of the situation and perceived threat. This perceived threat, found Lowrey (2004), led to an increase of TV-use, interpersonal communication, radio-use, and use of the Web, in that order. This dependency on news after a crisis was previously found by Kubey & Peluso (1990) analyzing the emotional responses on the tragedy with the exploded, live televised Space Shuttle Challenger, killing seven American astronauts. "Rather than avoid information about the Shuttle, in general, the more upset our respondents were early on, the more time they spent talking with others and watching television news" (Kubey & Peluso, 1990: 72). So, to cope with emotional responses towards an impactful event or crisis, respondents tended to use more news, not less.

The uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) can explain this information seeking behavior after such major events, not only on a level of individual communication, (as the theory was originally suited for), but also on the level of mass media (Boyle et al., 2004: 157). The reduction of uncertainty can be seen as a specific motivation to use media, as is the will to know more. Understanding motivations for media use is a central issue in explaining communication choices. Motivations often predict distinctive media use (Lee, 2013). Lee (20213) found four major themes, based on a synthesis of research in uses and gratifications theory, political communication, selective exposure, and media rituals studies that looked beyond reduction of uncertainty or knowledge and found information-motivated, entertainment-motivated, opinion-motivated, and social motivated news consumption.

However, uses and gratifications assumes rational media use. Often, media use is not as rational as assumed: habits explain media use as well (LaRose, 2010; Swart, Peters, Broersma, 2017). Habit formation theory argues that most media use is not cognitive driven. For example, when asked, respondents find it hard to explain how and why certain habits have developed. Second, to deal with the information overload in a high-choice, digital media ecology, people rely on habits to follow news to save mental energy. So, the use of live blogs during crisis can, according to the habits media theory, be explained as a consequence of news habits, formed before the pandemic broke out. Translated to news use: respondents using live blogs before the crisis, are more prone to use them during the breakout as well – because it was already a habit to do so.

Broersma & Swart (2022) found five types of news users, all with their own motivations to avoid or use news during COVID-19: news avoiders, followers turned avoiders, stable news users, frequent news users, and news junkies. Here, we concentrate on the last three categories of new users, all three characterized little differences or even a surge in news use during COVID-19. News avoiders and followers turned avoiders were characterized by avoidance or a decrease in news use. Broersma & Swart (2022: 563) conclude for the stable, frequent, and news junkies: "They perceived rewards because COVID-19 information had practical value in their personal lives, news facilitated conversations and social relations, and it allowed them to relate to civic issues and public debate." Based on this theoretical approach of

motivations for media use, we have different explanations for media use. Media use is motivated and the result of cognitive processes on a individual level, or, in contrast, media use is the result of habits, based on what individuals already did. Based on these findings, our second research question is this: what are motivations for people to use live blogs during COVID-19?

In addition, we specifically want to test the role live blogs might play in reducing people's uncertainty on the development of the pandemic. We therefore not only want to answer the question what motivates people to read live blogs, but more so how is the use of live blogs related to their feeling of being informed. Therefore, we formulated two hypotheses:

$H_{3.1}$: The use of live blogs increases the motivation to not want to miss out on news on the pandemic.

$H_{3.2}$: People who do not want to miss out on news on the pandemic, more often make use of a live blog.

4.6 METHOD

To answer these questions and hypotheses, we conducted a survey in the first three months of the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands. Trust in news consumption is relatively high in the Netherlands and even increased during the pandemic (Neman et al., 2021). Respondents were polarized in answering the question if they trusted the news (or not) and were less neutral in their evaluation than in earlier years. Despite these fluctuations within the Dutch population over time, the Dutch have the highest overall trust in most of the news compared with other countries in Europe. Only Norwegians trust news on social media more than the Dutch – for all other categories the Dutch trust the news the highest compared to other countries in Europe (Idem).

Our survey was conducted by I&O Research, an ISO-certified research company. We chose three specific moments during the first months of the crisis. The first wave was fielded on April 6, 2020. We chose this date as this was three weeks after the lockdown was introduced in the Netherlands and schools closed. A stratified sample from the I&O's panel was drawn by gender, age, region, and education level. A gross of 3,517 panel members were invited. The questionnaire was fully completed by 1,635 panel members, with a response rate of 46.5%. The survey was closed on April 14, 2020. The second wave was conducted on May 6 and closed on May 25. In this period the primary schools opened again. The second questionnaire was completed by 1,420 panel members, a retention of 87%. The third and final wave was sent on June 16, 2020, and closed on June 26, and was completed by 1,173 panel members (83%). This was the period when most of the lockdown measures stopped and public buildings and restaurants re-opened (on June 1).

In all three waves, we used the same measurements to understand the news consumption behavior over time. Firstly, we asked people to report which news sources and platforms they used to inform themselves on the crisis. We provided the

respondents with a wide range of options to choose from, ranging from online news websites, websites of newspapers, websites of television programs, television, radio, newspapers, regional and local media, podcasts, talk shows, satire news programs, and live blogs. To answer the question of who live bloggers are, we rely on background characteristics age (M = 54.1, SD =15.7) gender (50.5% female), and education (seven categories, ranging from no/primary education to obtained university degree, M =4.68, SD =1.53) that the research company provided. To answer the question on the motivations for using live blogs we used six items. We asked people whether they agreed with the following statements:

1. Live blogs provide me with fast information concerning the developments of COVID-19.
2. Live blogs provide me with reliable information concerning the developments of COVID-19.
3. Live blogs provide me with comprehensive information concerning the developments of COVID-19.
4. The live blogs on the developments of COVID-19 make me restless.
5. After following a live blog on the developments of COVID-19 I understand what is happening

Finally, we analyzed the correlation between the use of live blogs and the reasons for not wanting to miss out on the news concerning COVID-19. The variable "hate to miss the news" was asked with a single item measured on a 7-point scale in which higher numbers mean that people agree with the statement. We put forward the following statement: "I hate to miss the news" (M=3.68, SD=1.72).

4.7 ANALYSIS

To understand who reads live blogs, we present descriptives over three waves. To understand the relationship between live blogs and how this is related to other news platforms we used OLS regression analyses based on the first wave. To understand the relation between the use of live blogs and reasons to miss out on news we have used a cross-lagged linear model to allow for reciprocal causation.

4.8 RESULTS

While live blogs as a news format have been used for over a decade now, little empirical research has been done on the use of this format. During COVID-19 live blogs dominated practically every news site in the Netherlands. While news media said live blogs were very popular among the readers, this study provides more insight into this.

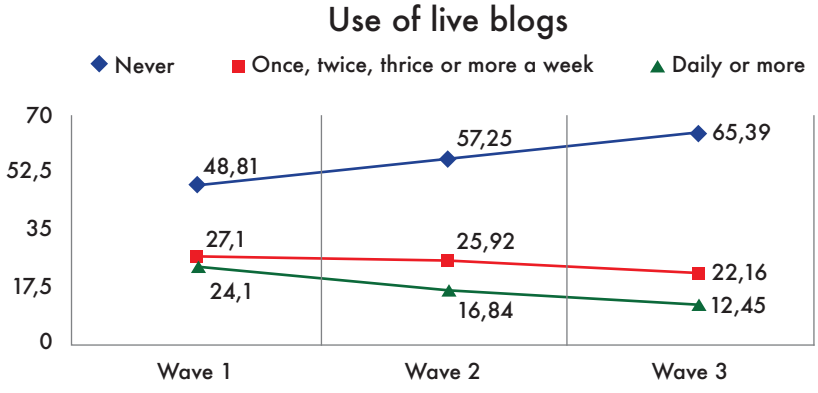
4.8.1 Live blog users

Our results show that in the first wave, a quarter (24.1 percent) of the respondents used a live blog up to more than once a day; over a quarter of the respondents (27.1 percent) between once and more than three times a week; and almost half of the

respondents (48,81 percent) never used a live blog. These percentages drop in the second, and third waves. In the third wave, only one-eighth (12.45 percent) of the respondents used a live blog daily or more than once a day. Still, almost a quarter (22.16 percent) used a live blog once up to more than three times a day a live blog. The number of respondents who never used a live blog, was almost two-thirds (65.4 percent) of the respondents in the third wave (see figure 1).

Results of the regression analysis based on wave 1 indicate that live blog users are more likely to be highly educated (ß = .10, p=.003), but there is no significant difference in age and gender. The people who choose to read live blogs do not only read the news through live blogs. There seems to be a clear positive correlation between live blog use and use of online news websites and apps of legacy media (ß = .35, p<.001), stand-alone online news websites and apps (ß = .13, p<.001), news aggregates (ß = .05, p=.016), podcasts (ß = .07, p=.001), and websites of governmental bodies (ß = .11, p<.001). However, people who read national newspapers (ß = – .06, p=.005) and people who watch commercial news programs (ß = –.06, p=.008) are less likely to consume live blogs. In other words, live blog users are highly correlated to educated news consumers who have a wider interest in other media as well. However, while the number of live blog users is quite high in the first wave it quickly decreases over time during the course of the pandemic.

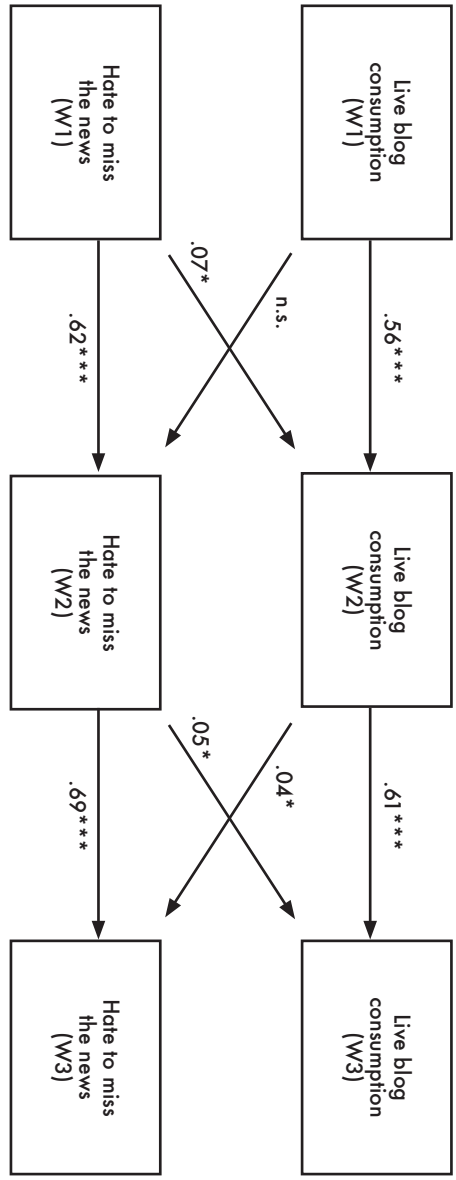
Fig. 1 Use of live blogs



4.8.2 Live blog use

Our study shows that the main reason for people to consume live blogs is that they provide news in a fast manner (24%). Other motivations, while less important, are reasons of reliability (15%) or comprehensibility (18%). We also examined the causal reciprocal relationship between live blog use and the willingness to be up to date on news developments. Interestingly, we found that people who read live blogs tend to want to follow the news and do not want to miss out on anything (we found a significant positive relationship for wave 2 and 3 between live blog consumption and the variable 'hate to miss the news', b = .04, p=.017).

The other way around, people who do not want to miss out on anything more often tend to read live blogs (we found a significant positive relationship between live blog consumption and the variable 'hate to miss the news', wave 1-2: b = .07, p=.011; wave 2-3: b = .05, p=.032). Users of live blogs are deeply connected, or even addicted, to news – between the need for news and the format of live blogs is a strong reciprocal relationship. In this way, we found support for both hypotheses:



Note: N=1,173. Model fit: X^2 = 256.921 with p = .000 and df = 4, RMSEA = 0.232, CFI = 0.915, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

4.9 CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

The global pandemic led in The Netherlands, as in other countries (Reuters, 2022) to an initial surge in news use, followed by a surge in news avoidance. Journalists covered the crisis using different channels and formats, live blogs were among the most often used formats. Characterized by their immediacy and uncertainty, they were a much-sought channel for a part of the news public during the first months of the pandemic, and thereafter. Previous research (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018) explained the that live blogs are an often-chosen format to cover these highly dynamic events. We wanted to know more about the user of live blogs and their motivations for choosing this format in such uncertain times.

We found that live blog use significantly correlated to education levels of respondents: highly educated respondents used live blogs and felt they needed to be continuously informed concerning developments during the first three months of the pandemic. To stay informed, they did not only use live blogs, but also other forms of media – they were news omnivores, or, following Broersma & Swart (2022) frequent news users and news junkies. Both categories are characterized by "durable new habits which resulted in increased media and news use" (Idem: 563) For these omnivores, live blogs provided news fast and kept respondents involved while pandemic news unfolded. Interesting is that we not only found a significant correlation between the use of live blogs and the need to follow news in general but also the other way around: respondents who said they followed the news, also chose live blogs as their favorite format. This reciprocal relationship might explain the habit formation of frequent news users and news junkies (Broersma & Swart, 2022).

However, the possible forming of new habits is only true for a small group. We see in our data a surge in respondents who say they stopped using live blogs in the first three months of the pandemic, and, consequently, a drop in the number of people who use a live blog once to three times a week, daily or more than once daily. Based on this observation, we conclude that live blogs are suitable for short periods of highly dynamic events. Data shows that more than half of the respondents said to use the format at least once a week or more at the start of the pandemic crisis, but then, after the initial popularity of the format, stopped using live blogs.

