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Live blog as genre in pursuit of credibility

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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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