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Sports Journalism on TV at EURO 2016

A Comparison of Live Commentary in Four Different Countries

Thomas Horky

Macromedia University of Applied Sciences

Play the Game 2017 – Riding waves of change

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Sports Journalism on TV - EURO 2016

Survey design

- Co-operative research project by:
 - Prof. Dr. Thomas Horky (Macromedia University of Applied Sciences / Hamburg)
 - Dr. Christoph Grimmer et al. (University of Tübingen)
 - Marianna Baranovskaa (Macromedia University of Applied Sciences/ Hamburg)
 - Prof. Dr. Honorata Jakubowska (Adam Mickiewicz University / Poznan)
 - Prof. Dr. Barbara Stelzner (Macromedia University of Applied Sciences / Hamburg)



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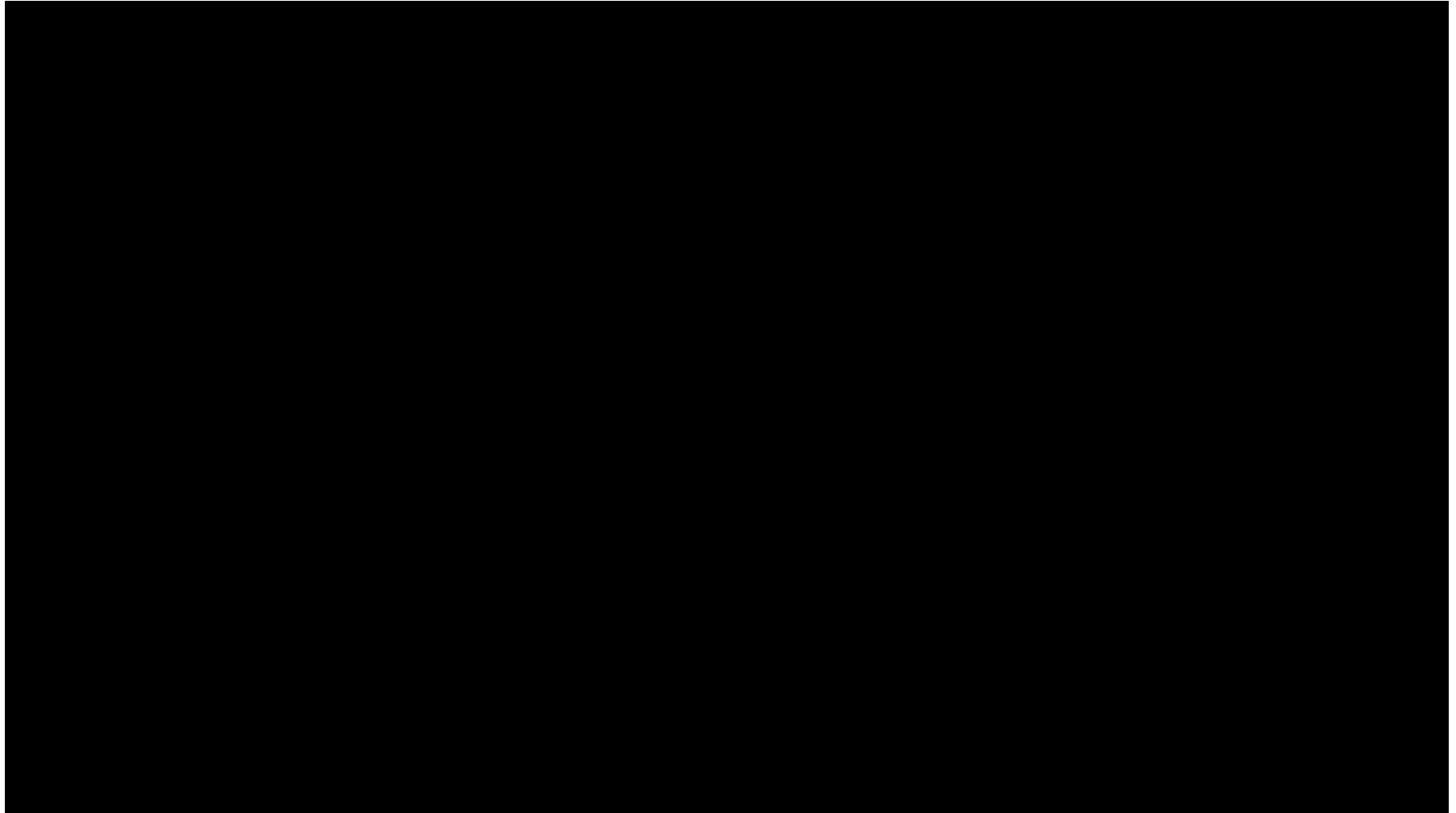
Survey - Introduction