These conclusions bring up two points for discussion. First, based on previous research and our data we think frequent news users and news junkies (Broersma & Swart, 2022) challenge the reduction of uncertainty theory. The group seems to prosper because of the uncertainty of the (news) situation, based on their choice to follow live blogs, a highly uncertain format in the first place. Two amendments to the theory arise out of our data. First, their ongoing use of live blogs is, explained by the reduction of uncertainty theory, motivated by their wish to reduce the uncertainty they experience. However, their reduction of uncertainty is based on a highly uncertain format – the live blog. Due to the highly uncertain characteristic of live blogs, uncertainty is not taken away, but fueling their wish to further follow many different news sources to cope with their uncertainty. Our data does indeed

show that respondents who follow live blogs follow other news as well, and vice versa: respondents who follow the news, also follow live blogs. Our data suggests that the theory of reduction of uncertainty holds, but with a little twist: in reducing uncertainty, respondents are confronted with new uncertainties due to the format they choose (live blogs), driving their news to further reduce uncertainty, leading to new uncertainties that have to be reduced – ad infinitum – possibly forming a habit labeled by Swart & Broersma (2022) news junkies.

Second, based on the discussion above, if the reduction of uncertainty theory holds, why do news junkies choose a live blog? Or, in other words: do news junkies want to reduce their uncertainty? Because when they do, live blogs are not the best format to do so. Our data suggests that news junkies seem to prosper from uncertainty. So, contrary to the prediction of the reduction of uncertainty theory, these individuals embrace uncertainty by following more news in more different ways, live blogs are one of them. Other research shows that news consumers who chose to avoid certain news during the pandemic felt an increase in their well-being (Bruin et al., 2021). This study seems to suggest that live blog users feel the need to consume more news, notwithstanding what this does to them.

We were able to collect data at the beginning of the pandemic to understand news use particularly the use of live blogs. However, this study also has its shortcomings.

First, we see that live blog use diminishes over time. Our data is collected in a short period of three months, so we do not know exactly when respondents stopped following live blogs. Moreover, due to our interest in motivations for using live blogs, we do not know what reasons are to stop using live blogs. To understand these motives to stop following live blogs (almost twenty percent of our respondents in three months' time), we suggest further research concerning people's motives to follow live blogs, particularly live blogs that are stretched over a longer period.

Second, this study is the first attempt to understand the users of live blogs. While news organizations are increasingly using this format for breaking news, sports, and other events, we see that the live blog is developing in form and function. Live blogs are not only immediate updates of reality in fragmented posts with a temporary status of texts, but live blogs also develop in so-called slow blogs. Slow blogs are characterized by longer and fewer posts, covering more themes during a longer period, often months or even years (Nab, 2021). We suggest further research specifically this form of slow blogs in relation to the motivations for news use. Overall, this study contributes to the studies of news consumption during a crisis and shows that news consumption is not only a conscious act but might even show an addictive form of news use.

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CHAPTER 5

Evaluating Credibility in Dutch Live Blogs. A Focus Group Study on Immediate News, Covering Crisis, Politics, and Sports

5.1 ABSTRACT

Live blog is an online news format, covering events immediately with a high degree of uncertainty, often in a fragmentary narrative, presenting a diverse range of multimodal sources. The format is popular among users, based on statistics of diverse mediaorganizations. The absence of alternatives for following events immediately might explain the popularity of live blogs. However, in a high choice media landscape, why do people turn to live blogs for credible news? While much research has been done on perceived credibility of online sources, online messages, and online media, no studies look specifically at how users of live blogs evaluate the credibility in and of this format. This paper presents results of six focus groups discussing elements of credibility as well as technical affordances (multimodality, interactivity, and hyper textuality) in six Dutch live blogs. Results led us to conclude that using a live blog is an active way to relate to an unfolding world, where uncertainties and fragmentation are not an obstruction, but motivations to look, read, and listen further, like in a detective or an adventure game. Doing so, [1]respondents seem confident enough to assess the credibility of live blogs by repairing what goes wrong, contextualizing what is in their eyes seen as a too narrow interpretation of events and embracing the complexities of an unfolding reality.

Lubben, S.P. van der; Haan, Y. de; Jong, J. de; Koetsenruijter, W. (2023). *Evaluating Credibility in Dutch Live Blogs. A Focus Group Study on Imediate News, Covering Crisis, Politics, and Sports [Manuscript].* University of Applied Science, Utrecht & LUCL, Leiden University.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Live blogs have become a usual format for many news sites around the world, bringing news as it unfolds (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman & Walters, 2013). While live blogs started as a format for covering sports events or breaking news, the format is used for a variety of events like politics, breaking news events, or even criminal trials (Flower & Ahlefeldt, 2021). These events can last for a few hours or days, and sometimes even months or years, as happened with live blogs covering COVID-19 and the current crisis in the Ukraine.

Live blogs are often free content, guaranteeing a proliferation of the format and news. Previous studies showed that live blogs kept readers longer engaged on news sites than commonly used inverted pyramid stories (Thurman & Walters, 2013), and that users spend on average between 12 and 24 minutes reading live blogs, three times more than reading other stories (Thurman & Newman, 2014). Nevertheless, the format brings about uncertainties as the narrative is fragmentary, the information is presented by a diverse range of multimodal sources, while the editor is often not present at the place of the event (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgenson, 2020; Thorsen & Jackson, 2018; Thurman & Walters, 2013).

Despite this fragmentary format and uncertainties, the question is why this news format is popular and how this popularity is related to the credibility of live blogs? Already in 2003, Tsfati and Capella pointed out that people can consume media, but at the same time does not trust it. One argumentation back then was the absence of alternatives. However, in a high choice media landscape, why do people turn to live blogs for credible news? While much research has been done on perceived credibility of online sources, online messages, and online media, no studies look specifically at how users of live blogs evaluate the credibility in and of this format. Credibility in journalism is related to credibility of the used sources, the message and the medium. Credibility of the sources concerns the use of useful and accurate information. Messages are assessed for their credibility based on the topic of the message; the internal validity; plausibility of arguments; supportive data, or ordering among other criteria (Wathen & Burkell, 2002: 136). Or, as Appelman & Sundar (2016: 63) define message credibility, "an individual's judgment of the veracity of the content of communication."

Medium credibility has shifted over the past century with the advent of new media platforms. Attention to medium credibility dates to the 1930s when radio was introduced and newspapers were concerned what this new technological innovation might do with their audience, and, again, in the 1950s with the introduction of television (Metzger et al., 2003: 306). Research then focused on medium credibility, focusing on organization, usability, presentation, or vividness (Wathen & Burkell, 2002: 136).

Over the past three decades online news has developed quite rapidly, enriched with online characteristics such as interactivity, hyper textuality and multimodality (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Cassidy, 2007; Deuze, 2003; Oblak, 2005; Paulussen, 2004). Live blogs are a subset of online news, because apart from multimodality, hyper-textuality, and interactivity, the format brings news while it folds, pushing the

latest developments first in a reversed chronological order, written by journalists often not present at the site of the covered events in a fragmented manner, and foremost: immediately.

The question is how readers of live blogs evaluate the credibility of live blogs, regarding the sources, the message and the media. Research on online information shows that the speed at which online information is brought does not necessarily affect news credibility. Taking account the specific characteristics of the live blogs format, this study focuses on how news users evaluate the credibility of the live blogs. To do so, we first focus on the specific elements of credibility (sources, messages, medium) after which we can answer the question how news users perceive the credibility of live blogs as a news format? To answer this question, we conducted six focus groups of in total thirty-six frequent users of live blogs.

5.3 CREDIBILITY

In previous research concerning credibility, credibility and trust are often used interchangeable (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). However, there are are important differences between both concepts. For example, Van Dalen (2020) understands credibility as "perceived believability" (6) because credibility is a feature attributed to individuals or organizations by someone regarding events, narratives, facts, et cetera (Van Dalen, 2020).

Seen as such, credibility is a narrower concept than trust because credibility refers to the perceived truth-fullness of individuals, institutions, or information, while trust refers to the media task to provide information that is truthful. Between the two is also a difference in the dimension of time: credibility is an evaluation once a receiver is exposed to it, while trust is a "predictive judgement, referring to the future" (Van Dalen, 2020: 5). Central to this study is the concept of credibility, not of trust, and therein we distinguish between source, message and medium credibility.

5.3.1 Source credibility

According to Hovland & Weiss (1953) there was a clear scientific relevance to study the influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness (the title of their seminal paper): "There are few studies in which an identical communication is presented by different communicators and the relative effects on opinion subsequently measured without explicit reference to the position taken by the communicator" (635). Consequently, they defined credibility in terms of expertise and trustworthiness of a speaker; the first expressing the qualifications to know; the second as perception of the motivation to tell the truth (Metzger, 2003: 6). Some scholars found expertise a more objective dimension, and therefore easier for audiences to assess (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993), others found trustworthiness a more dominant dimension for credibility (Lui & Standing, 1989). This approach to credibility as source credibility dominated for long studies of credibility assessment. Interest in persuasion during the 1950s led to a growth of research concerning source and message credibility. For example, Tseng and Fogg (1999) identified different types of source credibility (in: Wathen & Burkell,

1999: 135). Sources can be perceived as credible due to presumptions of the receiver and stereotypes of persons or objects. The presumption that "all politicians lie" leads to a negative assessment of their credibility and, by absence of other cues, leads to the rejection of their messages. Second, perceivers can assess credibility based on labels like 'doctor', or 'professor'. This reputed credibility is based on source labels. Or, third, credibility can be perceived based on personal experience with a source.

Next to these types of source credibility, other factors play a role as well. Expertise, trustworthiness, credentials, attractiveness, similarities between source and receiver of information, or likeability are important factors in assessing a source as credible (Wathen & Burkell, 2002: 136). Pornpitakpan (2004) adds, next to credibility and attractiveness, also power as an important factor in source credibility. In an extensive literature review, Pornpitakpan (2004) summarizes context and circumstances for sources to be credible and, therewith, persuasive, and concludes: "Almost all of the main effect findings suggest that a high-credibility source is more persuasive than is a low-credibility source in both changing attitudes and gaining behavioural compliance" (Pornpitakpan, 2004: 266).

The past two decades scholars analyse the shift from offline to online sources credibility. Metzger & Flanagin (2003), for instance, claim "that in some respect (…) websites may be considered to be analogous to individual organizations (idem: 300)". Seen as such, expertise might be reflected by the site's informativeness, credentials, reputation; and trustworthiness may be communicated through policy statements, lack of advertisements or commercial content. However, both authors threaten to cross the border with medium credibility, and therewith not reducing complexity in credibility assessment of online sources but adding some. Keshavarz (2020) found more discriminating components in literature covering credibility of online sources: user profile and authority. The first concerned the user's profile itself, but also the frequency and regularity of posts, the age of accounts, endorsements and administrating profiles among others. Authority was, according to Keshavar (2020) conceptualized by affiliation, contact information, education background, interest, credentials, experience and competence.

5.3.2 Message credibility

In addition to Hovland & Weiss's findings that sources are an important factor in perceiving credibility of information, Rosenthal (1971) found that people also assessed credibility based on message. Message credibility "examines how message characteristics impact perceptions of believability" (Metzger et al., 2003: 11). Appelman & Sundar (2016) found that message credibility can be measured by asking participants "to rate how well certain adjectives describe content: accurate, authentic, and believable" (73), defining and validating an exclusive scale and comprising message credibility in its core, and "elements of writing quality, fairness, and professional expertise inform message credibility" help (Idem: 74).

Metzger and colleagues(2003) distinguish three factors that contribute to the assessment of online message credibility: message structure; message content; and

message delivery or presentation (11). Kiousis (2001) found that message variables can shape source credibility, indicating the independent factor of message credibility. For instance, the style of writing (complicated versus simplistic) can affect credibility. "The message should be internally consistent", concluded Wathen & Burkell, 2002: 140). Message credibility online, acording to Metzger et al. (2003: 305) is often determined by the message structure, content and delivery. For example, amateurism of web-messages and inconsistencies in page design decrease credibility of online messages (Alexander & Tate, 1999): the better the navigability, the better the credibility of the messages. Sundar (1988) found that quotations in online news benefit its perceived credibility and quality. Fogg et al. (2001) found that the presentation and design of a web page influence the credibility of the message, as did typos and dead links. So, next to sources, credibility is also perceived in relation to the messages of online news. In relation to live blogs, these messages are the individual posts that are published.

5.3.3 Medium credibility

Further research showed a third focus for credibility assessment: next to source, and message, medium also play a part in the credibility assessment of people. Pornpitakpan (2004) pointed in his extensive literature review concerning source credibility on the significant interaction between source trustworthiness and media: "Trustworthy sources were more persuasive than were untrustworthy ones when the message was delivered through the television rather than the radio or the print medium" (Pornpitakpan, 2004: 225). Kiousis (2001) concluded that "survey respondents (...) give higher credence to newspaper stories before online news and online news before television news" (Kiousis, 2001: 396). In short, media can affect the persuasiveness of source credibility: people seem to evaluate credibility of different media in different ways. Newhagen and Ness (1989) demonstrated, for example, that newspapers were judged according to their credibility as an institution, while the credibility of television news was judged by the presenting newscasters.

5.3.4 Technological affordances

Comparing offline with online news, Chung et al. (2012) concluded that trustworthiness and expertise are, for both, central factors for assessing credibility, and participants in their study rated online, independent news media lowest (in their study Drudge Report and Axis of Logic). Only the online specific affordance hypertexuality (next to multimodality and interactivity) significantly impacted the perceived credibility of news.google.com and news.yahoo.com – two online news index platforms. "This is probably because index type news sources offer links to diverse news sites that enhance users' information seeking opportunities and provide them with easier ways to navigate through large amounts of information or specific news items in depth" (Chung et al., 2012: 181).

