

**The German football blogosphere: An
evaluation and analysis of production,
consumption and co-creation processes in
interactive blogs**

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PhD
2019

The German football blogosphere: An evaluation and analysis of production, consumption and co-creation processes in interactive blogs

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A thesis submitted to the University of Gloucestershire in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Business and Technology

December 2019

Word Count: 92,338

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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Date December 13th, 2019

doi:10.46289/BUSM4574

Abstract

The research aim was the investigation of the German football blogosphere. Three aspects were considered as fundamental parts of this interactive online media sphere: The bloggers' working processes and practices, the interaction behaviour between blog participants and the impact of the relationships on the blog content. Therefore a mixed-method approach was used for the analysis combining the quantitative and qualitative blog content analysis as well as expert interviews with bloggers and a finalising blog reader survey. The results reflect the complexity of the working processes and interaction mechanisms in the media world of blogospheres. As a main finding, the German football blogosphere is an interactive communication and information sphere in which football blog participants can be divided into different groups who directly or indirectly have an impact on the produced blog content as a result of co-creation and way of content consumption, whereas the bloggers who work on a professional level decide on the presentation of information and the way of interactions as a last instance on and of their content platforms. Further findings show the high level of professional working methods among football bloggers whose working routines are comparable to those of other professional media producers (i.e. journalists and public relation communicators). Moreover, football blogs are equally used as an information platform but additionally as an interaction room by a small group of football blog users that is not offered in other professional content services (e.g. online news websites, newspapers). As a conclusion, the media culture of the German football blogosphere can be defined as an interactive, co-creatively producing and professional online media-related totality of an intellectual, creative and cultivated blog community within the football media world in Germany.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my two supervisors: Dr. Andrew Bradley and Prof. Dr. Marcus Bölz for their support, encouragement and constructive criticism throughout the entire process of this thesis. The conversations were always motivating and constructive and their advices have been invaluable in the development of this thesis and the way it was conducted.

This research would also have been impossible without the participation of the interviewed football bloggers. I really appreciate their interest and provided time during the interviews and their support when the survey was conducted.

I would also like to thank my wife Johaina who constantly supported and believed in me. Thank you for giving me the time for the research even though our wonderful son Elias was born during this intense research process. I love you and I will always be grateful for your support.

Last but not least, it would be inappropriate to forget my parents and my brother Miguel who are my personal role models and who always taught me that education is a valuable commodity.

I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents and Ruth.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Football blogs (FB) become the centre of discussions about the sport-related internet. Blogs (originally weblogs) are frequently updated websites where content (i.e. articles, social media posts, photos, videos, sound files etc.) is uploaded regularly and new blog entries are displayed in a reverse chronological order. Blogs are constructions of networking and interconnecting, and users have the option to comment on articles (i.e. postings) and references (i.e. links) to other online sources that are posted in articles or in comments which make blogs construct a clustered network of interconnected information from various sources, also described as the blogosphere (Bruns, 2007; Schmidt, 2007). Generally, blogs enable people to participate in public discussions why this type of grass root journalism questions the tasks and functions of traditional journalism. Blogs as well as microblogging services (e.g. Twitter), social network sites (e.g. Instagram and Facebook), video user generated content platforms (e.g. YouTube), or wikis (e.g. Wikipedia) represent the diversity of social media. Their main characteristics are the accessibility for everyone who wants to act in the public communication sphere as providers of information or communicators. Blogs represent the change of the media users' role within the process of media consumption and media production. That is, until the introduction of the internet, media consumers had to be satisfied with the passive recipient role, but now they can appear as citizen journalists who mediate news and information for a specified community (e.g. football blog community) or the public (Bruns, 2010; Eveland et al., 2007; Klaus & Lünenborg, 2004; Thorsen, 2016). The change of the recipients' role allocation has an impact on the media and journalism world: As traditional media and the professional journalists were the news gatekeepers before the invention of internet, modern internet journalists such as bloggers become serious competitors who cover and publish actual news in their blogs as well (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Neuberger, 2016; Nölleke et al., 2016). Moreover, bloggers stay in a community of blogging practices which is a "(...) group of people who share certain routines and expectations about the use of blogs as a tool for information, identity, and relationship management" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1409) which show parallels to the function of journalism. Therefore, bloggers intend to challenge the

informative offer with their blogs as a new genre of computer-mediated communication (Schmidt, 2007). Every new blog entry (i.e. blog posting) has an own URL (i.e. permalink) so that connections and comments to other web services, sources or articles can be build. Thus, a blog develops then to a medium of interpersonal group communication when other users leave comments or add cross-references to own blog entries or other online sources. This linking, additionally, is registered automatically by trackbacks so that blog readers can search for, read and refer to another online source resulting in the construction of a new kind of collective and collaborative hypertext (Beck, 2014).

Researchers intended to categorise blogs into different types: Issue-orientated blog, knowledge blogs, general information, media/journalism, war, military, political, corporate, and personal blogs (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Johnson & Kaye, 2004). In the meantime the number of blogs has grown and the blogospheres have become too sophisticated for a simple clustering of blogs into seven types (Borah, 2015). Thus, bloggers and the blogging universe have become a household word in the contemporary media landscape, and the number of new blogs consequently increases which expands the huge variety of different contents (Borah, 2015; Johnson & Kaye, 2004). However, traditional content analysis methods offer optimal analytical tools for analysing structural features of FB (Herring, 2004, 2010). Blog researchers such as Herring (2004; 2010), Elo & Kyngäs (2007), McCarthy (2012, 2014), Paulussen & Ugille (2008), Nielsen (2012) and Scheidt & Wright (2004), who in the early 2000s analysed various blogs using a traditional quantitative and/or qualitative content analysis (QICA) approach, found common structural features in blogs ranging from sidebars containing information about the blog and/or the author(s), links to other blogs or social media channels, advertisement, calendars, photos, icons with links to products which can be associated to the blogger. The distinguished use, the amount and frequency of these features from blog to blog show that there is no common and unique pattern with regard to the structural features of blogs. The linking of videos or photos on Twitter, Facebook or YouTube is not a unique feature to blogs because online webpages of newspapers and other journalistic formats interlink as well in order to support statements, but Herring

(2004, p. 241) explains that “[...] blogs were among the first types of web document to display them”. Researchers must therefore extend traditional content analysis methods that include methods for the analysis of comments and links in particular (Herring, 2010). Thus, blogs have an impact on the work of online journalists because commenting and interlinking are features that connect people with each other and support the media producers’ arguments (Herring, 2004).

Nevertheless, besides some parallels, differences (inter alia in the content production processes) exist between blogging and journalism: Fischer (2006) claims that in the blogosphere it is written first and then commented. That is, due to the reversed editorial working processes bloggers use the group-fact check in which bloggers ask their readers to screen information and news released in the internet and to replenish it in the blog (i.e. the publish-then-filter-model) (Borah, 2015). It means that published articles are edited after the publication and blog users fulfil the role as editors, whereas in the mainstream news media the editorial staff checks the information and content before the publication of an article. These aspects may show the differences between working processes in the blogosphere and in professional journalism because no editorial staff is intermediated covering the new form of journalistic act called participatory journalism (Fischer, 2006; Lünenborg, 2005). A blog, however, is a competing tool for traditional media because the online world enables and connects the expectation towards a higher interaction and participation in the public communication with the contemporaneous support of transparency and follow-up communication (Neuberger, 2016).

The interconnectional sphere of various blogs is a symbol for the diversity in this specific media world. All existing blogs cannot be classified to one general blogosphere because of the huge variety of blogs concentrating on different topics (e.g. political, fitness, fashion or sport blogs) and features (e.g. activated or deactivated comment features that generate or prevent interactions). Consequently, blogs and blogospheres are complex and differ in the design or content presentation which results in a sophisticated media world of blogging. While there is a constant diffusion of the blog as a genre, many differing scientific investigations have been conducted analysing three aspects of

this interacting platform: the blogger as media producer, the blog as media content and the blog usage as media reception. A considerable body of research has presented empirical findings on profiling bloggers and blogospheres (e.g. the political and sport blogosphere by concentrating on the different ways of communicating or on the common visual design elements of blogs) (Allen & Reese, 2016; Fischer, 2006; Galily & Tamir, 2012; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Kian et al., 2011; Li & Walejko, 2008; Mc Carthy, 2012; McCarthy, 2014; Schall & Müller, 2011; Scheidt & Wright, 2004), blogging practices and the co-production or collaborative co-creation of blogs (Baumer et al., 2011; Bruns, 2007; Bruns, 2009; Bruns, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Franz, 2005; Schmidt, 2007; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007), the credibility of blogs in comparison to traditional media (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Borah, 2015), comparisons and interactions of blogs and the established journalism (Carlsion, 2007; Hewitt, 2005; Lasica, 2003; Neuberger et al., 2007; Singer, 2006; Woodly, 2008), the interaction behaviour in blogs (McCarthy, 2012; McCarthy, 2014), the motivation and expectation of the blog readership (Kim & Johnson, 2012; Lawrence et al., 2010; Smith, 2008; Trepte et al., 2008), and the blog usage (McCarthy, 2012; McCarthy, 2014; Meyers et al., 2015; Porter et al., 2009; Schmidt et al., 2005). The cited research gives a basic insight into what has been investigated already indicating that the blog format is used in various ways, settings, and contexts. The genre blog can be used for a huge variety of communication intentions, communication forms and contents which again shows a variety of opportunities to produce blog content (Neuberger, 2016). These differences must be taken into account when reading the investigation of the GFBS in this thesis. Findings should not be generalised for other blogospheres, but approaches can be transferred and used to describe the media production, media content and media reception of other blogospheres, and to understand the contextualised media culture of the GFBS (Lünenborg, 2005). Thus, the internet has an impact on the hegemony of journalism that existed before any online platforms were invented. Lünenborg (2015) explains that with the dissolution between professional-journalistic communication and user generated content familiar patterns of the objectifying presentation of events are consciously broken. Moreover, a journalistic genre theory must take these current developments into account because

genres are bound forms that were developed historically and that are subject to a constant change and a constant development (Lünenborg, 2015). That is, descriptions that merely focus on the media producer's intention (as it can be found in (traditional) media theories) are too limited when researchers aim to grasp the whole process of media communication. Blogs, therefore, suit well as research subject to challenge the traditional norms of journalism in which the inviolable patterns of journalistic working processes are questioned because from a culture-oriented-journalism-research-perspective the questions of which texts, formats and narratives can be defined as being journalistic, or where and how lines can be drawn between journalism and other public forms of communication, cannot be answered by the exclusive analysis of written texts (Lünenborg, 2015; Neuberger et al., 2007). This approach can be transferred to the blogosphere.

Football and other sports and its mediation are fundamental to modern German cultural history (Bölz, 2014; Horky et al., 2009; Steel, 2014). German football journalism is undergoing a continuous change. In their studies about the current situation in modern German sport and football journalism, Bölz (2014) and Postel (2018) point out that sport journalism is not as critical regarding team or individual athlete performances as it should be because the relationship between sport journalists and athletes become too close through the daily, personal contact with each other why there is a gap of critical coverage of matches and of individual player performances in the professional sport journalism. There are different reasons that potentially can explain this development: On the one hand football clubs influence the coverage and are a media content competitors because they publish breaking news on their website and social media which fans can consume directly, on the other hand (regional) journalists' work situation gets worse (i.e. higher work load in media production due to the media responsibility for the publisher for various platforms such as print, online and social media accounts; poorly paid jobs; precarious working conditions or the carelessness to mix journalism with public relations) and critical articles can result in the football club's ignorance of interview requests with players as well as the competition increased due to the invention of new media formats such as football blogs (FB) (Bölz, 2014; Postel, 2018). As an addition to

the contemporary relationship between journalist and athletes, it has to be mentioned at this point that in the past time athletes were direct information sources who described details or gave an overview of the course of the game or a competition when journalists had no opportunity to visit an event. In the meantime and with the direct participation in sport events, sport journalists expanded their repertoire of getting and presenting information by interviewing football participants. Football players and their own social media channels become competitors for journalists because Ronaldo or Messi, for instance, use social media as a news releasing tool, self-marketing and presentation platform on which they or their social media consulting agency inform their followers directly about certain points that can range from an advertisement to insights into the personal state of emotion and health or to the announcement of a new contract. Thus, the dependence between football journalists and athletes always existed, but the evaluation of the dependence has changed by the invention of new media forms in the meantime (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018). That is, football players and football fan bloggers become media competitors of professional sport journalists. Although professional sport journalists have prejudices towards the content and writing quality of sport blogs, blogs developed from diaries to valuable sources of information and commentary (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007). However, there are still barriers in the acceptance of sport blogs as an established medium especially from the perspective of traditional journalists. Schultz & Sheffer (2007) show that journalists cling to traditional values and deny sport bloggers to work professionally, but less qualitative, and whose writing style is subjective, emotional and consequently less objective. Moreover, regarding Lasica (2003) journalists of traditional media are dismissive of bloggers categorising them as unskilled and self-interested, while bloggers look the other way around and describe mainstream media as a club of arrogant and elitist actors that put their own economic interests above their social and societal responsibility of what they should be: A free press. This dichotomy might have been changed because mainstream media houses offer online services why parallels can be found between news blogs and online websites (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). Nevertheless, it still seems that mainstream media fail to understand that the online world with its various social media

acts as an editing mechanism, and participants do not necessarily need a lack of skill or journalistic training to publish and provide information or to build a community that follows a media producer on a regular basis. Lasica (2003) shows that news journalists do not perceive blogs as a journalistic format. Some traditional journalists think that readers are not able to rely to blogs for information and news because from their viewpoint bloggers do not follow established principles of truth, accuracy and fairness. These opinions can also be found in German sport and football journalism (Bölz, 2018). Hence, established journalists reproach bloggers to have no editorial oversight neither to respect journalistic media rules nor standards (Bölz, 2018; Lasica, 2003) why Lasica (2003, p. 70) generally questions blogging as a journalistic construct by wondering “[d]oes the free-for-all renegade publishing form known as blogging really have anything to do with journalism?”. This question will also be answered in this thesis and the analysis of working practices will show how much football blogging can be related to football journalism and whether the German football blogosphere (GFBS) is an equivalent culture of professional-journalistic processes or simply a sub-cultural form of amateur football journalism.

Apart from the topic field, reach, specification and content presentation, sports are predestined to be communicated via social media such as blogs compared to other topic fields (e.g. science, law, or politics) because it is highly entertaining and an inclusive field that is ideally suited for interpersonal conversations (Nölleke et al., 2016). Football is an emotional and popular sport, and the inconsistency in team and individual performances (e.g. teams win and lose matches), the continuous rumours (e.g. about a player’s leaving or a new transfer) and other environmental impacts (e.g. dismissals of head coaches) provide a high potential for interactions and debates within a fan community. Emotional expressions, criticism and discussions are essential parts of the nature of a fandom in which the majority claims to be an expert and to act better than the players on or the head coach off-the-field. In addition, everyday breaking news arise in football why there is enough information to be published. The importance and attention of predominantly football club-related blogs increased in the German football media world and average football media consumers and professional football journalists

consume football blogs why in 2016 the German Academy of Football Culture (i.e. a jury of football journalists and other football experts) awarded the best German football blog. There are various FBs with diverse blog articles which provide current information about football-related topics, online media users consume it and interact with each other in this journalistic information and communication sphere. Therefore, German FBs are investigated and this subject area enables the consideration of approaches from media studies and cultural studies into the context of football journalism research. It must be understood how German football bloggers (GFB) and the blogosphere work and enable social interaction, how these subjective interpretations of meaning interact and are used by bloggers and readers for the personal construction of a subjective football media reality. Social interaction is therefore important and a central aspect in this thesis because regarding McCarthy (2012) conversation is the leading factor in the online landscape and content is the subject people talk or write about.

Although there are many different findings on the blogosphere in a very general sense, the discussion of bloggers, blogs, blogging, blog usage and interaction behaviour in blogs must become more sophisticated, and the research objectives of this thesis are aimed to address these factors. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no academic research about the GFBS. Thus, for a better comprehension of the GFBS, it needs to be seen as a cultural construct in which the media producer, content and media recipients interact with each other. Thus, all elements involved in a cultural process of media production have to be investigated to reach a holistic comprehension of the system (Lünenborg, 2005). Therefore the triangulation between football blog production, content and reception predetermines the use of a mixed-method approach in which qualitative and quantitative content analyses of selected blog entries, expert interviews with bloggers and a descriptive recipient survey are employed. Moreover, it has to be mentioned that this study will consider three forms of triangulation by combining various data sets (data triangulation), methodological approaches (methodological triangulation) and theoretical perspectives (theory triangulation) which are explained in more detail in the next chapters. With those considerations in mind, the research objectives that framed this project were as follows:

RO1: to investigate the German football blogger's working practices and processes of media content production.

RO2: to analyse the impacts of the interaction behaviour between football blog participants on the media production.

RO3: to critically evaluate the relationship between German football bloggers, users and blog content for generating a better theoretical understanding of their role allocations in the blogosphere and the status of football blogs in the German football media world.

This three-point-analysis-process will help to understand how production, content and reception impact each other in an online media world in which both producers and recipients have the option to construct content co-creatively. In this thesis, to investigate how the GFBS works in all its facets, the following steps are considered in this research project: After the presentation of the research objectives, a review of literature (Chapter Two) on media studies and journalism research in Germany, the role allocation of sport journalists in the media world, and occupational processes in football journalism are presented, followed by the methodology (Chapter Three) including the philosophical stance, the choice of methods and the explanation of the analysis of the data produced in detail which pay into the research objectives. The three considered methodological steps for the data generation are then explained and results are presented, summarised and discussed (Chapters Four to Seven). In the final steps, the results of all three research steps will be contextualised with each other in a synopsis (Chapter Eight), and a conclusion from the results is deduced (i.e. including methodological and theoretical reflections, practical applications, empirical contributions, suggestions for future research and concluding remarks) to get a better understanding of the media culture of the GFBS.

Chapter 2: Review of literature on media studies and journalism research in Germany, the role allocation of sport journalists in the media world, and occupational processes in football journalism

This chapter deals with three separate areas of academic literature in media studies with the aim to forming them to an understandable and coherent frame that informs this research. Journalism practice has been challenged within established media companies, and journalists receive competition by citizens who publish their viewpoint with the help of blogs (Thorsen, 2016). Whilst in the area of journalism research the occupational processes are well investigated, the interaction between media producer and recipient and the co-production by media users in news-process routines may seem to be not considered in mass media-oriented journalism research. As mass media played a central role in media studies and journalism research within the last decades, the invention of internet caused changes in media production, content and reception, and the variety of online media channels delivered new approaches for research of media-cultural processes (Bölz, 2014; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Lasica, 2003; Luhmann, 2009; Lünenborg, 2015; Neuberger, 2016; Nölleke et al., 2016). The still unexplored football blogosphere has the potential to investigate contents, communication ways and usage of blogs and to support the processes of understanding better this specific online media world. Thus, research approaches that base on mass media and online media serve as a framework for this study in order to investigate the media culture of the GFBS.

A secondary objective in this chapter is to show the gaps within this literature. As an example, it is argued that bloggers are amateur journalists who aim for a direct interaction with their readers, other researchers postulate bloggers not to be as professionalised and qualitative in their work as print journalists which, however, does not mean that they may be outside the existing understanding of the journalistic process (Kian et al., 2011; Schultz & Sheffers, 2010; Weedon et al., 2016). This thesis will yield information whether there are similarities and differences in working processes of

bloggers and professional journalists. Also central to this assertion is that with the activation of the comment feature in a blog, readers become ‘producers’ as it is a word outside of common dictionaries who Bruns (2007) describes as users of online media providers who co-produce the content and possibly influence the blogger in the content production (i.e. a hybrid word combination of producer and consumer). Whilst the current research has analysed the blog participants’ (bloggers and readers) motivations in terms of involvement and participation, at the moment there is no empirical evidence that indicates how bloggers proceed in the production of blog content, how the interaction behaviour within the football blogosphere is conducted, and how the relationships between participants have an impact on the GFBs’ content production.

Literature search is an important step for a good authentic research and a critical element of a systematic review process which helps to formulate research objectives and plan the study (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014; Cooper et al., 2018; Doig & Simpson, 2003; Grewal et al., 2016; Haddaway et al., 2015). After finding out the research objectives, a search plan was defined and different sources were integrated in the searching process in order to find appropriate literature (Grewal et al., 2016). The literature was researched through different ways, databases and locations: Books were borrowed from the Institute of Social Sciences of the Technical University in Braunschweig (Germany) and journal articles were collected and downloaded online via the search engines google, google scholar, PubMed, researchgate.net and the online library of the university of Gloucestershire (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014; Haddaway et al., 2015). The literature research was started with a general key word search that was specified during the process reading and researching (e.g. working processes in media studies; occupational processes in journalism, sport journalism, football journalism or sport blogosphere; interaction in online media, blogs or sport blogs; consumption of online media; co-production or co-creation in online media or blogospheres etc.) (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014; Doig & Simpson, 2003). Then it was sifted and prioritised by reading through a variety of literature, finding further key words and more important literature suitable for the investigation of the research objectives (Cooper et al., 2018; Grewal et al., 2016). The main key words for the literature research inter alia with reference to the working

processes and practices were the following ones: online media, blogs, occupational processes, working processes, working practices, writing blogs, writing articles, text production, blog production, content-process routines, journalistic content production, co-creation, co-production, interaction behaviour, interaction, interaction patterns, relationships of media participants, role allocations, media production, media consumption, media co-production, media co-creation, triangulation, synopsis, theory triangulation, data triangulation, method triangulation, status of blogs, blogosphere, sport blogosphere, football blogosphere, journalism, sport journalism, football journalism, journalism research, media studies, interactive blogs, impacts on journalistic working processes, and impacts on relationships between participants. All key words were combined in various ways. These literature results were evaluated, recorded, reviewed and revised which finally formed the basis of the literature review in this thesis (Grewal et al., 2016).

In the following sub-chapters, literature on media studies and journalism research in Germany, the approach of cultural studies in journalism research, current findings about interactions and the reflection of the role of journalists in the media world, and occupational processes in German football journalism as well as co-creative involvement of the audience in participatory journalism are presented. Theories from these research areas are considered to underpin this research project theoretically and conceptually.

2.1 A brief introduction to the importance of blogs in the German football media world

Bloggers interpret the world of football subjectively and from a fan perspective which results in a writing style that differs to the content of German football news websites or magazines. Especially sport fans prefer to read fanzines and fan-affine blogs which cover the sport in a non-professional and biased way (McCarthy, 2012). Potential reasons therefore are that bloggers do not have to consider the chief editor and other processes that accompany the content production in newspapers and other publishing houses. Dr. Christof Siemes (2016), a member of the jury of the German Academy of

Football Culture, describes the communication space of football blogging as a zone of freedom which is “[...] an important place in which an undisguised, permanent exchange among football fans is still occurring”, and in which the communication is not controlled and regulated by media houses showing the difference to the big entertainment industry of professional football (Deutsche Akademie für Fußballkultur, 2016). This description shows that the GFBS is still believed by some professional journalists as a non-professional area in which opinions and information between fans are exchanged, and GFBs may work differently than other professional sport journalists.

2.2 Media studies in Germany

Research in German media studies and journalism research usually concentrates on the media producer or the journalist, respectively, as the main factor in the content-process of media production for which quantitative methods were predominantly used (Bölz, 2014; Kian, Burden & Shaw, 2011; Klaus & Lünenborg, 2000; Löffelholz & Quandt, 2005; Löffelholz, Quandt & Thomas, 2004; Lünenborg, 2005; Weischenberg, 1976). Schaffrath (2011), however, believes qualitative methods to be a helpful tool for the research of occupational fields such as those of sport journalists working in different sections why he pleads for the use of qualitative methods in sport communication research because it analyses the multi-faceted interrelations and complex interdependences between editors and media producers better than the exclusive usage of standardised questionnaires. In communication-related research fields, several methods were considered when media cultures, the role of media producers or journalistic working processes were investigated: data in these studies were collected by using either qualitative methods (e.g. interviews) (Schaffrath, 2006), observations (Bölz, 2014), QICA (Schmidt, 2007), quantitative methods (e.g. surveys) (Thielemann, 2008) or quantitative content analysis (QnCA) (Nielsen, 2012; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008). The literature review of considered methods in media studies and journalism research shows that a mixed-method study is needed. At this point it is important to add that also political decisions have an impact on the selection of research methods: for instance,

instead of using qualitative interview techniques in this study, a quantitative questionnaire is used when analysing the media reception of FBs because the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) made the availability of users' contact data difficult to use them for interview requests. In return, the bloggers' support would have been necessary to receive their readers' contact details and the researcher refused to ask them because of potential conflicts with legal consequences. However, to date there are no media-cultural investigations of the football blogosphere that consider all content-producing participants within their analysis. Hence, no pre-existing work investigation of a media culture exists to be used as a basis for this research. This space affords the opportunity to move outside the German research tradition and follow other approaches such as those of cultural studies. Before the added values of the consideration of the cultural studies approach into journalism research are nearly explained, a short introduction into the methodological and conceptual implications when investigating German journalism as a media-cultural process is given.

2.2.1 Methodological and conceptual implications in German journalism research

In recent years, there has been a debate in the German journalism research about the methodological and conceptual implication when investigating journalism as a cultural process because the communicator takes the central place in the communication process, and the audience exclusively receives relevance for the working order of the system 'journalism' (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018; Weischenberg, 1994). It means that media recipients fulfil functions as passive addressees of information provided by journalists, and they are not actively involved in the process of media production. Moreover, they hold the opinion of the medium that provides 'relevant' information (Weischenberg, 1994). Thus, the audience is merely relevant for the journalists' anticipation because of their expectation's expectation that they need to fulfil for the audience: Journalists think about what the audience might want to read, hear or see, and what the audience might estimate as relevant information which a journalist then should include in the media content (Scholl, 2000). Consequently, recipients took a minor position in the process of

offline media production, but the invention of the internet has changed the research attitude towards the audience's role in the media producers' working processes (Bölz, 2018; Lünenborg, 2005). The following chapter is about the necessity of the approach of cultural studies when investigating media cultures in journalistic spheres.

2.3 The approach of cultural studies in journalism research

The consideration of approaches from cultural studies allows a more rounded understanding of the entire media production processes in an online media context with activated comment features. It helps to understand how GFBs produce blog postings and how commenters make a contribution to the content both influencing the media production. Thus, interaction activity, role allocations and the audience's perspective in an online medium can play an integral part in the content-process routines (Lünenborg, 2005). Hence, Lünenborg's (2005) constructivist principle of media triangulation (i.e. the analysis of media production, content and reception) will offer a greater insight into all aspects of the football blogosphere as a media-cultural process. To understand the media culture of the GFBS, it has to be estimated as a context-related communication because "[t]he lesson, of course, is that to understand journalism [here: blogosphere] we have to understand cultural context. [The blogosphere] emerges from and responds to cultural specificities" (Bird, 2000 in Lünenborg, 2005, p. 78) that must not be framed by a nation, it can also be a sport. Before the approaches of media studies and cultural studies are contextually referred to the German football journalism research, the history of sport and football journalism in Germany is explained in the following chapter in order to understand the development and time-related changes of journalistic content production and the football media world.

2.4 The history of sport and football journalism

A look back at the history of media demonstrates how communication and interaction changed, and how contemporary communication is especially in the context of online

media. At first, it is important to notice that the history of German sport journalism is a poorly analysed research field (Eggers, 2009). Eggers (2009) reunited all facts about it, and he complains the missing core literature for this topic field: In 1724, the first newspapers reported on sport events. One hundred years later, the German gymnastic movement became popular which developed to a central element of education. Newspapers (*Turnfachpresse* and *Deutsche-Turner-Zeitung*) functioned as the central voice of the uprising gymnastic movement and covered several topics about military, physical and political education of the society in which the development of patriotism stayed in the centre of the movement (Eggers, 2009). During the late 19th century many different sports played almost an equal role in German newspapers and the aim of news coverage was the definition of a national identity until the end of World War II where regional, state or city issues were estimated as of greater importance than those of international and national interest (Steen, 2007). Moreover, in the 1880s sport journalism has become more famous in the newspapers by the popularisation of the English sports football and tennis which then lead to the first sports section in German newspapers (Eggers, 2009). At the beginning, local sport heroes played a central role in the columns until the football club *Freiburger FC* won the German football championship in 1907. This incident was the reason for founding a football resort because readers asked for football news (Eggers, 2009; Häupler 1950). However, the first German sport news agency was founded before (i.e. in 1904) which had supremacy over opponents until the beginning of the WWI. Furthermore, the majority of the articles were filled by written content because (sports) photography was still in the beginning of its technical development, and therefore newspapers often printed portraits of athletes or the teams (Eggers, 2009). Professional sport journalism and the job profession as full-time sport journalist was rare before WWI, and consequently newspapers depended on athletes as reporter themselves especially in cases when matches or events took place abroad (Eggers, 2009). In the 1920s, football became very famous and a widespread phenomenon of which the latter one reached a membership in the German Football Association (i.e. *Deutscher Fußball-Bund*) of more than one million in 1931. Various football magazines and newspapers, consequently, were founded, and until today the

“Kicker” (founded in 1920) is one of the most famous football and sport magazines in Germany (Eggers, 2009). Apart from the growing importance of football, sport photography profited from the technical development of cameras and photos enhanced the content of articles (Eggers, 2009). Sport radio, moreover, also had its beginning in the same decade and the first live commentary of a German football match has been broadcasted in 1925. Moreover, the Association of the German Sport Press (i.e. Verband der Deutschen Sportpresse), the professional organisation for German sport journalists on a full-time basis, was founded two years later in 1927 (Eggers, 2009).

German sport journalism went through a time of misuse from 1933 to 1945 receiving a caesura during the Nazi time because inter alia since 1933 Jews had no rights to work as journalists anymore of whom the most influencing sport journalists went into exile (Eggers, 2009). Moreover, the Reich Ministry of Information and Propaganda discerned the power of sport and journalism and misused it for their ideology by forbidding the freedom of speech and expanding the dictator’s ideology (Eggers, 2009).

After the liberation from the Nazis in 1945 and the division of Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) until the reunification in 1989, sport journalism developed differently in both countries due to the political systems and in terms of world political circumstances such as the Cold War (Eggers, 2009). The three Western zones reunited to the FRG in 1949, and consequently a media system following the example set by the Anglo-Saxons was introduced with reference to the freedom of the press and speech as well as plurality (Eggers, 2009, p. 20; Eggers, 2007b). The introduction of the German Bundesliga in 1963 changed the media landscape with the effect that football became a central topic in the newspapers, and recipients asked for more analytical match coverages because television and radio as both leading media and result transmitter concentrated on simply publishing the match results without giving any comments (Eggers, 2009). This historical era shows that sports journalism has to reinvent itself permanently as the world around it changes because of the invention of new communicative media opportunities, reader

participation in working processes or interaction, recipient's interests to specific topics, or political decisions and its impacts (e.g. general data protection regulation).

Newspapers reported more frequently on sport issues and the sport radio had its golden era in the 1950s and was the only medium in Germany that reported live from the World Cups in 1950, 1954 and 1958. However, the introduction of satellite technology made radio then less important for recipients. Radio became a medium mainly listened by car-driving recipients (Eggers, 2009). Moreover, the German economic miracle in the 1950s made it possible that the majority of the German population could buy a television, and as a consequence sport radio journalists changed from radio to television and tried to establish themselves in the 'new' medium. Many radio journalists failed in the adaption of the reporting style in new upcoming media because the television commentary set different emphases than radio reports and not every journalist had the ability to adapt to new standards and recipients' demands (Eggers, 2009). Thus, the introduction of television and the recipients' demand for television commentary have shown that sport journalists had to internalise flexible journalistic abilities and new media require different skills and competences (Bözl, 2014; Eggers, 2009). Sport journalists were discredited as 'outsiders of the editorial staff' in the 1970s because of their close relationship to the athletes (Bözl, 2014; Weischenberg, 1976). It leads to the postulation that it could have caused in a sport journalist's inferiority complex until today which also could be a possible reason for the sport journalists' disparaging opinion about sport bloggers' performances and qualities (Schultz & Sheffer, 2007).

After the invention of internet the impact for journalists was immense because magazines and newspapers started to produce web versions approximately in the mid of the 1990s of which the content firstly was filled with uploaded versions of printed texts, later with user-friendly formats and user-generated content (Steen, 2007). Consequently, online (sport) journalism was gradually in the process of development (Horky et al., 2009). As a result of the users' moderate interest for uploaded print-online texts and their new developed requirements to online media content, the change in requirements made publishing houses react to it by implementing online editorial offices which are

responsible for the production of user-friendly online content (Auer, 2016). This systematic step in magazines resulted in new conflicts between print and online journalists who (partly) are in competition with each other also within the same magazine and with other competitive papers or homepages, respectively (Schultz & Sheffers, 2008). Moreover, the inventions of blogs and social media as interactive information tools aid the change process in content production and made journalism more complex. The circle of competitors is now expanded for journalists because every potential citizen has the opportunity to publish informative media content as a blogger or rather a 'citizen journalist' (Kian et al., 2011; Steen, 2007).