- UEFA's EURO 2016 in France was a highlight for sport journalism in all participating countries.
- Big football tournaments reach high figures on TV (UEFA, 2012; Gerhard & Geese, 2016; Broadband TV News, 2016).
- Live commentary on TV is discussed regularly on traditional and social media and can be called a highlight of TV coverage.



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Survey - Introduction



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Survey – Theoretical Approach

Review of literature:

- Criticism related to nationalism or patriotism and racism or gender (Billings, Angelini & Wu, 2011; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Daalman, 1999; Licen, 2015; Schwier, 2006)
- Effects on viewers like increase of drama, tension, violence and action (Bryant, Comisky & Zilmann, 1977; Lee et al., 2016)
- Increase of entertainment and joy (Klimmt, Bepler & Scherer, 2006; Woo et al., 2010)
- Increase of sports-related meaning and content (Schaffrath, 2003)
- International comparisons often related to Olympics (Billings & Eastman, 2003; Woo et al., 2010; Billings et al., 2011).

In the US, there is a difference between „objective or factual commentary“ and „color commentary“ (Lee et al., 2016, p. 148).

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Survey – Theoretical Approach

Theoretical Concepts:

- Self-Identity/Self-Categorization (Goffman, 1959; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1987; for different groups/fans: Billings, Angelini & Wu, 2011; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Scott & Kunkel, 2016; Wernecken, 2000).
- Framing (Entman, 2007; Billings, Angelini & Wu, 2011; Billings & Eastman, 2003)

EURO 2016:

- The importance of host broadcasting services in TV production has increased in recent years (Tunze, 2006).
- During EURO 2016 all participating countries had to use almost exclusively TV feeds from UEFA's broadcasting partner HBS (Host Broadcasting Services) for live matches (Live Production, 2016). All right holders were limited to using the multilateral picture feed of HBS („live stadium feed“) between two trailers before and after the match.
- Thus, the pictures of the match itself were identical in all countries. Only in pre- and post-coverage the right holders in different countries were allowed to use unilateral cameras for additional pictures. This rule was verbally confirmed to the authors by a right holding TV station.



New significance of live commentary?

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Survey – Research Question

- Apart from rising globalization and standardization of sports reporting (Rowe, 2013), sports journalism appears to be influenced by nationalism or patriotism (Boyle & Haynes, 2000; Rowe et al., 2000; Tudor, 2006; Schwier, 2006). The identical picture feeds seem to be in contrast to that.

➔ How do live commentators from the two competing countries in one individual match express nationalistic or patriotic thoughts over identical pictures?

➔ Does the identical picture feed lead to identical TV live commentary? Do commentators judge the same situation in a similar or different way?

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Survey – Methodological Design

Analysis of live commentary of different matches of EURO 2016

- Complete broadcasts of three group matches of the German team on German TV as well as in the country of each opponent: the Ukraine, Poland and Northern Ireland.
 - **Quantitative/Frames:** Analysis of the structure of complete three broadcasts based on Horky & Grimmer, 2011; Grimmer et al., 2016 to describe the broad frame.
 - **Qualitative/Social Categories:** Analysis of selected parts of live commentaries of these matches to identify categories like nationalism/patriotism, globalization, themes as well as quality of language and evaluation of teams, players or umpires.
- **Approach:**
 - Recording of entire live coverage/broadcast of the three pre-round matches of group C with Germany, Ukraine, Poland and Northern Ireland in German TV and each opponent.
 - Live commentary was translated, and compared qualitatively based on specific defined situations: ten minutes before the match start, the first five minutes of the match, five minutes after each goal or after yellow and red cards and the last ten minutes of the match.

