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The Netherlands

Live blog as genre in pursuit of credibility

Lubben, S.P. van der

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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 than 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 at 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.

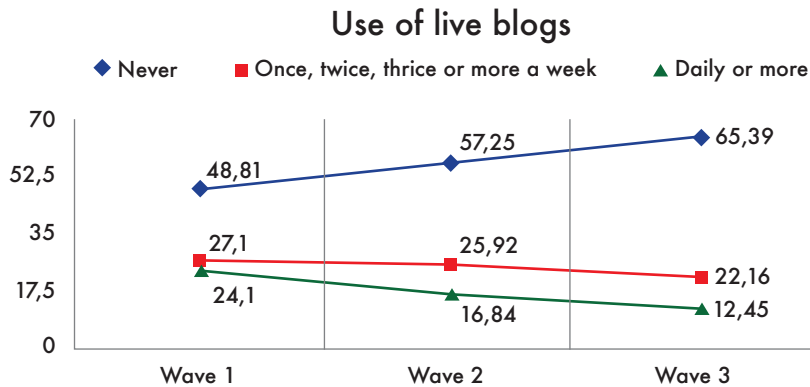
4.8.1 Live blog users

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 ($\beta = .10, p=.003$), 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 ($\beta = .35, p<.001$), stand-alone online news websites and apps ($\beta = .13, p<.001$), news aggregates ($\beta = .05, p=.016$), podcasts ($\beta = .07, p=.001$), and websites of governmental bodies ($\beta = .11, p<.001$). However, people who read national newspapers ($\beta = -.06, p=.005$) and people who watch commercial news programs ($\beta = -.06, p=.008$) 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.

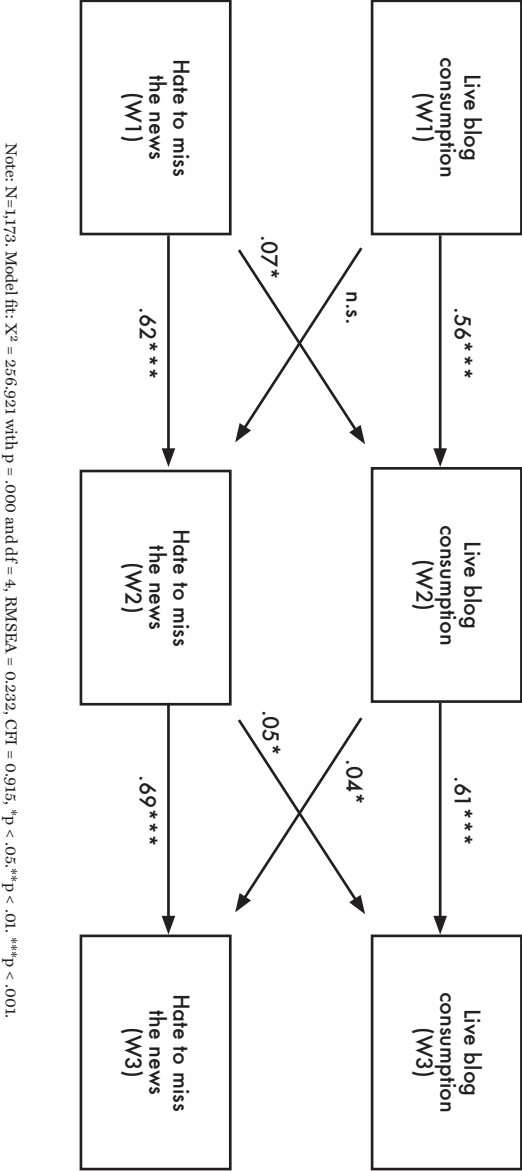
Fig. 1 Use of live blogs



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:



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 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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