Journalism has changed for centuries: Especially the inventions of media tools like radio, television and internet have influenced the change that has a huge impact on working processes in content production, on producer-consumer relationship and on the reception process (Steel, 2014). In particular, the internet accelerates the change leading in controversial debates about advantages and disadvantages because “[o]ver the past decade the nature of sports journalism has altered radically, irrevocably [,] and, many argue, not necessarily for the better” (Steen, 2007, p. 39). The variety of sport media channels offers a huge repertoire of published sport contents and influenced the sport fans' demands in Germany because “[t]he desire for football fans to have up-to-the-minute information on the weekend's matches has driven the concept of rolling sport news to new heights, with the development of 24-hours sport news channels such as Sky Sport News (...)” (Steel, 2014, p. 375). The desire for immediate football news and match analyses continues across print, radio, television and internet (Steel, 2014). While sport journalists in the past merely used to cover scores and some highlight of an event, nowadays sport writers and journalists text general and up-to-date information such as future plays, biographical articles of athletes, issues with athlete trades and recruiting (Steel, 2014; Steen, 2007). Moreover, there is the tabloid sports coverage akin to the yellow sport press culture in Great Britain emphasising on personalisation and conflict to entertain the audience (Steel, 2014). Nonetheless, sport journalists do both entertain and inform readers about what is happening within the world of sports, and they also

have an influence on current sporting events because fans, scouts, coaches and athletes read sport news which affects the participating protagonists (Steen, 2007).

In conclusion, the history of sport journalism has shown that it has changed from a trivial to an important department within newspapers and the sport news reading society due to the expansion of media channels such as radio, television and internet. Newspapers and magazines, radio, television and internet have become an integral part of people's life. Football journalists from different media channels compete with each other and they work differently. Above all, new technologies are used at every place in coverage of sports which has also changed work routines and the producer-consumer relationship. Whilst sport and football journalists of print or broadcasting media such as radio and television represent a more reporting correspondent for the audience who has no direct interaction, online journalists and bloggers differ in this point. Depending from the guidelines of online newspapers for the involvement of journalists into interactions with consumers, internet sport writers interact directly with their readers which influences the sport writers themselves and the work routines because both the sport writer and the reader are more approachable to each other by giving direct feedback or discuss personally about the written or broadcasted content (Moritz, 2014; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007). However, technological innovations (e.g. the inclusion of comment features in online media), social (e.g. the longing for media participation and expression of the own opinion) and political factors have been drivers of the change in sports media, and modifications in work routines have been necessitated from which changes in producer-receiver-relationship were revealed (Steel, 2007; Steen, 2014).

The prospective view at the history of sports journalism shows how it has been influenced by politics, economic change and technology and how this is something that is continuing to happen now (e.g. the growth of blogs for 'instant news', people being involved in the media production process through sharing their views etc.). The history also shows that journalists shift their approach as technology changes which they continue to do as some journalists write blogs (Schultz & Sheffer, 2007). Thus, the next

sub-chapter will offer an insight into sport journalists' role within the media world, and it covers the occupational processes of sport journalists.

2.4.1 A short introduction: Sport journalists in the media world

Sport journalism differs from other fields of journalism (Horky, Schauerte & Schwier, 2009). The structure of sport makes the coverage about sport events and competition special. Sport journalists participate on-the-scene in attractive sport events, their relationship with sport participants is close, they cover current discussions and situations of football clubs, hold a position as opinion makers who are not exclusively reporting on topics related to a football club, they also express their own opinion which potentially forms the readers' ways of thinking and ignite discussions in the general sport public. Sport journalists and sports media, hence, have a key role as a driving force for change. Consequently, they receive direct information to produce media content and they also can have an impact on team formations, player transfers or athlete's future performances (e.g. negatively through criticism or positively through supporting coverage) (Horky et al., 2009). However, sport journalists and players make profit out of this intense relationship. As an example, professional football clubs offer work places for football journalists in media rooms to write articles and to interview players. Bölz (2014) showed that football journalists foster the relation to the clubs in a way that could make an objective coverage of the match performance difficult. The sport media industry, however, is an attractive work field for people with an extraordinary sport enthusiasm and communicative talent concluding that it is a journalistic resort for somebody entering the sport field of work independently from their educational background (Horky et al., 2009). Furthermore, the official job title of a journalist is not trademark-protected why every type of sport content producer could be named a football journalist (Horky et al., 2009). The introduction of online media opens every sport fan to publish their thoughts, knowledge and opinions which makes this differentiation more complicated. Therefore, GFBs will be classified as a kind of football journalists in this thesis. Sport journalism researchers Horky et al. (2009) point out that the sport journalist's profession, official function and the capacity to take an active role varies and

depends on social and economic conditions. Thus, the variety ranges from a simple observer of the sport media culture (i.e. events, matches, competitions etc.) to a reporter or an influencer of situations (e.g. transfer politics of football clubs). The sport journalist's role model depends on conditions and capacities or on the recipient's and superior's requirements, and it changes throughout the time and the available communication channels (i.e. online, print, television, radio and photography) (Horky et al., 2009). However, also media ownership has a direct influence over the extent to which something is reported. It means that the owner of broadcast media regulate the content, they decide on how data and information or facts are viewed, presented and debated in the society, contributing to develop its public opinion. As an example, the broadcasting of football matches of the German Bundesliga is split up between three private media channels (i.e. Sky Sport Deutschland, Eurosport Player and DAZN): when one media owner broadcasts a match the other ones ignore the respective matches in their owned media outlets online and on television.

A culture-analytical research perspective opens the journalism research for a wider and holistic investigation of journalistic maxims and processes in which all participating elements in the process of media production are analysed. Researchers become receptive from a journalist-oriented micro-perspective to an interactive-oriented macro-perspective including all media elements (Bölz, 2014; Lünenborg, 2005). Communication and culture are interconnected dimensions of social behaviour and social action, and communication produces its own reality with the interaction between communicator and recipient. That is, media texts include the communicator's allocations and interpretations of meaning and require the recipient's ability to interpret and give meaning to the same content (Lünenborg, 2005). Lünenborg (2005) explains the necessity of integrating actively the audience into journalism research. The inclusion of the audience is a progress of the journalism research because the potential audience belongs to the journalistic system with regard to the way it communicates with and within this system, and the audience gives meaning to the media content.

As a consequence, several aspects decide on how football journalists report on certain topics, but especially time has changed the opportunities to cover sport. Thus, to understand the mechanisms in football journalism a view to occupational processes in football journalism is presented in the next sub-chapter.

2.4.2 Occupational processes in sport and football journalism

Sports newspaper journalists and departments have been called ‘the outsiders of journalism’ and were described as ‘toy department’ (Steen, 2007) because sports coverages have not been perceived as serious topics usually covered by the news desk, and sport journalism has not been a regular feature since the very beginning of publishing newspapers (Weischenberg, 1976). The history of sport journalism has shown that it is an essential element of media organisations which also report about sports such as football and make this type of content to an essential and important part of news coverage (Bölz, 2014; Eggers, 2009). A retrospective view on its history shows that there is an influential interrelation with politics (e.g. political, work and social conditions) for each epoch as well as the dependence on technical improvement which has influenced the development of the sport journalistic resort (Eggers, 2009; Steel, 2014). Understanding the history of sport and football journalism and contextualising it at a later time with the results of the investigation of the football blogosphere will tell us much about how the football media is shaped in terms of media production, reception, interactions and relationships between football media participants.

Football is an emotional sport and fans debate about football news from football journalists who still act as gatekeepers (Bölz, 2014). Football journalism, therefore, has the potential to integrate readers in the content production processes. While journalists of traditional media do not have the chance to integrate the audience from a technical viewpoint, online journalists can create content differently in terms of audience involvement through activating comment features on news websites which again has an impact on the journalistic content, working and consumption processes because the audience participates in the processes of content production and reorganises traditional

journalistic processes to participative and co-creative journalistic processes (Bruns, 2007; Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008). As participation seems to be characteristic in the football blogosphere, the theoretical underpinning of the roles of bloggers, media content and consumers will be explained more detailed in the next chapter.

2.5 Participatory and citizen journalism practices as news produsage

Working processes in journalism were highly stable for almost one century, but the invention of the internet forced journalism to be in a continuous process of reinventing itself since then (Domingo et al., 2008). In mass media, journalists used to reserve the task as gatekeepers which makes them to be the person to decide what the public needs to know, in which way and at which time point news should be provided (Bruns, 2009; Groshek & Tandoc, 2017). The internet with its technological inventions, diverse formats and variety of content production appears to fracture this hegemony because non-professional content producers and consumers can gather, select, edit, produce and communicate news (Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008). These opportunities change the closed journalism that communicates in a one-way-direction to a two-way-direction in which the audience becomes an actively involved part of the media production. Indeed, the term citizen journalism is often used by researchers as a blanket wording for participatory journalism models, but both terms describe the collaborative online news production (Deuze et al., 2007). It is important to mention that there are various models of participatory journalism that base on different characteristics of participations such as news website production with open and direct participation of various content contributors (inter alia professional and amateur journalists, website visitors etc.) in publishing and discussing news, involving users as contributors or allowing them the editorial control over the potential content to be published, while other online media producers allow registered users to read articles before it is released or they submit their articles immediately and use their community as feedback and response tool through commenting or discussing about an article (response and discussion stage) (Deuze, 2003; Deuze et al., 2007).

Online journalism and its variations unites all these approaches in citizen and participatory journalism, and it is produced for the internet world why it can be differentiated from other kinds of journalism in terms of functional operations because technological components of the world wide web determine the functionality of (online) journalism. In addition, there are three factors representing a typical form of online journalism that enable user participation and convert it to a participatory journalism in which recipients can co-create the content: multimediality, interactivity and hypertextuality (Deuze, 2003). The factor of multimediality enables online journalists and other online media producers more room to create content and to decide on which formats transmit released information best. During this process of content production they must consider which options they give the audience to respond and interact (interactivity) as well as the way of connecting own produced content with other content through integrated links (hypertextuality). Above all, the interactivity factor constitutes the opportunity of co-creation for users where they can comment on articles, fall back on archives for self-searching reasons and are enabled to participate in the content production process on various online platforms. In this context, produsage is multidimensional and complex with regard to the mechanisms of consumption and interpretation on the part of the productive community (Bruns, 2007). It can be converted under certain preconditions because produsage is a user's experience and an interpretative act. It means that a recipient must have the ability to interpret the media content in order to produce an own contribution through comments to the football blog content, for instance (Pavlickova & Kleut, 2016). FBs with an activated comment feature are participatory in nature and enable interactions between blog participants why co-creation does exist in the GFBS. Consequently, co-creation and participatory journalism belong together and cannot be separated from each other in the context of media production in interactive blogospheres. The important question in this context is not whether co-creation can be found in the GFBS, but how much the blog users' co-creation influences the blog production processes and the blog content. In the following chapter the theoretical underpinning of the interactive production, consumption and co-creation processes in the GFBS is explained more detailed.

2.6 The creation of a theoretical framework for this thesis

The purpose of this sub-chapter is to explain how the underpinning theories are united in the process of theory triangulation in this study. The theory triangulation provides multiple theoretical perspectives from integrative journalism research (Lünenborg, 2005), working practices in German football journalism (Bölz, 2014), citizen journalism as news produsage (Bruns, 2010) and participatory journalism practices in the media (Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007; Domingo et al., 2008) to conducting the research and interpreting the evaluated data (Banik, 1993; Hussein, 2009). These multiple theoretical perspectives help to exclude competing propositions and reduce the risk of premature confirmations of traceable explanations in order to strengthen the confidence in developing the conceptual framework and in constructing the final theoretical model of this research project.

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks are essential for the thesis because it explains the path of the media-cultural investigation of the GFBS and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs. The aim of this sub-chapter is the description and explanations of the considered theories which are combined as well as contextually expanded with aspects from the blogosphere. It gives an insight into how this theoretical base is transferred in a practical framework to investigate the research objectives. The general aim of the two frameworks is to make the findings in this thesis more meaningful and acceptable to the theoretical constructs in journalism research ensuring its generalizability (Adom et al., 2018). The theoretical framework in this thesis consists of the concepts, definitions, theories and literature that are relevant to the investigated research problem. It introduces and describes the following considered theories that depict the theoretical basis to explain the interactive processes of production, consumption and co-creation in the German football blogosphere as a media culture (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the research project.

As journalism and journalistic practices change and develop constantly within the last centuries due to external impacts such as technology, communication and society changes why journalism research consistently concentrates on different journalism fields, theoretical approaches come from traditional and online journalism research findings which construct the theoretical underpinning of this thesis. While in mass media the audience is passively exposed to a text or content which expresses the journalist's intentions in terms of opinion-making and informing, new media forms such as blogs change this situation in which the audience can be actively involved in the process of content production because the audience is relevant for online journalists' working processes and their content. Consequently, the importance of journalism for a society is

represented by the interaction of the media production, the media text as a cultural product and the media consumption why the audience must be considered as a part of the media culture environment (Lünenborg, 2005). Therefore, the integration of approaches from cultural studies in online journalism research is essential because the analysis of the audience perspective is an integral part of the content and the bloggers' intentions when producing content (Bözl, 2018; Lünenborg, 2005; Lünenborg, 2015).

Occupational journalism research can be found predominantly in the context of news journalism and the media production and the roles of media producers in mass media are well investigated in German news and sport journalism research (Bözl, 2018; Horky et al., 2009; Weischenberg, 1992; 1995). However, as journalism research is predominantly used in the context of news journalism, research results from political and news journalism are not entirely transferable to football journalism because the working processes and relationships between involved people (journalists, athletes, trainers, sports media users etc.) differ between these journalism areas and cultures (Bözl, 2014; Horky et al., 2009). Esser (1998) concluded after a comparison analysis of news journalist types in publishing houses that journalistic working processes, structures and environments of media production result in country and resource-specific differences. In this context, the interaction behaviour in the GFBS and the working processes of GFB as media producers will be analysed by using approaches from a culture-oriented journalism research in order to understand the cycle of media production and reception in the football blogosphere (Lünenborg & Klaus, 2000). Johnson (1985) recommended not to investigate equally all moments of the cycle of production and consumption of cultural products (i.e. the production and its conditions, the content, the type of reading and its conditions, and the living culture that crosses with social relationships) in order to prevent an overtaxing of the empirical research which could lead to a reduced analyses of the research objectives. However, Johnson (1985) and Lünenborg & Klaus (2000) commented that an ignorance of the interaction between the factors media production, media content, media reception and cultural citizenship could result in a theoretical and disciplinary fragmentation leading to false interpretations and to limited findings. Consequently, a triangular approach by

investigating the GFB, the blog content and the blog recipients are considered in this research project.

The role of the sport blogger in sports journalism cannot be determined as a fixed and never changing position. That means, with the start of sport blogging in the early 2000 and the continuously changing sports journalism culture due to the social media impact, the roles of sport bloggers and blogging have changed in the meantime (Kian et al., 2011; McCarthy, 2012; Schultz & Sheffers, 2007). Blogging has an impact on the institutional patterns of sport news production and it is emphasised by the fact that newspaper sport writers must blog for their newspaper's website that makes blogging to be a regular working step of sports journalists' quotidian working practices (Jensen & Mortensen, 2016; Schultz & Sheffers, 2007). Kian et al. (2011) showed that it is difficult to generalise augmentations about internet sport bloggers and their writing styles in comparison to those of professional journalists because the majority of the full-time sport bloggers have some type of journalism background, whereas Cohen (2009) found shifts in writing skills but an increased focus on audience interaction by new media sport journalists compared to traditional reporters. There is still no consensus in the contemporary journalism about what constitutes quality reporting and journalism (Weedon et al., 2016). Analyses or comparisons between journalists' and bloggers' quality are not as generalizable and fact-based as some journalism researchers postulate because the journalistic objectivity is often used as the main differential quality factor between both types of journalists of whom the bloggers mainly insist on their subjectivity (McCarthy, 2014; Weedon et al., 2016). However, sport bloggers who do not work professionally as journalists are categorised as amateur journalists (Kian et al., 2011) or described as fan sport bloggers (McCarthy, 2012). A fan sport blogger is defined by McCarthy (2012, p. 421) as "(...) a sports fan who contributes their own narratives to the quotidian reportage of sports by publishing an online sports news site on platforms like Blogger and WordPress, [which] is a relatively new fan presence". This definition of sports bloggers allows the declaration that the football blogosphere belongs to the cosmos of sports journalism. Moreover, based on this definition there is the more open and still no definite interpretation about the professionalism of a media

producer because a fan sports blogger's professional background ranges from an amateur blogger who has no journalism background to a professional sports journalist who blogs privately for his own blog or officially on the newspaper's website (McCarthy, 2012). There are controversial discussions about the positioning and role of sports bloggers in the media world of sports journalism. While professional sports journalists and commentators are assigned to be objective in coverage and to do self-marketing for personality-public relations on their personal social media channels or websites in order to establish themselves as a communicator in reader communities (Schultheiß, 2017), the fan sports blogger is propounded as subjective and representing an independent citizen journalist who holds two positions: the text-writing media producer and the fan who is a consumer of popular culture texts and who has found a gap to share knowledge and interact with other fans within a particular culture such as the football blogosphere (McCarthy, 2012). The fan sports blogger might be the central issue for interaction and represent a social function because almost all sport bloggers recommend links to other blogs or websites in the sidebar of their blog (i.e. the blogroll) (McCarthy, 2012). Moreover, bloggers use mainstream news as an information source and combine it with their own opinion. They might personify the role of the corrective and supplement to mainstream media ending in a citizen journalist-type role (McCarthy, 2012). As a consequence, the role of sport blogging can be described as distinct styles of sports communication. It can be regarded as a communication platform for "(...) fans to react and to critique the work of the mainstream media in communicating sports" (McCarthy, 2014, p. 65). The sport bloggers' role as professional journalists and new citizen journalist is still discussed in the academic literature (Kian et al., 2011; McCarthy, 2012; McCarthy, 2014), and this thesis might contribute to the understanding of the GFB themselves and their roles in the world of football journalism. However, football blogging platforms are an optimal space for writing football fans whose football zine culture was transferred from print to blogs as it became available for everyone (Real, 2006). Blogs might play a special role for football fans as additional communication platform because it contains the potential to impose the published

opinion of opinion-makers within the fan base over those of established sport journalists (McCarthy, 2014).

Even when online media producers still decide the time of release of news, its consistency as it existed in print media is affected by the readers' influence to commenting the content. Thus, a blog posting is not a discrete, but a dynamic and flexible type of written material which can be revised after the publication by bloggers or readers (Bruns, 2010; Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008). Therefore, the traditional term of media product as it is understood in mass media-oriented communication theories must be rethought and contextualised to the environment of online media. Currently, media products represent a central factor for the interaction between blogger and recipients. Bloggers are still the main content producers who have the opportunity to control the interaction and conversation by activating the comment feature or deleting comments that infringe the netiquette of the blog (Kian et al., 2011). Although the blogosphere was perceived as interconnected and conversational, due to limited features of former blog formats and templates like WordPress in the early 2000s, comment features could not be included into blogs resulting in a non-existing interaction between bloggers and readers (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus & Wright, 2004; Herring, Scheidt, Kouper & Wright, 2006). However, Herring et al. (2006a) showed a fluctuation in the number of comments which also remained low in a QnCA of almost 450 weblogs. In this thesis, FB with an activated comment function are exclusively considered in order to analyse the impact of the direct interaction on the blogger's routines of content production, and to fill the gap of knowledge of how the interaction and relationship between football bloggers and recipients affects GFBs' occupational processes and the media content. In sum, the analysis of the FB production, content and reception gives information to develop new ideas with regard to the media triangulation because it has the ability to expand upon new production-content-reception models as people can actively reply and interact, and receivers can also create their own content in the blogosphere (Bruns, 2008; Bruns, 2010).

As a conclusion, the theoretical assumption with regard to the specific media-cultural content production in the GFBS is as follows: Theoretical approaches from German journalism research, cultural studies, citizen and participatory journalism research must be combined and transferred to the context of the GFBS. Thus, working process routines from traditional football journalism may be transferred to content-process routines in the blogosphere, while the online context allows blog readers and their audience to co-create content through interacting with each other and the content. These alternative and media-specific content-process routines and impact factors may influence the production and consumption processes of German FBs and may differ from similar processes in other football media. In the following chapter, the conceptual framework is presented as the determined research structure to best explain the media-cultural production, consumption and co-creation in the GFBS.

2.7 The conceptual framework for this thesis

The aim of this sub-chapter is to explain how to imply the theoretical framework in the conceptual framework in order to explore the production patterns and impact factors in the GFBS (Figure 2). New football media services challenge the existence of traditional football media because written, visual or audio content can be implemented by writing a football blog post with the inclusion of a podcast or video file. Therefore, journalistic working processes in the GFBS may differ from professional football journalists' habits because the digitalised media world adapts working processes to online requirements. The literature analysis of occupational processes in the environment of traditional and online journalism shows that the online audience plays an active role in the production of media content by co-creating it with their comments, likes and shares (Domingo et al., 2008). Moreover, online media producers consider their community during publication processes when articles are presented to registered users who have the opportunity to read a text before it is published on the online platform (Bruns, 2007; Bruns, 2009; Deuze et al., 2007). Consequently, there is an urgent need to analyse the blog content, its

production procedures and reception patterns which potentially are influenced by the interaction behaviour and the relationship between blog participants in German FB.

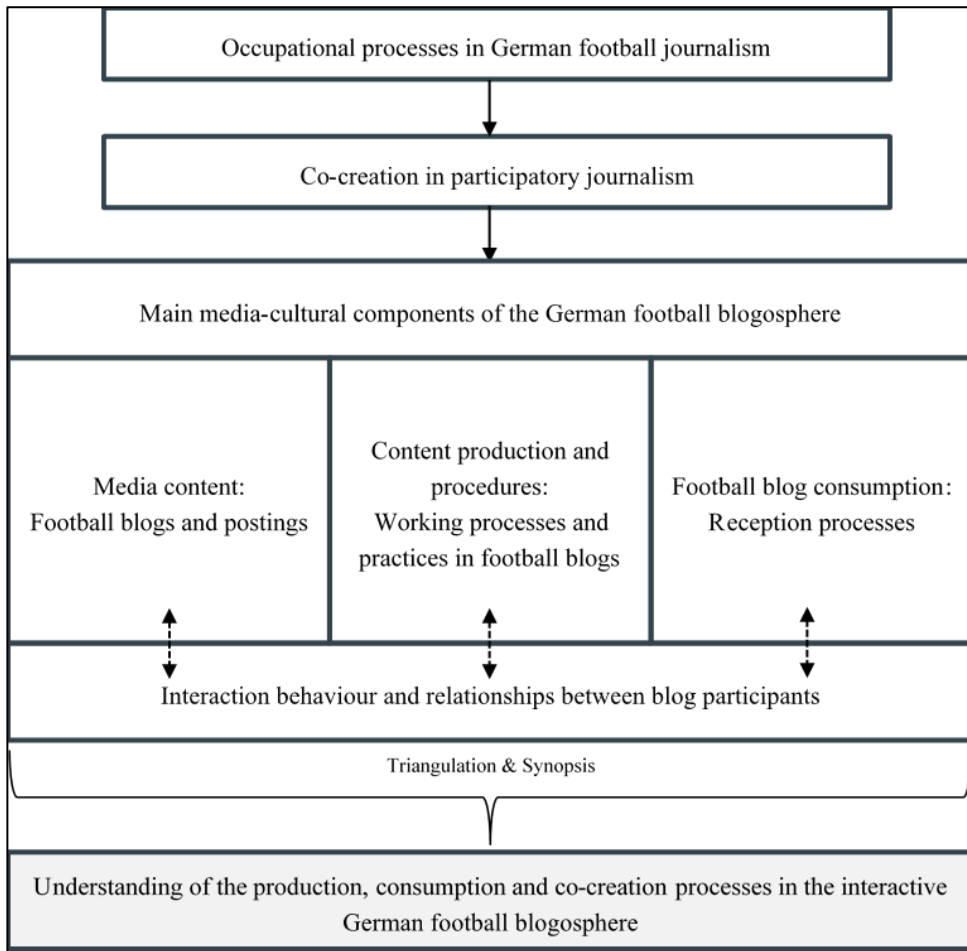


Figure 2. The conceptual framework on the media-cultural production, consumption and co-creation in the German football blogosphere.

This conceptual framework of this research project presents how influential the development of co-creation processes in participatory journalism is on the occupational processes in German football journalism. The evaluated data and findings of all research steps are reunited contextually (triangulation) and compared comparatively (synopsis) to understand journalistic working practices in the GFBS as a media-cultural process between bloggers (media production), the blog (media content) and the blog community (media reception).

2.8 Chapter summary

Social network services caused a change in the relationship between content producers and the audience (Bruns, 2007). Journalists in mass media provide a media content that is received by an audience who has been described as a passive recipient group of journalistic content, but blogs offer new ways of understanding the collaborative and mutual media production of writers and readers (Klaus & Lünenborg, 2004).

There has been literature focusing on relationships between journalists and readers which explain the changed role of media consumers due to the opportunity of interactions in online media environments (Bruns, 2007; Bukvova, Kalb & Schoop, 2010; Herring et al., 2005; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Thorsen, 2016). In this citizen journalism, content is produced in various ways ranging from individually to collaboratively written news sites such as blogs (Bruns, 2007; Bruns, 2008; Bruns, 2010). However, in comparison to mass media users who are not able to stay directly, contemporary or immediately in an oral or written conversational contact with the producer, blog readers are actively participating in discussions about a posting content by commenting their own viewpoint or giving additional information about a certain topic (Thorsen, 2016). This interactive and co-creative environment can be found in a blogosphere that McCarthy (2012, p. 424) describes as “(...) an inter-connected community of blogs sharing similar content and readership”. Moreover, Meinel et al. (2015, pp. 8) add that the readership within a blogosphere is not an eternal followership because the blogosphere is “[a]n independent and segmented public that dynamically evolves and functions according to its own rules and with ever-changing protagonists”.

Depending on the blogger and their blog format, the citizen and participatory journalism and the blog content resemble a conversation than lecture as the latter is custom for journalistic newspaper articles. A blog with an activated comment function offers a participatory communication platform where ideas are produced collaboratively and all participants are both users and producers of information and knowledge (Bruns, 2007). It does not mean that participation was not possible in mass media, but it occurred in a different way: mainstream journalism has, to some extent, also attempted to open up

comment features on some online articles, but the big game changer with blogs is the immediacy of the communication without the censorship or editing, respectively. In social media, however, participants cannot be divided anymore into two sections: the journalist as the producer and the reader as a passive recipient of the journalist's content (Lünenborg, 2000). News blogs or blogs without a comment feature resemble a more traditional production model where the producer is a part of an organisation (e.g. publishing house or editorial staff) or an individual content producer (e.g. independent journalist) transforming information and other material to a text or a media product that represents the producer's knowledge (Bölz, 2014; Bruns, 2007). Blogs and other social media channels, hence, break the traditional role models because "(...) users are no longer passive consumers, but frequently express a desire to participate actively in guiding the development process for new and existing products" (Bruns, 2007, p.4). Nevertheless, in the beginning blogs were more used as personal diaries which led to a less interaction between bloggers and readers, but the blogosphere underwent a development regarding the interaction behaviour between the participants (Herring et al., 2005). Herring et al. (2005) conclude after an analysis of the conversational behaviour in blogs that most blogs contained no links to other blogs or comments and conversations were the exception. Nowadays, it seems usual for many bloggers to allow comments and to interact with users because an activating comment function makes a blog dynamic and exciting which intensifies the interaction with and within the readership (Bair & Gardner, 2013). A further precondition and supportive factor for an interaction is the media content inviting the recipients to discuss or comment personal opinions by asking questions or writing open-formulated content that leaves room for feedback and discussions (Bair & Gardner, 2013).

Consequently, the interaction behaviour could decide about keeping or losing the readership, but in order to understand the GFBS, it is necessary to consider the media-related working processes and its further impact factors such as interactions, the content produced by the media producer and his readers, and the media reception processes during the media consumption. The methodology to analyse the before mentioned research objectives is explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to translate the key issues from the literature review into a methodological structure to gather and analyse the collected data. In developing research proposals it is important to define the research strategy that outlines the way how the research is conducted (i.e. methodology) and to justify the methods that are going to be used in it (Bryman, 2004; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). King & Horrocks (2010, p. 6) define methods as “(...) techniques or procedures (...) to collect and analyse data”. Research methods differ from each other in several ways. That is, several approaches decide about how data which type of information and how much are collected which, furthermore, have a decisive influence on how data can be interpreted. However, among the development of the research strategy and the decision for certain methods there are other points that decide about how data are collected and how it is interpreted and viewed: the research philosophy (i.e. the idea of knowledge creation and the belief about the ways in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used) and the theoretical framework (i.e. which theories are followed that consequently form the theoretical basis for this research). There are different methodological approaches that have been used to investigate the blogosphere that can be adapted for the use in relation to FB as the existing research is not football-specific. It depends on the research design and the philosophy behind the research which methodological tools to choose and that fit best to the overall picture of the research project. The analysis of blogs, however, cannot be reduced to one method because it is more than the analysis from the perspective of communication science. It means that a sophisticated investigation is needed resulting in a multi-perspective view on The GFBS with the inclusion of theoretical approaches from various research fields and with the consideration of multiple methods to investigate the research objectives so that the media culture of the GFBS can be understood integrally with reference to the interplay of blog production, content and blog reception.

In this chapter, the researcher explains the selection and definition of the relevant paradigm, ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods which built the basis for

the conception, development and application of the conducted research. The target of this chapter is finding the path to understand the relationships between media production, consumption, co-creation, interaction behaviours and role allocations in the GFBS by using GFBS as a case study of these concepts and ideas. The basic belief system (paradigm) and its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions are explained to describe, explain and understand how research in this study is conducted basing on the researcher's worldview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, Saunders et al. (2015) developed a research onion (Figure 3) to illustrate and describe the stages through which a researcher must pass when developing an effective research strategy (i.e. methodology). It helps to maximise credibility by providing explanations and justifications for each level of the methodological decisions, and it provides an effective progression to design the research methodology that is useful in its adaptability for any research methodology and in a variety of contexts (Saunders et al., 2015). The research onion contains six layers or stages that are described in this chapter in the following order: the research philosophy (1) requires definition to create the starting point for the appropriate approach to theory development (2). Then the strategy (3) is adopted that is followed by the methodological choice (4) and the identification of the time horizon (5). The final stage represents the techniques and procedures (6) (i.e. methods for data collection and analysis).

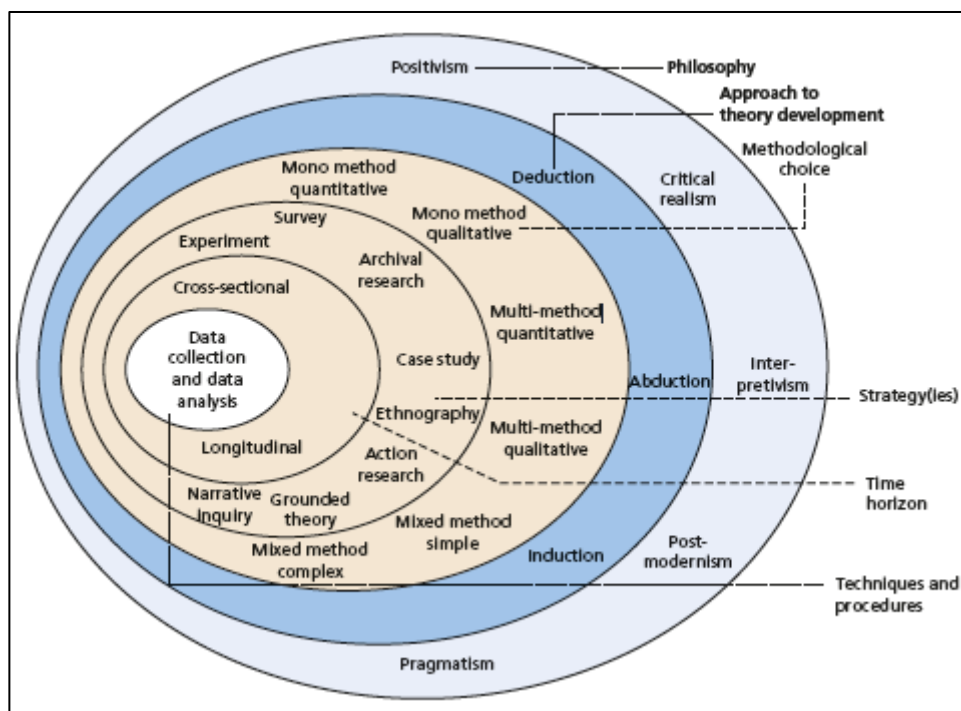


Figure 3. The research onion by Saunders et al. (2015, p. 124).