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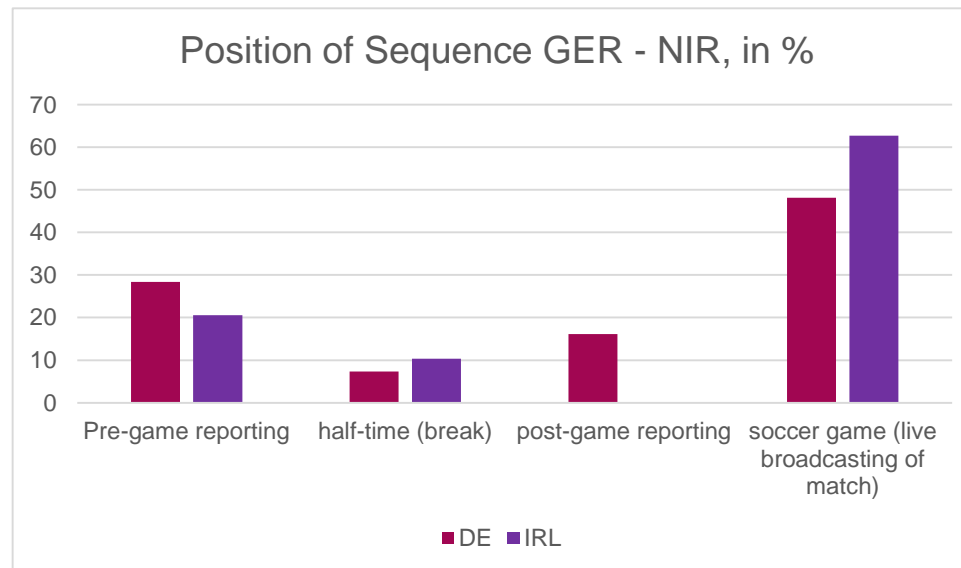