Metzger and colleagues (2003) found additional, online-specific factors impacting perceived credibility: "the ease of publishing professionally appearing content, the

vast amount of information and information producers online, the convergence of genres, and the malleability of digital information" (Metzger et al., 2003: 311). Like TV, Metzger and colleagues (2003) concludes, websites offer minute-to-minute coverage of issues and events. However, these reports are predominantly text-driven, making websites more like newspapers than TV. Therefore, the expectation was that websites were perceived as credible as newspapers, but Ang & Nadarajan (1999) "point out that the chance for error in news is magnified on the Web due to unlimited capacity, high speed, and use of hyperlinking from source to source" (in: Metzger et al., 2003: 311). So, due to the pressure to publish immediately, little time was left for verification, endangering the perceived credibility of online media. "This result", explain Metzger et al. (2003: 311), "may be due to the fact that people use the same criteria to judge the credibility of news across both print and online formats".

This review of literature concerning perceived credibility of sources, messages, and media both off and online, and technical affordances of online information and news as factors in perceiving credibility brings us to two interrelated questions concerning the perceived credibility of Dutch live blogs. First, we would like to know how, and which elements (sources, message, or media) are perceived as credible by avid users of live blogs. Second, we would like to know how avid users of live blogs perceive the credibility of the format. In our method section we explain how we are answering these research questions.

5.4 METHOD

To answer our two research questions, we conducted six focus groups with thirty-six respondents in total. Previous research about online perceived credibility is mostly done by surveys or experiments (Hsieh & Li, 2020; Naab et al., 2020; Shariff, 2020; Thomas et al., 2019; Willemsen et al., 2012; Wölker & Powell, 2021). In contrast, we wanted to ask avid users of live blogs to reflect on their evaluation of credibility, which elements are perceived as credible and how these perceptions are formed when confronted with a live blog. Therefore, we choose focus groups as a qualitative research method.

5.4.1 Respondents

We selected avid users (all over 18 years old) of live blogs who, at least, followed live blogs once a week or when a live blog of their interest starts. We prefer avid users here, because to reflect on credibility it requires knowledge of and experience with the format. Our second criterium for selection concerned specific preferences for (and therewith experience with and knowledge of) breaking news, politics, or sports live blogs. Previous research concerning content and makers of live blogs also distinguished between these three themes. We did so to maximize differences (in event, theme and therewith content and motivations) in search for similar patterns between sources, language use, routines, and conventions and, in this paper, perception of credibility.

In total we conducted six focus groups, two with respondents who read breaking news blogs, two with people who regularly read sports blogs and two with people who keep

track of blogs covering political events (see Appendix for the live blogs we discussed with respondents). To answer our research questions, we choose to maximize the differences between users and live blogs to find similarities concerning the perceived credibility of live blogs. The focus groups were held between February 24th and October 14th, 2022. The focus groups took one and a half to two hours each. Most of the focus groups took place by one or more respondents at home; two took place at a university (classroom) and one in the office of a brewery. All locations were quiet places with a large table where everyone could sit comfortably and conduct several assignments.

5.4.2 Assignment

To conduct the focus groups, we constructed a discussion guide with three assignments for the respondents. First, we asked the respondents to note what stands out in the live blog that we selected for them. The focus groups concentrated on six different live blogs, two concerning a breaking news event, two a sports event and two a political event. Table 1 (Appendix) provides details of these blogs.

After welcoming the respondents, we explained them the goal and procedure of the focus group and asked them to sign an informed consent form. Participants brought their preferred device to be able to read a live blog, some respondents brought their iPad, others read the live blogs on their iPhone or laptop. We asked them to fill in the URL of a previous selected live blog covering crisis, or politics, or sport to start the first assignment. Then, we asked them to read the live blog as they are used to do (individually) while taking notes on post-its on things that stood out for them and writing down what they thought was good and what was not good about the live blog. This first round had three interrelating goals. First, we wanted to let respondents get used with the live blog they had not read before and find their way around in the live blog. Second, we wanted to let respondents get acquainted with the setting of a focus group. Respondents usually read live blogs on their own, not in groups, with a discussion afterwards. Third, we wanted to let respondents get used to taking notes when reading the live blog. After taking notes, we asked respondents to, first, read out loud what points they had written down. Then we asked them to react to each other's points. This first round also made it easier for respondents to discuss positive and negative evaluations with others, making sure individuals felt safe and secure enough to take minority views.

After discussing what stood out, we then asked respondents to read the same live blog again, but then focusing on the evaluation of different elements of credibility. Therefore, we asked specifically to reflect on sources, messages, and channels as well as interactivity, hyper textuality, and multimodality as factors for the assessment of credibility, following our theoretical findings concerning perceived credibility. We asked respondents to take notes again while reading the live blog. We did so because evaluating is complex, and discussing these evaluations might lead to forgetting observations respondents made when they were reading the live blog. We then asked respondents to elaborate on their findings, pointing in the live blog where they found elements (in)credible and how they perceived credibility concerning these elements.

After discussing remarks concerning the perceived credibility of the live blogs, we asked respondents for an overall assessment of the format's credibility. How did they, despite or perhaps because what they noted in previous rounds, evaluate the credibility of the live blogs? This final question had two interrelating goals. First, suggestions for bettering live blogs are also an implicit critique on current live blogs. To know how to improve them is only possible after a critical analysis of the current blogs. Second, asking respondents about the overall credibility of live blogs, respondents had the chance to relate elements which were discussed during the second assignment.

We developed a code frame for both research questions based on our literature review concerning perceived credibility. For RQ 1 we determined defining; message credibility; online credibility; receiver variables; source credibility; trust as most important subjects to analyse our transcribed focus groups. For RQ2 we established assessing online credibility; importance of (online) credibility; live blogging and credibility; and speed of production in relation to credibility for the analysis of our focus groups. The authors discussed the results of this first round and based on the findings and discussion, added new codes (Freeman, 2017; Saldaña, 2021). These additional codes were chosen to cover extensive debate between respondents and concerned amongst others the references to other media; selection and relevance of information in live blogs; (lack of) authorship; and user experiences as subjects discussed but not before mentioned in previous research as factors to perceive credibility. After this second round, authors discussed this code frame again and a final, third round of coding was conducted to coherently code with the established codes, based on our literature review and the codes we added based on our first round. All coding was done in Atlas.ti.

5.5 RESULTS

We asked respondents to reflect on the perceived credibility of live blogs asking them first to note what they thought was noteworthy (for any reason thinkable) and then asked them which elements contributed to (or detrimental to) the perceived credibility of live blogs. Four themes were central, already known in the literature regarding credibility: sources, messages, media and technical affordances (of this online format). Previous research indicates that these themes are important for the perception of credibility. Our data suggests that within these themes respondents further nuanced our understanding. We structured our results according to our theoretical approach into source credibility, message credibility, medium credibility, and technical affordances.

5.5.1 Source credibility

Foremost, respondents explained that sources, either experts, formal or both, contributed to the credibility of the post. Particularly when these expert sources are presented as primary sources without intervention of the journalist, by for example, re-posting a tweet in a live blog. One respondent, disentangling a political live blog covering the crisis in Ukraine and the possible disastrous consequences

for the nuclear powerplant in Chernobyl, very much trusted tweets used from the International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring the power plant:

> *"What I noticed and what I found was that sometimes a tweet was used where I understood the relevance very well. Like the first one from the head of the agency, who then says, 'How are we doing now?" That comes directly from the source it's about."*

An important factor in the perception of credibility were perceived stakes and interests of sources that were selected for the live blogs. So, in a direct confrontation of two respondents, Zelensky's claims were both perceived as credible and not credible. Zelensky was a credible source for some respondents because he is the president of the Ukraine and 'in the position to know' what happens in his country. For others, his position made him not credible, due to the interests he had.

> *Speaker 1: "Because the news report says Zelenski, and then it's up to me to determine whether I find Zelenski's opinion reliable or not. Well, in that case, I do find Zelenski himself reliable ... So, I would look at it differently, but it's up to the reader themselves to assign value to that. (...)."*
> *Speaker 2: "It's not an unclear source, Zelenski is not an unclear source, but an unreliable one! He is a player in the field, yes, he may be considered sacred here, not by me, certainly not, but that doesn't mean what he says is true."*

Some respondents even made a more nuanced remark within this evaluation: they stated that some sources, even if they were not credible, had to be selected in a live blog to prevent a very negative evaluation for the journalist's credibility. These sources could not simply be left out by journalists, and consequently, these 'problematic sources' had to be part of the report, because of their contribution to the event.

Discussing a live blog covering a political debate, a respondent had great difficulty with the credibility assessment of politicians of the right-wing party Forum voor Democratie (Forum for Democracy). According to the respondents, opinions about this party are deeply polarized in Dutch society, and the representation of them (and their views) in a blog covering a political debate raise questions among the respondents how to assess the credibility of their statements: should they be incorporated as part of the covered event, or should these statements be banned from reporting because of their quality? A consensus was reached that journalist had to cover these sources, but adding quotation marks to signal the information was not of the journalist, but the member of parliament.

> *"Yeah, and like Forum for Democracy, well, [journalists] do it well. They do indeed mention them [and] their opinion, and that's allowed in a democratic country [...]. They just put it out there. But if he doesn't... Those quotation marks are important. In some way. They could also omit them, that's possible ... I find it very difficult. I really find it difficult. How should I read the blog [without them]?"*

Because the journalists had, according to the respondents such an important role in evaluating the credibility of sources and selecting these sources (and their views) in or out of the live blog, authorship was extensively debated among respondents. They recognized the importance of the journalist-as-source and not only as an invisible source selector, or the so -called gatekeeper. One respondent recognized the grey area between gatekeeper and source as an important trait of the craft:

> *"Well, not to pass judgment, but indeed, always saying that this politician thinks this and that, also tried to handle it well with quotation marks... all the time. Because that, I think, is a point of criticism you can receive if you start writing things like "member of parliament asked the wrong question", [because] that implies a value judgment. So, [they are] trying to be very neutral and I do find that impressive."*

Respondents then further deepened the discussion about credibility by pointing towards authorship of the live blog. Respondents, analyzing different live blogs, wondered who made the texts. Not knowing who wrote posts in live blogs, made them critical towards their credibility. Analyzing the credibility of a live blog covering the crisis in Ukraine, one respondent remarked:

> *"Who writes this? Is it someone who is there on the spot? Or do we see this from satellite images or... because the last part also states, "intense fighting was taking place around the former nuclear power plant this afternoon." That seems like an observation, but who made that observation? And that's what's missing. In these kinds of pieces."*

This remark shows the complexity of assessing source's credibility by avid users of live blogs. The assessment of source credibility seems to be multi-layered and followed in different focus groups a similar sequence: first, the source and presentation of the source is important in the assessment of credibility. Then the source's views are considered. This consideration of views lead to assessing the motivations of the journalists to present some views, and not others, leading up to the question of authorship and the transformation of the journalists-as-gatekeeper of sources to the journalist-as-source.

5.5.2 Message credibility

Credibility is not only based on sources, but also on messages. The first and foremost characteristic of a message is its language. Respondents evaluated certain wording or complexity in language-use (like jargon) as negative for the credibility of that message.

> *"I'm watching and what strikes me is the bureaucratic and military language used in the explanation."*

Assessing the credibility of a live blog covering a political debate, one respondent assessed a post as not credible due to its heading 'Slechtste jongetje van de klas' (The black sheep of the class), mentioned during the debate by a politician. The message of the political debate was, according to the respondent, more complex and not only the summary that the Netherlands were internationally not doing right. This message was too short sighted:

> *"... that writer, they pick that out. And yeah, do I want that? Don't I just want to read it myself and decide for myself what should grab my attention or what I find important?"*

Second, all respondents in all focus groups covering breaking news, politics and sports found the absence of emotion evidence for its factuality. Even when this led to simplification or reduction of information in the message covering an event:

> *"Well, I like to receive a report that is told in an emotionless manner. That people simply state the facts they observe and translate them into a piece of text. And I already know that when they do that, a portion of the actual information is always lost because it's something complex. But as they add more interpretation to that factual event, you see... You state a fact and then you can interpret something, but if they already include an emotional explanation in the factual first sentence, or at least that's what I expect, then I find it less reliable."*

An important indicator for factuality were statistics. Although all live blogs had some statistics that were highly regarded as factual, statistics were especially seen as very important indicators for assessments of credibility in sport blogs. This is understandable, because matches, games or races are highly structured events with clear rules, starts, middles and endings. At the same time, they are very emotional events full of fandom and passion. Consequently, sport events generate a lot of statistics (fastest, best, most, et cetera) and emotions alike, and message credibility was assessed as an optimum (and debatable) balance between (statistical) factuality and passions – or, in rhetorical terms: an optimal balance between logos and pathos. Third, respondents stated that the time between messages (or posts) in relation to the information in these posts is an important factor in the assessment of their credibility. Consequently, specifically for this format, there seems to be a continuum between a lot of information in a short time (which is assessed as problematic because, according to respondents, journalists are summarizing too much) and a long time without (a lot of) information (suggesting nothing important happens and therefore raising questions about live blogging the event in the first place).