The researcher follows the paradigm of interpretivism which is all about interpretation, subjectivity and understanding because the GFBs' viewpoints and experiences will provide insights to subjective interpretations and perceptions of the GFBS which help to understand the overall structure of journalistic mechanisms in this specific media sphere. The interpretivist paradigm is originally rooted in the assumption that understanding knowledge is related to those persons who interpret their individual world and then act based on these interpretations while the world does not (Hammersley, 2013) Therefore, it should be an aim to understand the diverse perspectives of and experiences in the world of football blogging with reference to different (topic-related and football club-related) cultures and contexts by avoiding simultaneously the bias in investigating and analysing the blog users and the GFB exclusively with their own interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 2013). Consequently, the diverse individual preferences and experiences with particular working methods and interaction behaviour in the GFBS enable the interpretivist researcher to describe the research issue, participants, situations and conditions, and moreover he deeply can understand them in a social context (Crotty,

1998). Another advantage is the conduction of these research types in the natural setting of the GFBS via utilising key methodologies such as ethnography, case study or grounded theory to receive the participants' insights providing more authentic information of the research objectives (Tuli, 2010). Moreover, leveraging key methods such as interactive interviews researchers are allowed to investigate and analyse things which cannot be observed or explored with a content analysis, and the interviewee's values, prejudices, perceptions, thoughts, perspectives and feelings can be explored (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). That is, collecting valuable data allows the researcher to receive better insights for further research steps and for understanding a previously made content analysis, for instance. However, besides these key strengths, this paradigm has also disadvantages which are mainly criticised by positivist researchers: regarding the research perspective there could be the limitation that interpretivists cannot generalise the evaluated results to other people and contexts which is not seen as a problem in this study because the aim is gaining a deeper understanding and knowledge of the GFBS within its complexity of the context (Crotty, 1998). As a consequence, interpretivist research tends to leave out a gap in the usefulness of research outcomes and in verifying validity. Another criticism is its subjective than rather objective validity (Mack, 2010). Therefore, the results are affected by the researcher's interpretation, belief system, personal experiences, cultural preferences or ways of thinking causing to certain bias. The researcher is aware of these biases and examines the study as impartial as possible and with proper care and concentration on the subjects' statements and actions in their blogs. The researcher will explain the data analysis in a detailed way for a better understanding, reproduction and retracement of his result interpretations. Thirdly, the theoretical perspective of interpretivists potentially abandons the addressing of political and ideological impacts on social reality and knowledge. That is, the interpretivist paradigm targets to understand a current phenomenon rather than to focus on problems in relation with the empowerment of individuals and societies (Mack, 2010). As the target in this study is the understanding of practices and mechanisms within the GFBS, the current media processes in this specific sphere is analysed and external impacts on this sphere are then considered in the

data analysis when it impacts these specific media factors or are relevant for the interpretation of the results.

As a researcher, it is not tried to discover the existence of an objective and generalisable reality which applies to every single person and which may supposedly be out there. Rather it is tried to understand a reality in an interpretative way by explaining how individuals interpret their subjective world basing on personal experiences. In terms of ontology (the view on nature of reality) interpretivism takes a relativist ontology in this research that contradicts and relativises the existence of an objective reality by saying that the reality is a relative entity that is not consistent because reality bases on subjective interpretations of situations that construct the subjective reality which can change the reality by gaining new experiences, for instance (Hammersley, 2013). The reality depends on the way meaning is attached (i.e. shaped by context) why truth does not exist without meaning. In order to find the reality of production, consumption and co-creation processes in interactive FBs it is needed to look on the GFB's individual perspectives on their worldview and everyday actions to construct their subjective blog content. Consequently, there are multiple realities that are products of mental constructions and the reality varies in nature depending on a set of individual experiences, beliefs, understandings, locality, media, institutions, society, time and context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 2013). When the time and context changes the reality as well must change because it is context-bound. It results in the assumption that a reality is not a constant construct, but it changes over time as experiences, beliefs and understandings can change in the same matter and lead to new subjective interpretations of issues (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructions of reality and truth are therefore informed, sophisticated and above all changeable.

Epistemology basically means which relationship the researcher has with knowledge and how it is perceived between the researcher and reality which again shows whether a researcher is a part of the knowledge or not. It means that findings are created during the investigations because the research object and the investigator are assumed to be linked with each other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In relation with the ontology it shows what the

researcher believes about the nature of reality that dictates what kind of relationship the researcher think he should have with the investigation of the GFBS. A subjective epistemology is considered which means that when the researcher in this study enters into the research situation the participants represented by the researcher and the GFBS influence each other which results in a mutual co-construction of reality. To summarise, there is a relationship between reality and the investigator why the researcher influences the reality under research. Thus, the researcher believes in a subjective approach to reality why an emic approach is used for the study conduction because the researcher describes the media culture of the GFBS through the participants' perspective. Consequently, the description of media practices cannot be neutral in this case and bases on subjective interpretations. Interacting with GFB to find out what truth means to them is needed. These are reasons why the researcher wants to get inside the various media processes in the GFBS in order to understand how FB construct their subjective reality and truth as bloggers observe and critic professional news media services and produce own content at the same time basing on previously collected news (Bölz, 2014). The potential influence of the researcher on the outcome is acknowledged because interaction with the GFB is seen as necessary to discover meanings and to receive in-depth understanding of how and why production, consumption and co-creation processes are conducted in the way they exist in the GFBS (Crotty, 1998; Mack, 2010; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Therefore, the researcher represents the ontology of relativism because it is believed that truth is created by meanings and experiences. In order to understand the bloggers and recipients experiences and the context that shaped it, a dig deep and direct conversational interaction and survey with an interpretative and qualitative approach of data analysis is needed contextualised to former findings in the research (Bryman, 2004; Byrne, 1998; Denzin, 1970; Dudovskiy, 2018; Heale & Forbes, 2013; Olsen, 2004; Silverman, 1993).

The methodological approach adopted in this thesis is based upon the paradigm, ontology and epistemological stance outlined above which will show how data, findings and knowledge are discovered and analysed in a systematic way (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The methodology here, therefore, refers to the interpretivism paradigm

that guides how knowledge should be gathered when evaluating and analysis media production and consumption processes in the GFBS. The methodology in this case is hermeneutical and predominantly qualitative. Each reality is interpreted by the investigator (i.e. the belief on the strong role of the researcher and qualitative research) why hermeneutical techniques are used and constructions are contrasted and compared through a dialectical interchange of the gathered findings from the research steps. It is assumed that the individual constructions can only be extracted through social interactions between the researcher and GFBs why inter alia expert interviews will be conducted (Bölz, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, the purpose of the interpretivism paradigm is the transfer of findings why generalisations from the data cannot be made, but findings can be transferred from one context to a similar one. The final purpose is filtering a consent construction being more sophisticated and filled with information than any of the previous existing constructions either from bloggers and readers or the researcher himself (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Furthermore, the methodological approach shows how the researcher proceeds in this study to discover and create knowledge and to find out the participants' subjective media reality which they construct in the context of the GFBS. Therefore, the logic of the inductive reasoning or inductive approach is considered by beginning with a study of a range of individual cases and extrapolating patterns from it to define a conceptual strategy (Charmaz, 2006; Mills et al., 2006). In this study, the researcher analyses FB articles for gathering as much specific information as it can be about the different research objectives. Then it is looked for patterns and common findings in the data (pattern analysis). From those patterns tentative hypothesis, which is not labelled in a quantitative sense, are created. These hypotheses are used to promote more research and general conclusions and finally a theoretical model are developed and presented as key findings (Bowen, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Hodkinson, 2008; Jebb et al., 2017; Mills et al., 2006; Ramalho et al., 2015).

The case study research which is directly connected with the interpretative tradition dictates the researcher's methodological choice because it is aimed to understand the

research objectives in the real world setting of the GFBS (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Chetty, 2013; Harrison et al, 2017; Keutel & Werner, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Ponelis, 2015; Stake, 2006). Contemporary case study research has its origins in qualitative approaches to investigate the GFB's lives and experiences, and how they understand the cultural and social context of their media world to gaining insights into their individual interpretations and attributions which again are their experiences and constructions of their own world and reality (Harrison et al., 2017; Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014). This investigation is conducted in the natural setting of the GFB's experiences with mainly narrative, but also descriptive data outcomes. Therefore, the previous explained theories of the theoretical framework guide the research process while undertaking this case study research that led to a more integrated methodological approach due to the integration of narrative and descriptive or rather statistical methods in a single research project (Harrison et al., 2017). That is, the combination of qualitative comparative methods with descriptive data demonstrates the adjustability and flexibility of the case study design making a significant contribution to the understanding of the interactive GFBS (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Chetty, 2013; George & Bennett, 2005; Keutel & Werner, 2011; Ponelis, 2015). Consequently, the used case study methods are linked to the underlying arguments in the research philosophy of this research to understanding and researching the complexity, processes, practices, social interactions and relationships in the GFBS (George & Bennett, 2005; Harrison et al., 2017). Different methods are required to explore the participants' perspectives and the influence of their relationships on the media production. The usage of an interpretivist orientation to this case study is emphasised on an inductive exploration and holistic analysis of the research objectives. The characteristics of case study research are inter alia descriptive and heuristic focusing on the GFBS as a specific entity or case which is studied by describing and analysing this unit and community comprehensively, holistically and in-depth related to its environment. Moreover, it provides room for credible research endeavours which is also viewed as a valid form of investigation to evaluate and analyse complex issues especially in the context of human behaviour and social interactions (Merriam, 2009). That is, the interpretivist perspective represents the attitude that multiple meanings and

realities exist depending on and being co-created by the participants and the researcher (Harrison et al., 2017). While emphasising the qualitative essence of case study, it also enables the opportunity to design the study tailored specifically to the inherent complexity of the research objectives combining qualitative with quantitative methods to explore the GFBS-related research objectives (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). Harrison et al. (2017) describe the case study as a qualitative inquiry basing on a qualitative or interpretative paradigm encompassing explanatory, exploratory, descriptive or interpretative purposes. Therefore, a broad scope of methods is employed to seek understanding and to establish the meaning of experiences from the participants' viewpoints in the GFBS, and regarding Stake (2006) also quantitative methods (e.g. surveys) can be included to discover subjective meanings and understandings of experiences in the GFBS context even though the researcher holds an interpretivist orientation. The researcher aims at analysing, presenting and understanding the various perspectives in order to get close to them in the GFBS environment (Stake, 2006). Therefore, an interaction between bloggers and the researcher is necessary for data collection because it is an indication of the researcher's level of connection and involvement to the research objectives which mirrors the interpretivism approach and background of this research design (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Ponelis, 2015). It means that the researcher's interpretations and perceptions are a part of the investigation and the results leading to an interpretative and subjective orientation that flows throughout the research (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). The researcher must be reflexive in every research step and has to manage his individual interpretations within the study to support his position by comparing it with findings from related research (Harrison et al., 2017). The researcher's role is always critical when producing knowledge and at the same time his interpretative role is essential in this process because the researcher and the participants are partners in the generation and discovery of knowledge because both direct interpretations and the thematic grouping of findings are considered (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). Therefore, the interpretative position views reality as subjective and multiple bases on the blog participants' understandings and meanings (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ponelis, 2015; Stake, 2006). Consequently, the

produced knowledge is relative to the time and study context and the researcher is interactively participating in the study (Harrison et al., 2017; Ponelis, 2015). In terms of epistemology, the interpretation and the experiencing of the activity of the media production in the GFBS are shaped by the research situation to understanding the media processes in its context and the particular situation (Stake, 2006). The researcher tries to study the media processes situationally that enables him the investigation of the integrated system of German football journalism in which the GFBS unfolds. As a summary, case study is a sophisticated and versatile form of qualitative research enabling the combined use with quantitative methods to investigate and understand the complex GFBS in its context holistically, comprehensively and in-depth by considering the methodological and data triangulation in this study. It fits best for the investigation of media processes in the GFBS because the boundary between the GFBS context and the research objectives is unclear and contains many elements (Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 2009; Ponelis, 2015; Stake, 2006). Its exploratory and explanatory nature can be used to create an understanding of the GFBS in its natural settings, and case study helps to answer how, why and what are the media production, consumption and co-creation processes in the interactive GFBS (Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). Therefore, it is essential to enclose the interactive GFBS with the help of a specific and selective identification of the parameters (inter alia participants, locations and processes), the establishment of the timeframe for the investigation, the use of multiple sources of evidence and a heuristic and descriptive case study design in order to frame, focus and manage data collection and analysis (Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). The collective alignment of these elements with the theoretical and conceptual framework determines a justifiable structure of this study and develops the validity, reliability and credibility of the research findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Keutel & Werner, 2011).

The time horizon refers to the time frame within which the project is intended for completion. According to Rindfleisch et al. (2008) the time horizon is needed for the research design independently from the considered research methodology. There are two types of time horizons named longitudinal and cross-sectional. The cross-sectional time

horizon exists when there is a pre-set time established for the collection of data, and data are collected at one time point. A longitudinal time horizon refers to the collection of data repeatedly over an extended period to analyse time-related developments, for instance, when a blogger's writing style or content production is analysed at different time points to analysing changes and differences to former data collection times regarding the same factors (Saunders et al., 2015). Thus, longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period, whereas cross-sectional studies are limited to a specific time frame. Although, the research objectives are analysed by using different methods at different points in time which could result in the assumption that this research is longitudinal in nature, this research is also limited to a time-specific status of the GFBS why the cross-sectional time horizon is used. Besides this, the cross-sectional study is conducted with different samples (i.e. the blog content, GFB and FB readers) not at the same, but at different time points. That is, even though three research steps are considered at different time points, all research objectives are considered during the research process without focusing primarily on time-related differences (Saunders et al., 2015). It means that the three research methods do not analyse different research objectives, because data about every research objective are collected with every applied method. Therefore, it is aimed to analyse the current status of football blogging related media elements or rather showing the cross-section of production, consumption and co-creation processes throughout the interactive GFBS. However, there is a possibility that research-related objectives can change through the time of data investigation which are then considered during the data interpretation, synopsis and triangulation.

As there are no previous investigations of the GFBS, primary data are collected specifically for this research, and secondary data containing the literature review are used for comparison purposes (i.e. parallels and differences) and to receiving the view by various authors regarding other blogospheres and online journalism-related outcomes. The benefits of collecting secondary data is its support to structuring ideas, to developing new concepts, to widen new directions to data, and to organising appropriate approach to the research why these data are viewed with the same caution as with the

primary data (Saunders et al., 2015). For this research, the researcher collected secondary data from journal articles and textbooks.

A method triangulation will be conducted to study the pre-described research problems by combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Hastings & Salkind, 2013). Thereby, the construction of the descriptive blog reader survey method will base on findings from previously conducted content analyses and expert interviews to verify the formerly evaluated data and findings (Denzin, 1970; Heale & Forbes, 2013). The use of triangulation depends on the researcher's philosophical stance which in this study is an interpretative and qualitative-guided one by deciding that the qualitative approach portrays the main methodological part and a within-method approach is used leading throughout the study so that the quantitative methods are used as complementary methods (Hussein, 2009). That is, the research project will be enriched by the addition of quantitative methods to the tool spectrum (Bryman, 2004). Although interpretivist researchers often used exclusively qualitative methods for the data collection and data analysis, in this project a mixed-method approach is defined by conducting content analyses, expert interviews and a survey. Thus, as an interpretivist worldview lays the foundation, the researchers requires to put the quantitative collected data in a qualitative context with other qualitatively sampled data which will be explained in more detail in the following sub-chapters. In the next chapters, the research philosophy and approaches to research, the selection of methods, the research conduction and data analysis will be explained in more detail and contextualised to the GFBS.

3.1 Philosophical stance and choice of methods

To date, no research studies can be found in the literature which investigated the football blogosphere. In general, the blogosphere is a kind of complex reflection of journalism which cannot be defined exactly because the intermediate characteristics of blogs and its infinite possibilities to present the content make a common definition difficult. Although there are some common key points (e.g. chronological presentation of blog articles or interconnected website with other sources and media producers), there are various

definitions of the 'blogosphere' with differing descriptions (Herring et al., 2004; Herring et al., 2005; Li & Walejko, 2008; McCarthy, 2014; Schmidt, Schönberger & Stegbauer, 2005). Everyone can write, read and comment on blogs, and bloggers enable readers to post comments which in the end make these kinds of websites very interactive. Technological changes and developments have the potential of influencing the interaction behaviour and the bloggers' working methods which have not been considered in investigations of blogospheres.

Furthermore, the aim is to explore the production of the GFB' coverage in terms of its logic and functioning: With which everyday practical actions do GFB establish their subjective reality and produce content. Producers and recipients act in a blog environment where roles can change place: a media producer could be the recipient of the blog entry commenter's opinion so that the recipient becomes a producer (Nielsen, 2014). Both bloggers and recipients are asked about the influence of the direct interaction, their motivation to write or to read a blog as well as the perception of their roles in the process of content production. Hence, there is a need to ask people for their perceptions and interpretations in order to understand and make sense of their subjective reality and their subjective production and reception processes. Thus, following the interpretivist viewpoint the analyses of the GFBS may provide an insight into its media culture in which realities are individually interpreted as well as socially and media-culturally constructed (Lünenborg, 2005).

In the world of research, scientific investigators choose various philosophical stances and methods to conduct research projects. Consequently, there are paradigm wars in which researchers deputise for certain paradigms and methods. However, the research objectives decide on what paradigm and methods fit best for a coherent and useful investigation of a phenomenon. The interpretivism paradigm and relativistic position, therefore, form the basis for the investigation of the three research objectives in order to investigate the media culture of the GFBS (King & Horrocks, 2010; Klaus & Lünenborg, 2004; Lünenborg, 2005). From a relativistic and interpretive viewpoint, reality is viewed as a subjective and therefore multiple construction that bases on the blog participants'

understandings and meanings of the mutually co-created content (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ponelis, 2015; Stake, 2006). It means that the reality is a relative entity, and it depends on the way meaning is shaped by the context of the covered football topic and situation why truth does not exist without meaning. In order to find the reality of media processes in interactive FBs, it is needed to look on the GFB's individual perspectives on their worldview and everyday actions to construct their subjective blog content as well as on the readers' interpretation of their usage and role allocations in the GFBS which are influenced by interactions with each other and the blog articles. Consequently, there are multiple realities that are products of mental constructions and interpretations, and the reality varies in nature depending on a set of individual experiences, beliefs, understandings, locality, media, society, time and context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) Therefore, numerical data through quantitative methods and narrative data through qualitative methods are collected and analysed to address the defined research objectives.

A triangulation approach will be conducted methodologically in this research project to analyse the research objectives from different methodological perspectives. Triangulation is also known as mixed-method approach because different data collection methods are used to analyse one research objective from different scientific viewpoints (Williamson, 2005). The aim is to enhance the confidence of the findings through the confirmation of an analysed information or statement using three independent measures: the quantitative and QICA method, the expert interviewing and the descriptive survey method. Combining the findings from these methodological approaches will provide a more comprehensive understanding than one approach could do by its own because this methodological technique can be used both to confirm suggested findings and to work out the data completeness (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Moreover, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows to exceed the limitations from each method by comparing results from different viewpoints, and the mixed-method usage can result in different outcomes: assembling the collected findings to the same conclusions; complementing results to each other and supplementing the individual results even when findings relate to different research objectives; evaluating contradictory or differing findings (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The aim of assembling results is to enhance the

validity and strength of the study through verification of evaluated data and to decrease biases, while complementing results focuses on providing multiple perspectives and on underlining various aspects of the research objectives, and divergent results can show new and better explanations for the objectives during the evaluation and analyses (Denzin, 1970; Heale & Forbes, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003).

The aims are using this mixed-methods approach to profit from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of a unique use of either the qualitative or quantitative research approach (Feilzer, 2010; William, 2007). For instance, when the purpose is to provide a deep-dive into a research problem or a phenomenon, a small but informative subject group is selected (qualitative approach). When a researcher focuses on inferential numerical data in order to quantify the results, then quantitative methods are used. Therefore, when both goals are pursued, it is worthy to combine both methodological approaches into a single research study. As a conclusion, William (2007, p. 70) summarises the advantages of the mixed-method approach very well because “[b]y having the ability to design research studies that combine data collection or data analysis methods from the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, researchers are now able to test and build theories. Researchers are also able to employ deductive and inductive analysis in the same research study. The mixed methods approach to research provides researchers with the ability to design a single research study that answers questions about both the complex nature of phenomenon from the participants’ point of view and the relationship between measurable variables. Proponents of the mixed methods approach to research advocate doing ‘what works’ within the precepts of research to investigate, to predict, to explore, to describe, to understand the phenomenon (...). That is, in relation to the mixed methods approach to research, pragmatic assumptions govern claims about what is knowledge (...). The fact that the quantitative and the qualitative research approaches are not only compatible but also complimentary underpins calls for additional research studies that use the mixed methods research approach (...).”

There are examples in football journalism-related or blogosphere-related research projects using triangulation or rather mixed-methods approaches in varying manners by combining interview and observation methods or content-analysis and survey methods with each other in order to link and compare these methods with reference to single or multiple research questions in one project (Bölz, 2014; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Kim & Johnson, 2012; Meyers et al., 2015; Rainie, 2005). However, methodological triangulation is also criticised in research because of the reproach that mixed-method researchers presuppose data, which is collected with different methods, can be compared with each other and can potentially be of the same importance and weight for the research objectives (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Additionally, the critics of triangulation assume that in case different data sets result in similar findings, the data interpretation must be viewed with caution because it could mean that every evaluated data set is erroneous (Banik, 1993; Denzin, 1970; Heale & Forbes, 2013). Nevertheless, a triangulation approach contributes to advance a more comprehensive and better understanding of the three research objectives in this thesis and to arise the precision of this research study because the use of a mixed-method approach as a philosophical perspective provides for more relevant identification and understanding of cultural studies-oriented journalism research (Lünenborg, 2005; Heale & Forbes, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003). Consequently, the application of quantitative and qualitative methods comes closer to the football bloggers' and FB users' interpreted reality and it creates more realistic findings for researchers by analysing and providing a more comprehensive identification of the production, consumption and co-creation processes in GFBS, its context and scope from different methodological and multiple blog-related participating perspectives. Therefore, this study will triangulate and combine various data sets (data triangulation), methodological approaches (methodological triangulation) and theoretical perspectives (theory triangulation) from media studies, journalistic-related cultural studies and journalism research.

3.2 Research in this thesis

To understand patterns and mechanisms behind the production and consumption of football blogs and the interaction behaviour between blog participants with its impacts on working processes and content, the research approach (methodological choice), the methods (operational details) and data analyses are presented in further chapters. Quotes from blog articles and expert interviews for the usage in this thesis were firstly translated by the researcher from German to English and then checked by a person who studied for nine years in the United States of America and consequently familiar with academic writing in English.

3.3 Methodology in German journalism research

Approaches of cultural studies support a perspective change in journalism research and the attitude towards the audience's role in online media. Therefore, the analysis of the audience's view on media products or on the participants' perceptions role allocations in the GFBS are important when media culture is investigated. Thus, when texts, working processes or the interaction behaviour are explored, the audience has to be considered in the research process because their views are an integrated and central element in media-cultural processes to understand a media culture as the interplay of co-created production, content and consumption (Lünenborg, 2005). When analysing working methods in the media world, in German media studies it is rare to consider qualitative methods for research (Bergmann, 2006). However, the consideration of its usage is supported by German researchers who advocate that qualitative interviewing helps to receive a holistic and profound viewpoint of an analysed media phenomenon (Lünenborg, 2005; Schaffrath, 2011).

The principle of triangulation considers the interactive aspect in blogs as an additive main part when texts are produced, and pleads for the inclusion of the audience in the investigation of the football blogosphere. These aspects were considered in this research project (Lünenborg, 2015).

3.3.1 The methodological analysis of the German football blogosphere

Media studies-related research projects consider a qualitative-methodological triangulation when analysing journalists' content-process routines (Bölz, 2014; Flick, 2011; Lünenborg, 2000; Thaweesaksri & Wannapiroon, 2013). "(...) [Q]ualitative research is interdisciplinary, interpretive, political and theoretical in nature. Using language to understand concepts based on [the] people's experience, it attempts to create a sense of the larger realm of human relationships" (Brenner, 2013, p. 4). It aims to interpret meaningful relationships between media and society, and "qualitative researchers consider the diversity of meanings and values created in media" (Brenner, 2013, p. 5). Consequently, qualitative methods were included into the research project in which the results help to explain in more detail the media triangulation (Klaus & Lünenborg, 2000). In relation to the purpose of investigating the GFBS, content analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method to analyse the interaction behaviour between the participants of the GFBS. The content of blog entries and comments were considered in the QnCA process to explore the blogging frequency to indicate how time-intense new content is produced, text lengths to show whether articles resemble professional articles in the sense of short news coverages or long articles potentially include a storytelling, and the calculation of linking patterns to point out the interconnected use of web sources, the interconnected network of blogs or the interconnection between bloggers and other media producers (Herring, 2010). For the investigation of the interaction behaviour, though, the QICA explores the key patterns in the blogger-reader-interaction and the reader-reader-interaction. Thus, as Herring et al. (2004) concluded that blogs have an interactive potential that has not been fully exploited, it is the research aim in this thesis to analyse the interaction behaviour between blog participants with the help of content analysis methods.

3.4 Operational details to the selection of subjects

Respondents for this case study were selected using a purposive sampling method. This approach is used when limited numbers of people can serve as primary data source due to the research objective, and when a researcher needs to study a cultural domain with a limited range of expert informants (Palys, 2008; Tongco, 2007). In this study, the choice of interviewing certain GFB bases on the nominating list of GFB by the German Academy of Football Culture in 2016 (<http://www.fussball-kultur.org/artikel/news/24-blogs-sind-nominiert/>) and on GFBs who offer an activated comment feature. An analysis of a range of similar studies that have looked at other areas of the media creation process (Bölz, 2014; Gray, 2014; Kian, Burden & Shaw, 2011; Thaweesaksri & Wannapiroon, 2013) shows a sample size of between 5 and 12 media producers why 7 FB were analysed according to the selection criteria made for this research project.

Firstly, it was aimed to analyse working processes and patterns of the interaction behaviour in the football blogosphere. Hence, with a quantitative analysis emphasising on descriptive data and a qualitative blog content analysis process by Elo & Kyngäs (2007) it was aimed to outline the content-process routines, the intensity and types of interactions between bloggers and commenters of 7 selected FB and the depiction of the media-cultural characteristics of the GFBS (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hepp, 2009). Thus, blog participants were considered to be interacting conversationally to each other when two cases arose: a comment is made to another comment (1) or at least two comments either referred to the content of the blog entry or to the content of another comment within the comment feature is written (2) as a conversation starts with two people exchange comments to one another (Herring et al., 2005). In addition, for the interview analysis the hermeneutic content analysis was used. It parses a text reductively by setting up categories in contrast to other QICA. That is, a hermeneutic content analysis investigates interpretively the content in its entirety (Bölz, 2014; Christmann, 2006; Flick, 1995). The findings of the content analysis serve as a basis for the construction of the blogger interview questions.

The second research step was to investigate 7 selected football blogger's content-process routines by using semi-structured in-depth expert interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Gray, 2014; Kian, Burden & Shaw, 2011; Thaweesaksri & Wannapiroon, 2013; Thurman & Walters, 2013). In media studies, expert interviews are used for analyses of media productions and media institutions (Aufenanger, 2008). Fontana & Frey (2000) describe in-depth individual interviewing as a powerful tool for exploring topics in depth because interviewees can be queried more intensively and the researcher can go deeper into the subject matter. Interviewees were older than 18 and freely consent to participate without being coerced or unfairly pressurised in order to respect their individual freedom, autonomy and integrity so that the persons can decide by their own how to communicate their opinions and choices.

Thirdly, a descriptive survey method was used to gather data from the blog readers' ways of media consumption, their interaction behaviour, their perceptions of relationships and role allocations and the FB status in the German football media world. Therefore, findings from the first and second research step were considered to construct the items for the descriptive blog reader survey (Dudovskiy, 2018; Salaria, 2012). It is of importance that survey participants read German FB why bloggers were asked to share the survey link in their blog and social media accounts.

3.4.1 An introduction to the German football blogosphere

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief introduction to the GFBS and explain the reasons for the selection of the chosen FBs (Table 1). In 2016, an independent jury of the German Academy of Football Culture (i.e. journalists, internet experts and experts of football and culture) nominated, voted and awarded the best football blog in Germany. Each jury member nominated his personal favourite basing on journalistic quality, originality and football-cultural relevance and gave an exclusive explanation for the nomination. Thus, the nominations of these German FBs represent the first step of the blog selection for this study (i.e. FB with a comment feature from the list of nominees). In a second step, if available blog rolls of the nominated FB were investigated to expand

the circle of selected FB for this study under the described preconditions. In the last step, a subject group of seven German FBs was determined from which the average text length (i.e. number of words per post) and the average number of comments were analysed to function as a base for the QICA of blog articles which were published between August and December in 2017. That is, when the numerical word average in a FB is 250, then postings around 250 words ($\pm 10\%$) were chosen to frame the number of potential postings for analysis.

Blog name	Topic	No. bloggers	Name of blogger	Gender	Place of residence	Year
1. Königsblog (KB) www.koenigsblog.net	Schalke 04	1	Torsten Wieland	Male	Gelsenkirchen	2007
2. Die blaue 24 (DB24) www.dieblaue24.com	TSV 1860 München	5	Oliver Griss, Dominik Sauter, Uli Wagner, Holger Amann, Pascal Lawitsch	All male	Munich	2011
3. Textilvergehen (TV) www.textilvergehen.de	1. FC Union Berlin	4	Stefanie Fiebrig, Sebastian Fiebrig, Daniel Roßbach, Hans-Martin Sprenger	1 female & 3 male	Berlin	2006
4. Wolfs-blog (WB) www.wolfsblog.de	VfL Wolfsburg	2	Normen Scholz, Lars Vollmering	All male	Wolfsburg & Cologne	2010
5. 120minuten (120) www.120minuten.net	All about football	4	Endreas Müller, Christoph Wagner, Alex Schnarr, Oliver Leiste	All male	Magdeburg & Paris (France)	No information
6. Nur der FCM (FCM) www.nurderfcm.de	1. FC Magdeburg	1	Alex Schnarr	Male	Marburg	2006
7. An Old International (AOI) www.anoldinternational.co.uk	Football history	1	Christoph Wagner	Male	Paris (France)	2010

Table 1. Profile of the sample of German football bloggers with information from the blog-website (as of January 2018).

3.4.2 Königsblog

The football blogger of Königsblog Torsten Wieland is a fan of Schalke 04 and was introduced in the GFBS in 2006 when he firstly read a football blog entry. After the foundation of his first blog “Drei Ecken, Drei Elfer” (annotation: three corners, three penalties) he changed in 2008 the blog supplier for design reasons and started the Königsblog. The intention is to write down own thoughts about his favourite club and to deliver other football fans a communication platform on which they can discuss about it. In the same year, he opened his personal blog-related Twitter account on which he also publishes links to his last blog entries. Motivational problems and private circumstances forced him to have a blogging break twice (December 2010 to January 2011 and July 2017 to September 2017), but in May 2018 he finally stopped blogging because his blog does not fulfil the new requirements of the European Data Act Protection Law.

3.4.3 Dieblaue24

Oliver Griss describes his FB “dieblaue24” as “the one and only platform for fans of the lions [annotation: TSV 1860 München] and in the meantime it became to one of the biggest private football portals in Germany” (<https://www.dieblaue24.com/werben>). In 2011, the former professional football journalist started the blog with a page access of over 40 million clicks in 2017. Dieblaue24 does report several topics related to the football club TSV 1860 München including a live ticker during matches which is read by approximately 5000 fans. The blog is his main salary income source.

3.4.4 Textilvergehen

Textilvergehen was founded in 2006 by the female blogger Stefanie Fiebrig and is now a multiple-authored blog. It is a fan blog of 1.FC Union Berlin and the member Sebastian Fiebrig works as professional journalist for a newspaper in Berlin. Since 2008, Textilvergehen has an own podcast (with approximately 1.500 to 2.000 listeners) and matches are commented “very subjectively, often controversially, but always fair and

original” (Kicker, 2016). This FB was voted as the “Best German football blog 2016” by the aforementioned football academy. Since March 2015, the press review “State of the Union” is published daily on Facebook and in the blog containing mainly breaking and current news. Although the bloggers publish their articles on a daily basis, they do not work as professional bloggers and do not earn money with their blogging activities. The bloggers of Textilvergehen work professionally as photographers, graphic designers or journalists.