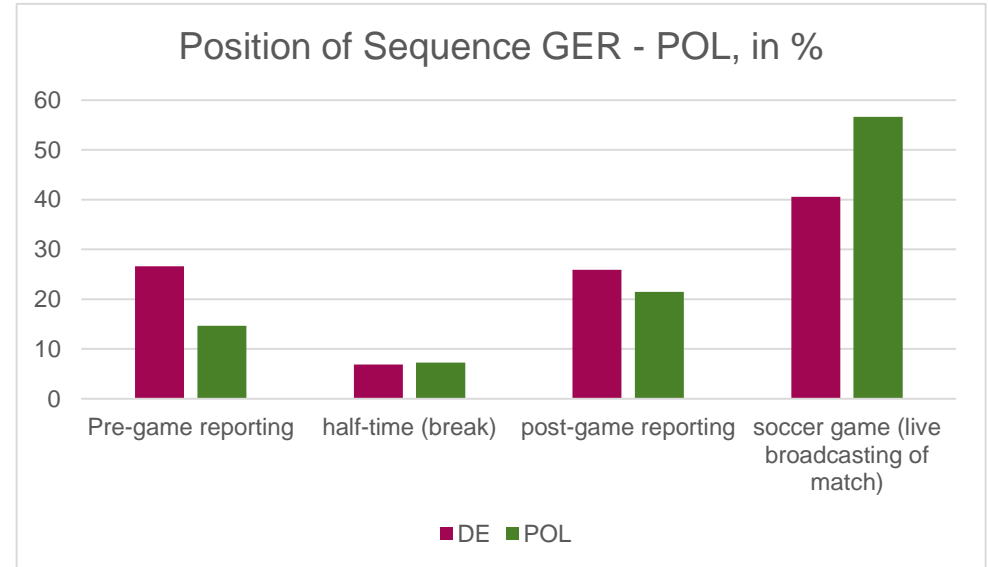
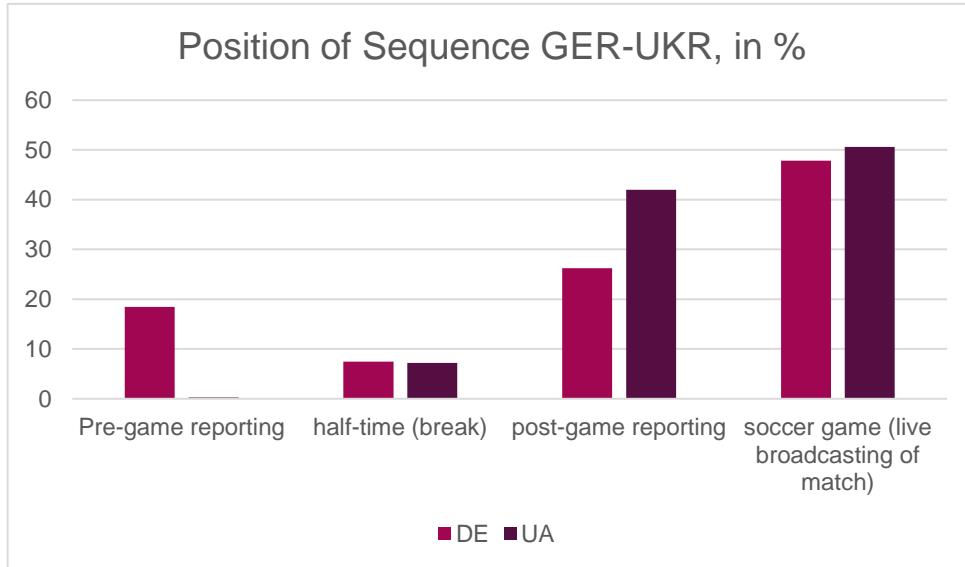
Survey – Methodological Design