> *"If I purely look at the information about the teams in the match, Volendam didn't get much exposure. I mentioned gaps in the timeline, and I don't find the clutter surrounding it relevant to this match... Oh, and the posts about the preparation*

only focus on Emmen. So, only Lukine [manager of Emmen, authors] is interviewed, not Wim de Jong [manager of Volendam, authors]. I think he was there too."

Finally, an important indicator for message credibility is the use of quotation marks. Respondents mentioned these as important indicators for the assessment of message credibility. At the same time, respondents also made a distinction between the message and its content. Quotation marks indicates that someone said something, and this act of speaking was, when indicated by quotation marks, seen as very credible. The content of the speech act – the message between the quotation marks – was still highly scrutinized by the respondents. So, respondents accepted the fact that someone said something, then discussed the motivation for the journalist to quote what was said and finally assessed the credibility of the message between the quotation marks.

"For example, when the NOS [public broadcaster] quotes the British Ministry of Defence, it is presented as a fact. However, what the British Ministry of Defence says is not necessarily a fact. They are just another interested government entity that has historically lied, so why should we assume they are telling the truth now? In my opinion, that's precisely what they're doing: "Here, this is what they say, take a look and decide for yourself what you think of it"."

Consequently, as with source credibility, the assessment of message credibility seems to be multi-layered. The (right) choices of language are important indicators for credibility. Then, the balance between factuality and emotion, between logos and pathos, is seen as an important quality of the message. Finally, reported speech and the use of quotation marks to indicate speech acts were important indicators for the assessment of message credibility as well. Still, respondents scrutinized the message between the quotation marks, weighing their factuality and the motives of journalists to report direct speech.

5.5.3 Medium credibility

Then, respondents evaluate credibility not only through sources and messages, but also by medium. Respondents stick to their favorite platform and directly mentioned the comparison of the live blog they were asked to analyze with live blogs they are used to read themselves. Doing this comparison, some respondents explicitly named public news organizations more credible than commercial platforms for covering breaking news and politics. They found that these public platforms were more neutral than commercial platforms, although they could not name specific examples in the platform as evidence. Others found commercial platforms for sports better suited to cover events than public platforms, because commercial platforms understood the importance of fandom better than (more) neutral public platforms. Here again, respondents could not point to evidence in these blogs to underpin their 'feelings'.

Respondents constantly compared the media platform of the live blog that they were asked to evaluate with other media platforms in general. They did so by comparing brands, or more specific, by comparing content from one platform with the other. In this comparison, Dutch live blogs constantly 'competed' with foreign media platforms, like the *BBC*, New York Times, statistical football-apps, or with one specific Dutch platform: *NOS* Teletekst. This constant comparison of media was an integral strategy to evaluate credibility. One respondent compared the Dutch public broadcaster *NOS* with the *BBC* regarding a live blog covering the crisis in Ukraine.

> *"So yeah, you rely on NOS [Dutch public radio & television], and yeah, then I think, well, one plus one is two, because NOS is obviously just very cautious in that regard, I think, and more factual, et cetera, than […] any other blog."*

Even though the *NOS* is seen as credible, the *BBC* is seen as more credible due to the presence of a correspondent on the spot.

> *"At the BBC, our journalists in Kharkiv are also present every morning, and … And then you think, yeah, they know what they're talking about. Nowhere in these blogs [by the NOS] do I find anything like "it's from John, Peter, or Tom."*

Less than source or message credibility, medium credibility is not multi-layered. Respondents have strong preferences for media to follow 'their' live blogs. Interesting, though, is the result that respondents constantly compare live blogs (of their preference) with other media. Live blogs are not consumed in isolation but are actively compared with other brands.

5.5.4 Technolgical affordances

Live blogs are online news platforms. Following Chung et al. (2012) and Metzger et al. (2003), hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality can contribute to the perceived credibility of online news. For instance, respondents mentioned that video or videos from twitter accounts (multimodality) increased the credibility of live blogs. Videos show what happens and are regarded as credible reports of an event. At the same time, videos and tweets led to extensive discussion why a journalists embedded certain tweets, referring to the motivation for and selection of sources, as discussed above. So, for instance, one respondent analysed a video from a live blog covering the crisis in Ukraine.

> *"Yeah, you know, I assume they'll be addressed and arrested by the police, because you often see that in the video as well. Yeah, and there's another video like that indeed, where someone (…) shows a tank driving over a car. Well, you want to show those, but usually they're very blurry videos. Yeah, and first, you need to see the whole context properly, like where the tank is and where the car is. And then you'll roughly see what was already mentioned in one or two sentences, and then you go, yeah."*

Links in live blogs can be used for backgrounding stories and are evaluated as valuable and credible as well. For some respondents, these links are indications for the quality of the report and their absence an indication for a negative evaluation of credibility. For them, reports without links, mean there is nothing important there to report or contextualize, which attenuates claims made by journalists.

> *"I see that quite often when [journalists] referenced [to] an article. They would then provide a link saying, "This happened yesterday, and there's a report on it." If they don't have [such a link], then you kind of start wondering if it's true or not?"*

Embedding material from social media led to positive perception of credibility (see above by the section about source credibility). However, embedding material could also backfire because respondents were distracted from the live blog and had hard times not only finding the live blog back, but, when they did, finding back the position in the live blog where they left.

> *"What I find annoying in live blogs, and what they also do, is including tweets from other parties in between. Because then, if you really want to watch that video, you must go to another page, and I find that really irritating. While I often want to see it, I just want it to play right on that page."*

Finally, to our surprise, during the focus group, respondents found out that the responsiveness of their live blog was highly correlating with their platform of choice (mobile phone, tables, laptop) and the operating system (iOS, Android, Windows), leading to different user experiences. Learning how to optimize their user experience from other respondents during the focus group, led for some respondents to a better user experience and, consequently, a positive evaluation of a live blog's credibility. To summarize, technical affordances can have a positive effect on the perception of credibility. However, at the same time they form a risk. Dead or wrong links, the complexity of using a live blog (UX) or the lack of backgrounding by links have led to negative perceptions of credibility for the live blogs.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study looks in the issue of credibility of live blogs according to the users. First, how do avid live blog users perceive the credibility of elements of live blogs? And second, how do they perceive the credibility of live blogs as a news format? Our data suggests that the answer for both questions is that user are quite critical towards live blogs. The ease with which respondents scrutinize source credibility, message credibility and medium credibility as well as technological affordances of live blogs as an online format, suggests active use and not passive consumption of news in live blogs. Respondents are constantly reflecting on the content of the format based on their extensive body of knowledge about events of their interest, previous experience with live blogs as a news format, and their heavy news use in general.

Respondents signal imbalances in reported views due to the selection of sources and they miss criteria for the choices made. Consequently, they question the expertise of journalists as many respondents also discussed which sources were left out by journalists, broadening the discussion about the representation of views in live blogs. What often followed when discussing the credibility of sources was a discussion about journalist's choices for certain sources. From there, respondents wondered who the author of (parts of the) live blog was. Authorship, some explained, contains important cues for expertise and trustworthiness, and therewith credibility. So, not knowing who the author was, led to a negative evaluation of sources, messages, and the format. One focus group even concluded that a live blog covering the crisis in Ukraine must been written by the trainee, just fooling around in a corner of the editorial room. This made them conclude that lot of information was not credible, because it was not produced by experienced journalists.

This constant discussion of sources, views and authorship was somewhat balanced by the perceived credibility of messages (or posts, as in live blogs). The use of quotation marks was seen as contributing to the credibility of these messages, though respondents were still ritical about the credibility of what was reported directly. As Tuchman (1978: 97) remarks, quotation marks are technical devices that "makes the story factual" without the necessity to check and verify what is said. Still, this tension between quoting and quoting what is right, was not only felt by the respondents, but also discussed.

Finally, some technical affordances (hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality) of live blogs were positively contributing to the credibility of live blogs but had some risks as well. So, videos were regarded as credible content, because of their 'what you see is what you get'-quality, as were links to background articles. However, respondents found it troublesome to leave the live blog and watch a video or read article and find their way back to where they were. Some suggested a 'fold out'-option: when clicking on a video, a layer appears over the live blog with the video. After finishing, this layer can be closed again to return at the same point as respondents were before leaving the live blog.

Concluding, as mentioned in the introduction, Tsfati and Capella (2003) rightly pointed out that people consume media, but at the same time do not trust them. In 2003, the argument to solve this paradox was the absence of alternatives. The proliferation of live blogs makes it possible to tune in and to not drop out. Respondents who need their daily fix of news can follow live blogs, maybe despite the critical remarks they have regarding the perceived credibility of live blogs.

Our six focus groups had all one thing in common – respondents effortlessly discussed, analysed, and contextualized complex concepts regarding source, message, medium credibility, and technological affordances given the uncertainties, as the narrative is fragmented, the information is presented by a diverse range of multimodal sources, while the editor is often not present at the place of the event. Users of live blogs are dedicated news followers with an impressive body of knowledge regarding their events of interest. Respondents seem to enjoy scrutinizing the news,

live blogs feed them with the content they need to do so. Using a live blog is, more than consuming news, it is an active way to relate to an unfolding world, where uncertainties and fragmentation are not obstruction, but motivations to look, read, and listen further, like in a detective or an adventure game. Doing so, respondents seem confident enough to assess the credibility of live blogs by 'repairing' what goes wrong, contextualizing what is in their eyes seen as a too narrow interpretation of events, and embrace the complexities of an unfolding reality.

Still, the results of this paper must be dealt with some caution. First, because we choose avid live blog users, the richness and complexity of the arguments given for the perception of source, message and medium credibility, and technical affordances must be somewhat nuanced. We choose avid users to debate the perceived credibility of live blogs. We did so, because we did not want that our respondents first had to get acquainted with a relatively new journalistic format. We wanted to be sure that the format itself was not an issue of conversation or debate, but the perceived credibility of the live blogs covering their favourite theme (breaking news, politics, or sport) was the issue.

Second, previous research concerning public of live blogs conducted experiments or surveys with more respondents than in our focus groups (Hsieh & Li, 2020; Naab et al., 2020; Shariff, 2020; Thomas et al., 2019; Willemsen et al., 2012; Wölker & Powell, 2021). These studies concerned, for example, the uses and gratifications (Pantic, 2020), or, only partially, credibility of live blogs (Lee, 2022). In Pantic's study, respondents were predominantly undergraduate students without discriminating between themes of live blogs (breaking news, politics, or sports), while Lee (2020) had 220 participants conduct an experiment with identical news stories, presented in a form of a live blog or pyramid style. The result (no effect) is very valuable but leaves unanswered the question which elements in live blogs respondents perceived as credible. Consequently, our focus was on the subjectivity of (avid) live blog users and found focus groups more fit to answer that question.

Finally, to our surprise we found respondents evaluating live blogs seemingly effortless comparing sources, and messages between live blogs and live blogs of different media by heart. This observation is a valuable clue for live blog makers – they have a very expert public that not only understands that selection in information must be made, but often also knows which information is selected out of these live blogs. Consequently, they compare their 'private' expertise with the published expertise of media organizations and, sometimes, they conclude they are more expert. Then, all respondents explained, live blogs lost their credibility. But only for a while, because immediacy gives journalists with every new post a new chance to come up with credible news again.

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APPENDIX 1

Corpus live blogs discussed with respondents

Theme	Date of publication	Header (EN/NL)
Breaking News	February 24th 2022	Russians continue to advance • Airport near Kiev and Chernobyl nuclear power plant captured (Russen rukken verder op • Vliegveld bij Kiev en kerncentrale Tsjernobyl ingenomen)
Breaking News	September 12th 2022	LIVE | Kiev: 'About 500 km² reclaimed in the south'; Calls for Putin's resignation in Moscow and St. Petersburg (LIVE | Kiev: 'Zo'n 500 km² heroverd in zuiden'; Roep om aftreden Poetin in Moskou en St. Petersburg)
Politics	May 19th 2022	Rutte 'is not lying', but he still needs to review his text message archive (Rutte 'liegt niet', maar hij moet toch nog eens zijn sms-archief in)
Politics	June 24th 2022	Parliament disappointed with Minister Staghouwer's farming plan • 'big fail' (Kamer teleurgesteld in boerenplan minister Staghouwer • 'dikke onvoldoende')
Sport	July 18th 2022	Dutch Lionesses narrowly miss out on group stage victory in goal-filled final minutes, France awaits in quarterfinals (Oranje Leeuwinnen na doelpuntrijke slotfase nét geen groepswinnaar, Frankrijk wacht in kwartfinale)
Sport	October 14th 2022	Emmen and Volendam draw • Vitesse now bottom of the Eredivisie. (Emmen en Volendam spelen gelijk • Vitesse nu hekkensluiter eredivisie)

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions & Discussion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

I started this thesis with the main question: how is journalistic credibility established in live blogs? To answer this question, I introduced the concept of the pursuit of credibility, indicating that credibility is a public evaluation of a professional attempt to convince the public with content of their version of reality. This pursuit of credibility, therefore, includes the content of credibility, the realization of credibility, and the evaluation of credibility (see Figure 1). With these concepts, empirically underpinned in four chapters, I will answer the main research question of how credibility is established in live blogs (6.1). After answering this question, I will reflect on the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of my thesis (paragraph 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 respectively), and discuss the findings in this conclusion.