3.4.5 Wolfs-blog

The blogger of Wolfs-blog describes his blog as an independent news portal with information about VfL Wolfsburg which is no official offer of the football club itself (<http://www.wolfs-blog.de/informationen-uber-wolfs-blog-de/>). His intention is the presentation of the club in a way ‘it deserves it’. As an opponent of the sport journalism he wants to offer an alternative and trusting information source about VfL Wolfsburg. The blogger founded the blog in order to analysis media rumours and news for its trueness by delivering alternative and additional sources and facts (i.e. official statements or trustworthy sources). The blog is similar to a fanzine combined with the blogger’s personal impressions of training units, match analyses and media coverage in which the personal section is aimed to be a part of it (<https://www.clubfans-united.de/2012/03/15/tradition-weil-ja-kaum-was-anderes-uebrig-bleibt/>). The readers are invited to comment the blog entries for which a netiquette is listed on the blog page. The blogger and his editorial staff reserve the right to prove, edit, delete or reject any comment.

3.4.6 120minuten

The blog 120minuten was founded by Andreas Müller, Christoph Wagner, Alex Schnarr and Oliver Leiste who additionally have their own single-authored football blog. In 120minuten long football-related articles, the so-called long reads, are regularly

published. Although guest authors write articles for the blog, the four founders who also represent the editorial office publish the majority of the blog entries. Because of a gap of long texts in the GFBS, the blog was started firstly by Andreas Müller and Christoph Wagner. 120minuten can be seen as a football project for GFBs and journalists who have the opportunity to publish texts which they usually would not publish in their own blogs for several reasons (e.g. no relevance for their readers). Blog entries are published irregularly why they do not have set times and regular time intervals regarding new articles because more investigative time is needed for the collection of information and the creation of an article than for articles about a specific football club, for instance.

3.4.7 nurderFCM.de

Nurderfcm.de was founded in 2012 after 1.FC Magdeburg played an unsuccessful season 2011/2012 and the blogger Alex Schnarr used the blog platform to express his frustrations about his favourite club. It contains periodically and weekly published blog articles and a podcast from a football fan's critical point of view. Besides his own blog, Alex Schnarr is a member of the aforementioned football blog 120minuten.

3.4.8 An Old International

An Old International is a blog about football history and was founded in 2010 by Christoph Wagner who writes articles in English. Topics are inter alia his favourite football club 1.FC Magdeburg and several incidents of the international football history. Christoph Wagner is also a founder of the football blog 120minuten.

3.5 The centrality of interaction in selected German football blogs

There is a wide range of content types in the GFBS. The GFBs publish periodically articles containing objectively expressed information and subjectively formulated opinions or thoughts. The selected blogs have in common that comments, feedback and

criticism are highly encouraged and welcome. Some bloggers published a netiquette which commenters must respect if they want to comment on articles. Also bloggers without commenting rules (e.g. Königsblog) delete readers' accounts or comments in situations in which the comments are too provocative or agitating against the blog, the blogger, the favourite club or other blog users. The blogs cannot merely be considered as a communication platform in which the bloggers express their subjective and individual opinion about football topics, it is also an interaction platform for blog participants who interact among each other and discuss controversially in terms of content about the topic of an article or other football-related topics. The comments show that FBs are an information tool and a forum at the same time in which interaction has a central role either as a feedback tool for bloggers or as a room for communicative exchanges. The commenting behaviour shows that interaction is essential for blog participants because even blog entries without an open content or question show high numbers of comments which are made sometimes often by a small group of commenters and few times by many different commenters. Table 2 shows the overview of selected blog entries which were analysed with reference to its publication frequency, text lengths of articles and the types of inserted links. Even when QnCA says little of working processes, it is useful as a measure of how many words are used within the posts and which kind of blog feature are used among the blogs. Thus, the descriptive results could tell us more about the meaning of structural characteristics and text production as a means of lengths and incorporation of sources. These are the articles that provide the basis for the QnCA and QICA.

Blog	Title of blog post	Translation	Publication month (2017)
Königsblog	"Verdienter Sieg gegen den VfB Stuttgart"	„A deserved win against VfB Stuttgart“	Sep (a)
	Schalke sein und bleiben, keine Stimme der AfD!	Be Schalke and stay Schalke, no vote for the AfD!	Sept (b)
	Schalke 04 - Bayer Leverkusen 1:1	Schalke 04 - Bayer Leverkusen 1:1	Oct (c)
	Das Derby in Dortmund	The derby in Dortmund	Nov (d)
	Pokalachtelfinale gegen Köln	Round of the last sixteen in the German Football Cup against Cologne	Dec (e)
dieblaue24	"Ich komme wieder": DEL-Star Abeltshauer von Bieros Löwen begeistert	“I’ll come again”: DEL-Star Abeltshauer delighted by Biero’s Lions	Aug (a)
	Wie baut Bierofka die Löwen um? Die Bilder vom Training	How ill Biero convert the Lions? The photos of the training	Sept (b)
	Reisinger durfte nicht in die Arena - BFV-Präsident Koch musste helfen	Reisinger wasn’t allowed to enter the arena – President of BFV had to help	Oct (c)
	Für das große Ziel Aufstieg: Bierofka will den 1860-Kader reduzieren	For the big aim promotion: Bierofka wants to reduce the 1860-squad	Nov (d)
	Das Stimonaris-Aus: So erklärt sich Verwaltungsrat-Boss Drees	The Stimonaris-out: That’s how the chief of the management board Drees explains himself	Dec (e)
Textilvergehen	"Union ist aufgestiegen"	“Union goes up”	Aug (a)
	Low Key Derby	Low Key Derby	Sept (b)
	Ein Ergebnis, das nicht die Wahrheit vom Spiel erzählt	A result that doesn’t represent the reality	Oct (c)
	Die Mannschaft hat Reife gewonnen	The team became more experienced	Nov (d)
	Viele Fragen sind offen, aber bei Union will sie niemand beantworten	Many open questions but at Union no one wants to answer it	Dec (e)
Wolfs-blog	Matchday: VfL Wolfsburg gewinnt gegen Hildesheim mit 6:0	Match day: VfL Wolfsburg wins against Hildesheim with 6:0	Aug (a)
	VfL Wolfsburg: Nerlinger und Beiersdorf im Gespräch	VfL Wolfsburg: Nerlinger and Beiersdorf are under consideration	Sept (b)
	Einzelkritik: Wie benotet ihr die Spieler gegen Schalke?	Individual critique: How do you assess the players	Oct (c)

		against Schalke?	
	Offiziell: Der VfL Wolfsburg verpflichtet Leihspieler Tisserand fest	Official: VfL Wolfsburg gives the loan player Tisserand a contract	Nov (d)
	VfL Wolfsburg: Hummels feiert Mallis Traumpass	VfL Wolfsburg: Hummels celebrates Malli's dream pass	Dec (e)
An Old International	Return to Bauer	Return to Bauer	Aug (a)
	Next Stop: Promotion?	Next Stop: Promotion?	Sep (b)
	Losing the Battle – Winning Hearts	Losing the Battle – Winning Hearts	Oct (c)
	When Hungary Turned England's World Upside Down - Interview with George Robb	When Hungary Turned England's World Upside Down - Interview with George Robb	Nov (d)
	Magazine Review: View from the Allotment End	Magazine Review: View from the Allotment End	Dec (e)
nurderfcm.de	"Die Sensation ist ausgeblieben"	"The sensation fails to come"	Aug (a)
	"Play it again, Sam"	"Play it again, Sam"	Sep (b)
	Alles wie immer	Everything as always	Oct (c)
	"...wir war'n noch niemals in Madrid..."	"...wie never haven't been in Madrid..."	Nov (d)
	Murmeltiertag oder: "Döp, döp, döp" - reloaded	Groundhog Day or: „Döp, döp, döp” – reloaded	Dec (e)
120minuten	Zur weiteren Entwicklung des Fußballs - 95 Thesen	To the further development of football – 95 theses	Oct (a)

Table 2. An overview of the selected blog entries

3.6 The content analysis methods

The social network character forces researchers to combine various methods related to the research question. In FB the traditional content analysis is as important as the link analysis (i.e. links used in a blog entry) in order to analyse the interconnection and community formation within a blog and between blogs. That is, the verification of the content and the interconnection can be enhanced by linking because links are the essence of the web (Herring, 2010). Bloggers use it to verify their content by linking it to original information sources, and links interconnect bloggers or rather communicators with each other (Herring, 2010). Linking patterns within and across websites have been analysed as indicators of phenomena ranging from academic quality (Thelwall, 2002) to

community formation (Gibson, Kleinberg, & Rhagavan, 1998). The logical consequence out of the research questions and the purposes is the combination of link analysis (i.e. which is aligned with the social network analysis) and quantitative and QICA in FB (i.e. stylistic, multimedia, textual and hypertextual elements) (Table 3) (Herring, 2010; Thurman & Walters, 2013).

Quantitative content analysis	Qualitative content analysis
Textual features of blog entries	Working processes and practices
Interconnection via cross-links	Follow-up communication processes
Channels of publication	Interaction behaviour in blog articles

Table 3. Purposes of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of German football blogs.

There are epistemological and ontological differences between the qualitative and quantitative paradigm which leads to methodological debates in research because its combined use in the same study or even in the same research step are criticised due to existing strengths and weaknesses of each methodological approach (Hussein, 2009). However, in the context of the GFBS both approaches are combined basing on the assumption that there is a great possibility of equalising the flaws of one method and enhancing the benefits of the other one to receive better research results.

The combination of QnCA with QICA processes is combined in case studies and digital communication research to illustrate processes of online media production and consumption with quantitative (e.g. posting frequencies, average views etc.) and qualitative data (e.g. mediation of knowledge and information) why it represents the optimal strategy to answer the first research objective (Byrne et al., 2013; Forbes, 2016; Hall & Valentin, 2005; Karlsson & Sjovaag, 2016). The quantitative link analysis gives an insight into the number of integrated links in texts and delivers information about the usage and value of external media which bloggers´ viewed and used for own content productions. It shows how bloggers write articles under the consideration of their subjective worldview, meanings and realities in the football media context. These quantitative analysis results are useful for the QICA and the expert interviews when exploring which role media and further external or own content plays in one´s blog: either it is aimed to hold the readers on the own website or to offer additional content to the own one. It reflects a blogger´s subjectively perceived and defined role of his blog for the targeted reader and fan community and in the German football media world. Content analysis is a multi-faceted and flexible method that contains diverse and applicable instruments in order to find suitable and targeted answers to various research questions (Heindl, 2015). The purpose of both content analyses methods is a systematic evaluation of text-based and audio-visual data so that scientific results can be generated (Flick, 2011; Heindl, 2015; Herring, 2009; Mayring, 2003). However, both methods differ in the purpose of the respective method, the generalisation of the research results, in the processes of data evaluation and the methodological access (Flick, 1995; Heindl, 2015). The QnCA is a standardised, intersubjective comprehensible, and objective

method that suits well to the analysis of big data volume and that explores data in a way in which general conclusions can be made and causal connections can be explained (Heindl, 2015; Wyss & Keel, 2010). On the contrary, QICA contains open, flexible and hermeneutic techniques. Their purpose is to interpret single and several data hermeneutically so that the content can be understood more reflectively by contextualising it systematically, critically, communicatively, situational or socially to a specific phenomenon in its entirety (Bührmann, 2005; Heindl, 2015; Mayring, 2003). However, depending on the research purpose it is often recommendable to combine both methodological approaches of content analysis by connecting quantitative and qualitative analysis steps (Heidl, 2015).

Herring (2010) points out that the content analysis is an established methodology in social science and media studies that describes systematically, objectively and quantitatively the content of communication. QnCA, moreover, was one of the first methodologies used in web analysis albeit it was not being used in a traditional way as it was done for paper-based content analysis in which permalinks to other sources cannot be inserted (Herring, 2010). Hence, it means that the web based content analysis faces methodological challenges because the boundaries blur between traditional and non-traditional content analysis and other methods such as link analysis, theme and feature analysis or computer mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2010). Thus, in the case of investigating the GFBS the challenge here is the limitation of the content in FB because the content analysis in a web-based context is not merely limited to the blog entry itself anymore, quite the reverse, the content volume increases through the links to other websites or social media. Consequently, the unlimited content volume in the online world must be determined so that the overview and the central purpose do not lose track. For those reasons, in this research project only the conversations in the comment feature of the selected blog entries were considered when analysing qualitatively the relationship and the interaction behaviour.

3.6.1 Quantitative content analysis

In order to elicit empirical detail about the interaction activity and general data about German FB, quantitative content methods are applied. The combination of qualitative and QnCA methods are also used in other research that investigated blogs because the quantitative approach gives descriptive information about data, while the qualitative approach aims an in-depth interpretation of various aspects in blogs (Bukvova et al., 2010; Herring et al., 2005; Nielsen, 2012; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008; Petzold, 2002; Schmidt, 2007; Thaweesaksri & Wannapiroon, 2013). The evaluated quantitative data in this study, specifically, involve descriptive information about the blogger and his individual blog and calculations of text lengths, cross-linkage and publication channels.

To determine patterns of cross-linkage in German FB, the frequency of links to other social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.) or news websites were measured. Moreover, Bukvova et al. (2010, p.95) assume that the amount of words (i.e. verbosity) “can be interpreted as the author’s engagement with the posts as well as the blog itself”. Furthermore, it shows which benefit a blogger could try to reach with short or long articles, and what role the blogger assigns his blog in the sphere of football journalism. Consequently, subjective worldview and meaning of the own blog in the context of football journalism gives potentially an information about the role of a blog that is defined by the blogger. The text length of blog entries are calculated by measuring the average number of words in order to describe quantitatively patterns of word-related content production. Microsoft Excel is employed to calculate the quantitative measures including averages and standard deviations.

3.6.2 Web content analysis: An introduction

The football blogosphere is an unexplored research field and raises many questions which firstly should be restricted and contextualised to the main purpose of the research (McMillan, 2000). The formulation of research questions in internet environments differs from traditional media because the hypertext with its text, audio, images,

animation and video is a main characteristic in blogs in comparison to a letter-based message in newspapers or books. McMillan (2000, p. 91) points out that it is important that “[r]esearchers [should] build on earlier theoretical and empirical work in defining their Web-based research”. The analysis of the sport blogosphere is rare, and that is why Therefore, approaches of the blog researchers Herring (2006b), Bukvova et al. (2010), McCarthy (2012; 2014), Nielsen (2012), Paulussen & Ugille (2008) and Elo & Kyngäs (2007) were considered when analysing FBs.

Secondly, it is also important that the selected sample units fit best to the investigated phenomena (McMillan, 2000). Interactive German FBs are chosen purposively regarding the purposive sampling method selecting FB with an activated comment feature to analyse the interaction behaviour.

Thirdly, as there is no standard analysis of FB and a standard list of categories does not exist, established categories of content from other blog analysis studies were consulted as an orientation point in defining coding categories (inter alia ways of gathering information, information reproduction of other sources, embedded media etc.) (Herring, 2004; McCarthy, 2012, 2014; Nielsen, 2012; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008; Scheid & Wright, 2004). The website and selected blog entries were downloaded to capture a snapshot of content (McMillan, 2000). The clear unit of measurement in this thesis is defined as the FB website, texts and comments of selected blog entries.

Fourthly, there are reliability and validity issues in the generation and analysis of material during this research gathering process. The rapid change in websites may introduce problems in checking the intercoder reliability (McMillan, 2000). That is, multiple coders should be trained in order to check the reliability of their coding skills. McMillan (2000) points out that coders might analyse the content of a website or rather collect data at the same time as the website content could be removed or changed before the second coder examines the content. However, as the doctoral candidate is the only coder in the content analysis process, the reliability of the coding theme could not be determined in this research project which can be seen further as methodologically problematic. However, by analysing specific and selective cases, identifying the

necessary parameters (e.g. selected blog articles, involved participants, defined timeframe etc.), showing transparently the process of analysis and using multiple sources of evidence, it is aimed to focus and manage data collection and analysis as well as to determine a justifiable structure of this content analysis to developing the validity, reliability and credibility of the findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Keutel & Werner, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). However, the last step is the analysis and interpretation of collected data.

After an analysis of 19 studies that applied content analysis to the internet, McMillan (2000) concludes that traditional content analysis can be used in the online environment, although it raises the previous explained potential problems. Thus, there are some challenges when applying content analysis in FBs which can be overcome by considering carefully the content analysis process that has been chosen to fit best for the research purpose.

As a consequence of the dynamic and rapid change of websites and its content, media researchers argue that new communication technologies call for new analytical methods (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Herring, 2010, McMillan, 2000). For example, the web content analysis aims to explore a wide range of content in order to find systematic identification of patterns in links and interactive content messages because these types of interconnected content are common in the blogosphere (Herring, 2010; Herring et al., 2006a; Herring et al., 2006b). Therefore, a link analysis also provides insights into the content production so that the non-traditional approach of web content analysis combines methods that incorporate a variation of analytical ways to receive representative results of the internet content (Herring, 2010). Indeed, the comment feature in blogs is one aspect that shows the difference between the blogosphere and traditional media: It allows readers and bloggers to comment blog posts or other comments, and to start a communicative exchange between the involved participants writing about the produced content and about the topic of discussion (Herring, 2010). Incorporate links into blog sidebars or postings, moreover, add another facet to the participant interconnection by connecting intertextually among and between blogs or

other types of internet media (Herring, 2010, Herring et al., 2004). Consequently, linking to other media or blogs can also function as a conversational return between the participants of the blogosphere, and holds them in the context of their own interpretive and subjective view of the football media world and reality (Herring et al., 2005).

3.6.3 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative studies do not aim at representativeness but at exploration, deepening and contextualisation of the gathered data (Fürst, Jecker & Schönhagen, 2016). The QICA is a procedure of a systematic text analysis basing on the QnCA that has been developed for an interview study about psycho-social consequences of unemployment by Ulich et al. in 1985 (Mayring, 2000). In recent years, the QICA was established as an independent method in the German communication research which was a time consuming process in which content was analysed manually until the invention of internet and analysis software simplified the analysis process (Fürst, Jecker & Schönhagen, 2016). Moreover, QICA contains a great potential for researchers to explore innovative and complex research objectives with the concurrent delivery of general research findings that, moreover, completes the method of quantitative content analyses (Fürst, Jecker & Schönhagen, 2016). Regarding Mayring (2000) the aim of QICA is the development of a systematic and qualitative-oriented text analysis which considers the following aspects: The text has to be interpreted within its context and it has to be investigated for its production and effect. Moreover, the researcher's worldview, belief system or experiences are biases that can potentially influence the data analysis and interpretation why every step of analysis and every decision during the analysis process must be attributed to a tested and valid rule so that other content analysts have the opportunity to reconstruct the train of thought. Therefore, construction and explanation of the categories are essential. The category system is an important factor for both the comparability of the results and the estimation of the reliability of the analysis. Thus, the method underlies a study-oriented and permanent modification in which the concrete method fits closely to the objective of the analysis. Pilot studies

examine the specific instrument for a perfection of the method due to the research objective by testing and documenting the method and category system (i.e. intersubjective verifiability) (Mayring, 2000). Here, it is important that the current state of the object of investigation and the comparative research field are consulted systematically into all procedural decisions, that is, arguments with regard to the content have priority over argument with regard to the method (i.e. validity is prior to reliability) (Fürst, Jecker & Schönhagen, 2016). In a last step, quantitative steps of analysis are included and are justified in the analysis process in which qualitative steps are considered coherently (i.e. especially when the generalisation of the results is aimed). Consequently, the evaluation of the method regarding the criteria for scientific research (i.e. objectivity, reliability and validity) is very important because the standards of qualitative analysis have been undermined before (Mayring, 2003). As a conclusion, the aim of the analysis is the reduction of the material through abstraction so that the substantial content is preserved as the representation of the bulk material. The QICA aims to obtain information about questionable text sequences (e.g. definitions, sentences) in order to clarify it and to estimate the content with reference to beforehand constructed criteria (Herring, 2010). QICA uses the advantages of the QnCA in order to use qualitative steps of analysis in a methodological and controlled way of which relations to quantitative steps of analysis can be established. Nevertheless, QICA contains limitations when using open, explorative and variable formulations of a question, when the reference to categories seems to be a limitation by itself, the explorative character loses its effect, and when a holistic analysis process is aimed (Bauer, 2000). On the other hand, the advantage of QICA is the combined use with other qualitative approaches (e.g. interviews), i.e. when the research question and the characteristics of the investigated material are considered. Questions and doubts about methods should be discussed with regard to the research object in order to proceed in a methodological-comparative manner (Mayring, 2000).

3.6.4 The qualitative blog content analysis process

Versions of the websites and blog entries between August and December 2017 were downloaded and saved for data analysis without the loss of information as blogs can disappear (Herring, 2010). Even when discussions occur in the bloggers' other social media accounts (Bukvova et al., 2010), a QICA of its content were not considered in the research process as the blog itself was determined as the communication room to be analysed. All blog entries between August and December 2017 were analysed quantitatively and a total of five posts per blog (i.e. one representative blog entry for every month) were analysed qualitatively. No more than five articles per blog were collected for the qualitative analysis with regard to the interaction behaviour. The selected postings were printed and coded by using different colours to develop later codes and categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Ethical issues played an important role when selecting FBs and GFBS for the analysis of the GFBS. Although blogs are publicly accessible and technically public, the bloggers may not agree with the use of their personal blogs for research projects because the blog and its content is considered as a private property as other scientists did in the context of blogosphere research and bloggers may not be comfortable with the use of their FBs for a research project (Bukvova et al., 2010). Moreover, the literature review shows that researchers analyse social media content without asking the authors for their permission. However, there is one literature which recommend to ask bloggers before analysing the content (Bukvova et al., 2010). The researcher in this study, therefore, analysed exclusively these blogs of GFBS who gave their permission of the use of their blogs for research purposes which limited the number of German FBs for an evaluation. Bukvova et al. (2010) explain this procedural step with the following reasons: a) legal protection and private property aspect, otherwise legal consequences could be expected due to the not agreed use of the intellectual property; b) research logic because the analysed blog content and the correspondent bloggers must be related with each other as the incoherent data interpretation can lead to misinterpretations and incorrect findings because working methods may be specific for single blogs and cannot be transferred without restrictions to other German FB because the blog production depends on a blogger's subjective

interpretation of reality and meaning of media products. All selected bloggers were contacted per e-mail and informed about the research and asked for the agreement with an interview linked to the previous use of their blog content for the qualitative analysis of which the results formed the basis for the following blogger interviews. 7 GFB agreed, one blogger did not give his permission and 12 GFB did not reply.

The QICA was considered for this part of the purpose: patterns of interactions (Herring, 2010). There are also limitations when analysing cross-blog-conversations and interactions in blog entries when focusing on the links because conversations and discussions in blogs do not confine to the blog itself because discussions can start talking about the content and ending in a debate about the participants' interpretive and subjective reality, worldview and meaning to the discussion topic. Interactions are also transferred to other social network services so that it is difficult to capture all parts and elements of conversations across multiple communication platforms which also have their own function and meaning that could additionally influence the interaction between people with subjective worldviews. In order to prevent an unceasing dimension of the communication room for the analysis, it was limited by restricting it to the comments made in the comment feature under the selected blog entries (Herring, 2010, McCarthy, 2012, 2014; Nielsen, 2012).

3.6.5 Phases in the qualitative content analysis process

Less standardisation and obligation to formulaic requirements make QICA more complex and difficult than QnCA (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Blogs can be used for a variety of purposes which is accompanied by a variety of the use of analytical methods. Elo & Kyngäs (2007) described the process for analysing qualitatively the blog content (figure 4). There are two ways to explore media content: the deductive and inductive process. Both approaches are described as three main phases: preparation, organising and reporting. The purpose of the study decides which approach is used: The deductive content analysis is recommended when there is previous knowledge and the purpose of the research is theory testing (Kyngäs & Vanhanen, 1999 in Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The

phenomenon of working processes and the interaction behaviour in FB, however, is scientifically untouched. In such cases, Elo & Kyngäs (2007, p. 107) in particular recommend using inductive content analysis because “(...) [the inductive approach] is used (...) where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when it is fragmented”. Generally, the inductive approach reflects the researcher’s process to discover findings and create knowledge to find out the individually constructed reality in the context of the GFBS by looking for patterns and common findings between the selected cases which then are used to promote the expert interviews and general conclusions (Charmaz, 2006; Mills et al., 2006). Thus, categories are extracted from data in inductive content analysis where particular cases are obtained and contextualised into a general description (Chinn & Kramer, 1999 in Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 107).

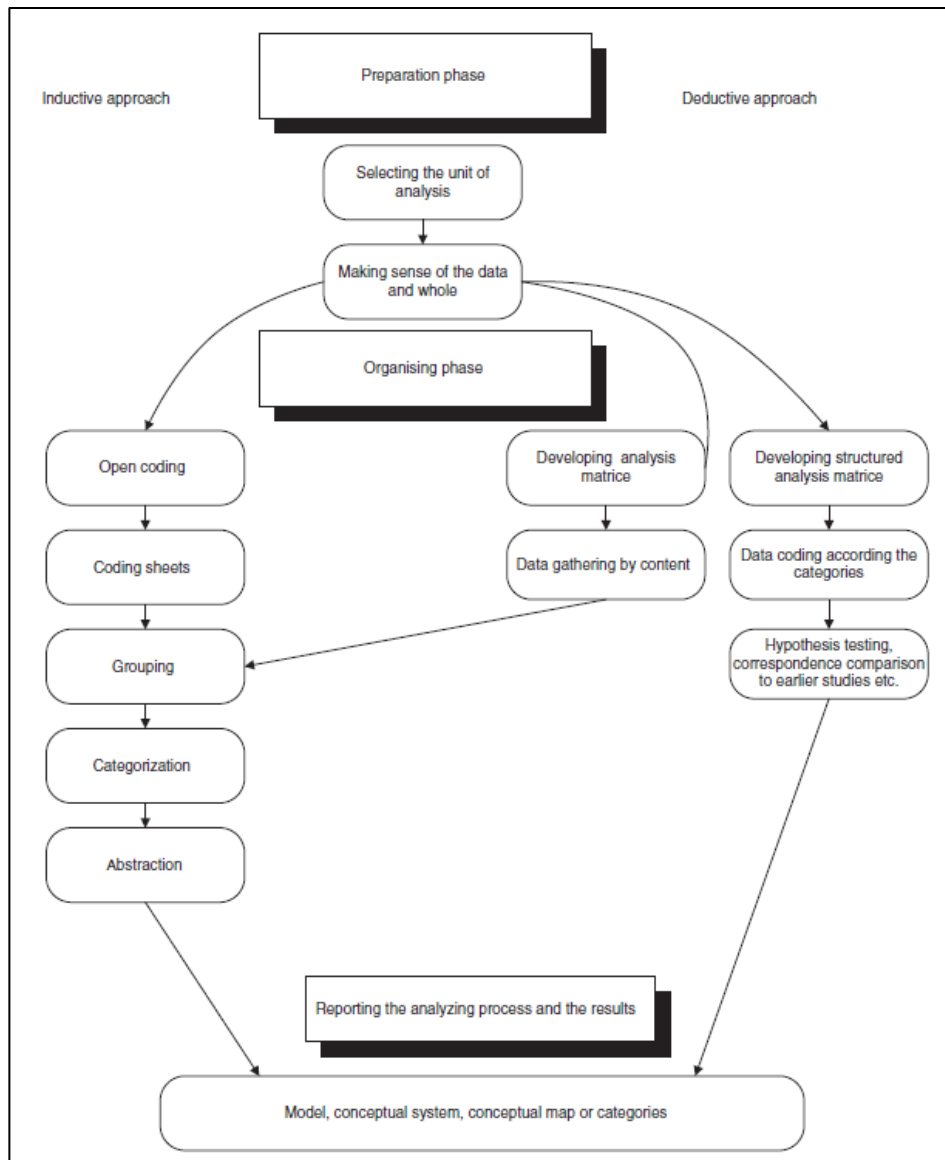


Figure 4. Phases in the qualitative content analysis process (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 110)

The preparation phase is the first analysis step in which the unit of analysis is selected and no systematic rules are defined (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The unit of analysis depends on the research question and could be a word, a subject, the number of participants in discussions or the time used for discussions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). It is important that the unit of analysis should be both large and small enough in order to be regarded as a whole and to be understood as a context for meaning (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004 in

Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 109). Consequently, for the QICA five blog entries per blog are chosen.

A researcher must decide whether considering exclusively the manifest content or the latent content (i.e. sigh, laughter) into the analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). In the context of blogging, the latent content refers to the symbolic meaning of abbreviations such as smileys or letters that represent a hidden or symbolic meaning or an emotional expression (e.g. the smiley “:-)”) is a positive or smiling face that expresses a friendly gesture or even an agreement to a statement) that lies behind the literal (i.e. manifest) content (Schlobinski, 2006). Thus, the manifest content is a letter, word, blog entry, and storyline of a media product or other literal units (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The latent content also was considered in the analysis as it could be expressed in smileys or abbreviations such as web-based language which have their own meaning and are commonly used in social media (Schlobinski, 2006). The researcher then reads through the written text several times in order to make sense of the content and to become familiar with it by considering questions such as “who is telling”, “where is this happening?”, “when did it happen?”, “what is happening?”, “why” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 109).

The next phase deals with the organisation of qualitative data and considers open coding, defining coding sheets, grouping the data, creating categories and abstraction. While reading the articles several times, as many headings as necessary are noted down the margins to describe every aspect of the written content. After that, the headings are collected on coding sheets and categorised freely and followed by grouping the list of categories under higher order headings to reduce the number of categories, i.e. deleting those that are similar or dissimilar into more general categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). An important aspect here is that creating categories is not an easy part of the analysis because data has to be classified correctly by comparing the data and other observations that do not belong to the specific category or rather belong to a particular group (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The researcher’s ability of interpretation is needed when creating and formulating categories because it has to be decided which points to bring together in the

same category so that the phenomenon is described in a way that increases the understanding and generates the knowledge for the purpose of the research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). During the abstraction process subcategories with similar events and incidents are grouped together as it is done, likewise, with the categories as main categories. An example of the process is shown in Figure 5. Thus, Elo & Kyngäs pointed out the meaning of abstraction as “(...) formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 111). Considered quotes in this thesis are translated from German into English by the researcher himself which additionally are double-checked by a person who used to study and live for nine years (2005 – 2014) in the United States of America.

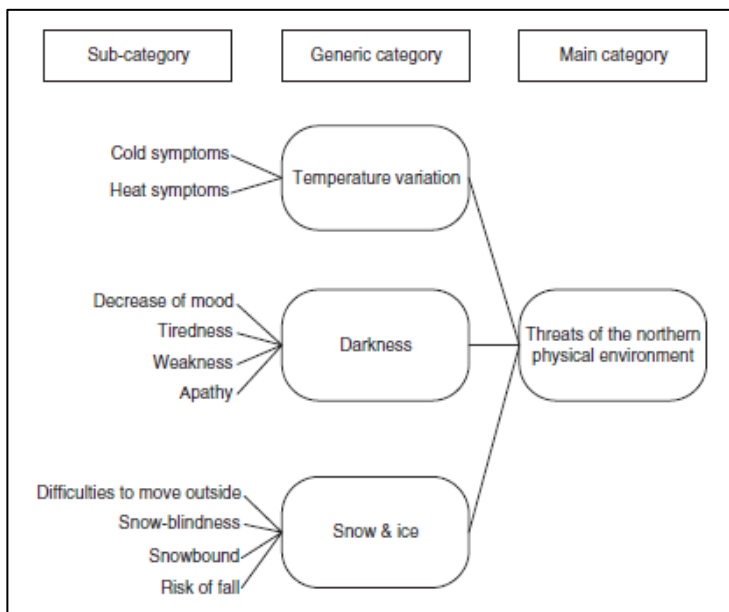


Figure 5. An example of the abstraction process (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 111)

Elo & Kyngäs (2007) outline certain aspects to force the quality criteria of the processes in this content-analytical method. A key feature and most challenging phase of the study is the detailed description of the analysis process and of the results in a way that readers of the study have a clear understanding of the realisation, strengths and limitations of the inductive analysis. It means that the results represent the content of the categories which

must be empirically and conceptually grounded. Consequently, the subcategories describe the content of the categories demonstrating a link between the results and the data (i.e. by using tables and appendices) that simultaneously increases the reliability (Polit & Beck, 2004 in Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Furthermore, a clear description of the context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis simplify the transferability. The dialogue among co-researchers who in this research project are the doctoral candidate and his supervisors is important to agree the process in which the data is categorised, and it supports the concept production or coding issues and following the content validation (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Thus, the inductive content analysis process has its merits and limitations: On the one hand, an excessive data interpretation prevents a successful content analysis, whereas high amounts of data (i.e. large texts and different textual sources) can be analysed in an understandable way providing evidence for a phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). However, the inductive content analysis process is estimated as the correct method to investigate the research-related content and purposes.