Broadcasts:

- Germany vs. Ukraine 2:0 (1:0), 12 June 2016, 9 pm:
 - ARD: live commentary by Gerd Gottlob.
 - Ukraine: UKRAÏNA, private TV channel, live commentary by a sports journalist.
- Germany vs. Poland 0:0, 16 June, 9 pm:
 - ZDF: live commentary by Oliver Schmidt
 - Poland: Telewizja Polska, public television, TVP1. (TVP2 transmitted at the same time the movie “Knights of the Teutonic Order” (director Aleksander Ford, based on the novel of Henryk Sienkiewicz). Live commentary by a sports journalist together with an expert (former Polish national player)
- Northern Ireland vs. Germany 0:1 (0:1), 21 June, 6 pm:
 - ARD: live commentary by Tom Bartels
 - Northern Ireland: BBC1, live commentary by a sports journalist together with an expert (former Northern Irish national player) and a second former player as an expert on the field.

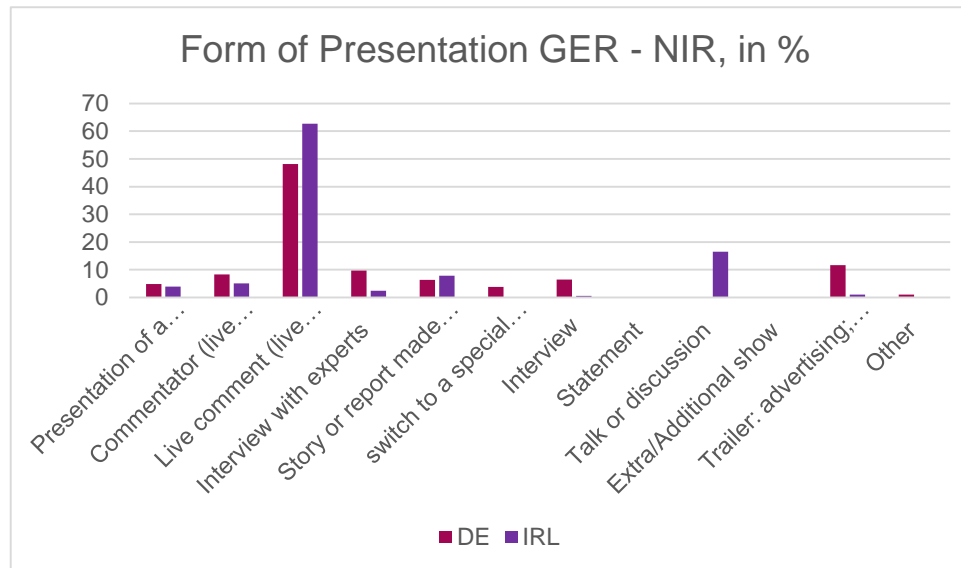
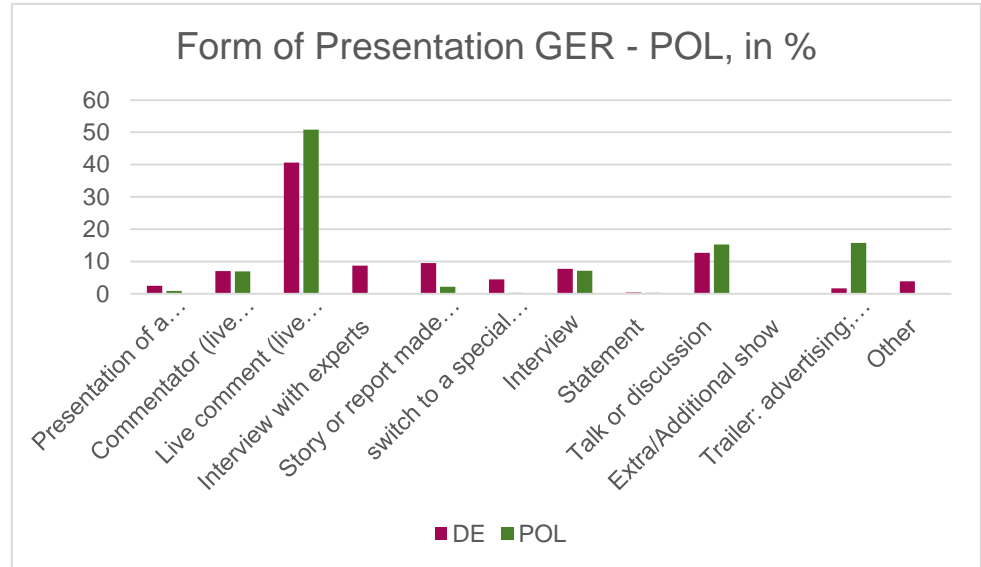
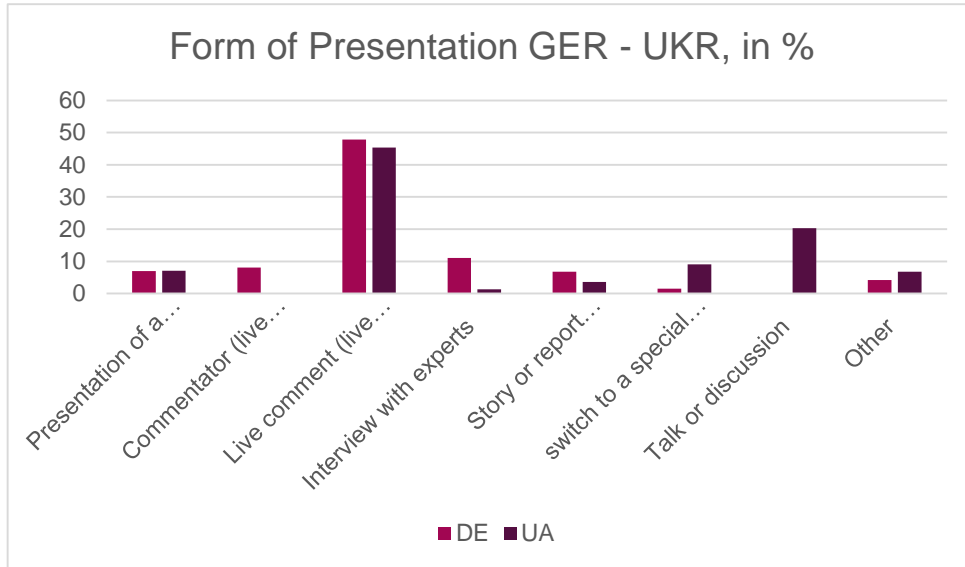
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Results – Quantitative Structure