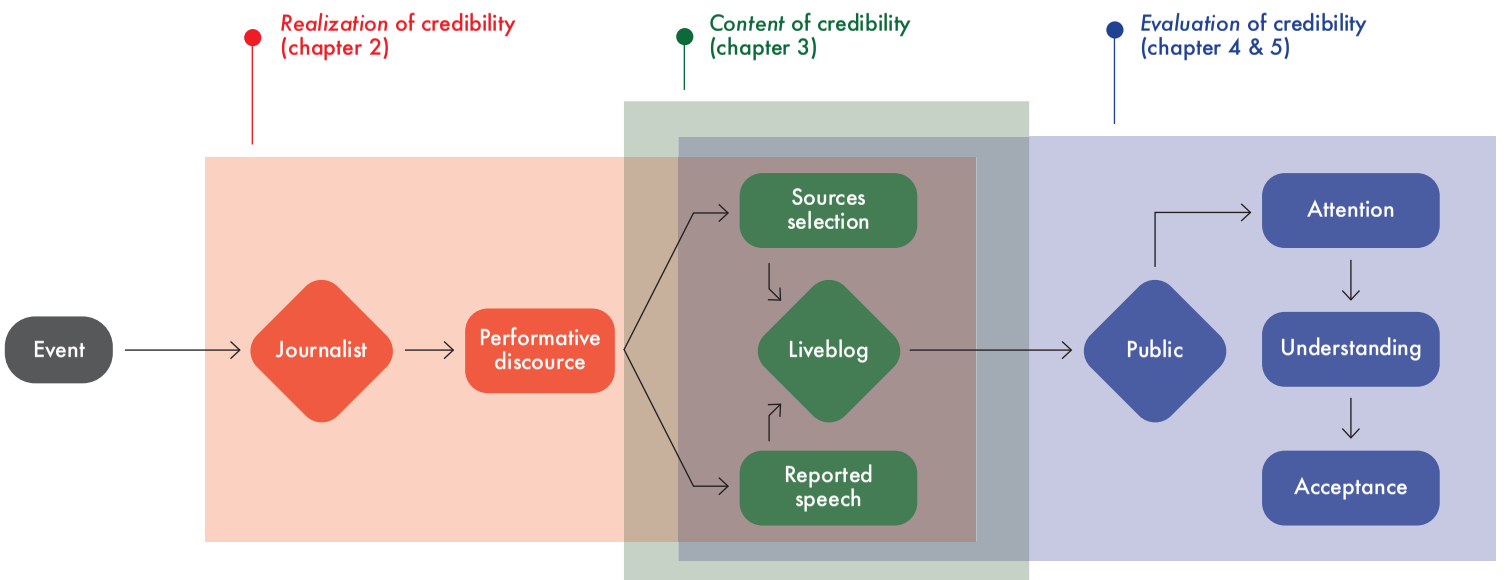

Figure 1 Stages in the pursuit of credibility in live blogs

6.2 REALIZATION OF CREDIBILITY

In Chapter 2, I empirically underpinned the realization of credibility by interviewing journalists performing discourse (the red dotted square, left in Figure 1). Conventions and routines help journalists cope with the epistemic challenges posed by uncertain information that must be transformed under immediate circumstances into credible content for live blogs. Journalists covering events in live blogs claimed, acquired, and justified knowledge on the go, leading to conventions for the realization of credibility. First, despite working with different platforms and covering different events at different moments, respondents shared in their answers the conceptualization of a communicative goal, channels for communication concerning routines and conventions, and assumptions about subject and episteme concerning the use of the genre, echoing Swales's (1990) conception of discourse community as described in the introduction of this thesis. In contrast to other genres of (online) journalism, live blogs have a strong social and organizational convention for production. I found in my study that live-blogging is a predominantly social event, and therefore, a different activity than individual contributions to news platforms. Liveblogging is realizing credibility with each other, incorporating debates concerning choices in their productions.

For politics, journalists covering debates with live blogs have expertise that resides within a network of colleagues. An important convention to acquire knowledge is social, by contacting expert colleagues on the spot. So, acquiring knowledge for planned events (sports and politics) is part expertise (knowing about the game and politics), and part technical dexterity (asking, scrutinizing, and embedding information delivered by third parties and colleagues) done by individuals with a high degree of editorial autonomy.

In contrast to blogs covering politics or sports, it is an important convention to covering breaking news with at least two journalists. To do their work, they have a gatekeeping role in the production of live blogs: they are in constant and continuous contact with other journalists in the organization. In contrast to debates and sports, breaking news is covered by a team with distinct roles that actively acquire knowledge, indicating not only lesser editorial autonomy of live blogging journalists, but also of their direct colleagues, who now must share their knowledge and give access to (exclusive) contacts and sources needed to acquire more and more reliable knowledge.

This discourse community of live bloggers is constantly weighing (ir)relevance with (un)certainty, due to the immediate character of live blogs. Not writing an article, as regular online journalists do, but writing posts (updates), live bloggers have an immediate challenge with this balancing act—journalists do not have a coherent narrative after the facts, as with online news, but report on news (or politics or sports) the moment it is taking place. This led to the evaluating information.

One convention was quite clear: if information was irrelevant and uncertain, journalists did not publish. When it was evaluated as certain and relevant, the convention was as clear – then information was published immediately. In between

was information that was relevant but uncertain, or certain but irrelevant. Both evaluations led to the convention to justify their choices to publish. Journalists explained they did so by either referring to the relevance for the public, or by attributing uncertainty in wording, using hedges, and therewith managing accountability concerning the information published.

Two more conventions concerning the use of sources were found in our data. First, when uncertain, respondents' claim to knowledge is based on the authority of the (formal) source. To balance the importance of the information with its questionable factuality, the ethos of the police's spokesperson legitimizes the claim. Dealing with eye witnesses, respondents indicate that they check the coherence of the eyewitness's stories, meaning they want more of them to tell the same story before they use the information in their live blog, or they want to know the development of the situation to make checking the eyewitness accounts possible, using them at the end of the event.

These routines and conventions are all used but are also still in development, as is the discourse community of live bloggers. New applications of live blogs ask for new routines and conventions, like the long-lasting live blogs covering COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine—both examples of new content answering to a new situation, and therefore, possibly demanding new routines and conventions. Within the genre of live blogs, we see differences in the communicative goals of live blogs (as will be further reflected on in the discussion), and hence in the discourse communities of live blogs covering breaking news, politics, or sports. These discourse communities seem to differ, as data shows, in the editorial autonomy (McEnnis, 2016) of the journalists. This autonomy seems to be highest in sports blogs. Journalists—often specialists—cover games, matches, and races on their own. Political events (debates, campaigns, hearings) are often covered in live blogs by one journalist who uses networks of knowledge, constantly asking colleagues (with knowledge about certain dossiers) to contribute. Covering politics is a very social activity. Third, when covering breaking news, journalists are part of the much broader network of colleagues; they're often not writing themselves, but gatekeeping contributions by others concerning the crisis that is covered. Covering breaking news in live blogs has the lowest amount of editorial autonomy, and is, for those matters, a highly social activity.

6.3 CONTENT OF CREDIBILITY

In Chapter 3, I empirically underpinned the content of credibility, focusing on the selection of sources and reported speech in live blogs (the green dotted square, left in Figure 1). Based on my data, I concluded that the coverage of breaking news, politics, and sports events was mostly done by narration, interpretative content written by journalists. When journalists use sources to cover events, they mainly choose formal sources, and therewith formal views. They mostly quote ad verbatim (direct speech) to perform discourse in their pursuit of credibility. So, despite the potential to be polyvocal (more and more different voices) in live blogs, and incorporate more and more different views on events evolving, journalists have a clear preference for formal

sources, and therefore, narrow down readings of events to some of the most trusted official accounts.

Due to the emergence of social media, the promise of online journalism was a more polyvocal selection of sources, thus, there were also more and more different stances in journalists' reports. Rosen (2012) summarized the emancipation of the "accidental journalists" (Allen, 2013) as "The people formerly known as the audience," indicating their active participation in the production of news. However, this potential is not met. The public potential to react to what happens (regarding natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or other breaking news), or to participate in what happens (political debates or sports), and thereby be open to more alternative views on the developing story, is minimal. To be credible, it seems, journalists reduce uncertainty regarding the event covered by following official accounts, and as much as possible, represent them in the words of formal sources (direct speech) or the words of journalists themselves (indirect speech, narration). Therefore, they do in live blogs what they say about live blogging (see above): constantly weighing (ir)relevance with (un)certainty, and justifying choices made by attribution and using hedges or by (in)direct speech, and therewith managing accountability about what is said.

However, one strategy to reduce uncertainty—using expert sources—is hardly used by journalists covering events in live blogs. I found that expert sources were very rarely used, despite the possibility for journalists to organize expertise in advance for live blogs covering planned events, such as political events or sports. For crises—both complex and dynamic events—expertise was hardly organized in advance or during an event. One explanation could be the sheer speed and immediacy of production, which makes the organization of expertise difficult, but as mentioned, this only counts for the unplanned events, not for the planned ones. Another explanation is the discourse community mentioned above. For live bloggers with a high degree of editorial autonomy, the organization of expertise is not a primary (or secondary) concern: they ask for specific knowledge within the social network of colleagues, not in external networks of experts.

6.4 EVALUATING CREDIBILITY

I empirically underpin the use of live blogs in Chapter 4, and the evaluation of credibility in Chapter 5 (the black dotted square, left in Figure 1). To understand if live blogs are accepted by the user, we must first analyze who uses live blogs to become informed about specific events. The survey study (Chapter 4)—conducted during the first months of COVID-19 in the Netherlands—shows that 24 percent of the respondents read a live blog daily in the first month. However, this number of users decreases in the following months. Users of live blogs consume a variety of different media—including live blogs—to become informed about an unfolding issue. For them, consuming news through live blogs is a way to diminish their uncertainty about what is going on. They do not want to miss out on the news. And this feeling of not wanting to miss out is even reinforced when consuming live blogs. This provides us with explanations on the use of live blogs.

To understand if users of live blogs accept them as a credible format, I then conducted focus groups with avid users of live blogs, asking them how they evaluate the credibility of a live blog. Data showed that avid users of live blogs are highly critical. Respondents scrutinized source credibility, message credibility, and medium credibility, as well as the technological affordances of live blogs as an online format. In doing so, respondents constantly mobilized an extensive body of knowledge concerning their favorite subject to reflect on the content of live blogs. Using direct speech elevated the source's credibility, but not automatically the source's message credibility. Respondents further signaled imbalances in reported views due to the selection of specific sources, and they missed the criteria for choices made. Consequently, they questioned the expertise of journalists, fed by their own knowledge concerning alternative sources they heard and read about in other media they followed.

So, how can we explain this critical stance towards live blogs, and at the same time, their popularity among respondents? The avid users in my focus groups are dedicated news followers with an impressive body of knowledge regarding their events of interest. They are constantly aware of the news, paying a lot of attention to developments concerning their subject of interest. By doing so, they understand the news and are very critical in accepting or rejecting what is told. Still, respondents seem to enjoy scrutinizing the news; live blogs feed them with the content they need to do so. Using a live blog is more than consuming news; it is an active way to relate to an unfolding world, where uncertainties and fragmentation are not obstructions, but motivations to look, read, and listen further, like in a detective or adventure game.

6.5 LIVE BLOG AS GENRE IN PURSUIT OF CREDIBILITY

To answer the main research question, how journalistic credibility is established in live blogs, we must accept that credibility is not a characteristic, quality, or attribution of journalism, but the outcome of the evaluation of journalism. Credibility is a process that starts even before journalists start covering reality. Before a word is noted, and the cursor is blinking in the left-upper corner of the screen, journalists choose a genre to report on reality. That choice determines what is written – like a secret power over the journalists' autonomy and creativity. It is genre that forces journalists to take the social-cultural setting of discourse into account, transcending particularities of makers, content, and the public through a social view of writing. Doing genre studies can "reveal certain philosophical and moral underpinnings that guides acts of journalistic production and representation that news workers may not even be conscious of" (Buozis & Creech, 2017: online). So, genre studies reveal routines and conventions for journalists, making explicit what is still implicit. At the same time, genre prescribes discourse in such a way that effects of credibility can occur, and the public gets what it expects to get. Based on these expectations, trust can be built between makers and the public through discourse.

We defined genre as a social action, based on the recurrence of situations or events. Political debates, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, matches, races, and games recur,

and in covering these recurrent situations, conventions and routines evolve and are established. Every time such an event must be covered—exigence in rhetorical terms—journalists fall back to these conventions. Yes, there are alternative ways to cover such an event, but these are not chosen (yet). And every time the public follows these events in the news, they evaluate the journalistic attempt according to their expectations.

In short, genre organizes professional discourse to fulfill public expectations, even before an event or situation is transferred to the news. When genre is in action, public expectations are met, and effects of credibility can be established. The same holds true for live blogs. They are a specific genre in journalism that differs from other journalistic genres. Live blogs are characterized by a developing narrative, a diversity of modalities (text, photo, data, social media), and variable timelines between two hours and two years are used to produce immediate news by journalists, which is tolerated by the public. Live blogs covering politics and breaking news are the result of a very social production process with a specific communicative purpose: immediacy over relevance, over uncertainty.

How credibility is established in live blogs is determined by an implicit and silent contract of expectations between producers and the public over the content of the live blog, with effects of credibility as a result. Credibility is the raison d'être of journalism; it is a constant mission of journalists to persuade the public to accept their version of reality. Journalism is, in essence, a profession of second-hand (even third hand) knowledge transferring from the journalist (realizing credibility) through content (content of credibility) towards the public (evaluation of credibility). Luckily, journalists can fall back on genre to establish credibility in their content. And, luckily, the public has knowledge about these genres and evaluates journalistic attempts of persuasion. Consequently, to understand this implicit contract of expectations organized by genre, the journalists' thriving for, and the public's evaluation of credibility must be analyzed together. That is exactly what I tried to analyze in pursuit of credibility in this thesis. This pursuit of credibility is not without theoretical, methodological, and practical consequences for the study of live blogs specifically and journalism studies in general. I will, hereafter, discuss these consequences.