3.7 Qualitative interviewing

Interviews are conversations in which at least two people talk to each other and change information. Qualitative interviewing enables interviewees to share their subjective understandings and experiences of the GFBs' working processes and practices (Bözl, 2014; Bözl, 2018). Qualitative interviews are a constructive nature of social interaction between people where knowledge is generated and understood through the meeting of different mind worlds of every active-participating individual in this conversation (Helfferich, 2011; King & Horrocks, 2010; Mey & Mruck, 2007). Language has an important role because it potentially constructs both the world and the reality of individuals, and it shows that a true knowledge does not exist because language is subjective which influences the personal way of thinking (Mieg & Näf, 2005). There is no objective truth or neutral position from which the world can be defined as objectively true, but from an interpretivist viewpoint meaning is constructed through subjective

interpretations of situations influenced by social exchanges. Meaning has the potential to change during the time and depends on the cultural background because both aspects lead to different and contradictory interpretations of the same (social) phenomena (King & Horrocks, 2010; Luhmann, 1995).

As an established method in interpretivist research qualitative interviewing has become prominent in social sciences because face-to-face conversations are the basis of an interactive living in a society, and it seems like a natural technique for the researcher (King & Horrocks, 2010).

3.7.1 Expert interviews

An endorsement of qualitative research and interviewing is the recognition of the inherently subjective nature of social interactions and relationships. In interview situations participants interpret the behaviour of their conversation partners who are placed in own subjectively and discursively constructed thinking pattern. Thus, as interviewing is a get-together of at least two subjectivities, every interview partner constructs his own reality that bases on predefined patterns of thought (Olsen, 2004). Therefore, there is an impossibility of objectivity because both participants are a central part in the interview scene and influence the interview outcome with their subjective involvement. It means when the interview partners accept the subjectively biased situation, the consensus values the social nature of the exchange of subjective aspects of the targeted interview topics (Luhmann, 1995; Olsen, 2004).

The interviewer must be able to discern and reflect the dynamic of an interview, and to behave appropriately to the social arrangement (Mey & Mruck, 2007). King & Horrocks (2010, p. 20) define the qualitative research interview as “(...) a face-to-face verbal interchange where one person (the interviewer) attempts to obtain information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons.” Qualitative interviews refer to a group of methods that can be ordered in different dimensions, and the steering of an interview depends on the standardisation and the action-oriented degree of steering

(Mey & Mruck, 2007). It means that structured interviews entail a high level of involvement and consequently of control by the interviewer. Contrary to this, a less structured interview gives the interviewee more verbal space to answer and explain a phenomenon. Therefore, subjectivity and personality are two influencing factors for the outcome because the interview data is always the result of an interaction between two or more actors in a concrete social situation. That is, the different types of interviewing contain different types of questioning and procedures which in the end lead to different sorts of data (Gläser & Laudel, 2004; Mey & Mruck, 2007). Consequently, in comparison to interviews with a strict interview manual to follow, in semi-structured in-depth interviews the interviewer has the freedom to dig deeper after receiving answers and to ask further questions enabling an exclusive retreatment and emphasis of the investigated research objectives (Bölz, 2014). Usually, the interviewer plays an active role in order to animate the interviewee to give feedback. Semi-structured interviewing, on the contrary, gives the opportunity to change roles when the interviewee starts to give more details as a result of an interest in the self-reflexion during the interview which makes him to set other emphasis and main topics related to the topic area.

Regarding the literature review there are different interview methods from which the expert interviewing was determined as the method that fits best in relation with the research objectives (Gläser & Laudel, 2004; Groeben & Scheele, 2000; Meuser & Nagel, 1991; Mey & Mruck, 2007). In the research world there is no agreement about the definition of experts. Gläser & Laudel (2004, p. 10) define experts as people who have a specific knowledge about social facts which can be revealed by an expert interview method. The use of it is very effective when social situations or processes are aimed to be reconstructed in order to find explanations for the social science (Bürhmann, 2005; Lamnek, 1988). In this context, the expert interview method is used for the second research step because GFB are experts who have special knowledge at their disposal due to their professional position. Expert interviews are following a different approach compared to other methods: It depends on the specific objective, its derived purpose of the interview and of the resulted role of the interviewee (Gläser & Laudel, 2004). Expert interviewing in combination with purposive sampling is the most suitable method for

the first research objective, that is, to investigate the football blogger's action patterns, guiding principles and working methods (Thurman & Walters, 2013). There is no other reason to use another type of interviewing because conversing directly in a face-to-face interview with bloggers is the best way to find out the working processes and practices. Gläser & Laudel (2004) recommend to use a not-standardised interview manual and to analyse the content with the help of a QICA when interviewing experts: The interview text was investigated for relevant information by using a category of analysis: The information were extracted from the text and allocated to the categories which have been constructed before. The aim here is to process the information out of the original interview text in a more or less relative independent way (Bühmann, 2005). Regarding Gläser & Laudel (2004) it is not possible for the researcher to investigate empirically without personal assumptions. Consequently, the expert interview is a communication process in which the researcher must internalise the "art of questioning" by being open, as neutral as possible and clear in the way of asking the questions and regarding its content and functions (Bühmann, 2005).

Interpretivist-oriented methods do not reduce human beings and human behaviour to measurable variables. Conversations with people facilitate them to share experiences and understandings with each other. Qualitative interviewing helps to uncover how people feel about a certain topic and how it makes sense from their ideological perspective. That is, reduction, generalizability and the causal explanation of phenomenon are not the focus of the philosophical assumption in interpretivism, but interpretivist research aims at the interpretation of social phenomenon supported by its intentions, motives, objectives and purposes (Mayring, 2000a). The bloggers were interviewed qualitatively at different points of time, and the transcribed interviews were analysed with the help of Elo & Kyngäas' (2007) QICA method that is also used for the blog article analysis. Qualitative interviewing is idiographic and therefore directed at the descriptive investigation of the individual. Idiographic research is rooted in interpretivism in which qualitative interviews can be used to describe "(...) aspects of the social world by offering a detailed account of specific social settings, processes or relationships" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 11).

Expert interviews are selected as an appropriate method for the investigation of the research objectives because it enables the interviewees as much scope in answering questions as possible by asking interviewees to self-describe themselves. This can be best conducted when they have the chance to answer questions without giving them any answering frames (Bölz, 2014; Scholl, 2009). The purpose of interviewing GFBs is the reception of their knowledge, opinion and imaginations in relation with the research objectives. It is supposed to receive retraceable and credible opinions of GFBs through a semi-structured in-depth interview and to collect information to verify findings from the content analyses as well as to constructing the descriptive blog reader survey.

The whole football blogosphere is almost unmeasurable which makes random sampling of FB practically impossible. An analysis of a range of similar studies that have looked at other areas of the media creation process shows a sample size of between 5 and 12 media producers (Bölz, 2014; Gray, 2014; Kian, Burden & Shaw, 2011; Thaweeksakri & Wannapiroon, 2013). In this research project, 7 bloggers from 7 FB permitted a scientific analysis of their blog why consequently 7 FB were analysed and GFB from these blogs were interviewed in the second research step. More details about the role of the researcher in interviews will be explained in the following sub-chapter.

3.7.2 The role of the researcher in interviews

Generally, methods are connected to how a researcher is involved as an interview partner in conversations which finally results in specific roles of the researcher who fulfils different roles which depend on the use of considered methods and its advantages and disadvantages for the research outcome. The researcher proceeded inductively in this media research and participates interactively in qualitative semi-structured in depth-interviews by democratising the research relationship between the researcher and the researched through reflexivity, reacting spontaneously on the interviewee's answers and the option to pursuing a topic more flexible and more intense (King & Horrocks, 2010; Mayring, 2000). "The researcher is co-producer of knowledge and therefore required to be reflexive and critically aware of language" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 20).

Reflexivity supports the researcher to interpret an aspect continuously which therefore influences the construction and the production of meaning. Two kinds of reflexivity influence the role of the researcher: The personal reflexivity is influenced by the personal history of the researcher (i.e. belief, interest, experiences and identity), and influences the construction of a research project, its content and the researcher's position of viewing the world and interpreting the data of the researched. The individually used language constructs meaning, and therefore influences potentially the research process and the interpretation of the research finding. Nevertheless, personal reflexivity can change in time. The epistemological reflexivity is connected to the research process, that is, in the course of the research the content and the assumptions are reflected during the whole process by the researcher including on "(...) how the research questions have been defined, interview schedules structured and the method of analysis undertaken" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 23). Three axis of orientation (i.e. discourse, cultural constructions including social and cultural characteristics, and subjectivity) of the cultural analysis resolve the axioms of journalistic research from a positivistic to an interpretivist perspective. The openness on behalf of the researcher over the research subject, the research situation and the research methods are essential characteristics of qualitative research (Hempel, 2008).

A high concentration level on the interviewer side is important during the conversation to guarantee a dynamic procedure with the direct evaluation of the answers and the concurrent development of new questions (Bölz, 2014). Consequently, the active role of the interviewer makes him influencing the interview procedure, but also depends on the interviewee's verbal and mental ability to participate in a long interview because the number of questions can vary according to the topic and its general or specific asking (Hempel, 2008; Bölz, 2014). Moreover, by entering into the research situation the researcher and his interviewees co-construct mutually a reality and it represents the relationship between reality and the investigator why the researcher influences the reality under research (Harrison et al., 2017). Expert interviews are conducted because it is assumed that the individual constructions can only be extracted through social interactions between the researcher and GFB, and the investigator interprets each reality

using hermeneutical and interpretive techniques to contrast and compare subjective constructions through the dialectical interaction (Bölz, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this context, the researcher's role is critical during the production of knowledge, and his interpretative role is essential during the research process because all interview participants' interpretations influence the generation of knowledge and the thematic grouping of findings (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). That is, the researchers' interpretative position views reality as subjective and multiple bases on the bloggers' understandings and meanings (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Ponelis, 2015; Stake, 2006).

3.8 Descriptive survey methods

The descriptive research approach examines a situation in its current state and it identifies characteristics of a specific phenomenon that bases either on the exploration of correlations between at least two phenomena or on observations (Williams, 2007). Therefore, information is collected without changing or manipulating the environment to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The descriptive methods can range from developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables to the survey which describes the status quo (Williams, 2007). As the goal of this method is to describe the phenomenon and its characteristics, researchers take a closer look at what rather than how or why something has happened to determine relationships (Nassaji, 2015). Therefore, percentages, frequencies, averages and other statistical values are used.

Descriptive studies attempt to determine and identify problems or current issues through data collection that enables researchers to portray accurately the characteristics of a particular group, individual, situation, or various aspects of the phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2018; Kothari, 2004). Hence, researchers tend to use descriptive methods also for the description of the behavioural characteristics of a population (e.g. motivations for the reader involvement in discussions within FBs) or for the caption of the phenomena at the moment (Williams, 2007). Researchers use the descriptive survey method for

sampling data and information from respondents who are representatives of a population by using open-ended items to which participants can give an individually formulated answer or closed ended instruments (i.e. a multiple-choice questionnaire in which respondents must mark one or multiple answers) (Williams, 2007).

A descriptive survey tries to set the distribution and range of social characteristics such as the interaction behaviour in FB and how the social media usage characteristics are related to specific attitudes or behaviour patterns (Zurmuehlen, 1981). Descriptive surveys deliver factual data or opinions, and it can provide results which lead to more sophisticated studies (Passmore, Dobbie, Parchman & Tysinger, 2002).

Descriptive studies can be explained as describing, revealing and validating findings that were made in previous research or research steps within a thesis amassing facts by including proper analyses, explanation, comparisons and identification of relationships (Salaria, 2012). According to Dudovskiy (2018) the advantage of descriptive research are inter alia the possibility to observe a phenomenon in a natural and unchanged environment, to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and it is less time-consuming than quantitative experiments or qualitative interviews.

However, as this kind of research bases on a descriptive approach, descriptive studies cannot verify or test a research problem statistically. Thus, due to not using statistical tests, it reflects certain levels of bias which makes it difficult to identify cause behind described phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2018; Salaria, 2012). In this context it has to be mentioned that difficulties occur when this method is used as a unique method to collect data, but in a multiple-step research the phenomenon can be explained with the help of a heuristic interpretative approach by connecting findings from different research steps with each other.

The descriptive survey method provides information useful to analyse critically and examine source materials by interpreting in a way that helps to generalise and also predict the issue (Salaria, 2012). Moreover, the first scholars used descriptive methods to describe blogospheres and focused on the personal-private and diary-like blogs, and how blogs were declined first in the beginning of blog research (Johnson & Kaye, 2004;

Rainie, 2005; Thurman & Walters, 2013). The descriptive survey method was adopted in the last research step to determine the readers' subjective perspective towards the status of German FBs, the readers' process of blog consumption, the perception of their role as a reader and the bloggers' roles in the process of blog content production and their motives for interacting with blogs. There are several researchers who firstly started with an investigation of media producers and their content production before evaluating the users' consumption processes by conducting descriptive surveys (Dudovskiy, 2018; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Meyers et al., 2015; Rainie, 2005; Salaria, 2012; Thurman & Walters, 2013).

The multi-perspective triangulation illuminates different aspects of the research project. Thus, the descriptive survey method will be used after the in-depth qualitative enquiry why all questions of the survey will inherently base upon in-depth findings, and survey data can therefore interact with previously collected information (Bryman, 2004; Olsen, 2004). The used range of qualitative and quantitative methods helps to investigate the research objectives from different perspectives, but the descriptive survey method captures findings about FB readers who are usually hard to reach especially for qualitative enquiries (Olsen, 2004). As in agreement with other researchers, it is rejected to calculate statistical correlations and between-group-differences as it is not aimed with regard to the research objectives in here (Bryman, 2004; Byrne, 1998; Dudovskiy, 2018; Olsen, 2004; Williams, 2007; Salaria, 2012; Silverman, 1993). Instead of concentrating on multi-level statistics, for the exploration of the research objectives it is more interesting on developing alternative interpretations or rather triangulated re-interpretations of the collected data by contextualising it with previous findings rather than attempting to make general and universalistic assertions about the variables in the survey (Byrne, 1998; Olsen, 2004; Silverman, 1993). Consequently, the look at variables is leading to excessively generalised interpretations and keeps researchers from paying attention more closely at the overall complex because at the end the collected data underlies the survey participants' social realities and subjective meanings and views of the football world (Olsen, 2004).

3.8.1 The construction of the descriptive football blog survey

From an interpretative position this survey aims to receive and explore the blog readers' different worldviews and meanings of football blogs in order to construct a comprehensive, holistic and in-depth understanding and knowledge of media production, consumption and co-creation processes in the interactive GFBS by assembling the producers' and consumers' own subjective realities. Therefore, the formulation of the items in the descriptive football blog reader survey were developed on the basis of the findings from the first and second research step in order to include the blog recipients' perceptions regarding media usage, interaction behaviour and role allocations as these results in combination with all other findings in this thesis provide an extensive understanding of the media culture of the GFBS. While several blog studies did not gather demographic data (Thurman & Walters, 2013) or found little connections or weak relations between demographics and blog variables such as blog usage (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Kim & Johnson, 2012; Rainie, 2005), others as well used a descriptive survey method to describe blog user populations (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Meyers et al., 2015) from which Eveland & Dylko (2007) conclude that education was the only variable to be associated with the blog usage. Therefore, no further demographic data besides age (i.e. older or younger than 18 years old) and education background are gathered in this descriptive survey. In order to prevent neutral attitudes in scaled items, a 6-point Likert-type scale (i.e. following the German school grade system) ranging from "totally agree" to "totally disagree" was included which makes participants to give an affirmative or disapproval answer or rather tendency (Thomas et al., 2008). Therefore, 3.5 is the scale midpoint and sample means higher than 3.5 indicate disagreement whereas a sample mean of 6, for instance, would indicate unanimous disagreement. Consequently, the detailed six-point-scale contains the following grading: "I totally agree" (1), "I agree" (2), "I somewhat agree" (3), "I rather disagree" (4), "I disagree" (5) and "I totally disagree" (6).

It is impossible to ask the entirety of the FB readership why it cannot be expected that every single FB consumer participates in the descriptive reader survey. Thus, the

researcher analysed a range of similar blog studies including reader surveys to have an orientation value for a justified survey sample size in this study. Generating a random sample of German FB users is very difficult because there is no central registry of German FB readers or any way to identify them from other Internet users who do not access FBs. Consequently, in comparison to telephone and mail surveys, “(...) samples cannot be produced through census lists or random digit-dialing-type techniques such as random e-mail generator” (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; p. 627). Therefore, other researchers surveyed users from several hundred blogs. When these numbers are down-sampled to the total of seven blogs, the participation numbers range between 122 and 216 people (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Meyers et al., 2015; Porter et al., 2009; Salaria, 2012). Consequently, the convenient sample in this study is oriented towards the previously mentioned calculated range and a picture of 251 FB survey respondents can be presented which is an adequate size to allow confidence in the stability of its characteristics (Salaria, 2012). Moreover, by investigating a niche topic such as the GFBS, the selection of participant groups is limited which means that only users of German FBs are potential participants why just a chosen group from a larger population (i.e. a sample) is considered for analysis in order to yield information about this population (Salaria, 2012). Consequently, it was assumed that the survey sample was composed of people who have a certain basic understanding of the topic (Becker, Meißner & Werning, 2008).

Before starting the main survey phase, a pilot phase with four participants was conducted who answered the questionnaire with the aim to receive the duration time for filling out the survey and feedback for items regarding comprehensibility for later adaptations and re-formulations of items or queries regarding definitions and words. The descriptive reader survey with in total 66 items (see Appendix VI) was constructed in Google form. When readers clicked on the Google survey link, they were first asked to indicate if they were at least 18 years old. Only those who said yes were allowed to participate. However, due to technical problems 3 of 251 participants could fill the survey although the survey should have had ended when the participant marked the age under 18 years old. Respondents were provided with an explanation of the research

objective to help them understand the context of the survey. The online questionnaire contained five major sections: Besides the short demographics part there were the blog usage and its motivational reasons; interaction and comment behaviour; role allocation of the blog, the blogger and themselves in the context of the blogosphere; and the estimation of the FB status in the German football media world. During the conception of the survey it was attended to formulate the questions in an understandable and easy manner as well as to insert and order questions in a way that it builds thematically on each other and that it does not tire the participants when answering the survey (Becker, Meißner & Werning, 2008). In the demographics section, respondents provided age and education. The blog usage section asked participants to indicate how they first find out about FBs, how many years they already read them, and how many FBs they read weekly. The second section also asked them to report the number of FBs that are read regularly, whether they support them financially, how they follow them, if they follow them which social media are used to share blog articles, and other ways of blog usage readers consider when reading articles. This section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their motivation for reading blogs and which preference they have regarding articles and podcasts. The next section asked participants to indicate whether they write comments and, if applicable, how they interact with other blog users in order to find out the interaction behaviour of those users who comment on blogs. The fourth section asked users to estimate their own role in the process of the blogger's media production and within a blog community as well as the blogger's role and the role of the blog in general from their viewpoint. The last section of the survey asked to indicate how participants categorise the bloggers' and the blog status in the German football media world in comparison to professional football journalists and other football news media.

In the introduction of the survey, participants could find further information to the research project, the survey, its objectives and technical maintenance (Becker, Meißner & Werning, 2008). The survey were not personalised and conducted without coding a fully answered survey in a way that it can be categorised to an individual (e.g. by combining name abbreviations with a combination of numbers etc.) in order to prevent

multiple participations by one and the same person. Even though the researcher explained transparently the process of data back-up in the introduction of the survey, he accepted the abstinence of a personalisation because it is assumed that participants may refuse the participation due to the current debate throughout Europe about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2019 and a fine for Google as the result of an infringement of the Data Protection Act in France right before the survey phase was started. Consequently, it could have made people feel insecure to enter personal or personalised data in the survey form. However, after finalising the pilot phase (inclusive the survey adaptation) and before the survey phase of four weeks was started, the sampling was carried out which is “the process by which a relatively small number of individuals or measures of individuals (...) is chosen and analysed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was chosen” (Salaria, 2012). The finalised link file to the survey on Google form was shared by the researcher via mail with GFBs and in the researcher’s Facebook and Instagram accounts, in GFBs’ social media channels and by the universities of applied sciences and arts FHM Hannover (Fachhochschule des Mittelstands) and VfL Wolfsburg Campus. Furthermore, it was shared by the Facebook group “Blogger Netzwerk” (English: blogger network) with about 10.5 thousand members (state from March 2019) and also by many private persons to spread the link. Data collection began March 2 and was completed March 31, 2019. All of the collected data were analysed in Microsoft Excel to calculate descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, means, and standard deviations. In general, it has to be mentioned that many blog surveys are conducted for commercial reasons. Therefore, the results are often available in an extracted way, and the methodological procedure is only partly comprehensible (Neuberger et al., 2007). Moreover, various blog recipient surveys focus on different aspects as well as scientific approaches and use different methods which make it more difficult to find representative and comparative results.

3.9 Chapter summary and conclusions

The description of the selection procedure of FB shows that the GFBS is a niche genre in which especially the aspect of interaction reduces the number of potential FBs for an investigation in this research project. In contrast to the predominantly quantitative-oriented research methodology in German media studies, approaches of cultural studies were considered for the investigation of the GFBS representing a change of the research perspective and attitude towards the audience's role. Involving the audience into research is an essential part especially in online researches because users are involved by commenting on articles why their perspectives on media products and role allocations related to their relationship with bloggers during the production process are important to understand the media culture of the GFBS. Moreover, the key strength of the research methods considered in this thesis was the combined collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The first step comprised of an analysis of the selected articles that are contained within the different FBs. This information was used for the second step of the thesis which is based on semi-structured expert interviews with GFBS and on analysis of their working processes, interaction behaviour and relationship with blog readers as well as its impacts on the blog content. The findings of both research steps were used to construct the descriptive FB reader survey that closed the data collection for all research objectives of this thesis. Interpretivist researchers aim to explore, analyse and gather the blog participants' subjective and interpretive worldviews, meanings and realities contextualised to the media processes in the GFBS by using a mixed-method approach and triangulating all findings in the context of the research objectives. Chapters Four to Seven present the analysis of this gathered material.

Chapter 4: Quantitative analysis of football blog content

The purpose of this chapter is to show the results of the quantitative blog content analysis in terms of the number of posts, the average text length, linking in terms of hypertextuality and the channels of publication. This analysis is then compared with findings from blogospheres with different topic fields.

4.1 The blog entry: Posts, words and text length

Before presenting the results of the average number of used words in a blog entry, it is shown how many posts were totally and averagely published among the selected blogs in order to show the differences in the amount of publishing content. The total amount of 1,299 posts were published among the seven blogs which makes an average of 185.57 ± 293.49 blog entries per month between August and December 2017. The high standard deviation in the number of published posts could possibly be the result of the abstinence of Königsblog during August 2017 and by the daily publication of at least five articles by dieblaue24. However, the calculation shows those 37.11 ± 58.7 posts/month were published averagely among the blogs from August to December 2017. Moreover, Table 4 shows a wide range of word usage in the blogs. That is, while some blogs used averagely less than 300 words in their posts (i.e. Königsblog, dieblaue24 and Wolfs-blog), others raise the average among all football blogs to 661.38 ± 450.97 words per post (i.e. Textilvergehen, 120minuten, nurderfcm.de, An Old International). The three latter FBs have in common that their bloggers (i.e. nurderfcm.de and An Old International) are members of the blogger group of 120minuten who is famous for its long reads (i.e. $> 1,000$ words/post). Moreover, fan blogs use fewer words than football blogs covering general topics regardless of a specific football club.

Blog	No. of all posts (total)	Posts/month (mean ± sd)	Words in all posts (total)	Ø words/post (mean ± sd)
Königsblog	19	3,8	4,826	254
dieblaue24	826	165.2	208,719	252.7
Textilvergehen	176	35.2	90,474	514
Wolfs-blog	205	41	56,661	276.4
120minuten	21	4.2	28,412	1,353
nurderfcm.de	41	8.2	45,011	1,098
An Old International	11	2.2	9,699	881.7
Total	1,299	37.11 ± 58.7	443,802	661.38 ± 450.97

Table 4. Text measures of blog posts (from August to December 2017).

A comparison of text lengths as a means of number of words per post shows that it varies between the blogs. The standard deviation shows that there is a variety of post length and of the frequency of blog entry publication between the blogs. Thus, some blogs create more frequently articles; others publish less frequently and write longer texts therefore by using a higher number of words.

4.2 Cross-linking in interactive German football blog entries

The quantitative analysis shows that linking to original sources (i.e. cross-linking) plays a central role in the content production of FBs. Various types of links are included in posts: to comments, other posts, social media, a club website, blogs, plogs, own podcasts, advertisement, or to crowdfunding pages (Table 5). A total number of 4,208 links were used in 31 analysed blog entries during the selected time period which is an average of 601.14 ± 785.76 links per blog. Almost one third of the links (35.1 %; 1,478 of 4,208 total links) refer to social media channels (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) which leads to the assumption that social media are mainly used as information source for the creation of a post. The “top 3” of link types (highlighted in bold in the table), moreover, shows that bloggers prefer using different link types. Links to mainstream news media (i.e. under the top 3 of link types in five of seven blogs), other posts in the own blog (i.e. under the top 3 of link types in five of seven blogs), and to external YouTube channels (i.e. under the top 3 of link types four of seven blogs) are

mainly considered in the process of cross-linking. However, an interesting finding is that the blogger of dieblaue24 links almost as much to the own YouTube channel (94 links) as he does to external YouTube channels (97 links) which assumes that he tries to hold his readers in his own content environment. Moreover, only three of seven GFB link rarely to their personal or blog-related Twitter account: one of seven bloggers links to his Facebook account; two of seven bloggers link to Instagram, and two of seven bloggers link to the own YouTube channel. Here, dieblaue24 is the most active blogger referring to links to the own channel.

Link types/Blog	KB	DB24	TV	WB	120	FCM	AOI
to comments	19	49	2	32	0	0	0
to blog entries	20	260	42	82	42	23	38
to external Twitter channel*	4	32	443	49	14	27	2
to own Twitter channel	0	10	30	0	1	0	0
to external Facebook channel*	0	22	56	17	1	1	1
to own Facebook channel	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
to external Instagram channel*	0	80	232	0	0	0	0
to own Instagram channel	0	60	26	0	0	0	0
to mainstream news sources	4	5	913	77	55	27	17
to football clubs or football associations	2	9	126	3	6	3	0
to external Youtube channel*	3	97	45	73	3	30	3
to own YouTube channel	0	94	0	15	0	0	0
to other blog	8	0	109	0	36	13	1
to other plog	0	0	51	0	3	7	0
to own podcast	6	0	66	37	1	44	0
to advertisement	0	431	12	0	3	0	0
to crowdfunding web sites	0	0	8	0	3	32	3
<i>No. of posts (Aug - Dec)</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>826</i>	<i>176</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>11</i>
links in posts (total)	66	985	2161	385	168	207	65
links/post (mean)	3.47	1.19	11.96	1.8	7.95	5.05	5.9
link types/post (mean \pm sd)	3.88 \pm 6,37	68 \pm 113.79	127.12 \pm 230.8	22.65 \pm 30.19	9,88 \pm 17.13	12.18 \pm 14.9	3.82 \pm 9.7

* Social media channel that do not belong to the blog itself

Table 5. Incorporated link types in blog entries.

4.3 Channels of publication

Blog posts represent a collection of information that has been accumulated through various processes and sources. After bloggers collected information and summarises it in their own writing style, posts are then published in multiple social network services (e.g. Facebook) or online media (e.g. newsletters) of the bloggers to reach also readers who follow the bloggers' other communication platforms, who are registered for the newsletter or other kinds of news alerts. The qualitative analysis of the GFBs' publication channels shows that they operate on various social network services which are Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. On Facebook every investigated football blogger uploads a post with a link to the new blog post, whereas An Old International, dieblaue24, Textilvergehen, 120minuten and nurderfcm.de use additionally Twitter to reach followers and inform them about their latest blog article. Exceptionally nurderfcm.de uses Google+ as further publication channel. However, that other channels are used to enhance the blog reach is usual for online sport news producer (Horky, Grimmer & Nölleke, 2017). Moreover, online media and social networks are not exclusively used for the simple publication of articles, it incorporates more functions because it is restricted to the distribution of topics, interaction within the own network and the aim of self-marketing. On the whole, GFBs use several media channels to receive information and to reach followers who visit different channels of the bloggers. Thus, bloggers collect information in every possible way from reporting on-the-scene up to re-using already existing media content by quoting it, by re-writing the content and by hyperlinking to it. Furthermore, they use predominantly social network services to inform their followers about the latest content in the blog. Table 6 gives an overview of the additional social media channels that are used to publish information about the latest post or to make statements to a certain matter.

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Youtube
Königsblog	x	x	x	-
dieblaue24	x	x	x	x
Textilvergehen	x	x	x	-
Wolfs-blog	x	x	-	x
120minuten	x	x	-	-
nurderfcm.de	x	x	x	-
An Old International	x	x	-	-

Table 6. German football bloggers' channels of publication.

4.4 Discussion and Synthesis of the Quantitative Content Analysis

German FBs are either produced by one or by several authors. Three of the selected blogs are single-authored (42.85 %) and four are multiple-authored (57.15 %) which shows that in the GFBS it is common practice to share a blog with several opinion-makers. For instance, the writing of posts alternates between the authors and multiple bloggers split tasks such as taking photos, writing content, or uploading the content. However, involving several authors seems to differ in the world of blogging because bloggers from other blogospheres usually act out alone in a blog, and necessarily involve readers who create content with their comments (Schmidt, 2007).

GFBSs add their real and full names to the post except one blogger who uses a pseudonym. This tendency covers findings of longitudinal analysis of weblogs that the use of pseudonyms decreases in blogospheres, and authors more often use their first or full name (Herring et al., 2006a). Furthermore, the names show that the majority are men (except one blogger) which in sport-related blogs are usual (McCarthy, 2012). The layout of German FBs differs from each other, although the same blogging software is used. Moreover, sidebars also look different but it is filled with similar information (e.g. about the blog and/or the bloggers). The notable differences between FBs in the frequency of post publications are the result of the availability of information and news about the selected topics or a club that a FB is purposing (McCarthy, 2012). Herring et al. (2006b) found out that blog entries contain between 200-300 words which is half the

amount of words that are used in German FB. It assumes that GFB write types of long-reads including facts and objective coverage (e.g. results, percentage of ball possession, or match coverage of established online newspaper sources) combined with experiences of the blogger in the stadium or the own opinion (e.g. nurderfcm.de).

While networking and connecting with other bloggers is claimed as important act in the blogosphere, the results are similar to other studies showing that blogs appear to becoming less connected to each other (Herring et al., 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Solely nurderfcm.de, for instance, has a blogroll (i.e. a list of links often to other blogs that is recommended by the blogger) at the sidebar (McCarthy, 2012). However, linking to various sources is an essential working process when bloggers create content. Links have a double-function and therefore is often integrated in the text: Links show the source from which bloggers receive news which they can use simultaneously to verify information. Links also give readers the opportunity to re-read and monitor an article from other online media sources (McCarthy, 2012). Furthermore, the majority of links that are considered in posts refer to mainstream news media (Figure 6) and to Twitter channels (Figure 8) from other media producers. The embedding of external content (e.g. images, audio, video, citations or graphic functions) (Figure 7 and Figure 9) is essential as a meaning element in text creation because it visualises the content of a blog entry in which many links, for example, to press conferences of the favourite club are included (e.g. die blaue24).

Aktuell hat der VfL Wolfsburg Bedarf auf den Außenpositionen. In der [WAZ](#) spricht Trainer Martin Schmidt diese Not direkt an: „Ein, zwei Außen“, könnte man noch dazunehmen, so Schmidt. „Wir haben auch schon Ideen.“

Figure 6. Blue-bolded link to a regional newspaper (Wolfs-blog, 2017d).