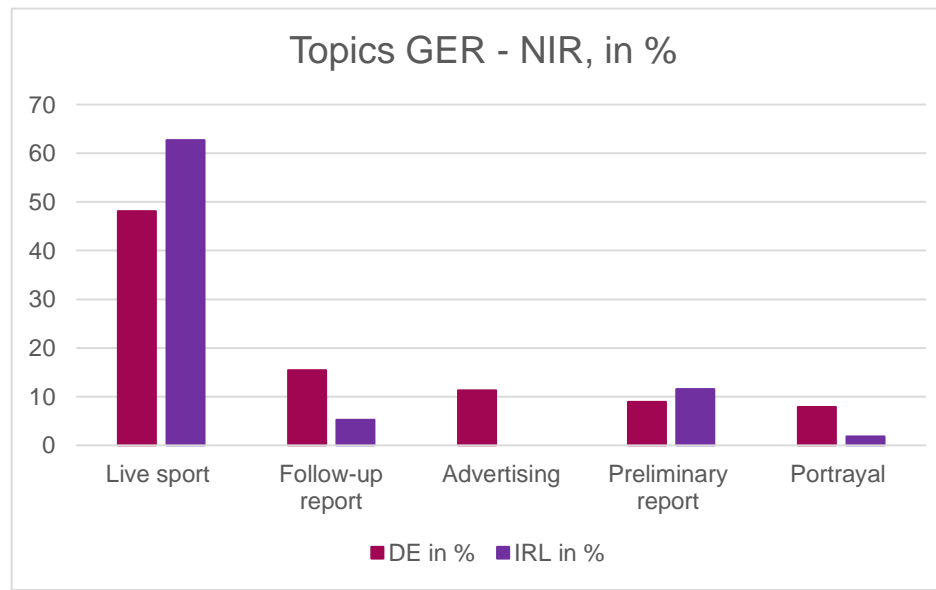
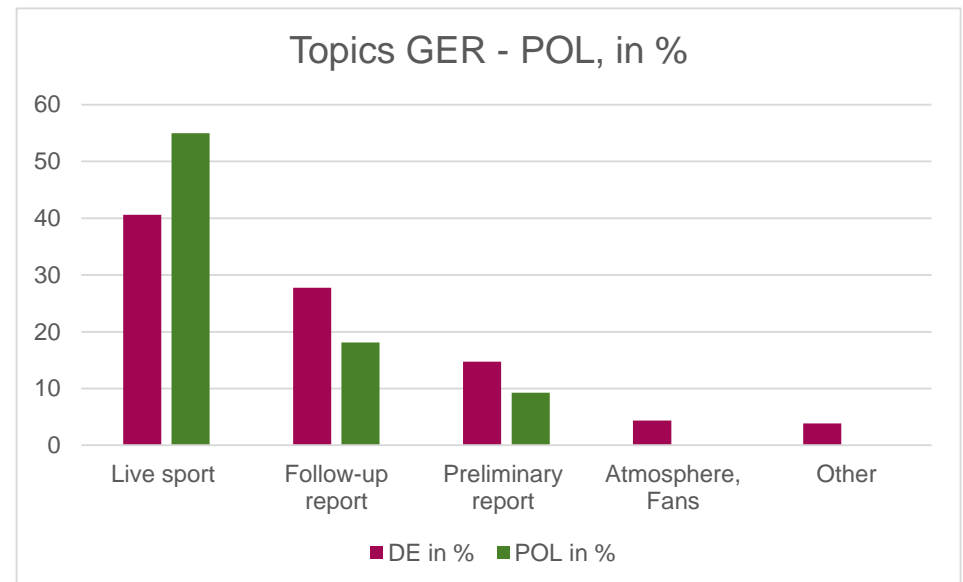
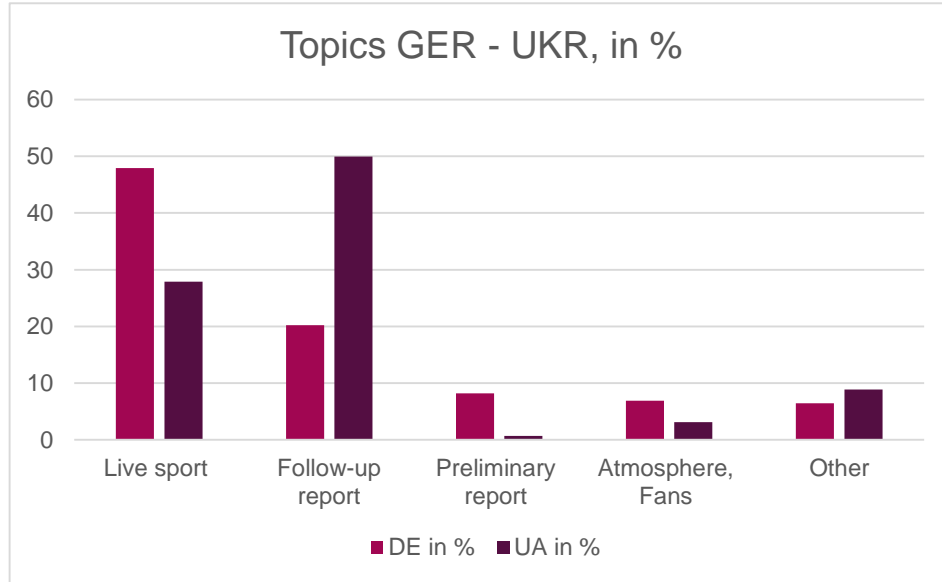
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Results – Quantitative Structure