6.6 THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES

One theoretical consequence of the pursuit of credibility concerns the unit of analysis: the pursuit of credibility is studied by interviewing journalists, analyzing the content of live blogs, sending out a survey to news consumers, and organizing focus groups with avid users. Consequently, the pursuit of credibility is established within and between all three phases of the communication process: sender > content > receiver. The pursuit of credibility, so to speak, requires a holistic approach to the simplest communication process. I argued that credibility is an aim of journalists to persuade the public to accept their version of reality, and the evaluation is in the eyes of the beholder. This process of persuasion through an evaluation of journalistic discourse, as mentioned above, is not a game of chance. The journalists' aim to persuade the public is based on well-established routines and conventions. In short: genre.

Genre encompasses makers of discourse, discourse itself, and the public that the discourse is directed toward. Genre theory helps explain existing genre, but also explains how genre comes to existence. Recurring communicative events, writes Swales (1990: 45-46), are put into genre if they share a set of communicative purposes. Journalism shares one essential communicative purpose: credibility, embedded in the realization of content when covering recurrent events. The rationale of genre, explains Swales (1990: 52) further, is to establish constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their content, positioning, and form. Genre gets work done, to cite Frow (2015) and paraphrase Tuchman (1973). So, as Broersma (2010) remarks, journalism is not about creativity and autonomy; journalism is about routines and conventions. These routines and conventions are the basis of the journalistic transferring of reality in discourse in a comparable, stable, predictable, but sometimes also biased, troubled, and non-convincing way. I argue that genre theory offers a coherent theoretical and empirical apparatus for the assessment, critique, practices, and effects of credibility, especially in a timeframe of high technological affordances, which are rich breeding grounds for news formats and genres.

6.7 METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

This study concerning the pursuit of credibility embedded in genre theory shows that understanding genre—particularly new upcoming journalistic genres—cannot be done by solely analyzing the content (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thurman & Walters, 2013). By using both qualitative and quantitative methods, I showed that the pursuit of credibility is a process that demands analysis of sender makes content for receiver, as is structured in my conceptual model of the pursuit of credibility (see Figure 1). My thesis is a triangulated study, combining quantitative and qualitative studies concerning the process of the pursuit of credibility. Other than what the conceptual model implies, the actual sequence of my studies was different. I started with a content analysis of live blogs concerning the selection of sources and the use of reported speech (Chapter 3). This study informed my study concerning the makers of live blogs (Chapter 2), which informed my quantitative content analysis of live blogs again. Logically, makers precede content; therefore, makers are the first stage in our conceptual model. Consequently, an important methodological consequence of my triangulated method is a necessary back and forth between content and interviews. It's necessary because content and makers inform each other. Thereafter, both this content analysis and interviews led to a third study, concerning the use of live blogs in comparison with other media in a survey among news users in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. All these previous studies eventually led to my fourth study: six focus groups concerning the evaluation of credibility by users, completing all stages in the pursuit of credibility.

A second methodological consequence of this approach is that I studied a process, not stasis, and combined not just content and the production of news, but both in relation to the public evaluation of both. I conceptualized the evaluation of credibility as an integral part of its pursuit, leading to an operationalization of credibility in its

content, realization, and evaluation. A direct consequence of this approach is that the questions of if and how credible journalism can be is in the eyes of the beholders: the public. That does not mean we cannot determine the credibility of content or analyze routines and conventions used to realize credible discourse (as I showed in this thesis); however, it does mean that for a complete evaluation of credible journalism, we must take the public evaluation into account. Without this, we simply do not know if and how credible journalism is, and if and how successful journalists' attempts to persuade the public of their versions of reality are. In short: without the public, we cannot evaluate journalism itself.

Third, and finally, I used common methods, well known in journalism studies, but altered them to answer the main question. The first challenge concerned the makers. I chose to interview them, and not observe them doing live blogs, due to the restrictions of the pandemic (COVID-19). It was not possible to visit or observe for a longer period in the working environment of journalists covering reality in live blogs. Therefore, I had to interview journalists online (by Teams). To compensate for the loss of information I could gather when present, I asked journalists beforehand to bring their last live blog to the interview and started by asking what they did, almost line by line, as if we both did a content analysis, or maybe better, as if we were both "doing" a live blog. This assignment's focus was on the journalist's motivations to perform discourse. This "reconstructive" interviewing—asking what and why journalists did what they did—informed the content analysis of live blogs.

A challenge of the content analysis was the unit of analysis of live blogs (Chapter 3) in such a dynamic format. I had to establish boundaries of this multimodal discourse in motion to quantitatively analyze the content of live blogs. Live blogs are characterized by individual posts. these short status updates of reality are often multimodal; sometimes, an update is posted by reposting and embedding (parts of) social media. To cope with these challenges of a new format, I chose to minimize the unit of analysis to individual sentences, and following Bennett (2016), interpret embedded social media as sources and direct quotes to answer our research questions concerning sourcing and reported speech (Chapter 3).

The COVID-19 crisis not only interfered with this thesis, but it also presented an opportunity. Live blogs are a format chosen by journalists to cover a highly dynamic reality, but why did people follow these live blogs? So, we conducted a survey for users of live blogs, asking who they were and why they followed live blogs. Therewith, we placed our final study—focus groups with avid users of live blogs—in a broader context of media use and motivations for media use.

Finally, I conducted focus groups with avid users. I choose avid users on purpose: live blogs are a relatively new format that is quite demanding for consumers. Because I wanted respondents to evaluate the format, I selected respondents who used live blogs as a daily routine, and who knew their way around, so to speak, to evaluate credibility without being distracted by the forms and appearances of live blogs. This approach has a disadvantage: avid users (or news junkies) might be more critical of live blog content than less frequent users, leading to a distorted evaluation. However,

their evaluation—biased perhaps by their avid use of live blogs—is not intended to evaluate live blogs as such but is intended to find arguments with which they evaluate the credibility of live blogs. In other words: if avid users are more prone to use more criteria for the evaluation of live blog credibility, these arguments are possibly also used by a more "general" public evaluating the same live blogs. The other way around might not be the case: a more "general" public is perhaps less critical of the content of live blogs, which can possibly lead to missing arguments for the evaluation of credibility. To do so, I gave them an assignment to read a live blog as they always did, and to first, note what they found remarkable for all reasons they could think of, and second, tell me what they thought was credible (or not). My discussion guide was informed by the interviews with makers and the content analysis concerning sourcing and reported speech (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) These three approaches—quantitative content analysis (or the content of credibility), "reconstructive" interviews (or the realization of credibility), and the "assignment" focus groups (or the evaluation of credibility)—were based on a coherent conceptualization of the pursuit of credibility, operationalized in these three methods that reciprocally informed each other.

6.8 PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

The main practical consequence of this thesis is that it brought makers of live blogs together to reflect on their work, leading to further discussions in some media organizations concerning live blogging as a journalistic activity. During individual conversations with journalists, while we reconstructed live blogs for my second study, we (I and the journalists) sometimes found surprising routines and conventions.
This method led some respondents to a switch from unconscious competence to conscious competence, not only concerning what journalists do when they live blog, but also the position of live blogs in their organizations. One respondent, for instance, wondered why almost every article online was evaluated, except the live blog that was generating the most public clicks by far. Consequently, the conversations concerning the production of live blogs gave journalists arguments to critique and improve their live blogging.

Second, this thesis has some advice to offer journalists to improve the credibility of live blogs: be transparent in authorship (who wrote this); use numbers and statistics in posts; use video and photo; organize expertise before planned events (political debates, sports) or as fast as possible during crises; use these experts; link to backgrounding stories or analyses; and give meta-information about the selection of sources (why this source now). These are factors that can be distilled from my survey and focus groups among live blog users.

Third, and finally, genre theory unravels the rhetorical effects of text structures in relation to public expectations and offers insights into routines and conventions to get work done by realizing discourse. Understanding genre is understanding discourse and discourse production. But genre theory not only offers a rich palette of tools and concepts to analyze discourse, but it also analyzes discourse for innovation. The need for speed, the technical possibilities to deliver, and the urge for media

organizations to cover reality resulted in the exigence—the pressing urge for relevant and immediate discourse—of live blogs. Their routines and conventions, sourcing practices, and reported speech are evaluated as highly critical by avid users, so there is not only room for improvement, but under our eyes, we see room for innovation as well. Consequently, understanding the genre of live blogs makes it possible for journalists and the public alike to understand the innovation of live blogs too.

6.9 DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction, genre gets work done. It forces producers of discourse to choose and follow routines and conventions to answer to public expectations. Seen as such, genre normalizes, and therewith, stabilizes discourse. At the same time, studying live blogs in the past four years showed the dynamics of live blogs. COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine showed that genre changed under our eyes, and reality found new ways of expressing itself. So, how useful is the concept of genre to understand the pursuit of credibility? If journalism is discourse in motion, why are we focusing on similarities rather than differences? The answer to this question depends on the way I define stability and change: what exactly is stable, and what changes? Yes, the content of live blogs changes every day, or to be more specific, every minute or so. Yes, news concerning COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine differs from a terrorist attack or a football match. In short, reality constantly changes. What stays stable is what Tuchman (1973) already coined as routinizing the unexpected.

Live blogs offer a structure for an ever-changing and developing reality. Journalists do not have to invent new ways of covering this ever-changing reality; they can use the format of live blogs, reporting all the observed (or inferred) changes in a prescribed format of time-stamped posts. In this thesis, the question was not what differences I could find between live blogs covering breaking news, politics, or sports; the question was not what differences I could find between makers and users of live blogs, and if I found differences, how I could explain them. The question was what similarities I could find between different live blogs, different makers, and different users, and if I found similarities, how I could explain them. Genre theory answered the question of why different live blogs covering terrorist attacks, political debates, or sports were similar, why different makers working for radio and television, online platforms, or newspapers did similar things, and why different users—each with their own preferred subjects—evaluated credibility in the same ways: because producing and using live blogs is regulated by genre conventions.

However, this approach leads to another question concerning genre: if I focus on similarities as an important quality of genre, how many differences between discourses are allowed to be included in (or excluded from) a genre? I theorized that a common communicative purpose is an important argument to in- and exclude discourse from genre. However, I cannot qualify or quantify the amount of commonality of communicative goal, so to speak, to in- or exclude discourse from a specific genre. This question is brought up by my analysis of sports blogs. Results in the content study showed differences between breaking news and politics on one side, and sports

on the other. Breaking news and politics share the same communicative purpose—namely, to inform the public; sports also entertain the public, as was explained by makers and users of sports blogs. So, different communicative purpose, different genre?

Yes, because all respondents following live blogs covering sports missed entertainment and ambiance in the coverage. Sport is emotion, as they answered questions concerning the pursuit of credibility in sports blogs. For these respondents, it was not credible to cover a football match as objective, as a matter of fact, as they saw happen in the live blogs they analyzed. Keeping the emotions out of the coverage meant being distanced from what happened. This distance was an argument to evaluate the live blog as less credible: without these emotions, how can a journalist understand this match? Journalists could not, respondents evaluated. So, covering emotions and entertaining the public are important communicative purposes for sports blogs, which makes these blogs differ from breaking news and politics. This difference in communicative purpose legitimizes a difference in the assessment of genre. However, at the same time, sports fans want high-density information (every relevant minute of a game, race, or match). They even demanded more information than was given in the live blogs they discussed during our focus groups. Respondents explained they use specialized apps to follow game details, and suggested icons or emojis to report on fouls, goals, times, or other sports variables to better inform them about the sport they preferred to follow with live blogs.

Not only does the communicative purpose differ, but sports blogs are also produced in a different way than live blogs covering breaking news and politics: as mentioned above, the editorial autonomy in sports blogs is much higher. Because the communicative purpose of sports blogs and their production process differs from live blogs covering breaking news and politics (not only inform, but also entertain), I argue that live blogs covering sports are a sub-genre of live blogs covering breaking news and politics.

This evaluation brings us to our final point of discussion: who has the authority to claim genre? According to Swales (1990: 9), the authority of genre is the discourse community. I explained the defining features of a discourse community in Chapter 2 and found that live bloggers are not a perfect match with the literature (Swales, 1990). For instance, there are no dedicated channels for live bloggers where they meet to share experiences, solve problems, or present discursive strategies to cover reality immediately. Consequently, they lack formal mechanisms of intercommunication. Despite these shortcomings, I concluded in Chapter 2 that a discourse community of live bloggers in the Netherlands does exist. The question remains: is there "enough" discourse community to claim the genre of live blogs?

An answer to this question can be found in a different discipline than that of genre and credibility—namely, in the sociology of knowledge (Gieryn, 1999; Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Central to this approach is the question of who has the authority to claim knowledge when credibility is on the line (to cite Gieryn's subtitle of *Cultural Boundaries of Science*). That question cannot be answered by listing functions of

knowledge or trait-based explanations. Instead, Gieryn (1999) proposes a more democratic and rhetorical approach—various groups of knowledge workers (for example, scientists and journalists) engage in a continuing debate concerning epistemic authority, defined as "the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality" (Gieryn, 1999: 1). One such bounded domain of reality is the live blog. Consequently, the live blog and live bloggers are constantly struggling for epistemic authority, defining their authority for the constant pursuit of credibility on the go. Answering the question of whether live bloggers are "enough" community to claim live blogs as their genre is up to the live bloggers themselves. As with journalism, their epistemic authority is not given, but subject to a continuing debate concerning the power to define, describe, and explain live blogs as their domains of reality.