After [two years of migration](#) Red Star will play their home games in their natural home: The Stade Bauer in St. Ouen on the northern periphery of Paris. This seems to be the most natural thing to do after relegation at the end of last season. It means that two years of wandering have come to an end. After winning promotion in May 2015 the club had to migrate to the Stade Pierre Brisson in Beauvais, around 100 kilometres to the north of Paris. Getting there is only possible via car for an evening kick-off, as most games commence at 8pm in Ligue 2. The move was not popular even though it meant gate figures could exceed 2999, the number which is allowed at Stade Bauer.

Figure 7. Embedded link to a previous blog entry (An Old International, 2017a).



Figure 8. Embedded link and post to an external social media channel (Textilvergehen, 2017b).



Figure 9. Embedded links to online newspapers, other blogs and YouTube channels (Königsblog, 2017d).

Although mainly links to YouTube channels of other content producers (e.g. mainstream news, football club etc.) are integrated, the blogger of dieblaue24 is an exception by linking preferably to his own YouTube channel. It leads to the assumption that this blogger tries to hold his readership in his information cosmos. However, although GFBs

have their own social media channels on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, few of them refer to it in the process of linking. Linking to further own produced communication channels, though, is an exception because bloggers refer to sources from different content producers (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). GFBs use social media channels additionally as spreading platform so that followers in other social media are informed about the income of a new post or other news. Schultz & Sheffer (2010, p. 226) explored how Twitter affects sport journalism with the result that “[y]ounger and broadcast journalists were more likely to see Twitter as having stand-alone value and use it in forward-thinking ways. Older and print journalists were more likely to use Twitter for traditional purposes such as promoting printed work on other platforms”. Hence, social media are used by different groups of content producers with different approaches for own working routines. The quantitative results, though, show that personal or blog-related social media channels may play a trivial role for GFBs’ publication of a text. Dieblaue24 exceptionally links often to his own social media channels fulfilling the function as a gatekeeper which could be possibly related to his previous job as a professional football journalist (Groshek & Tandoc, 2017; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007).

GFBs’ activity and interaction level in the comment feature can be estimated as low, but as the administrator of the website they have the control over the moderation of a debate between commenters and can de-escalate discussions. Bloggers, therefore, have the opportunity to interact differently with the readership, for instance, by deleting comments which infringe the netiquette or by not reacting to a disrespectful comment against the blogger which can demotivate commenters who aim at discussing with bloggers (Nielsen, 2012). However, with reference to the deletion of comments, German FBs (except dieblaue24 who rejects comments before they appear in the comment feature) do not approve reader comments before they are published, but they reserve the right to approve, to edit and to delete comments such as dieblaue24 who explains it in the section ‘netiquette’ of the blog. The rarely written involvement of GFBs within the comment feature shows that it is mainly used by readers why the blog becomes a platform for exchanging opinions and thoughts between consumers. In addition, the rare

blogger involvement covers also Nielsen's (2012) findings who found out that bloggers rarely react to other comments because the blog is used as a forum for users in which communicative exchange occurs between the readers rather than attempting to establish contact with bloggers. Thus, stimulating readers to interact with each other seems to be a focus of the GFBs' working routines, although bloggers are almost inactive when it comes to a direct communicative interaction in the blog with others.

Chapter 5: Qualitative analysis of working processes in selected football blog entries

This chapter analyses qualitatively the key characteristics and GFBS' key working processes. The analysis is divided in three main areas: the processes of writing, the ways of collecting information which are the sources from which bloggers receive the informative input for their content production and publishing a blog entry, and in a final point the follow-up communication which is the interaction among the participants (i.e. blogger-commenter-exchange or commenter-commenter-exchange) (Table 7). These three discrete data selections are moreover compared and contrasted with the quantitative findings and with each other to examine the processes of how blog entries are produced and the routines in which communication occurs in the GFBS. The translation table in the appendix gives an overview of original and translated quotes of German football blog postings that are integrated in the QICA.

The areas are finished with a synthesis and discussion. It concludes arguments for the significance of the findings and its implications for the next research steps.

Main category	Generic category	Sub-categories
Processes of writing	Shape of text matter	Journalistic information note
		Appeal note
	Style of writing	Narrative perspective
		Language variety
		Type of content phrasing
	Embedding media	Multi-media
		Cross-media
	Structuring posts	Headlines
		Text body
		Appendix
Income and output of information	Ways of collecting information	direct self-collection of information
		indirect re-appropriation and redevelopment of existing content
	Channels of publication	Social network services
		Online media
Follow-up communication	Blogger involvement	Reactions to readers
		Intervention in communication
		Impacts on editorial work
	Reader involvement	Responses to bloggers and posts
		Responses to readers

Table 7. Key characteristics of content production in German football blogs.

5.1 Processes of writing posts

The previous chapter explains that GFBs search for information in different sources before producing the blog content. After collecting enough material for the content production, sport bloggers then follow further steps to create the article and to publish it (McCarthy, 2012). An analysis of the nature and structure of football blog reports resulted in the findings of the following four steps which are interpreted as the main working processes of content production: shape of text matter, style of writing, embedding media, and structuring posts.

5.1.1 Shape of text matter

The shape of text matter can be compared to those of professional journalists who write online and print-based for newspapers. As some of the GFBs work as professional sport journalists, this assumption covers the finding of Schultz & Sheffer (2007) who analysed that no specific changes in professional working processes when journalists must writing blog articles in newspapers of their publishing house. Working processes in the context of professional journalism are copied and transferred to the creation of blog content, and the boundaries of text matters between traditional and new forms of media blur. FB posts cover the variety of journalistic text types, focusing on news, articles, reports and commentaries that change within and between the blogs and posts. Moreover, the GFBs' writing style differs between each other. As some blogs redevelop and reproduce still existing content from press releases and posts, hence, it contains objective and compressed information and direct citations, but without the verbosity of journalistic articles meaning that texts are not copied in its fullness but specific sentences or information is extracted from it. For example, “[t]he end of Stimonaris: *That’s how the chief director of the board explains the situation [headline of the blog entry] – [text] There are still no information about the sudden retirement of Saki Stimonaris - few hours after the personal statement (...) TSV 1860 released official information to the 46-year-old’s retirement. ‘We regret the departure of Mr. Stimonaris and thank him for his voluntary work for our club’ says Dr. Markus Drees, Chairman of the Board of Directors: ‘We are delighted to take notice from his promise to continue with his friendly and personal connection to the club, and that he will support the club in word and deed’*” (dieblaue24, 2017e).

Other posts combine different text types representing parts from news, report and commentary such as in “*Official: VfL Wolfsburg signs up the loan-player Tisserand*” (Wolfs-blog, 2017d) in which the information is explained briefly in less than 250 words, but it is combined with modal verbs and rating words, answering the questions of who is involved, what did happen, when did it happen, where did it happen, how did it happen, why, and where is the information from. Wolfs-blog integrates players' citations from

newspaper interviews, combines it with objective information and but asks questions or gives advices such as “*we discuss this topic under the daily ticker*”.

Other posts resemble reports including a storytelling in which surroundings and the environment of a place are described objectively but in which the blogger simultaneously writes from situations or feelings he has perceived or experienced during a match in order to catch the reader emotionally: As an example, “*10 minutes were played when Beck got the chance to take a shot at the goal. (...) The nearly 1.500 fans must not wait much time (...) until the first goal was scored. (...). Fully deserved lead and the fan base [started to sing] with a self-initiated ‘Döp, döp, döp’ - which originally is the goal chant of the home team. Great show.*” (nurderfcm.de, 2017e). However, GFBs combine subjective and objective observations and impressions which make the text more accessible to the readers because “[*t*]he flat shot in the right corner of the goal kisses the inside of the post and crosses the line of the goal to mark the 3:1. It was played strongly and even better finished successfully so that the team went into the half-time with a deserved lead and a very, very good feeling” (nurderfcm, 2017e). Thus, they do not simply offer information and valuation, they connect it with emotional and entertaining participation, e.g. “[*f*]irstly observing, but then Domenico Tedesco conducts the chant ‘Schalke is power’, and it feels like Christmas” (Königsblog, 2017e). The own opinion is expressed as a personal statement which refers to a general information as “*Glückauf [welcome shout which is typical for the club fans] Königsblog. It’s a derby. And while Schalke is on the second place in the league and the head coach is glorified fulsomely, the Yellows [nickname for the opposing team] have a crisis and their coach is written off by the media*” (Königsblog, 2017d). Moreover, posts are about events, situations or circumstances and are presented as commentaries which are often finished by the question “[*h*]ow is your opinion about the match of yesterday?” (Wolfs-blog, 2017c) in order to request the followership for writing down their opinion and interacting with each other. The analysis shows that FBs offer different kind of objective (i.e. news and journalistic articles) and subjective (i.e. reports and commentaries) shapes of text matter which either vary in and between the blogs, or which are combined within one post. Although, there are posts with objective information, it is written in an

entertaining style with approaches of storytelling, personal opinion, comments and requests which set off further interactions between blog participants.

5.1.2 Style of writing

The writing style depends on the blogger's personal preferences and is a distinguishing feature between the blogs (Schall et al., 2011). A blogger's success depends on several readers' preferences and interests for the topics of posts, the writing style, or also the mutual favourite football club. Positive feedback to the blogger's writing style can be found in the GFBS: "(...) *I really like your text*" (Königsblog, 2017d), "*An awesome summary of the yesterday's match*" (nurderfcm.de, 2017a), "*I must compliment the writer [on his blog entry]*" (nurderfcm.de, 2017a), or "(...) *and it is always a joy to experience the match again*" (nurderfcm.de, 2017b). It can be assumed that it affects the readers' opinion in perceiving the blog as good and positive, and which potentially has an impact on the readers' motivation to follow it. The writing style comprises three factors: the narrative perspective, the language variety and the type of formulation. The narrative perspective represents the point of view from which the blogger writes his text either subjectively from the personal perspective of the blogger (i.e. first-person-coverage) or objectively from a more general point of view (i.e. third-person-coverage). The analysis shows that it is not possible to follow a strict distinction because bloggers combine both objective and subjective perspectives in one paragraph or even sentence: "[b]ut what was it like to have played in this momentous match? I was fortunate, in 2001, to have an opportunity to interview George Robb, called up to play on the left wing for England after an injury to Tom Finney. Robb had a distinguished career. He was capped 18 times for England's amateur team and played for Great Britain at the 1952 Olympics before turning professional and making 200 appearances for Tottenham Hotspur during the 1950s. What was sometimes referred to in the press as 'The Match of the Century' was his only full international appearance" (An Old International, 2017d).

Consequently, also the language varies within a text in which colloquial (i.e. using rating words, negativities or personal expressions) and colourless expressions are combined. The language variety depends on what the bloggers are reporting on: Wolfsblog (2017e) writes objectively from the replacement of the club manager and the blogger includes quotes from an online newspaper interview with a potential successor, whereas *nurderfcm.de* (2017d) writes a match report from his viewpoint including emotional expressions and personal comments such as “(...) *apart from this (not malicious but simply unfortunate) action, Fortuna Köln was barely visible on the pitch*” and “*Stupid story but shit happens*”. Other posts include colourless expressions but colloquial or rating words such as “*monstrous*” (*nurderfcm.de*, 2017a) or “*damned*” (*Textilvergehen*, 2017c).

A blogger’s type of formulation can also indicate directions to a follow-up communication by asking actively for comments such as “*feel free to write your thoughts, expectations, opinion and valuations of the match in the comment feature*” (*Königsblog*, 2017e), or by including direct or rhetorical questions: “*Honestly? What could go wrong?*” (*nurderfcm.de*, 2017d) or “*The ‘tz’ [a Bavarian newspaper] writes about ‘chicane’ - but is that really true?*” (*dieblaue24*, 2017a).

Although the content is influenced by external material, GFBs have their own writing style and combine colourless sentences with colloquial expressions within one post: “*16 of 18 possible points. 5 wins and 1 draw in the last 6 matches. That must be explained. And after his goal for a 1:0 against St. Pauli in the 92nd minute, it is especially Sebastian Polter who is in the centre of attention. Because he achieved more with his goal than just turning a tie into a win. The Kurier [newspaper] calls him ‘mentality monster’, the Morgenpost [newspaper] compares Polter’s integrative and supporting attitude with this one of Torsten Mattuschka [a legend of the club], and the Berliner Zeitung [newspaper] estimates the striker as being immune to pressure. All that [the coverage] is the best possible case which the club officials could have been imagined after the signing of Polter in the beginning of the year. (...). The Bild [newspaper] also wrote about Polter’s goal. And of course, we spoke about the 1:0 against St. Pauli in*

our current podcast as well, the atmosphere in the stadium, the minimal differences between back straight and forest-side [in the stadium], Christopher Trimmel's 5th yellow card, the next opposing team Heidenheim, the referee-disaster of the DFB [German Football Association] and much more" (Textilvergehen, 2017d).

However, it is difficult to define comprehensive patterns in style of language or shared identity between GFBs and readers. The question of the existence of a continuous style of language in the blogger's comments and the readers' comments cannot be answered unilaterally because there are two approaches which can be explained on the basis of two examples: There is diversity in writing comments and arguing style and every reader has his own way of arguing and writing. Bloggers cannot prevent escalations during discussions between readers who sometimes attack each other. However, the majority of the readership seems to have the same attitude like bloggers regarding the discussion behaviour: *"In the anonymity of the blog it is very easy for us [the readers] to judge real persons knowing that we don't really have to take responsibility for what we are commenting. We [the readers] should therefore follow the principle to speak or write about others as if they would sit in front of us (...)"* (Wolfs-blog, 2017d), whereas commenters in die blaue24 sometimes write in Bavarian dialect attacking each other, i.e. *"Oh man, it's you [another commenter] again. Every time I think, it cannot get worse, you spew it up (...)"* (dieblaue24, 2017c), or attacking the blogger, e.g. *"(...) in my opinion your posts become more and more mendacious"* (dieblaue24, 2017a). On the one hand bloggers and readers share identity; on the other hand they absolutely do not share the language. Even when bloggers get attacked, they do not change their writing style (e.g. attacking back verbally or using exclusively colloquial expressions), instead they argue with sophisticated statements and in a respectful way, for example, a reader's comment says *"[w]hat I want to say: I think you all [the bloggers] are an arrogant bunch of jet-setter fans (...) who are flattered and who are not in touch with the [fan] base" whereupon the blogger's answer'(...) I just try to argument in the nature of things and I already did it in the podcast. [There is] no reason to revive the old games of who is the better fan. No one of us said that he is. And you can just continue living [with the fact] that [other] people have another opinion. But I can do it anyway. Regards"*

(Textilvergehen, 2017d). However, readers' attacks and usage of colloquial or exceptionally dialect language do not influence the blogger's writing style. It is the opposite, as the majority of debates are sophisticated, bloggers seem to be unimpressed and therefore continue with their combined colourless and colloquial but always sophisticated and not insulting writing style. Consequently, FB participants share identity, but there are examples showing that the same sophisticated language is not necessarily shared. At the same time the combination of colourless and colloquial expressions results in a change of the bloggers' narrative perspectives within a post. Hence, a post incorporates two functions: it informs readers about specific discussion topics (i.e. closed formulations) and simultaneously it gives an insight into the bloggers' thoughts because information is combined with subjective, individual and personal comments (i.e. open formulations). In particular, the latter aspect contains the potential for follow-up communication and further discussion between readers which at the same time holds them on the blog website.

5.1.3 Embedding media

Embedding media by linking to several online sources or by pasting visual files (e.g. photos or YouTube video) in the text is a regular feature in the GFBs' work. Firstly, it is important to point out that it is unusual in German FBs to include advertisement in a text. Solely dieblaue24 embeds links to an advertisement by underlining single words such as in the sentence "*Everybody will get his chance*" (dieblaue24, 2017a) while the word 'chance' is underlined, linked and written in a different colour. When reading the post at different days, the same words are underlined, but the advertisement changes continuously. The embedding of self-produced existing photos or videos or from other online media is managed differently. As an example, Wolfs-blog (2017e) records videos from the team training and uploads it in the text which are linked to the own YouTube channel showing again that other social media are used as additional information platform for content publication and online source.

GFBS follow their individual concepts with reference to embedding visual material such as a permanent change of cover (An Old International), self-designed covers with the club logos and the result after a match (Königsblog), or photos of the blog photographer (dieblaue24, Wolfs-blog, and Textilvergehen). The self-production of visual material by bloggers is rare, therefore, they embed cross-media links to social media and other online media as a basic work to visualise the blog entry more user-friendly: Textilvergehen (2017a) included content from several external social media (i.e. blog podcast, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), links to another football blog (i.e. Eiserne Ketten), an overview of the match coverage of regional online newspapers, a link to a football match photographer, and a link to a radio channel. However, the majority of the selected blogs rarely link to other blogs, but more often link to own former blog posts. External media sources may be used to inform the readership and to verify information, but it is assumed that the purpose is to hold the followership in the own blog (i.e. dieblaue24). Moreover, the target of advertising is no usual practice in the GFBS, therefore it is considered by few bloggers (dieblaue24, Wolfs-blog and Königsblog).

The intense embedding of external content shows the importance and essentiality of external sources and linking in the blog content production. The blog entries include press-roundups either by including links, summarising mainstream news media content or commenting it. Consequently, writing a FB post is not the simple down-writing of information or of the individual opinion. It is more complex because it is the creation of user-friendly and visual texts that revert to multiple external materials from various media.

5.1.4 Structuring posts

The structure of a text is handled heterogeneously, and is composed of either one full text with paragraphs (e.g. nurderfcm.de) or of a divided text in chapters (e.g. An Old International). Patterns in text structure can be assessed, but GFBS structure their texts in different ways which depends on the amount of information that is communicated in articles. In general, FB posts are divided in three parts: headline, text body and appendix.

The headlines contain a post title such as *“Play it again, Sam”* (nurderfcm.de, 2017c) which in some posts is underlined by a sub-title either as tags *“Pokalachtelfinale gegen Köln – Saison 2017/2018, Achtelfinale DFB-Pokal: Schalke 04 – 1. FC Köln”* (Königsblog, 2017e) or as additional information to support content-related the title or rather headline *“Losing the Battle - Winning Hearts [title]; Magdeburg may have been beaten thoroughly, their fans have impressed however. [sub-title]”* (An Old International, 2017c). Moreover the author or photographer is also named *“VON OLIVER GRISS UND ULI WAGNER (Foto)”* (dieblaue24, 2017e), the date and time *“19 November 2017 um 11:19”* (nurderfcm.de, November 2017) are included, and in some blogs information is given such as the number of comments *“21 Gedanken [comments] zu ‘Die Mannschaft hat Reife gewonnen’”* (Textilvergehen, 2017c) or as *“60 Kommentare [comments]“* (Wolfs-blog, 2017d).

While there are many similarities in the structure of headlines, text bodies look different between the blogs and sometimes exceptionally within the same blog (dieblaue24.de and Wolfs-blog). However, text bodies contain abstracts such as the *“Magazine Review: View from the Allotment End”* (An Old International, 2017e) or *“Zur weiteren Entwicklung des Fußballs - 95 Thesen”* (120minuten, 2017a). The division of the text body in chapters depends on the topic and blog. The inclusion of chapters seems to be a favored working process of An Old International because three of the five analysed posts are divided in chapters with own sub-headlines such as *“Strong Core”, “Solid Defence”, “Adding Style”* and *“A Force”* in the blog entry *“Next Stop: Promotion?”* (2017b) or *“Ein Ergebnis, das nicht die Wahrheit vom Spiel erzählt”, “Das hier sind die anderen Berichte der Berliner Medien“, “Unschöner Vorfall nach Spielende“* and *“Was sonst noch bleibt“* of Textilvergehen (2017c). However, Königsblog, dieblaue24 and nurderfcm.de write all information in one text body.

The appendix is the last part of a blog entry in which either the category in which a text is allocated, tags linked to other posts, or a “share”-button are incorporated in the template, but GFBs manage the inclusion of these points differently. As an example, An Old International, nurderfcm.de and Textilvergehen combine categories and tags such as

“*England, Football, George Robb, Hungary*” (An Old International, 2017d), whereas Wolfs-blog (2017d) adds category names (e.g. “*Gerüchte, News, Slider, Transfers*”) but no tags, which contrary to this is managed the other way around in Königsblog (2017e), e.g. “*1. FC Köln, DFB-Pokal*“, and dieblaue24 (2017b), e.g. „*TSV 1860, DANIEL BIEROFKA*“. However, 120minuten does not include any of these elements except the share-button to social network services.

5.1.5 Summary of the processes of writing and publishing blog entries

The selected football blog entries show similarities in the bloggers’ processes of content production. While in single-authored blogs one person creates the content and operates the blog, working steps are shared between the bloggers in multiple-authored blogs in which “*(...) Steffi takes the pictures, we all produce the podcasts (...), [and we all] look outside the box*” (Textilvergehen, 2017d). The analysis, moreover, shows that several features such as the title of posts, activated comment feature, embedding videos, photos or audio files are utilised by all GFB.

FBs cover heterogeneous topics and the main emphasis depends on several backgrounds (i.e. favourite club, all about football, football and society etc.) and a blogger’s intention with the blogs (i.e. blog as interaction platform for readers; offering reflected and alternative viewpoints and information etc.). Consequently, a wide range of issues is covered such as general and specific information about a club, competitive matches, fan culture, football history, sport politics, and media comparisons. Moreover, the shape of text matter in blog entries can be compared to those in professional sport journalism. It ranges from journalistic information notes to appeal notes whereas the blog entries often combine both types. The analysis shows that every post has a title and also the authors’ names and the posting date are listed in the headline so that readers can track the author or topics in a blog in the search field. Furthermore, share buttons to social media channels and tags to main topics or to blog categories are integrated in the blog appendices. However, differences can be observed in the structure of a text body. GFBs write all gathered information down either in one text body (i.e. with paragraphs

included) or they divide the text body in chapters including an introduction, abstract, main part and outro. The texts, though, embed multi-media and links to social media and online media sources of which information are used because links to original sources verify and support the bloggers' opinion or given information.

The activated comment feature in all investigated blogs assumes the GFB's target and openness towards social interaction between blog participants. The majority of posts contains open formulations, and combine colloquial and colourless expressions. Some bloggers ask the readers to communicate their opinion to certain topics assuming that bloggers want their followers to use the blog as a follow-up communication platform. Beyond that, the narrative perspective changes within one text and in some cases even within the same paragraph from a first-person-narrative to a third-person-narrative why some posts resemble notifications or commentaries. In a final step, bloggers use other communication platforms as an additional alternative for reaching more readers. Moreover, bloggers publish their posts in further social media channels (predominantly Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) as interactions are welcome in FBs.

5.1.6 Discussion and Synthesis: Occupational working processes in the blogosphere

The blogs can be determined as amateur-journalistic or in the case of dieblaue24 as professional media blog that addresses relevant topics for the public by publishing information about a club, political, social or cultural issues of which the blogger is convinced that it is worthy to be published (Beck, 2014). Therefore, bloggers intent to publish posts representing the own opinion or that has the potential of delivering material for public discussions. GFBs are citizen journalists who are average citizens rather than salaried journalists, and who write and submit stories which "(...) are less frequently the outcome of direct investigative reporting, and more often collect and collate available information on certain newsworthy topics. The practice here is similar most of all to that of industry journalists compiling stories from a variety of news agency feeds and combining it with further evaluation and commentary" (Bruns, 2010, p. 120). There are parallels to the processes of how citizen journalists work because they observe the output of institutions, organisations and news outlets (e.g. newspapers,

television reports etc.), and they are engaged in gathering and compiling the amount of information that is relevant to the story or the main topic of a post (Bruns, 2010). However, as it can be seen in investigations of citizen journalism in online media worlds, GFBs also use their blog differently as a means of including the readership in the content production and allow only registered users to comment blog entries (i.e. few of them check comments previously whether it obey the blog netiquette) (e.g. dieblaue24), while others (e.g. 120minuten) give the opportunity to debate or evaluate the quality and veracity of a post without any registration (Karlsson, 2011). Moreover, commenters influence the content production in a way of extending, supporting, or contradicting details of a post by providing further information and references (Bruns, 2010). Thus, readers co-produce the content in FBs because they comment on the offered information and they provide alternative opinions to the bloggers' one in posts. Consequently, interactions (debates) are more detailed than the post "showing that in citizen journalism [here: blogging] the primary focus is on such discursive engagement more than on the mere provision of facts" (Bruns, 2010, p. 121). Those processes lead to the assumption that the interaction behaviour and the relationship between blog participants have an impact on the content creation because readers provide information that may be useful for an (almost) informative completion of a post (produsage) (Bruns, 2010). The participation and relevance of users have an impact on what is being published, which means that content producers in online media environments lose in some way control over content because they criticise incomplete or false information (Karlsson, 2011).

While blogs itself are social media, GFBs use additional social network services to share their blog entries with readers or other blogs. Allen & Reese (2016) found out that Twitter and Facebook are used by American sport bloggers as additional channels to post the current article, whereas GFBs use Facebook as the main additional communication channel to inform readers. In addition, Meinel et al. (2015) concluded after a structural exploration of different blogospheres that bloggers apparently use Twitter as additional microblogging service so that new posts are (automatically) published in the blog and in the Twitter channel. Thus, social media plays an important role in the GFBS "(...) helping to either add a multimedia flavour through video or

audio or to add another communication channel (...) into the mix to draw blog traffic and interest” (Allen & Reese, 2016, p. 61). The embedding of external content in a post by linking to original sources makes the blog to a more dynamic element, and confirms that it is a usual practice in the sport blogosphere (McCarthy, 2012). GFBs tend to link more often to mainstream news media sources but also include posts of football player’s or the clubs’ social media channels. In the off-season, GFBs link more frequently to mainstream news sources because breaking news to transfers are often firstly published by the club itself or rumours previously by online sports websites. Thus, GFBs take information from modern mainstream sports journalism and link it in the post after analysing the content and in dependence of the aim of a post (e.g. giving general information or publish a post with the aim of starting a debate).

However, it cannot be generalised that there are clear distinctions in topics or embedded links between off-season and on-season because rumours to possible transfers also start during the season. Moreover, FBs vary in the main emphasis of the blog, layout, writing style, and shape of text matters. They resemble the formal features of online and print news articles titles because headlines function as appeals or an index of content (McCarthy, 2012). The analysis shows that communicative exchange whether intentionally or unintentionally is important. GFBs formulate the content openly and followers debate intensely in the comment feature. Thus, interaction might be a motivation for bloggers and readers to interact and it might be a vital part in football blogs.

5.2 Income and output of information

This category will give an overview of how information is gathered in order to write a post, and in which further channels posts are additionally published to reach followers in other channels. An analysis of using various information sources as a basis for the blog content production and of the communication channels as additional publication platforms resulted in the finding of two generic categories:

- The ways of collecting information which are direct self-collected information by reporting on-the-scene and indirect re-appropriation or rather reproduction of still existing content (information income), and
- The channels of publication which are social network services or online media in which bloggers additionally have the opportunity to publish and distribute the produced content (information outcome).

5.2.1 Ways of collecting information

The self-collection of information refers to the bloggers' presence and reporting on-the-scene which helps them to receive first-handed information, perceive and communicate an emotional and intense feeling on what has happened. Another aspect of the self-collection is the direct access to information sources and the subject matter (e.g. professional head coaches or other involved actors) as a means of conducting interviews or to participate in the club press conferences. There are few bloggers (i.e. dieblaue24 and Textilvergehen) who have a direct access to the protagonists and who get the press accreditation of the favourite football club. These bloggers have an inside access to information and they can get information and access that are usually preserved for professional football journalists (Bölz, 2014). Thus these bloggers are enabled to draw in and retain readers because they have a special relationship with the football club which could possibly be the result of their main job as professional journalists. This claim can be substantiated because bloggers of dieblaue24 and Textilvergehen are professional football journalists who are accredited for the clubs' press rooms as it can be seen in dieblaue24-post "*Ich komme wieder': DEL-Star Abeltshauser von Bieros Löwen begeistert*" of dieblaue24 (August 2017) (Figure 10) or in a blogger's comment in comment feature of "*Die Mannschaft hat Reife gewonnen*" in Textilvergehen (2017d) (Figure 11).



Figure 10. Yellow-underlined information in blog post about the interview with the content protagonist (dieblaue24, 2017a).

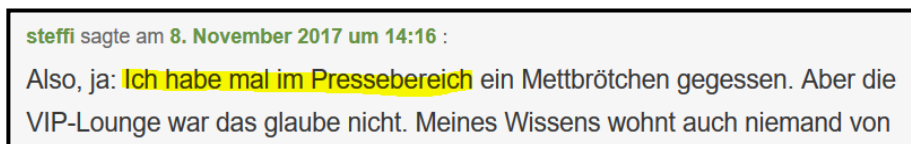


Figure 11. Blogger gives information (yellow-underlined) about the access to the press area in the stadium of the favourite football club (Textilvergehen, 2017d).

The accreditation and unproblematic access to players and the coach is the base of the football journalists' work which leads to the advantage that journalists (compared to bloggers) can publish more credible from what they are writing about (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018). However, the status as professional journalists offers the bloggers better possibilities to get in direct touch with protagonists enabling them consequently to cite them in posts. For instance, Oliver Griss (dieblaue24) participates regularly in press conferences or interviews the head coach whose statements he includes in his articles: "I have always said: Everyone will get his chance! Now the other guys must help out" said the 1860-head coach Daniel Bierofka (...)" (dieblaue24, 2017b). These bloggers

use this kind of information as breaking news by describing the potential line-up for the next match or the atmosphere during a match: “[t]here were four players (...) of the opponent team on the pitch who also started in the last league match” (Textilvergehen, 2017b) or “[i]t was not only the show just before kick-off when the teams came onto the pitch, it was moreover and more importantly the fact that throughout the ninety minutes they sang, created chants and noisy and supportive of their team” (An Old International, 2017b). GFBs do not consequently mention transparently when they visited a match in the stadium. In few cases, they add this missing information in the answer of a reader’s question or comment such as “[o]h well, okay, I didn’t detect it [a foul by a player of the opponent team] that way in the stadium (...)” (nurderfcm.de, 2017c). Consequently, direct access to club officials is not necessary for the content production of subjectively formulated perceptions or emotional descriptions. For instance, posts with explanations of the environment and atmosphere in the stadium can also be produced by visiting a match, observing the fan crowd in the stadium (e.g. nurderfcm.de) or even watching a match in television. Thus, bloggers are then limited in their processes of content production when interviews define the main object of a post, and when they depend on accreditations or other releases by a third party.

5.2.2 Reproduction of material from other sources

GFBs reproduce material from different sources such as mainstream news media, individual social media channels or official football club sources (press releases or information from the website). Bloggers have many options to gather information, but one approach is preferably used: the re-appropriation or redevelopment of already existing online media content. While there is a minority with press accreditations, many bloggers use other information sources in order to have enough material for a blog entry. Thus, they reproduce content by embedding links, photos or videos which help them to strengthen the credibility, the opinion or attitude by incorporating links in underlined words or sentences: “Further accolade came from England where the Sun spoke of ‘a terrifying show’ to test the mettle of Peter Bosz’ side. (...) The Daily Mail wrote that the

display was menacing (...)” (An Old International, 2017e). GFB use several options to be informed such as news from media houses, football clubs or private persons. For instance, bloggers reveal the original information sources such as Königsblog (2017a) saying that “(...) *the average and by no means bad performance of the Blues (...) was criticised and mocked in the social networks*”. However, the reproduction of external material does not necessarily mean that a blogger is well connected personally to the source or a player. The reproduction of material from other sources seems to serve their opinions as they demonstrate that other people feel the same way or it empowers the bloggers’ argumentations. Thus, posts of players, the club or fans in social media are important content and considered during the investigation process and the routine of content production, e.g. “(...) *following information on Twitter (...)*” (Textilvergehen, 2017c). The other key sources are online articles of football newspapers such as the German market leader “Kicker” or regional newspapers. The original sources are embedded differently either in bullet points (Figure 12) or in underlined words or sentences as it can be read in “[w]ith the comeback of Königsblog the Blues win 3:1 against VfB Stuttgart” (Königsblog, 2017a).