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Results – Quantitative Structure



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Results – Summary of Quantitative Structure - Framing

- **Sequences of broadcasts:** In Germany, the share of live match coverage within the broadcasts was significantly higher than in each of the opponent countries. Related to that, in Germany the shares of pre- and post-coverage are higher than in the other countries. One exception: the Ukraine without any pre-coverage.
- **Forms of presentation:** The shares of live commentary in Germany were lower than in each opponent country (related to the sequences). In contrast, in all other countries the share of discussions with experts or talks were higher, obviously related to the concept of double commentaries within the broadcasts.
- **Topics:** No identical structure could be found, but the topic of sports – the share of live sports and sport topics in pre- and post-coverage was the highest in all analyzed broadcasts. All other topics like atmosphere or portraits had very low percentages.



Looking at the structure in the broadcasts of all countries just one frame was found: *an action oriented evaluation of sport and performance*

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Results – Qualitative Structure

- **Summary of topics/evaluation by categories:**

- **Sport:** In all countries, the dominating commentary was on the sporting performance, evaluation or rating of tactical line-ups, special roles on field, the performance or injury of single players etc. Most of the time the evaluation was very careful, particularly the opponents of the German team express joy about getting the opportunity to play against the world champion.

Example of Ukraine:

“The Ukrainian National team showed in their contests of 2016 – not with their performance, but with the results of those contests, surprised many in Europe and quite seriously **scared the Germans**. The Ukrainian National team and the French National team are the two teams that have not lost a single qualification match - not only that they haven't lost, they even won all of their control matches in 2016. **We've** beaten Cyprus tightly – 1:0, **we've** beaten Wales tightly 1:0, with 4:3 **we've** beaten Romania and also Albania with 3:1 The last three teams are the participants of this European Championship. ...”

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Results – Qualitative Structure

- **Summary of topics/evaluation by categories:**

- **Expectations/Prospects:** In all countries, live commentary very carefully forms some expectations and prospects.

Example of Northern Ireland:

“Can those boys waiting in the tunnel there summon up the spirit of Valencia, that great World Cup 82 win over Spain? As long as they avoid being beaten by four goals, they should famously go through to the last 16 as one of the best third placed sides and more than likely have a crack at the hosts France down in Lyon if that happens. ...”

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Results – Qualitative Structure

- **Summary of topics/evaluation by categories:**

- **History:** In all countries, the event was very often historically integrated by live commentary in the history of matches of the national teams.

Example of Germany:

„Yeah! Twenty years after the last European title the German team soon starts into the tournament trying to win the European Championship here in France shortly after the great success in Rio de Janeiro ...“

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Results – Qualitative Structure

- **Summary of topics/evaluation by categories:**

- **Nationalism/Patriotism:** Sentences with nationalistic or patriotic undertones could hardly be found in any country. Just in single cases the live commentary uses frames like *we vs.us*.

Example of Poland (during the national anthems):

“Everyone stood up and in a moment we will listen to the national anthems of both countries, and then we will focus our and your attention on this duel which certainly electrifies not only Europe but also the world, because the current world champions play. And now we have a confirmation how many White-Reds are here [the camera shows ‘Polish’ sectors], they are happy, they believe and want the victory in this stadium. But also the current world champions have their supporters. The anthems of both countries (.....).”

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Results – Qualitative Structure

- **Summary of topics/evaluation by categories:**

- **Globalization/“Europeanization“:** In all countries, we found several notes related to the global or particularly European structure of football like i.e. national players of different countries playing for the same club.

Example of Poland:

“You have seen the meaningful images – the friends from one club [Lewandowski greets German players from Bayern Munich]. They know each other very well. [German players] know also Błaszczykowski and Piszczek. Before the match, the German press wrote – ‘Hey/hi neighbour, football is a beautiful game where the better sometimes wins’. ...“

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Results – Summary of Qualitative Structure – Social Identity/Social Categorizing

- **Social Identity:** live commentary offers just a few possibilities for identification or distinction from other social groups (here: nations). Careful thematization of different topics, keeping in mind the historical development of live commentary, especially in Germany/Europe
- **Social Categorizing:** Possible sets of categories like i.e. nationality, patriotism or distinct use of language/words were used very rarely. Nationalism seems appropriate for an important duel of two nations and in no part turns to patriotism. The offer to categorize the self was restricted to the categories of *sporting and historical evaluation* as well as *expectations and prospects*.



In TV live commentary of football, the offers for building up a social identity through social categorization were limited to *sporting topics*. One could speak about a lack of possibilities.

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Conclusion

- ➔ The identical picture feed of UEFA/HBS standardizes and leads to similar live commentary focusing on sport and fair competition. Undertones of nationalism are rare to find.
- ➔ Framing with similar program feed, graphics and scene editing or camera direction undermines national accents/priorities in TV sports journalism of different countries. Keeping in mind the growing impact of host broadcasting services, this opens up questions regarding the quality of TV live commentary in the future.
- ➔ Thesis: UEFA fosters and produces a community oriented celebratory event – start of development in 2002/Public Viewing

Limitations:

- small study, only TV, possible different categorization/evaluation of other situations/sequences, no or just short qualitative analysis of pre- and post coverage

Back to the beginning:

- The live commentator of Iceland was fired and is looking for another job.



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Thanks for attention

Further information

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@thomashorky