Prof. Jaap de Jong asked me five years ago what I was doing when I live blogged every Tuesday and Thursday, covering the council meetings in Leiden, the Netherlands for the regional newspaper Leidsch Dagblad. Now, after five years, I can finally answer his question: I tried to persuade him to accept my immediate version of a local council meeting, using a live blog I chose as a professional journalist, following conventions and routines to report on what was debated below me, at the council floor. It is for him to decide if and how I succeed in persuading him to accept my version of reality.

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SUMMARY

Live blogs are highly popular among both the public and journalists. However, issues lie in the credibility of the format, especially given the uncertainty with which events are reported and the immediacy of their production. This paradox between popularity and uncertainty leads to the central question in this dissertation. To answer this question of how journalistic credibility is achieved in live blogs, I introduce the concept of "pursuit of credibility," which is empirically supported through four separate studies, operationalized with literature on genre.

The first study (Chapter 2) focuses on the producers of live blogs. Little is known about how journalists routinely report on unexpected events in live blogs as these events are unfolding. This chapter delves into the creators of live blogs, referred to as "live-bloggers," and the routines and conventions they follow when reporting on an event in a live blog. To better understand the relationship between those who "liveblog" and how "live-blogging" is conducted, I interviewed a selection of nine experienced live bloggers who cover breaking news, sports, and politics for the three most visited news platforms in the Netherlands.

Based on our results, I conclude that journalists working on different platforms follow similar routines and conventions to claim, acquire, and justify knowledge. Despite working with different platforms and covering different events at different moments, respondents in my research shared a common understanding of elements such as the conceptual approach to a communicative goal, communication channels regarding routines and conventions, and assumptions about the subject and the use of the genre. These findings reflect the concept of a "discourse community" (Swales, 1990), wherein discourse operates within the conventions that are defined by the community. Data showed that live blogging is primarily a social event, making it a different activity than individual contributions to news platforms. Live blogging involves building credibility with one another and incorporating debates about choices in the production of live blogs.

For political events, journalists covering debates with live blogs have knowledge anchored within networks of colleagues. My research indicates that an important convention for acquiring knowledge is social, involving on-site contact with expert colleagues. Acquiring knowledge for planned events, such as sports and politics, requires both subject-matter expertise (knowledge of the game or politics) and technical, management, and organizational skills (asking questions, critically evaluating and integrating information from third parties and colleagues), conducted by individuals with a high degree of editorial autonomy.

In contrast to blogs focusing on politics or sports, it is an important convention to cover breaking news with at least two people. Both play a gatekeeping role in the production of live blogs, maintaining constant and continuous contact with other journalists within their organization. Unlike debates and sports events, breaking news is handled by a team with distinct roles actively acquiring knowledge. This

not only implies reduced editorial autonomy for live blogging journalists but also for their direct colleagues, who must share their knowledge and provide access to (exclusive) contacts and sources needed to obtain more reliable information.

This discourse community of live bloggers is constantly balancing (ir)relevance with (un)certainty due to the immediate nature of live blogs. Unlike regular online journalists who produce articles, live bloggers face the immediate challenge of striking a balance. Journalists do not have a coherent narrative after the fact, as with online news, but report on news (or politics or sports) the moment it is happening. This led to an evaluation of information.

One convention was quite clear: if information was deemed irrelevant and uncertain, journalists did not publish it. When information was evaluated as certain and relevant, the convention was equally clear - the information was published immediately. In between were cases where information was relevant but uncertain, or certain but irrelevant. Both evaluations led to the convention of justifying their choices to publish. Journalists explained they did this by either emphasizing the relevance for the public or by explicitly attributing uncertainty in their wording, using hedges, thereby managing accountability regarding the published information.

Two more conventions regarding the use of sources were identified in our data. First, when there was uncertainty about information, respondents based their claim to knowledge on the authority of the (formal) source. To balance the importance of the information with its questionable factual accuracy, the ethos of the police spokesperson legitimized the claim. When dealing with eyewitnesses, respondents indicated that they checked the consistency of the eyewitness accounts. This meant they wanted to hear more witnesses telling the same story before using the information in their live blog, or they wanted to know the development of the situation to enable the verification of the eyewitness accounts, using them towards the end of the event.

Live blogging, in contrast to regular online reporting, can best be summarized as a social process rather than autonomous production. These findings are important for three reasons. First, to understand how journalists deal with uncertainty when reporting on events under immediate circumstances with live blogs. Second, to understand the functioning of this popular format. Third, to contribute to the literature on journalistic genres, discourse communities, and, more specifically, the generic requirements of live blogs for establishing credibility.

In Chapter 3, I explain how journalists address the challenges that live blogs pose: journalists perform discourse. They present valid representations of the social world. One way to do this is through the use and representation of sources. In this paper, we analyze this performative discourse of live blogs by revealing possible patterns of source citation and discursive strategies in a series of live blogs. We examine how journalists deal with the mix of speed and uncertainty. Based on a quantitative content analysis of nine Dutch live blogs at the sentence level, we conclude that journalists follow the same conventions and routines as regular (online) articles.

Data showed that sourcing strategy of journalists in live blogs is the same as with other journalistic genres – mainly formal, confirming previous research done by Gans

(1979), Lecheler & Kruikemeier (2016), and Thorsen & Jackson (2018). This shows that even though new technologies provide journalists with new ways and formats to persuade the public, this does not mean journalists adapt new routines and conventions. Existing journalistic routines and conventions, like source selection, can be used to cover new events, or, as with live blogs, these same, old routines and conventions can be used to cover existing events in new ways. The latter seems to be the case concerning live blogs: existing routines and conventions are used to cover breaking news, politics, and sports in new ways: immediate, with high degrees of uncertainty, multimodal.

Journalists can then choose between different ways for the reporting of speech, each with their own rhetorical effects to persuade. Two are direct, and indirect speech, both with different rhetorical functions (Smirnova, 2009). Direct speech signals neutrality and objectivity as desired effect; indirect speech put the autonomous journalist as specialist and 'knower' more to the foreground (Harry, 2013). Our data shows that live blogs are predominantly source centered because when sources are reported, journalists use (far) more direct speech than indirect speech.

However, journalists use narration almost twice as much than both direct speech and indirect speech combined. More than quoting or interpreting what sources said, journalists predominantly report their own speech in their own words, using no sources at all. So, within the subset of sources, journalists mostly use direct speech, leading to a source centered discourse, signaling objectivity and factuality by reporting speech ad verbatim. Within all live blogs combined, however, journalists use narration and no sources at all, interpreting developments they cover, presenting themselves as 'knowers' concerning developments they 'see'. So, despite the potential for polyvocality (multiple and different voices in live blogs) due to accessibility through social media, journalists predominantly choose formal sources and report their statements mainly in a direct manner. As a result, they often reiterate the official interpretation of an event they are reporting in the live blog due to the use of formal sources. At the same time, they suggest objectivity in their reporting by using quotations but still select what to quote.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the results of a survey conducted among users of live blogs during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic. During crises, people tend to consume more news to alleviate or reduce uncertainty. The survey conducted during the early months of the pandemic in the Netherlands revealed that respondents consumed more news compared to the period before the COVID-19 crisis. They often preferred fast and immediate news sources such as online platforms, radio, television, and social media over traditional newspapers.

Individuals who choose to read liveblogs do not limit themselves to consuming news exclusively from live blogs. There appears to be a clear positive correlation between the use of live blogs and the use of online news websites, apps from traditional standalone online news sources, news aggregators, podcasts, and government websites. People who read national newspapers and those who watch commercial news programs are less inclined to consume live blogs. In other words,

users of live blogs exhibit a strong correlation with informed news consumers who also have an interest in various other media. Nevertheless, the number of liveblog users diminishes rapidly over time during the pandemic. People who read live blogs tend to have a desire to stay updated on news and not miss out. Users of live blogs feel strongly connected, even addicted, to news. There exists a strong mutual relationship between the need for news and the liveblog format.

Our data also suggests that the theory of reducing uncertainty applies, but with a slight twist: while reducing uncertainty, respondents are confronted with new uncertainties due to the chosen format (live blogs). This results in further reduction of uncertainty in the news, leading to new uncertainties that need to be minimized—ad infinitum. This potentially forms the news consumption habit referred to as 'news junkies' by Swart & Broersma (2022).

Contrary to expectations, these individuals embrace uncertainty by following news about the crisis through live blogs in various ways. Other research indicates that news consumers who chose to avoid certain news during the pandemic experienced an improvement in their well-being (Bruin et al., 2021). This study suggests that liveblog users feel the need to consume more news despite the potential consequences.

In Chapter 5, I focus on the users of live blogs. Despite the paradoxical challenges of uncertainty and immediacy, live blogs are popular among the public. The lack of alternatives to follow events immediately may explain the popularity of live blogs. However, in a media landscape with many choices, opting for a live blog is not an obvious decision. While substantial research has examined the perceived credibility of online sources, online posts, and online media, there are no specific studies that explore how liveblog users assess the credibility of and within this format.

This chapter presents results from six focus groups discussing these credibility aspects and technical features (multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality) in six Dutch live blogs. The findings lead to the conclusion that using a liveblog is an active way of engaging with an unfolding world, where uncertainties and fragmentation are not obstacles but motivations to explore further, read, and listen, much like in a detective or adventure game. In this way, respondents seem sufficiently self-assured to evaluate the credibility of live blogs by rectifying what goes wrong, contextualizing what they perceive as a narrow interpretation of events and embracing the complexities of an evolving reality.

In the conclusion, I address the primary question of this research, namely, how journalistic credibility is established in live blogs. To answer this question, we must first accept that credibility is not an inherent characteristic, quality, or attribution but the result of journalistic assessment. Credibility is a process that begins even before journalists have written a single word, with the cursor blinking in the upper left corner of the screen. At that point, journalists choose a genre that compels them to consider the socio-cultural context of the chosen discourse to describe reality from a social perspective.

Based on expectations, trust can be built through discourse between creators and the audience. In this context, I defined genre as a social act, based on recurring

situations or events that demand discourse (exigence). Political debates, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, competitions, races, and games recur regularly, and when covering these recurring situations, conventions and routines emerge. Journalists refer to these conventions when there is an exigence. Each time the audience follows these events in the news, they evaluate the journalistic effort based on their expectations.

In summary, genre organizes professional discourse to meet public expectations, even before an event or situation is conveyed to the news. When genre is in action, public expectations are fulfilled, and credibility effects emerge. The same applies to live blogs. Live blogs covering political and current news result from a social production process with a specific communicative goal: immediacy above relevance, above uncertainty.

How credibility is established in live blogs is determined by an implicit and unspoken contract of expectations between producers and the audience regarding the content of the liveblog, resulting in credibility effects. Credibility is the raison d'être of journalism; it is a continuous task for journalists to persuade the audience to accept their version of reality. Journalism is essentially a profession of knowledge transfer from the journalist (establishing credibility) through content (content of credibility) to the audience (evaluation of credibility). Consequently, to understand this implicit contract of expectations organized by genre, the efforts of journalists to achieve credibility and the evaluation of credibility by the audience must be analyzed together. This is what I aimed to do and demonstrate with this dissertation.

SAMENVATTING

Live blogs genieten een grote populariteit bij zowel het publiek als journalisten. Toch is er gezien de onzekerheid waarmee gebeurtenissen worden gerapporteerd en de directheid van hun productie kritiek op de geloofwaardigheid van dit format. Deze paradox tussen populariteit en onzekerheid leidt tot de centrale vraag in dit proefschrift, namelijk hoe journalistieke geloofwaardigheid in live blogs wordt bereikt. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, introduceer ik het concept 'nastreven van geloofwaardigheid'. Dit concept wordt empirisch onderzocht en ondersteund door vier afzonderlijke, empirische studies en geoperationaliseerd met literatuur over genre.

Hoofdstuk 2 richt zich op de producenten van live blogs. Er is weinig bekend over hoe journalisten verslag doen van onverwachte gebeurtenissen in live blogs terwijl deze gebeurtenissen zich ontvouwen. In dit hoofdstuk bevraag ik makers van live blogs, ook wel "live-bloggers" genoemd, en vind ik routines en conventies die zij volgen bij het verslaan van een gebeurtenis in een liveblog. Om de relatie tussen degenen die 'livebloggen' en hoe 'live-bloggen' wordt uitgevoerd beter te begrijpen, heb ik een selectie van negen ervaren livebloggers geïnterviewd die berichten over brekend nieuws, sport en politiek voor de drie meest bezochte nieuwsplatforms in Nederland.

Op basis van de resultaten van die interviews concludeer ik dat verschillende journalisten, werkzaam bij verschillende platforms vergelijkbare routines en conventies volgen om kennis te claimen, te verwerven en te rechtvaardigen. Ondanks het verslaan van verschillende gebeurtenissen op verschillende momenten, deelden respondenten in mijn onderzoek een gemeenschappelijk communicatief doel, het belang van communicatie met betrekking tot routines en conventies en aannames over het onderwerp en het gebruik van het format. Deze bevindingen tonen het bestaan van een "discours gemeenschap" (Swales, 1990) aan, waarin discours wordt gekozen, gebruikt en opereert binnen conventies die door de gemeenschap zijn gedefinieerd en deze gemeenschap ook definiëren. Mijn data toonden aan dat livebloggen in de eerste plaats een sociaal evenement is, wat het tot een andere activiteit maakt dan individuele bijdragen aan nieuwsplatforms. Livebloggen houdt in dat geloofwaardigheid met elkaar wordt opgebouwd en dat er debatten worden geïntegreerd over keuzes in de productie van live blogs.