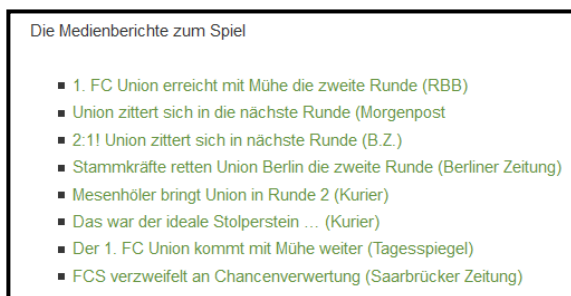


Figure 12. Snippet from a football blog post (Textilvergehen, 2017a)

5.2.3 Summary: Income and output of information

The GFBs show common ways of investigation and inclusion of various information sources in blog entries, but which are individualised as well. GFBs are totally transparent regarding their information sources because they name it and embed it as links. The ways of information collection are nearly the same but with some variations between and within the blogs. The inner-blog differences exist because the availability of information changes in dependence of the topic or the author. That is, included

information in some posts base on external material, personal experiences or perceptions (inter alia descriptions of the stadium atmosphere during matches, press conferences visits, interviews or other media sources). Consequently, bloggers link to social media channels, online mainstream news articles (i.e. fan blogs often link to regional news websites) and other posts within the blog that function as a base for the production of blog entries. As an example, “[o]ne of the mentioned texts that gushes over Domenico Tedesco [head coach of Schalke 04] is written by Philipp Selldorf: ‘A coach who makes the difference’ [embedded link to an online article]. Generally, you should read every text related to Schalke which are written by Philipp Selldorf. Besides, an interview with Domenico Tedesco was published today in the tactics blog *spielverlagerung.de* which I truly consider as very worth reading [embedded link to the football blog]. And from Domenico Tedesco you can also listen to his words mostly well. The press conference after the game for example (...). ‘The Pre-press-conference of S04 against Dortmund’ [embedded link to the club’s YouTube channel]” (Königsblog, 2017d).

5.2.4 Discussion: Income and output of information in German football blogs

Football blogging can be seen as a communication sphere primarily for football fans in which they react to the output of mainstream media and to those of opinion-makers such as bloggers who at the same time are fans as well (McCarthy, 2014). The embedding links enable users to follow and monitor a source implying that football blog users represent a strong and growing role as co-producers or co-creators of news stories (Karlsson, 2011). Thus, FBs integrate a wide variety of sources which again makes them to be a potential media source that provides information on a wide range of issues and from diverse perspectives at the same time (Himmelboim & Creery, 2012). Moreover, GFBs choose a variety of sources and they prefer applying features that allow user interactions with the content and with the ability of influencing it indirectly (i.e. monitoring sources, commenting content, etc.). Transparency with reference to information sources plays an important role in the working processes and may have an impact on the relationship between football bloggers and users. That is, Karlsson (2011)

points out that interactivity leads to transparency as a means of visibility of working processes and original information sources. Particularly bloggers link or name sources in order to guarantee a visibility of the used information source that again strengthen the own credibility (Karlsson, 2011). Hence, transparency and interactivity are strongly connected to each other and have an impact on the bloggers' consideration of information. There is a pattern in German FBs showing that bloggers use frequently the same sources (e.g. well-known established regional newspapers). Subsequently, as the majority of information sources are well-known by users, followers are given a chance to check, monitor, criticise and intervene in the process of journalistic process (Karlsson, 2011). However, blog readers do exclusively then have a chance to check it when there are no paywalls on the regional newspaper website. Linking is therefore an important working step because it makes bloggers' working processes transparent. In addition, transparency can be converted operationally in several ways, for example, enabling users to participate in every stage of content production (i.e. newsgathering, reporting, publishing, analysing and discussing), both acknowledging the readers about an error or mistake and publishing the corrected information with naming the source up to making working processes transparent by publishing links to original sources that are used (Karlsson, 2011). Hyperlinks have a consultative effect that provides additional information or the option to explore sources. However, there is diversity in obtaining information from several sources in the GFBS but its integration in posts is confined to online sources because mass media contribution cannot be integrated technically in posts except the information released in television, radio or print is digitalised in a media centre of a website on which users can access it online. According to that, GFBS use primarily mainstream news websites or social media as main information sources showing that external media has a massive impact on the production of blog content and blog output because GFBS primarily depend on what content and topics are covered in it which again decides partly on the content of a blog article (McCarthy, 2012).

5.3 Follow-up communication in posts

The GFBs' activity level and involvement in discussions varies. The bloggers' interaction is not limited to the writing of comments because bloggers can also interact by deleting comments; integrating a link that has been published in a user comment etc. Thus, blogger involvement is divided into three aspects: blogger-reader-relationship, blogger intervention in discussions, and impacts of interactions on the editorial work.

5.3.1 Reaction of bloggers to readers' comments

The relationship between the blogger and the readers in the GFBS is diverse: Generally, the majority of GFBs have a positive relationship with their readers, but in few moments the bloggers discuss with few readers that in some exceptional cases end in the deletion of reader accounts (Königsblog, 2017c). However, the analysis of comments shows that the more a blogger is involved in discussions with his readers, the better the relationship is (Königsblog, nurderfcm.de and Textilvergehen). In these blogs, the bloggers receive positive feedback to their blog and they know to appreciate it because they *“thank [their readers] very much for [their] detailed feedback. We are very pleased that you liked our idea”* (120minuten, 2017a). However, bloggers do not always receive positive feedback and their comments are not permanently thank notes because sometimes they join the commenting community by simply adding a comment to a previous comment which is about the main topic of the post (dieblaue24, 2017e; Textilvergehen, 2017a; Textilvergehen, 2017d; December 2017; Wolfs-blog, 2017c). In other cases, bloggers participate in discussions without writing comments, but by deleting comments or exceptionally reader accounts when discussion atmosphere is negative and insulting (dieblaue24, 2017c; Königsblog, 2017c). There is predominantly a respectful atmosphere when followers discuss, but the deletion of comments shows that the discussion atmosphere can change to a negative, disrespectful and aggressive one. However, the GFB of An Old International is the only one who does not comment any of the readers' comments. In this case, it is assumed that comments are directly transferred from Facebook to the blog because users' comments can be read in his blog

and in his Facebook account which shows that not the blog but the Facebook account is used as the main interaction platform.

5.3.2 Intervention of bloggers in communication

The level of debate and the conversational respect between the disputers decide about the blogger's intervention in discussions. Account deletions or bloggers' advices to the netiquette are seldom except in dieblaue24. The bloggers intervene in discussions and revise or delete few readers' comments in exceptional situations: dismissing the netiquette that bloggers determined for their blog or behaving disrespectfully by insulting, threatening or discriminating racially are reasons for deleting the readers' account or for asking them to leave the blog because *"(...) with expressions like 'This link-winged puke in this blog' or with threatens like '(...) Torsten and the others should consider if they brand me as a Nazi. I am glad that we now have a voice in the Reichstag with the AfD [German right-winged party] again' you truly went too far. Unfortunately, I cannot prevent that people like you are members of our club which declared to support integration and the protection of minorities. However, I'll still insist that people like you do not understand our club and our constitution. Here, however, on this page I can further prevent, henceforth, to read your discriminating comments"* (Königsblog, 2017b). In other blogs, the bloggers do not explain their decision for deleting accounts and comments: they delete it immediately and an automatic answer anonymise it such as *"Previous user #1004"* (dieblaue24, 2017a) or *"This comment was deleted by the team of dieblaue24. Please respect the netiquette!"* (dieblaue24, 2017a) that fill the gap in which the comments were previously visible.

5.3.3 Impacts of interactions on the editorial work

Independently from the text length and the topic, readers are highly involved in the communication with readers or bloggers, whereas bloggers intervene or comment other readers' comments seldom, when comments are addressed directly to the blogger (nurderfcm.de, 2017a) and a post is criticised (Textilvergehen, 2017b). However, the

interaction between bloggers and readers has an impact on the bloggers' editorial work because posts are revised after users advice to sources that a blogger previously did not include in his text such as “[reader:] *By the way, here is a current publication on spielverlagerung.de with the ‘Tedesco’-interview [link] – [blogger:] Thank you! It’s [the embedded link in the user’s comment] worth reading, I linked it in the text...*” (Königsblog, 2017d), and “*Thank you! I’ll add later the opening hours in the post*” (Textilvergehen, 2017d). Thus, bloggers rework their texts by including additional or deleting false information. Consequently, the readers' comments are useful for the blogger's working processes who are actively involved in the content production by offering additional background information in comments.

5.3.4 Reader responses to bloggers and posts

It can be summarised that the majority of comments are formulated respectfully and a positive ambience of debate exists. Comments appealing the blogger are often positive feedbacks to the writing style or encouraging words to the private situation, i.e. “[it is] *so great, Torsten, that you write again. For me this blog is the ONLY source that represents the thoughts of Schalke fans and it is a great replacement for groups of regulars*” (Königsblog, 2017b), or “*An awesome summary of the yesterday’s match*” (nurderfcm.de, 2017a) which the bloggers know to appreciate such as “*Thank you for the compliments and for regularly visiting my blog*” (nurderfcm.de, 2017a). However, an aggressive interaction pattern is also present in the debates in which the curve of disrespectful behaviour rises with the number of negative comments: the more disrespectful comments are written, the more colloquial and offending language is expressed especially when the blogger does not intervene early enough. During this development some commenters fulfil specific roles such as provocateurs or troublemakers who write sarcastic and provoking comments such as “*@OliverGriss in my opinion your positive articles became continuously better, lately*” (dieblaue24, 2017a). In moments of intense debates with some disrespectful expressions, commenters criticise the bloggers for not intervening after negative and insulting annotations by

saying that *“I’ve lost the hope that the blogger will intervene but I didn’t lose the hope that it will fall on his feet one day”* (dieblaue24, 2017b).

Although, texts do not include subjective expressions, there are observable intense discussions in which commenters include links to online media for the verification and support of their arguments such as *“[i]n the article is something about support [of the current manager] (...). <http://www.sportbuzzer.de/artikel/vfl-fuehrung-rueckendeckung-fur-rebbe-neuordnung-im-januar/>”* (Wolfs-blog, 2017b). Moreover, the majority of discussions are without insults or provocations, and readers explain or justify their opinion in long comments reflecting their interest and expertise in certain topics (Wolfs-blog, 2017a-e). Thus, the comment feature is primarily filled with user comments and bloggers predominantly fulfil a passive role in order to let readers conduct a discussion and give them the stage for interactions.

5.3.5 The interaction behaviour within the readership

FBs are used as an interaction platform. The commenters use nicknames or abbreviations of their names which does not stop commenters address the own opinion to another commenter by naming him before giving an answer such as *“@Altix For the second time today you say exactly what I am thinking. Thanks!”* (Königsblog, 2017a). Thus, some interactions develop to two-party-conversations in which only two commenters communicate with each other. However, when an argument refers to the post, then the discussion room opens to other readers who get involved in the exchange of opinions. Even when some involved people are criticised in a respectful way, there are also disagreements in the argumentations including sarcastic or provocative language such as *“Why are you not looking for another club where everything is great instead of criticising everything permanently? It would be the best solution for everyone...”* (Wolfs-blog, 2017c). However, a blogger intervention in tempestuous discussions is in few cases necessarily, but discussions can also be dissolved by readers, especially in moments of disputes and personal offences when readers remind the community to respect each other and the blog netiquette during debates because *“in the*

anonymity of the blog it is very easy for us to judge real persons knowing that we don't really have to take responsibility for what we are commenting. We should therefore follow the principle to speak or write about others as if they would sit in front of us and as if we must take responsibility as a person and with reference to our reputation what we are talking about. I think it would generally help during discussions and the interaction with each other in the blog" (Wolfs-blog, 2017d).

5.3.6 Summary of the interaction behaviour in football posts

There are both respectful argumentations and disrespectful comments in discussions between blog participants. The interaction analysis shows that the first comments in a comment feature refer to the post content which develop to debates the more comments are made. Thus, the comment feature is used for the general exchange about football or as a communication platform for side issues because discussions can also end by talking about blog-unrelated topics although the favourite team does not play neither that day nor in this competition (Wolfs-blog, 2017e). The dynamic of discussions, however, cannot be calculated previously. Commenters form and represent different opinion groups who argue against each other and who fulfil a specific role, e.g. provocateur, defender of participants and other opinions, mediator etc. Some debates escalate (dieblaue24, 2017a) and others have a positive atmosphere (nurderfcm.de, 2017a). The atmosphere depends on the related topic, i.e. whether something positive or a controversial topic (e.g. head coach dismissals) is covered. Generally, there is a good relationship between bloggers and their readership because bloggers offer their readers a platform for debates. However, bloggers participate seldom in discussions with own comments (i.e. Textilvergehen seems to be an exception because the bloggers are more often involved than their blogging colleagues), but they are involved in situations in which commenters address their comment directly to the blogger or when commenters ignore the netiquette which forces bloggers to intervene in different ways.

5.4 Interaction behaviour in football blog entries

The results of the QICA contributes to a better understanding how the football blogging platform enables interaction because the activated comment features show that conversation plays an important role in blogs, and content has the function to be talked about. In comparison to publishers, GFBs are not focused on the target group for economic reasons, but bloggers pay attention to the topics they are interested in (Schall & Müller, 2011). Consequently, their readers are like-minded people who are interested in the same topics, and who are looking for information and a discussion platform. In this case, the blogger fulfils the role as an important opinion-maker and multiplier (Schall & Müller, 2011). Several factors decide about the quality of the relationship between the blogger and his readers: media range, number of readers and especially the closeness between blogger and readers. A blog that is commented frequently, used as an inclusive discussion platform, linked by other bloggers or other types of media producers and is cited by others has a close relationship to his followership because the blog entries receive attention, and consequently develop an influence on readers (Galily & Tamir, 2012; Schall & Müller, 2011). Moreover, by offering room for interaction, the FB readers develop a personal connection to the blogger and give him personal feedback to his content, opinion or writing style which again plays a key part of interactional aspects (Baumer et al., 2011).

Blogs generally have the potential to stimulate communication between readers and authors. It can be estimated as a communication platform that extends interactivity by offering a wide range of feedback possibilities and by informing readers about current topics at the same time (Beyers, 2004). Bloggers profit from an active community because the comment feature is a space for the communication of individual thoughts and emotions. Thus, commenters participate due to various reasons such as looking for a conversation with other people, inform and get informed about problems, discussing and forming individual opinions which results in a hybrid form of a private dialog and public expressions of opinions (Beck, 2014). However, specific behavioural rules (i.e. netiquette) are either determined by the GFBs or their users conventionalised it in the meantime of commenting blog entries. Infringement of the netiquette is punished by

blocking or deleting an account or the comment, moreover, the community excludes socially a person what typically happens in chat communities (Beck, 2014). Football blogs are media of group communication because users publish comments and cross-refer by linking it to own or other blog entries and other web offers. Moreover, interaction is not limited to one blog: users can subscribe to RSS feeds that announce new posts, and blog rolls support potentially the communication and network within the football blogosphere (Beck, 2014).

The direct interaction is useful for bloggers because it helps to determine possible story ideas and story development (Weitz, 2013). An activated comment feature promotes tighter interaction among the readers or between the readers and bloggers (Weitz, 2013). Weitz (2013, p. 83) notes that “(...) online comments are leading [journalists] to provide additional sourcing information as a way to be more accountable to readers (...); also, comments are promoting increasingly interactive responses (...)”. As a consequence, besides the provision of interactive responses, allowing comments is an added value for GFBs because it leads them to verify and pay attention to the truthfulness of information. Deuze & Paulussen (2002) found out that interactivity is one of the most important factors (after immediacy) in the practice of Dutch and Flemish online journalists which covers the assumption that online media producers attach importance to the communicative exchange. An activated comment feature enables interactions and interventions within the communication processes by and between the blog participants (Beyers, 2004). For instance, Baumer, Sueyoshi & Tomlinson (2011, p. 1) found out that readers play a significant part in the creation of political blogs by arguing that “blogging is not only a social activity, but is a collaborative process of co-creation in which both bloggers and readers engage” which can be observed in the GFBS. The readers’ participation (i.e. by exchanging information and opinions) in German FBs during the process of content production is therefore an essential component for the maintenance of the blog, but the reputation of a blog and their readers’ involvement in debates depend on the discussion atmosphere. These findings cover those of Baumer et al. (2011) who resume that occasional commenting is important for participation in blogs, but the general environment of interaction around the blog decides mainly about

the involvement of a reader in discussions. However, the activity of participation and the feeling of belonging to a community are perceived “(...) differently by different readers in different contexts” (Baumer et al., 2011, p. 12). Furthermore, GFBs rely on their readers as participants at the production and publications of posts. The reaction and response to the content as well as the reader’s input (opinions, new information etc.) are potential material for future posts (Bruns, 2010).

Bloggers have different motives for starting a blog and it can be summarised that the selected blogs are used as both information and interaction platform among their users. As mainstream (online) news media rarely activate and often deactivate the comment function in online published articles, it seems that readers switch to FBs in order to communicate, express their opinion and interact with other blog participants. The professional journalists’ lack of responses, however, does face the issue for the (professional) journalism that readers use platforms on which they can find content with reference to be generally informed, entertained, and perceived (either by the content producer or other participants) at the same time. The way of providing information and content differs between and within the blogs and covers a wide range from short objective information written down in few sentences up to longer subjective and opinion-making texts. It can be assumed that the variety of blog content makes it interesting to be followed and commented by the participants. Moreover, bloggers name transparently the information source from which they collect news which blurs the line between the transparency of sources in articles which are produced by journalists and those posts which are published by bloggers. Therefore, the importance of FBs in the German football media world, especially for fans of a specific football club, and the desire to converse with participants and being a part of the produced content have become key issues in the content producer’s working processes and the German football media world in general. Thus, in places in which participation occurs there are mutual impacts on the relationship, reading and involvement between the involved people (Baume et al., 2011). Consequently, the interaction and relationship between the involved persons in the GFBS influences the content of a blog and demonstrate that the content is produced collaboratively co-created, but bloggers decide as the last instance

which content is published in the blog. Consequently, interaction is essential and is a vital part in FBs.

5.5 Summary of the findings from the blog content analysis

A mixed-method approach was conducted for the blog content analyses by exploring selected blogs and blog articles. At first, the quantitative analysis shows that FBs are either handled by one or multiple persons, and the qualitative analyses points out that a bloggers work either in own single-authored or also in multiple-authored blogs together with other GFBs. The QnCA inter alia concentrated on blog articles by calculating the total and average number of posts and text lengths (words per post) showing that FB articles differ in the number of post publications and text lengths between the selected blogs, but averagely FB articles are longer than articles in other blogospheres (Herring et al., 2006b). Moreover, GFBs insert different external and internal links which mainly refer to websites of other news media sources, YouTube channels of external news providers and further blog articles within the same blog. These results give indications to the function of linking and the QICA confirms that these links expand the multi-mediality of FBs and are included in order to enable readers the access to the original information sources to re-reading the original content. The content analyses lead to the findings that the writing of a FB bases on individual preferences, but information are collected mainly by reading through external news media sources which are then included in the text. However, there are also GFBs with a media accreditation for the press room of their favourite football club which enables them the collection of direct information by interviewing directly the subject of matter. Thus, with reference to the processes of writing and the collection and output of information the qualitative analysis shows that different sources are used for news gathering and inserted in different ways for the content production, whilst the quantitative analysis shows that social media are additionally used to publish new content to reaching more people and followers who do not directly go to the blog website and are guided from social network services to a blog. Furthermore, these networks are also used for interactions with readers or between

readers who debate and exchange comments in the blog and in the blogger's social media accounts as well. However, the interaction behaviour shows that bloggers are less involved in the interaction with readers, but active involvement mainly happens when comments have to be deleted for ignoring the blog netiquette. The interaction behaviour of the readership generally shows that comments are made about the topic and in few times about a blogger's writing style. Consequently, commenters use it to place their opinion and partly exchange communicatively with other commenters. These involvements result in a co-creation of the blog content because the follow-up communication expands the presented content and its topic by discussing about it.

The QnCA of blogs informs the qualitative research phase by giving suggestions how content is produced and where it is published. That is, these results which are combined with the qualitative findings give insights into the bloggers' subjective interpretations of their blog's role because it is seen either as an informative and short-written article or as an entertaining, long text form. Moreover, it represents the importance of external media sources for expanding the media reach which again shows that the blogging platform might reach a small group why social media are used to reach further users or groups of interest. Shorter texts, consequently, could be akin to the role of newspaper article which must be objective and informative, whereas longer texts are primarily more entertaining and secondly informative because it considers a stronger focus on storytelling aspects such as describing the stadium atmosphere. The quantitative findings, for instance, are considered for the construction of the semi-structured expert interview manual (see Appendix IV) and a reason to ask bloggers how they proceed in writing and publishing blog articles. The text lengths and publication frequency, therefore, can give information about the meaning of a blog that a blogger subjectively defines from which again the personal interpretation can lead to the estimated status of football blogs in the German football media world. Thus, the quantitative findings have an introducing factor for the expert interviews and are used to ask questions about the content production and publication. The researcher could receive insights and patterns for the text lengths and publication frequency through the interviewees' answers explaining the reasons for a daily or weekly content production and usage of different text lengths as well as the role

of other media sources for the production and publication of blog articles. The findings of the QICA inform the interview parts regarding the detailed process of content production and roles of different sources and its usage as well as on the interaction behaviour and its impact on the content production. Moreover, the qualitative findings show that there are different recipient groups which interact differently with each other, the bloggers and the blog that leads to the suggestions that GFBs maintain different relationships to various recipient groups from which different role allocations and the bloggers' individual estimation of the role of FB in the football media world (i.e. also how their readership might estimate the importance of FBs) could be concluded.

As a summary, the QnCA informs the qualitative research phase by delivering information how many articles are produced in what text lengths, how many other news media sources are connected with it and where the articles are furtherly published in the media sphere. These results give approaches to analyse it more detailed in the qualitative phase: The findings point that besides similarities in the blog production such as using multi-media, links or hypertexts to fill the content, GFBs have individual patterns in text lengths, usage of preferably external news media as link sources and different personal preferences to link to specific sources and to use further social media platforms as publication tools. Therefore, the quantitative findings informs the qualitative phase because it reflects how bloggers interpret their individual world (inter alia their subjective estimated role and of their blog in the GFBS in the football media world) and then act based on these interpretations by offering informative and/or entertaining content.

As a conclusion, blog context analysis helps to understand the diverse experiences and perspectives of the participants in the football blogging world with reference to topic-related or football club specific cultures and contexts. The diversifying blog contents and interaction behaviours look into the working methods and describe its patterns, situations, participants and conditions which are understood in the social context of football blogging (Crotty, 1998). The individual perspectives on the blog participants' worldviews and the bloggers' everyday actions to construct their subjective blog content

reality reflect the existence of subjective interpretations of meaning and multiple realities. These interpretations co-construct reality in the GFBS as a product of mental constructions depending on individual experiences, beliefs, society, understandings and context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 2013). Therefore, generalisation from the quantitative data cannot be made, but combined with the qualitative findings it can be transferred from one context to similar online media spheres. Thus, the blog content analysis establishes the meaning of experiences from the participants' viewpoints in the GFBS and the quantitative data of the content analysis are also included to discover subjective meanings and understandings of content production and impact factors in the GFBS environment (Stake, 2006).

The next qualitative research phase considers expert interviews with GFBs about their working processes and practices, impacts of the interaction behaviour on the content production, the relationships within the GFBS and the status of FBs in the German football media world.

Chapter 6: Interview results

This chapter aims to contribute to the understanding of GFBS' content-process routines, the relationships between GFBS and commenters and other involved participants from the German football media world (i.e. professional journalists, football players or club officials). A central aspect is the identification of impacts of relationships and interactions on the media production and the perceived role allocations as a result of the interaction behaviour.

In German journalism research it is preferred to conduct interviews without a manual, whereas the German media studies falls back on interview manuals. Consequently, both approaches are combined in this research step by using a semi-structured interview manual (see Appendix IV) which gives the researcher an orientation, but enables him to ask spontaneously further questions at the same time (Bölz, 2014).

As a consequence, it is obvious that expert interviews play a central role for the investigation of the GFBS. Consequently, the expert interviews enhance the access to the GFBS' experiences and perceptions. It also contains the potential to replace extended analyses of a multitude of blog investigations because selected GFBS' knowledges are used to receive insights and findings representable for the interactive GFBS (Aufenanger, 2006; Bölz, 2014). The advantages of interviewing GFBS are their contribution by incorporating two different perspectives: the one with the professional knowledge by being the main protagonist and the knowledge contribution through the contextual viewpoint by preserving enough and special information about the GFBS (Auenfanger, 2006).

The literature review shows that a close relationship between football journalists and professional athletes, club officials or spokesmen whom they cover in their articles is important for the reception of information, but the closeness has also the potential impact on the media content. For instance, journalists' criticism that covered subjects do not perceive as justified could lead in a withdrawal of the accreditation or rather the ignorance of interview requests which consequently are barriers in football journalists' working processes (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018). As the QICA of selected German FBs

shows that press accreditations are not usual, little, if anything is known about the way GFBS collect especially first-handed information.

A further element of this research step is the hermeneutic analysis of the interviews without the previous development of categories deduced from other research studies in order to approach the interview transcriptions more open-minded from an interpretative viewpoint (Bölz, 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). In comparison to the QICA method in other researches which follows theoretical principles such as a systematic and rule-guided procedure by taking the content apart in small units and encoding rules in order to make the process verifiable inter-subjectively and replicable, the hermeneutic and interpretative content analysis differs strongly from category-guided and deduced QICA approaches (Bölz, 2014; Christmann, 2006; Mayring, 2003). The researcher follows the interpretative paradigm and therefore expects a less biased analysis through the hermeneutic approach than in a theoretical-guided, justified and valid categorisation development which probably blurs the view on the content instead of the open interpretation. The researcher assumes that the hermeneutic content analysis facilitates the search of GFBS-related findings independently from previous findings in other investigations and in which the analysis is proceeded in an interpretative and not reductive way (Flick, 1995; Flick, 1997, Flick, 2000; Flick, 2011; Lamnek, 1988). Thus, Elo & Kyngäs' (2007) QICA method was also used for the analysis of the expert interviews. As it was done during the previous content analyses of the blog articles, it was started to write as many headlines as possible at the page margins of the transcribed and translated interviews to build categories and to reunite categories with the same meaning in order to reduce the number of categories. Before the analysis process was started, interviews were transcribed and then translated from German to English. For a better linguistic understanding and comparison of the interviews, the German transcription was conducted by writing down the spoken word into High German although some interviewees spoke partly with a regional dialect. There is an example of the original and translated interview transcription inclusive the example of collected headlines at the page margin as a part of the categorisation process in Appendix V. The translation was done by the researcher with the help of translation websites such as

www.pons.de or www.linguee.de when it was necessary to look for vocabulary. The translated transcriptions were double-checked by the same person who also checked the translations from the quotes of the content analysis and who used to live and study media studies for nine years in the United States of America.

This chapter aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact of relationships in the GFBS on the bloggers' working practices. This is done by identifying recipient groups with whom bloggers interact and by examining the importance of the relationship to these people for the bloggers' work practices. Secondly, the relevance of key topics and linked information sources for the blog production and its content is examined. Moreover, by integrating the background of why bloggers started to produce their blogs, how the blog has changed since the beginning of blogging to nowadays and which potential development and status it could have in the future in the context of football media world, the chapter aims to make a significant contribution to understanding how GFBS interact with recipients and how these interactions influence bloggers' working processes and the blog content.

6.1 Intentions for blogging

Before the working processes and relationships in the GFBS are explained, it is important to know the bloggers' reasons to write a blog. The intentions and reasons potentially influence the way of content presentation and the topic selection. There are different approaches why bloggers conversed finally from a football fan and its media content consuming fan to an actively involved media producer who becomes a part of the (regional) football media world. The different motives and intentions can result in personal benefits and further added values for GFBS.

6.1.1 Personal motives for football blogging

The majority of GFBS do not work professionally in the sense of a full-time blogger because they write articles or record podcasts in their leisure time. The impetus of

writing a blog can be activated by a wide range of reasons: GFBs report on similar motives that were the initiation for writing a blog. Firstly, the blog is the optimal platform to outlet emotions or frustrations which helps them to express their personal thoughts about several football-related: *“I got frustrated and then I started on a WordPress platform to write down all these things”* (Interviewee 1), and *“the writing is always a kind of self-therapy. When I watch a game and write about it afterwards, it is archived in my mind, and I can forget about it, in principle”* (Interviewee 1) because when bloggers founded their blog they *“just wanted to write down the thoughts which were there anyway, and [I] wanted to produce the format exactly in this way because it corresponds to my personality”* (Interviewee 4). However, blogging also helps to practice languages because *“for me personally, blogging was an outlet or rather a way to continue to be fluent in the language [and in] English”* (Interviewee 2). Besides egocentric reasons for a blog foundation in order to satisfy personal mental needs by freeing themselves emotionally, a dissatisfaction with the biased coverage of the favourite club in regional media is another motive because *“I had a feeling that a thematic perspective towards the newspaper coverage about the club is missed which was not examined enough; which I am especially qualified to contribute to it in terms of content, and where blogging has the freedom to do so”* (Interviewee 3). A bad reputation of the favourite club as a result of biased media coverage is another basic factor why blogging was started, and bloggers were *“sick to death of all these stereotypes, permanently to justify and to be ashamed for being a fan of [name of the city].”* (Interviewee 4).

Other bloggers write about club-unrelated football topics with approaches in sociology, history or culture and point out that the open access to information was a decisive factor for blogging, though, *“[because of the transparency] I started with blogging so that knowledge can be shared, (...) is available and does not hide behind paywalls. This was one of the reasons, why and how I started with it”* (Interviewee 2).

As the majority of the interviewees write blogs in their leisure-time, one blogger mentioned career-related reasons (i.e. withdrawal) for the blog foundation. He already

had the idea during his professional journalistic career to build an empire or monopoly of FBs reflecting his economic intentions behind football blogging because *“firstly, I lost my job (...) and then the newspaper publisher was sold. (...) At that time, I already saw that the newspaper is not the future. (...) My plan was to offer all 36 football clubs in Germany a blog as the one I have now, and I blocked names of [football] clubs, i.e. I bought websites [or rather] addresses (...)”* (Interviewee 5).

6.1.2 Blogging impacts on the individual development

Regular blogging causes a change in the personal status and prominence within the blog community and the fan base of the favourite club. A positive effect of regular blogging is the development of a positive reputation and the perception by others to be a type-of-journalist who gets the recipients’ attention. It means that bloggers get the chance to realise further projects such as book writing or invitations to sport television programmes as experts or fan representatives. That is, *“via this blog I realised a book project [about the football club] (...) which have read many people. And then I had a public appearance in a talk show of [a regional television channel] (...), and thereby people had a face which they could relate with the blog (...). Sometimes it happens that people talk to me who I have never seen before in my life (...)”* (Interviewee 1). This media presence makes bloggers visible and to a potential target for personal verbal attacks or criticism. Their status of prominence in the community can be estimated as ambiguous, though, because *“when you (...) provide something in public, either yourself, your opinion or something else, then you become vulnerable on the one hand, on the other hand you receive a position of esteem (...) which you notice on public events in the way people take a stand with you which is very respectful”* (Interviewee 4).

Regular publications of articles can pressure bloggers because the community expects a constant and continuous content publication. Consequently, GFBs develop a bad consciousness and suffer because they feel pressured to provide permanently content, even though the content is free and it is produced in their leisure time. Thus, *“[that followers wait for texts and the podcast] is a great feeling with reference to the esteem,*

(...) and, of course, it motivates me to keep on doing it. Because of being regular formats, it is a kind of commitment. When it is foreseeable that a text or a podcast session must be published one day later, then I have a bad consciousness” (Interviewee 1).

6.1.3 Summary: Intentions for blogging

The interview results show that there is a variety of different motivations for the production of football blog content. The variety of motives and the different blogger personalities result in a richness of diverse blog contents. GFBs use their blogs as a form of self-therapy that helps to reduce personal frustrations; it enables the realisation of new media projects which again have an impact on the personal development in terms of the enhancement of the writing style. In the beginning, GFBs used the blogging platform to outlet frustrations and joyful emotions when primarily the favourite club lost or won matches or when they were dissatisfied with the coverage of regional and national media. The simple down-writing of thoughts about the situation of the favourite club or other general football topics helped to reflect daily and extraordinary incidents in football that cover a blogger’s interest fields. While few bloggers use the blog to practice the native or a foreign language, other bloggers want to share their knowledge and well-researched and investigated articles with their readers. Primarily, when side issues such as social and historical football topics fill the main blog content, bloggers deliver an alternative information platform as a contrast to the scientific journals by offering a payless and open-access journal with the full access to well-researched content. However, losing the job as a professional journalist is also a motive.

As a conclusion, there are several motives to write a FB. In the meantime of maintaining a blog, the readership grows and consequently a GFB’s prominence within a fan base or blog community enhances. The regularity in content publication helps bloggers to improve the own reputation in their community which in some cases result in the participation of new media projects or official television appearances. Nevertheless, the greater the visibility and the achievement of greater awareness, the more a GFB becomes a possible target for personal verbal attacks.