Voor het verslaan van geplande gebeurtenissen, en dan met name politiek, verankeren journalisten kennis in netwerken van collega's. Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat voor het produceren van een live blog over politiek betrokkenheid van en contact met expertcollega's een belangrijke conventie is. Het vergaren van kennis voor geplande evenementen, zoals sport en politiek, vereist zowel vakinhoudelijke expertise (kennis van het spel of de politiek) als technische, management- en organisatorische vaardigheden (stellen van vragen, kritisch evalueren en integreren van informatie van derden en collega's), uitgevoerd door redacteuren met een hoge mate van van redactionele autonomie.

Voor brekend nieuws geldt de conventie dat met minimaal twee personen het live blog wordt geproduceerd. Beide redacteuren vervullen een poortwachtersrol in de productie van live blogs, waarbij ze constant en continu contact onderhouden met andere journalisten binnen hun organisatie. In tegenstelling tot debatten (politiek) en sportevenementen (sport) wordt brekend nieuws verslagen door een team met verschillende rollen die actief kennis vergaren. Dit impliceert niet alleen verminderde redactionele autonomie voor livebloggende journalisten, maar ook voor hun directe collega's, die hun kennis moeten delen en toegang moeten bieden tot (exclusieve) contacten en bronnen die nodig zijn voor het verkrijgen van betrouwbaardere informatie.

Deze discoursgemeenschap van livebloggers balanceert voortdurend tussen (ir) relevantie en (on)zekerheid vanwege de directe aard van live blogs. In tegenstelling tot reguliere onlinejournalisten die artikelen produceren, worden livebloggers geconfronteerd met de onmiddellijke uitdaging om die balans te vinden. Journalisten hebben geen coherent narratief achteraf, zoals bij online nieuws, maar rapporteren over nieuws (of politiek of sport) op het moment dat het gebeurt. Dit leidt tot een directe evaluatie van informatie. Als informatie als irrelevant en onzeker werd beschouwd, dan is de conventie om niet te publiceren. Wanneer informatie als zeker en relevant wordt beoordeeld, is de conventie even duidelijk - de informatie wordt onmiddellijk gepubliceerd. Daartussen gevallen waarin informatie relevant maar onzeker is, of zeker maar irrelevant. Beide evaluaties leiden tot de conventie om keuzes te rechtvaardigen. De conventie is dan om de relevantie van publicatie voor het publiek te benadrukken of door expliciet onzekerheid toe te schrijven in hun bewoording, gebruikmakend van voorbehouden, om zo verantwoording af te leggen over de gepubliceerde informatie.

Twee andere conventies met betrekking tot het gebruik van bronnen werden ook geïdentificeerd in mijn data. Ten eerste, wanneer er onzekerheid was over informatie, baseerden respondenten hun aanspraak op kennis op het gezag van de (formele) bron. Om het belang van de informatie in balans te brengen met twijfels over de feitelijke nauwkeurigheid, legitimeerden journalisten publicatie met het ethos van de een bron – hoe formeler dat ethos, hoe sneller tot publicatie werd overgegaan. Bij het omgaan met ooggetuigen gaven respondenten aan dat ze de consistentie van de ooggetuigenverslagen controleerden. Dit betekende dat ze meer getuigen wilden horen die hetzelfde verhaal vertelden voordat ze de informatie in hun liveblog gebruikten of dat ze de ontwikkeling van de situatie afwachtten om de verificatie van de ooggetuigenverslagen mogelijk te maken.

In hoofdstuk 3 onderzocht ik de inhoud van live blogs op brongebruik en de manier waarop de bronnen werden gepresenteerd (directe rede, indirecte rede of narratief). Data wijzen uit dat journalisten bijna twee keer zo vaak hun eigen narratief (vertellen in eigen woorden) gebruiken dan directe rede als indirecte rede gecombineerd. Meer dan het citeren of parafraseren van wat bronnen hebben gezegd, vertellen journalisten zelf wat er is gebeurd.

Bìnnen de subset van bronnen gebruiken journalisten voornamelijk directe rede, wat leidt tot een bron-centraal discours, waarbij objectiviteit en feitelijkheid worden

gesuggereerd door spraak ad verbatim te rapporteren. Binnen alle live blogs samen gebruiken journalisten echter narratief en interpreteren ze dus ontwikkelingen die ze behandelen en presenteren ze zichzelf als 'kenners' met betrekking tot de ontwikkelingen die ze 'zien'.

Ten slotte, ondanks het potentieel voor polyvocaliteit (meerdere en meer verschillende stemmen in live blogs) als gevolg van toegankelijkheid via sociale media, kiezen journalisten voornamelijk formele bronnen en rapporteren ze hun uitspraken voornamelijk op een directe manier. Als gevolg daarvan herhalen ze vaak de officiële interpretatie van een gebeurtenis die ze in de liveblog rapporteren. Tegelijkertijd suggereren ze objectiviteit in hun rapportage door citaten te gebruiken.

Hoofdstuk 4 geeft een overzicht van de resultaten van een enquête die is uitgevoerd onder gebruikers van live blogs tijdens de eerste maanden van de COVID-19-pandemie. Tijdens crises hebben mensen de neiging om meer nieuws te consumeren om onzekerheid te verlichten of te verminderen. De enquête die werd uitgevoerd tijdens de vroege maanden van de pandemie in Nederland toonde aan dat respondenten meer nieuws consumeerden in vergelijking met de periode vóór de COVID-19-crisis. Ze gaven ook de voorkeur aan snelle en directe nieuwsbronnen zoals online platforms (waaronder live blogs), radio, televisie en sociale media boven traditionele kranten.

Individuen die ervoor kiezen om live blogs te lezen, beperkten zich niet tot dit format: data gaven een positieve correlatie aan tussen het gebruik van live blogs en het gebruik van onlinenieuwssites, apps van traditionele op zichzelf staande online nieuwsbronnen, nieuwsaggregators, podcasts en overheidswebsites. Mensen die nationale kranten lezen en commerciële nieuwsprogramma's bekijken, zijn minder geneigd om live blogs te consumeren. Met andere woorden, gebruikers van live blogs vertonen een sterke correlatie met geïnformeerde nieuwsconsumenten die ook interesse hebben in diverse andere media. Niettemin neemt in de loop van de pandemie het aantal gebruikers van live blogs snel af. Mensen die live blogs lezen, hebben wel een verlangen om op de hoogte te blijven van nieuws en willen niets te missen. Gebruikers van live blogs voelen zich sterk verbonden, zelfs verslaafd, aan nieuws. Er bestaat een sterke wederzijdse relatie tussen de behoefte aan nieuws en het liveblogformat.

Onze gegevens suggereren ook dat de theorie van het verminderen van onzekerheid (die voorspelt dat respondenten meer nieuws consumeren in tijden van onzekerheid) van toepassing is, maar met twee twists: terwijl respondenten met live blogs onzekerheid verminderen, worden ze geconfronteerd met nieuwe onzekerheden als gevolg van het gekozen format. Dit resulteert in verdere vermindering van onzekerheid door concumptie van nieuws (in live blogs), wat leidt tot nieuwe onzekerheden die geminimaliseerd moeten worden—ad infinitum. Deze manier van nieuwsconsumptie vormt misschien de basis voor de 'nieuwsjunkies' zoals beschreven door Swart & Broersma (2022).

Een tweede twist is dat, in tegenstelling tot de verwachting, deze respondenten onzekerheid lijken te omarmen door het nieuws over de crisis te volgen via live blogs. Ander onderzoek geeft aan dat nieuwsconsumenten die ervoor kozen bepaald nieuws

tijdens de pandemie te vermijden, een verbetering van hun welzijn ervoeren (Bruin et al., 2021). Deze studie suggereert dat gebruikers van live blogs de behoefte voelen om ondanks de mogelijke gevolgen meer nieuws te consumeren.

In Hoofdstuk 5 richt ik me op de gebruikers van live blogs. Ondanks de paradox van onzekerheid en directheid zijn live blogs ook populair bij het publiek. Hoewel aanzienlijk onderzoek de waargenomen geloofwaardigheid van (online) bronnen, (online) berichten en (online) media heeft onderzocht, zijn er geen specifieke studies die verkennen hoe gebruikers van live blogs de geloofwaardigheid van en binnen dit formaat beoordelen. Dit hoofdstuk presenteert resultaten uit zes focusgroepen die geloofwaardigheid en technische kenmerken (multimodaliteit, interactiviteit en hypertextualiteit) bespreken in zes Nederlandse live blogs. De bevindingen leiden tot de conclusie dat het gebruik van een liveblog een actieve manier is om met een zich ontvouwende wereld om te gaan, waarbij onzekerheden en fragmentatie geen obstakels zijn maar motivaties om verder te verkennen, te lezen en te luisteren, bijna vergelijkbaar met een detective- of avonturenspel. Respondenten zijn voldoende zelfverzekerd om de geloofwaardigheid van live blogs te beoordelen door te corrigeren wat fout gaat, te contextualiseren wat ze beschouwen als een beperkte interpretatie van gebeurtenissen en de complexiteiten van een evoluerende realiteit te omarmen.

In de Conclusie & Discussie ga ik in op de primaire vraag van dit onderzoek, namelijk hoe journalistieke geloofwaardigheid wordt vastgesteld in live blogs. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, moeten we eerst accepteren dat geloofwaardigheid geen inherente eigenschap, kwaliteit of toekenning is, maar het resultaat van journalistieke beoordeling. Geloofwaardigheid is een proces dat begint zelfs voordat journalisten een enkel woord hebben geschreven, dus als cursor nog knippert in de linkerbovenhoek van het scherm. Op dàt moment kiezen journalisten een genre dat hen dwingt de sociaal-culturele context van wat ze gaan schrijven te overwegen en zo de realiteit vanuit een sociaal perspectief te beschrijven. Gebaseerd op verwachtingen kan door discours vertrouwen worden opgebouwd tussen makers en het publiek. In deze context definieerde ik genre als een sociale actie, gebaseerd op terugkerende situaties of gebeurtenissen die discours vereisen (exigentie). Politieke debatten, terroristische aanslagen, natuurrampen, competities, races en spellen komen regelmatig voor, en bij het verslaan van deze terugkerende situaties ontstaan conventies en routines. Journalisten gebruiken conventies wanneer er sprake van exigentie is. En elke keer dat het publiek deze gebeurtenissen in het nieuws volgt, beoordelen ze de journalistieke inspanning op basis van hun verwachtingen. Samenvattend organiseert genre professioneel discours om aan de verwachtingen van het publiek te voldoen, zelfs voordat een gebeurtenis of situatie wordt verslagen. Live blogs die politiek, sport en brekend nieuws behandelen, ontstaan uit een sociaal productieproces met een specifiek communicatief doel: onmiddellijkheid boven relevantie, relevantie boven onzekerheid.

Hoe in live blogs geloofwaardigheid wordt vastgesteld, wordt bepaald door een impliciet en onuitgesproken contract tussen journalisten en het publiek met

betrekking tot de inhoud van de liveblog. Geloofwaardigheid is de raison d'être van journalistiek: het is de voortdurende taak voor journalisten om het publiek ervan te overtuigen hun versie van de realiteit te accepteren. Journalistiek is een beroep van kennisoverdracht van de journalist (het vestigen van geloofwaardigheid) via inhoud (inhoud van geloofwaardigheid) naar het publiek (evaluatie van geloofwaardigheid). Bijgevolg moeten inspanningen van journalisten om geloofwaardigheid te bereiken, discourse en evaluaties van het publiek samen worden geanalyseerd. Dit is wat ik heb beoogd te doen in en met dit proefschrift.

CV

Sebastiaan van der Lubben (Voorburg, 29 december 1973) studied journalism at the University of Applied Science, Windesheim, Zwolle (1995-2001). There, he specialized in newspaper and magazine journalism. His thesis was about new journalism.

After journalism, he studied political science at Leiden University (2000-2005) and specialized in political theory. He wrote his master thesis about the interaction between individual freedom and the workings of the state after the terrorist attacks in America, September 9th, 2001.

He also worked as research assistant and advisor for the Center for Government Studies (CGS), University Leiden, The Hague, and published with Jouke de Vries a book covering the emergence of Pim Fortuyn in Dutch politics (*Een onderbroken evenwicht in de Nederlandse politiek. Paars II en de revolte van Fortuyn*) and edited with Huib Pelikaan a book concerning political and electoral space at the right of the Dutch political spectrum and possibilities for conservative parties in Dutch politics (*Ruimte op rechts. Conservatieve onderstroom in de Lage Landen*).

After working for the CGS, he worked at Maters & Hermsen, editing magazines for organizations and departments, started as freelancer for Leidsch Dagblad (political reporting and live blogs) and as teacher at Journalism and News Media at Leiden University. There, in 2017, he started this thesis.

He shortly worked as journalism teacher at the Free University (Amsterdam) and transferred in 2018 to the School for Journalism at the University for Applied Science, Utrecht. There, he taught political science and research, and became researcher at Research Centre Journalism in Digital Transition.

As PhD researcher, he published and presented his research at different, (inter) national conferences. Currently, Sebastiaan is teacher at the School of Journalism (politics and research), and researcher at the Research Centre Journalism in Digital Transition.

Sebastiaan is married and has three children.