6.1.4 Discussion: Intentions for blogging

There are divergent motivations that initiate the will to start a blog. It converses people from an average reader to a media content producer who actively gets involved in the media world. Football blogging confronts journalism and has a major impact on journalists and online newspapers because bloggers are competitors who challenge journalists by monitoring and gatewatching their media content (Allen & Reese, 2016). GFBs think that mainstream media do not give enough attention to their favourite football club. Therefore, bloggers check the news coverage of established newspapers and push relevant topics on the blogging platform (Hewitt, 2005). With the exception of one blogger, GFBs write without monetary incentives which match other international sport bloggers' motivational approaches (Kian et al., 2011). Moreover, further motivations can be found in other blogospheres such as the desire to share knowledge, the social interaction with others and the blog writing as a self-therapy or self-help tool (Allen & Reese, 2016; Galily & Tamir, 2012; McCarthy, 2012; McCarthy, 2014). While other sport bloggers indicate that meeting like-minded fans is an important and initial reason for blog writing, GFBs do not refer to this aspect in interviews. However, in the meantime of the blogging career this point became a natural consequence of the interaction. Another reason is the lack of available sporting information or a superficial coverage without deep dives about the favourite sport or football club (McCarthy, 2014). Thus, fan bloggers claim that their blogs are an additional serious information source because they fill the lack with well-investigated and detailed information while in their opinion mainstream news media report on few, biased and inaccurate news. In this context, in comparison to established sport coverages of professional journalists, football blogs can be described as a complement and corrective, and act as a concept, measure or media aid that corrects false or unwanted conditions in the media world such as biased and not sufficient reflected media coverages (Singer, 2006).

6.2 The degree of professionalism of football bloggers

The interviewees claim that it is more difficult to be perceived as professional journalists primarily by football clubs or journalistic colleagues when content is not published on a daily basis or blogging is not conducted as a prime job. Furthermore, there are fewer chances to build close relationships with players or other club employees. However, these disadvantages turn to an advantage because GFBs are more liberated in the production of critical content over the club without counting with negative consequences such as the revocation of the press accreditation. Consequently, journalistic professionalism in the context of the GFBS can be limited to few factors: source of income, time investment and journalistic work experience. As some GFBs have another prime job as their main salary source, others blog professionally why they can invest more time in the content production for the blog and their social media accounts. However, the intentions to start writing a blog have an impact on the degree of professionalism because different financial approaches are considered to (re-)finance the blog, and full-time and leisure-time bloggers have different opportunities with reference to their time management. Consequently, the invested time for the information collection and the realisation of journalistic projects differ between professional and leisure-time bloggers which again influences the thoroughness of content production because leisure-time bloggers have less time to produce and edit the content before it is published. The blog concept and working practices depend on the bloggers' previous journalistic work experience that again affect the network to other media producers, the blog content and the knowledge about the usage of further platforms for the spread of the content.

6.2.1 Journalistic work experience

Journalistic work experience, the concept of financing the blog and the available time for content production are three factors that decide how professional a blog can be translated into practice. The majority of the interviewed GFBs report on former journalistic work experience as *“in the past I worked as a sport journalist”* (Interviewee

6). This work experience helps bloggers to release information in a sarcastic way without landing in the zone of insults and offending people which again can result in criminal prosecutions and paying a fine for slander. That is, *“of course, (...) I know in which cases I am justiciable [Researcher’s note: able to be subject to a trial in a court of law for various reasons such as defamations]. Consequently, I do not enter into this area of insults or other things”* (Interviewee 4). From the bloggers’ perspective, the work as a professional journalist enhances the personal status in the football media world. It suggests that it is important to be estimated as a professional journalist and not as a blogger by the peers (which can include other journalists or fans) in terms of respect and no reception of degradations of their work because *“journalism is a trade that I practice, [and my platform] (...) is not a blog because I am no blogger, but a journalist. I do not want to be called a blogger. I hear it from colleagues, too, that they wonder what I am doing with my blog, and I think it is derogatory”* (Interviewee 5). It shows even when journalists start with professional football blogging, they want to be perceived as a professional football journalist because professional journalists seem to estimate blogging as something unprofessional and less qualitative.

However, changes in content, blog format, technical innovations or the network to participants and other media producers changed the GFBS in the last ten years. Long-time experienced GFBs observe that *“there are few [football bloggers] who are left over from that time [ten years ago]”* (Interviewee 7). Thus, the level of professionalism in football blogging could be a possible impact on leaving a blog because the majority of blogs are still produced in the leisure-time, though, but the bloggers’ and readers’ demand grows continuously. It expects a higher degree of professionalism in terms of producing interesting content, offering new formats (e.g. podcasts) or enhancing the technical knowledge which are essential to adapt formats and content such as the implementation of comment features in podcast (Interviewee 7). These aspects assume that the development and change in the demand of professionalism will continue in the blogosphere and separate the wheat from the chaff in the GFBS. Thus, blogs that produce content with a lower demand on its quality in terms of information, text format, writing style, community management or blog design have possibly a higher potential to

withdraw earlier than other blogs in which bloggers write texts in a more journalistic way without losing the subjective opinion.

6.2.2 The relation between time management and blog maintenance

Time management is very important especially when blogging is practiced in the leisure-time. External factors as the main job or family limit the time investment for sourcing, verifying information or writing articles. Leisure-time bloggers wonder “*who has the time to write in the morning? Because we all [i.e. bloggers in the multiple-authored blog] have a job, normal jobs, and (...) children who have to be at a certain time in school. In fact, it is more a question of time management [for the production of more content]*” (interviewee 7), whereas professional bloggers can invest the whole day to be currently informed (i.e. the basis for the production of new blog posts) because “*(...) I cannot imagine to start the working day at 9 o'clock in the morning because actually you work 24 hours a day to stay updated*” (Interviewee 5). The blog represent interviewee 5’s main salary income why he has the pressure to be consequently updated, but due to his former job as professional journalist he is used to provide constantly updated and breaking news. The pressure of working the whole day comes from the bloggers themselves and the readers’ insatiable appetite for content about the latest updates because media users are used to receive a 24/7-update opportunity through the access to a constantly updated media world.

6.2.3 The monetary background of football blogs

Leisure-time GFBs try to maintain, professionalise and enhance their working processes and blog content by financing it via donations, for instance, “*I try to monetise the blog project in that way that I have started something like crowdfunding [because] I am a big fan of this voluntary paying culture in the internet*” (Interviewee 1). However, companies as sponsors are no option for amateur bloggers, it is estimated as selling the blog and giving away the freedom of content production because “*what I would never*

do is to sell the blog to a company that sponsors it (...) [because] my idea behind it is making people to give me regularly a small financial contribution as esteem for the work who consume the blog or podcast regularly (...)” (Interviewee 1). Generally, with crowdfunding and donations GFBs cover costs for tickets, trips to away matches or the provision of a more professional content by including texts of famous authors and football journalists, for instance. These are the reasons why bloggers “*should find a way [to finance the blog] with the help of financial supporters so that we can really profit from it by a) covering our costs, firstly, and b) by offering authors as a reward which conversely means that we probably can consult much more big names [of football journalism] for the blog*” (Interviewee 2). Contrary to this, full-time bloggers are not able to imagine their work without sponsors because it helps to enhance the blog permanently when they “*now and then employ an intern*” (Interviewee 5). In this case, advertisers and sponsors deliver positive effects for these bloggers who professionalises the blog by adapting it to the system of publishing houses and professional journalism with several journalists and trainees in a newspaper. These bloggers communicate this financial support transparently by marking and linking to advertisement obviously: “*I have an advertiser, a big one (...) who places advertisements on my website. (...) The [name of the agency] can be read on the website*” (Interviewee 5).

6.2.4 Summary: The degree of professionalism of football bloggers

Three factors limit the approach of professionalism in the context of the GFBS: The journalistic work experience, the time management and the financial concept. While all interviewed bloggers have a journalistic background or at least experiences in writing scientific articles, few of them are enabled to invest their full time for the blog maintenance. It means that the majority of GFBs are leisure-time content producers and have another main job. Thus, football blogging in Germany is literally lived as a hobby.

The journalistic background and experience are important during and for the content production because GFBs formulate texts in a readable, interesting, and not justiciable way. The journalistic past (and in some cases present) are useful for bloggers because they assume that recipients (average readers, journalists, club officials) estimate the

status of the blog as more professional. GFBs, furthermore, claim that readers and journalists might suspect that these bloggers adapt their work experience and processes even when articles contain subjective and colloquial formulations. Because of their journalistic experiences, bloggers define professionalism as the opportunity to invest as much time as possible or whether blogging is carried out as a main job helping a GFB to invest almost the whole day for the literature review, the collection of (breaking) news, the reception of first-handed information by interviewing participants (Interviewee 5) or to realise projects together with famous sport authors which readers might find interesting (Interviewee 2).

Although leisure-time GFBs cannot invest as much time as professional ones, GFBs do not perceive their working processes as less professional. Thus, 'non-professional' bloggers should be estimated as leisure-time bloggers and not as amateur and unprofessional bloggers because it degrades their blogging work. Therefore, the time management and the opportunity of working as a professional blogger result in professional GFB's reverse following of approaches with their blogs: The security of enough income comes first followed by the guaranteed presentation of regular content, while leisure-time bloggers want to offer interesting content firstly and then concentrate on financial support to cover financial resources. Therefore, professional bloggers collaborate with sponsors or advertisers to enhance the visibility and prominence of the blog, but leisure-time bloggers prefer to be supported by single persons (no sponsors or advertisers) because the dependencies from an institution grow when it is the sole sponsor who then potentially could have the demand on influencing the content when a blog becomes more popular. A final but controversial point regarding the professionalism aspect in the GFBS is the claim that being called a blogger is derogatory for those who have many years of journalistic experience because blogging is contextualised with unprofessionalism and with less-quality journalistic work especially by traditional sport journalists (Schultz & Sheffers, 2007).

6.2.5 Discussion: The degree of professionalism of football bloggers

GFBs narrow down the degree of professionalism to the individual experience in professional sport writing, the type of income with blogging and the opportunity of time investment. Blogs can be financed differently which mainly depends on the purpose with the blog because bloggers whose blog is their main income source must generate revenue with it, while leisure-time GFBs concentrate on financial supporting methods that cover their travel, research or ticket costs. Therefore, GFBs fall back on usual methods of financing blogs such as donations, crowdfunding, financial support of the network community (inter alia friends, fans or other bloggers) and advertisement (Allen & Reese, 2016). Six out of seven interviewed GFBs use crowdfunding to finance the blogging activities in order to secure the personal independence from external businesses, but advertising does not necessarily mean that bloggers lose their independence because they can still write on whatever they choose (Kian et al., 2011). Monetary support is important for a continuous and regular content production because the more a blogger is financially secured the more time can be invested for research and information collection. However, “financial professionalism” is an exception in the GFBS because football blogging is more a hobby than a professional job. This leads to the aspect that blogging differs in some kind to journalism with reference to financial approaches and motivations for content production: While publishing houses “(...) value smooth production workflows, profitability and rigorous editorial standards. Weblogs adhere to a different set of values. Bloggers value informal conversation, egalitarianism, subjective points of view, and colourful writing over profits, central control, objectivity and filtered prose” (Lasica, 2003, p. 71). However, journalistic experiences and journalistic-professional backgrounds are factors that additionally influence the degree of professionalism in the GFBS because many years of experience in sport writing influences the writing style and the way of structuring a text. Moreover, GFBs differ hereby to other sport bloggers because their journalistic experiences in German sport newspapers explain some of the variations in the content type and style. Consequently, GFBs used to emphasise on a variety of football-related topics when writing for newspapers which again resulted in the focus on different personal interest fields. Thus,

GFBs are experienced in journalistic work, but other sport bloggers have no sport-journalistic background that helped them to produce professional news content, and consequently there might be qualitative differences between GFBs and other sport bloggers with reference to text structures, article quality and working processes (Kian et al., 2011).

6.3 The selection of topics for blog content production

FBs can be categorised in two types of topics: club-related fan blogs with a focus on a blogger's favourite football club (inter alia with tactical analysis of football matches) or more seldom club-unrelated FBs that concentrate on general football topics with approaches of culture, society and history. Emphasising on a certain kind of football topic depends on the GFBs' individual point of interest fields: The sport journalistic work experience and/or being a long-time fan of a certain club influence the topic selection. Thus, the following sub-chapters will explain which criteria GFBs consider when selecting topics for postings, and at the same time they give an insight in the thematic range of the GFBS.

6.3.1 Club-related topics

Fan blogs live from the currency and daily business of the football clubs because *“some topics are automatically relevant because it is about what happens in the club or in its environment at the moment. At the same time, sometimes we take up topics that have nothing to do [with the club], and related to this we are following a process of estimation [whether a club fan could be interested in a potential topic]. In this format in which we write something every day, the latest events of the day are a fixed point of content, of course, but otherwise the format and spectrum of topics is open in such a way that everything which feels relevant can be included [even though] it is not current (...)”* (Interviewee 3). Apart from the latest events such as transfer news, training sessions or injured players, bloggers produce blog content about *“(...) matches that I visit (...) and also [club-unrelated] current topics that are relevant for the club. Thus, it caters to the daily business of the season”* (Interviewee 1). Important information that

are included in match coverages are “(...) *the start line-up, then special situations during the match (...) [and] things that happen in the stadium that are important to me (...)*” (Interviewee 1). Club-unrelated topics, however, are nonetheless included in fan blog articles, but ignored in headlines because readers may not be mainly interested in it. However, “*it is okay to consider [regional and club-unspecific football topics]. But I do not necessarily include it in the headline (...) [because] during the time I know to which headlines people react well*” (Interviewee 6) in terms of sparking interest for an article and receiving positive responses and high interaction rates.

6.3.2 The thematic diversity of football

Football is thematically not limited to club-related topics. There are also FBs covering football-historical incidents, “*the inter-correlation between football and society in general*” (Interviewee 1), or “*women’s football [or] media how we consume football [that we write down in] personal texts*” (Interviewee 2). Producing content about side-issues in football can lead to complications when GFBs look for information about these niche topics which are rare, trustworthy and verified information. These pieces of information are more difficult to find than current information about a football club which are more frequently published on sport websites. It is rare to find these information in online open-access journals because “*(...) you click on a website on which you usually must overcome a paywall and that is not good, of course, because you cannot buy thousands of pages and articles per month for ten or twenty Euros*” (Interviewee 2). Thus, it is easier for fan bloggers to collect superficial information about current situations and developments around a club than to cover more profound topics with reference to social, political and gender discussions which need more time for a deep dive to find corresponding information sources.

6.3.3. Criteria for the topical selection

Two main criteria are considered when bloggers decide to write about a certain topic: the phase of the season (e.g. current incidents) and personal interests. During the off-season in winter and summer football players are on vacation and no training sessions are conducted, thus transfer news fills the majority of fan blog articles, but it is an uninteresting and difficult time to find interesting topics (Interviewee 7). Therefore, bloggers switch to alternative topics that have to do something with the players' private life or other trivial matters such as *“totally absurd things. Once in a summer break we published many photos of players in swimming pools, and it was very entertaining. Everybody knew that it was just a silly thing. You do not have to take it seriously every day and publish the highest art of content. [The blog] lives from its daily currency”* (Interviewee 6).

Fan blogs depend in parts on what is currently happening in the club, but there is the thematic freedom at the same time to write about other subject areas. Due to the bloggers' experiences on readers' reactions and feedbacks to certain topics, the selection criteria are a combined approach of personal interests and readers' topical preferences resulting in spontaneous decisions about what a blog post is about. That is, GFBs know through the years in what topics their readers are interested as their feedback and interaction behaviour point to their topical interest fields because *“I always used to write about what I am interested in, but I know as well what the readership wants to read. There are both [approaches]. (...) I relatively write much about sport politics and side issues (...). Usually, I do not have to do it theoretically for my readers. Firstly, I do it because it is interesting and I always think I do not get information or news about what is happening outside [the club], and I am not talking about football matches, but something like the polarisation in the opponent club. Then, I receive information about it somehow, [i.e.] there is something on Twitter and it is interesting, (...) but on the one hand I know that people are interested in it, on the other hand I am interested as well”* (Interviewee 6). Although the selection of topics depend on the bloggers' personal interests and their experiences of respecting the readers' expectations or wishes, the

writing style in blog posts is not changed in a way that interaction is supported because the most important criterion for selecting topic is that bloggers “(...) *write about what [I] want to write (...) because our interest is to reveal different topics in football for ourselves and to explain it in an appropriate way to the readers*” (Interviewee 2).

6.3.4 Summary: The selection of topics

German FBs are thematically diverse and either about a specific football club, analytical match coverages or general football topics connected with educational, political, social or historical approaches. While fan blogs catch up relevant topics such as the daily business of the club, latest news, transfer rumours or the current information about players and the team, other FBs are about general football topics with an intellectual background in order to enhance the knowledge about football topics at a macro level and off the field. Thus, the latter blogs aim to produce content about side-issues in football. It is more difficult and complicated for these FB types, however, to find information. The consequence is a higher time investment to write a well-researched article about profound side-issues with reference to social, political and gender discussions because valuable and verified information must be collected from research articles, from websites with paywalls, books or scientific journals. In comparison, fan bloggers have the opportunity to release content more frequently because first information is presented on sport websites.

While fan bloggers select topics that depend on natural conditions such as current news about the favourite club, other bloggers do not depend on situational or seasonal news from which the off-season is difficult to fill with content. It results in a less publication frequency, whereas during the season articles are published on a daily basis. Thus, fan bloggers need to find alternative news during the off-seasons and general GFBs do not depend on a club, but therefore the aforementioned challenges exist. However, general GFBs can release their articles at every day in a week, whereas fan bloggers depend in some way from the shape of the football season. It means that it influences the fan bloggers' lives because they might think twice to take a family vacation during the

seasons and to be liable to not produce new content, for instance. However, with an access to internet from almost every place of the world, GFBs have the chance to get to information everywhere and at every time, and might not be limited in their private time planning as it could be assumed.

Although the central criterion for the selection of information and topic is the personal interest, bloggers develop a thematic sensitivity for their readers' interests and their potential feedback to certain topics. Therefore, besides the thematic diversity, FB readers have an indirect impact on the topic selection and content production because GFBs consider their readers' interests when starting investigations and selecting topics.

6.3.5 Discussion: The selection of topics

In comparison to professional media, GFBs do not analytically define a target group, but bloggers select topics in which they and most of their readers are interested. GFBs know what their readership wants to read as a result of analytical observations of reader comments that enhance their experience with reference to what works well content-related in the community and what topics result potentially in out-of-control-discussions. In the sport blogosphere it is usual to engage with topics in which bloggers are personally interested and which are a natural reflection of the nature of media they consume at the same time (McCarthy, 2014; Schall et al., 2011). The thematic specialisation of a football blog can be interpreted as a reflection and dissatisfaction of presented or non-available information in mainstream media or scientific journals. Parallels to the topic selection can be found in other fan blogs showing that dedicated topics during on-season periods are previews of matches, athlete's performances or competition reports, while in the off-season more general news are posted such as transfer news or other football news (McCarthy, 2012). It shows that sport-oriented and club-related bloggers depend on seasonal phases forcing them to write about transfer news or other topics about which they usually would not write on-season (e.g. football players' vacation destinations). Fan bloggers might be interested in these topics, though, but they do also depend on special circumstances such as the off-season in which they

search for interesting topics to maintain their regular and continuous process of content production and distribution like professional sport journalists must do for publishers (Horky et al., 2009). This aspect limits the football blogger's independence because he must fulfil two sorts of demands: his own one to produce and distribute content continuously and to satisfy their readers' expectation of receiving new articles in the usual daily or weekly rhythm.

6.4. The collection of information

Information is the indispensable corpus of a blog post on which the content bases when news are covered. As mentioned before, a football-journalistic working background affects content-process routines such as the collection of information. When information is gathered, bloggers follow determined rules and use various sources which they include in their published articles and additional posts on their social media channels. Moreover, both synergies and differences can be found when GFBs gather information especially in multiple-authored blogs. Sharing a blog can impact the topic selection, the information gathering and the roles one blogger represents in a multiple-authored blog. Thus, GFBs' role allocations cannot be limited to one function because they fulfil several roles in the blogosphere: opinion-makers, supplier of information, supporter of discussions, observer of interactions and situational developments of clubs or of football-related topics which in some kind can differ within the same blog or between the blogs when bloggers participate in several blogs. It can be summarised that *"(...) in [blog name] sometimes we are opinion-makers. (...) [Our roles:] defining topics that provoke; that maybe were not looked at before or at least not from this perspective (...); and to ignite discussions. (...) [In my blog] I like to be a commentator with an own opinion. I also like just to be an observer when I write match coverage. (...) But I would never attribute to myself a fixed role or the function as an opinion-maker. [In the common blog] it is different. There we want to set topics and emotive subjects"* (Interviewee 2).

6.4.1 Rules and criteria for information gathering

Bloggers do not implement any sort of information in their texts. The information is professionally selected and GFBs pay close attention to the correctness of information that is published in the blog either by them or by readers because “(...) *even when I have heard it before, though, I have to prove it as a journalist. Unless it is proved, then I can leave it in the blog, otherwise I must delete it*” (Interviewee 5). Truthfulness and the verification of information are two essential points that are considered by every blogger because it is important “(...) *that a source is really proved (...) [and] what the source wants to express so that a possible reply is presented*” (Interviewee 2), for instance, “*I always read what others have written in order to have a basis whether I failed to notice something obvious (...)*” (Interviewee 1) in order to control, verify and confirm the included information before it is officially published in the blog. When information is collected, bloggers attend carefully to cite the source in a correct way and to respect the German press code because “(...) *the most important rule in sport journalism is to cite in a correct way. [Holding on the press code] should do everyone*” (Interviewee 5).

6.4.2 Gathering information from online sources

There is a variety of sources that are steered for the information collection because “*what you can read in the internet every day, what you can read in newspapers, what you can hear in the subway. [Everything could be relevant for the content production], and what [of all these collected information] you finally edit, does everyone [decides by his own] depending on how relevant he thinks it is*” (Interviewee 7). However, internet sources are mainly including smart television channels (e.g. DAZN), YouTube or the website of regional television channels in order to “*watch again the one or other match scene when it is available. When I miss something, I read some statistics up [on specific online portals] such as whoscored.com*” (Interviewee 1). Moreover, online research articles are also considered in order “*to find interview partners*” (Interviewee 1) when writing about topics such as women’s football and culture-related football topics. There is a link between the usage of sources and the way of text production with the blogger’s

profession because bloggers with a journalistic or scientific background consider the press code (i.e. publishing and journalistic principles defined as a norm by the German Press Council) when collecting, citing and linking to information. Thus, the profession has an impact on the content and articles are written *“in the same way how seminar papers are written at the university. [That is,] looking in the internet for information whether there are books; which persons can be found to tell you more about [the topic]”* (Interviewee 1).

However, blogs about opponent teams are additionally used as information sources because it shows an alternative perspective towards some topics. Alternative perspectives, opinions or general football-related information can be found in social media, though, which are important sources, for example, in cases when bloggers do not find other internet sources because they try to *“(...) link to a discussion either on Facebook or on Twitter so that it is obvious that there is a discussion occurring and on which source [the blogger] refers to”* (Interviewee 2). Thus, *“social media or rather the blogosphere and traditional media represent a great part of the story. And then there is Instagram which many football players use actively. That is a source which is checked regularly for colour content [such as the posting of the players’ dogs] which is quite nice to liven up the format because in the layout it is technically a certain welcome change”* (Interviewee 3). Especially Twitter seems to be a useful online source when information is gathered because hashtags are used which link to sources and information. Thus, *“under a hashtag you can find everything (...), the flyer of the fan stand in the stadium as a photo post, or a text that could be interesting for us, or someone took a picture of something interesting. You can find it all very easily on Twitter”* (Interviewee 6).

6.4.3 Gathering information from offline sources

Blogger do not totally depend on online sources even when it is mainly considered for the information collection. Some bloggers fall back on offline sources such as books or the personal network to people who are trustworthy to give verified information (inter

alia club officials or players). The personal relationship and in some cases friendship with involved people can also lead to inner conflicts when it comes to the decision whether information is published because the release of certain information could expose the internal informant: “(...) [D]ue to political reasons, for example when I have an information that I already knew weeks or months before, I cannot write about it because I would divulge an informant” (Interviewee 5). Although there are touchpoints with club officials or spokesmen who provide information which are then used for posts and even when the blogger has the opportunity to ask detailed questions, there is no close relationship with players or rather some bloggers do not call football players directly via telephone to get exclusive information because they see no added value in it. Moreover, “football clubs do not want that journalists or bloggers call players personally on the phone” (Interviewee 6) and this influences the gathering and consideration of information (sources). As football players release personal information in their social media profiles, bloggers additionally do not need to talk to them personally about content that is already published in their own channels.

6.4.4 Summary: The collection of information

Bloggers consider rules and establish criteria for the information collection. They do not use any sort of information and pay close attention to its correctness which must be confirmed by at least two independent sources. Thus, truthfulness and verification of information are two essential points. The verification is guaranteed by citing sources correctly in the text and by respecting the press code, i.e. verifying information before using it in articles.

GFBs consider different types of information sources: online and offline. They prefer online sources (i.e. news websites, video platforms (e.g. YouTube), social media channels (e.g. Twitter) or other blogs) because it is easier to get at information and online news can be included in a text through links. These sources are used to inform readers about interviews, line-ups before matches, alternative perspectives or further information about certain topics. While bloggers offer a summarised informative content,

original sources can give readers a more contextual background. Especially Twitter seems to be a favourite social medium because GFBs follow journalists on Twitter where they publish current information in their accounts. It enables bloggers to get to new information, interact with them directly and expand their network.

However, bloggers also fall back on offline sources (i.e. television, radio, books, participations in press conferences, or people from the personal network). While the offline-collection is easier to hold a certain distance to the information source, personal relationships with insiders makes it more difficult to use information because it develops inner conflicts when insider information or exposure and criticism to persons of the personal network are published in articles.

As a conclusion, information is collected both online in news websites and in social media, or offline in television, print, radio or in conversations with informants. Independently from the source it is important that information is true and verified by comparing information from at least two different sources so that the bloggers' trustworthiness is guaranteed, and that readers estimate their reputation as positive and as being a correct and true information source. Moreover, athletes themselves publish information in their social media channels which bloggers incorporate in their blog articles. This represents a significant change in journalism as a shift in the balance of information power has swung more in favour of athletes who now release content themselves. This raises questions about the mediated nature of the media and how information sources are controlled by players, their agents and sponsors, and how they are manipulated before journalists even try to put their own spin on things. It also raises questions about the future of journalism when ordinary individuals have direct access to athletes via their social media feeds.

6.4.5 Discussion: The collection of information

The collection of information and distribution is connected to the function a blogger attributes to himself in the blogging community. Therefore, GFBs are either

gatewatchers and information guide dogs (i.e. citizen journalists) or gatekeepers (Bruns, 2009). As in the past, journalists gathered information from investigations and interviews and presented it in their articles, the internet enhanced the ways of gathering information enabling bloggers to search for news on various websites and social media without the necessity of interviewing people who are reported on in blogs. In other words, GFBs observe news as gatewatchers and do not publish new stories but already available important information; they allocate these pieces of information from mainstream media and rely on their users to make their own conclusions from these articles by linking to original information sources. GFBs who act as gatekeepers control the content that reaches the public and their readership by distributing self-investigated news or information from other sources but without naming or linking to it (Bruns, 2010). GFBs commonly link to original sources showing that the availability of media might determine how content and knowledge is produced in the football blogosphere (McCarthy, 2012). Thus, mainstream media play an essential role for information gathering because as a narrow passage of news it has an impact on considered and presented information in blog posts. However, one football blogger does never link to external sources even when he gets some information from these news platforms for keeping readers on his website. This behaviour let him hold the position as a gatekeeper from which users get exclusive content. It is potentially connected to the fact that this blogger maintains his blog website as his main job. In this way of acting he guarantees that readers remain on his website which again is important for the placement of advertisement because it guarantees his exclusivity for the fan community. Schultz & Sheffer (2010) and Horky et al. (2017) confirm that also sport journalists use Facebook and Twitter for establishing collaborations and for networking generally in sports journalism beside the use of these channels as news sources and distribution channels of information. Thus, social media are essential in many ways for GFBs and sport journalists, and it can be classified as important factor for the information collection and the personal network.

As a consequence, GFBs mainly gather information on mainstream news online media and also journalists' social media channels. Although some GFBs have the chance to

interview athletes and club officials, their general and predominantly way of information gathering shows that they depend on mainstream media coverages (McCarthy, 2012), whereas the way of presenting and implementing these investigated information in the blog are influenced by the blogging concepts and the role of a blogger in his community either as a gatewatcher or gatekeeper (Bruns, 2009).

6.5 Content production and distribution

After the decision on the topic selection and way of information collection, GFBs start the writing and content production process. Content-process routines are established ways of how a blog post is written and which steps are considered during this process. The process is divided in several parts: It consists the tools used during the content production and goes on to the external impacts on the content production and post writing, the shape of text matter, writing style, final editorial work before posts are published, and finally the cross-media usage when publishing blog posts.

6.5.1 Impacts on the working process and produced content

The production of blog content needs a well-organised working process when blog posts are written so that it can be published within a certain time, in particular in multiple-authored blogs in which *“(...) the person who writes, is responsible for everything: (...) he writes the headline, he writes the texts, he selects the pictures by himself, selects [everything] for Facebook and Twitter and posts it”* (Interviewee 6). Moreover, a production plan helps to be a good blog with several bloggers. Thus, *“(...) we have an arrangement that one day before the match I usually write because with the other blog I write, the focus is on the tactical access to the match”* (Interviewee 3).

Football is an emotional theme and it is predestined for subjective and emotional content. Therefore, it has the potential to end in harsh expressions why fan bloggers do not write and publish texts immediately after the match. Hence, *“it is better that I do not write it at the same day, especially not after the club has lost because I then become too harsh*

(...). *I got into the habit of doing it on Sunday evening when the last match [of the league] is played. (...) But in principal it is important that the match of [club name] is over*” (Interviewee 4). Due to emotional factors and the time-related availability to produce the content, bloggers follow individual fixed concepts when content is published such as Mondays for blog posts and Thursdays for podcast sessions (Interviewee 4) or “[we] have targeted time of days that mainly follow the daily rhythm” (Interviewee 7). Consequently, the quantity of posts and content publications depends on the aimed format and the amount of news on which bloggers can fall back upon. It means that “*in the meantime, from the format of the blog it has developed to something that takes up the topics which do exist. (...) It means we have implemented a rhythm in which we [represent] our according interests in a weekly rhythm that is purported by the rhythm of matches (...)*” (Interviewee 3). Besides the available information and news, the time to calm down after matches, the format of the blog (e.g. long-read, report, interview transcription etc.) or the content production plan in multiple-authored blogs and the experience in writing have an impact on how long it takes to produce a blog post which again influences the time of publication because some bloggers need 30-45 minutes (Interviewee 4). Others, in contrary to this, cannot give a specified time because they do not wait on an online source in which they can read new information (Interviewee 5). Consequently, some bloggers use their personal network and have a good relationship to the protagonists of the club because “*(...) when I write a text, (...) there is information which is in my mind. Thus, I cannot speak from the collection of information. [But] when I have an interview [with a player], it is something different. Then it takes regularly thirty minutes to one hour. I listen to the recorded tape and write it down (...)*” (Interviewee 5). Therefore, planning is not the only decision factor whether the content is produced and published within a short time after interesting information and news arise. There is also an emotional aspect that has to be considered by bloggers because content with disrespectful formulations and expressions can end in negative discussions which bloggers do not want to provoke. However, negative discussions are not the result from the football blogger’s writing style, it is primarily the sum of a bad team performance. Consequently, bloggers’

observations and the content analysis show that most comments are made when a team plays bad.

6.5.2 Text formats in German football blogs

The majority of interviewees have a journalistic background that impacts the written format or rather shape of text matter. The former content analysis shows that text formats in German FBs are akin to the objective journalistic way of covering news, whereas the difference in blogs is that blog posts are a combination of coverages (i.e. news or matches) and the GFBs' opinions or columns. Thus, *“that is our opinion, we must combine coverage and opinion in one format, [and] that is an unusual format for German media”* (Interviewee 6). Thus, FB posts are combining subjective and objective formulated text forms because *“we have an opinion and it is relatively obvious in every post because I change into the first-person-perspective so that the people can see that it is me, it is what I think, which I write in that way [for further clarifications]”* (Interviewee 6), but *“the majority of texts (...) are match coverages or also travel experiences [to the stadium] (...)”* (Interviewee 1). However, a covered topic and the availability of information are decisive factors on the way information is presented. Therefore, the coverage of information comes into a self-dynamic process in which experimental ways of content production become popular for blog followers and finally the format is an important pillar in the blog. For instance, *“some time or other [name of a blogger] started to publish a press roundup on Facebook and then in the blog. Before that, it was just presented from time to time, and since then the format is released as a commented press roundup every day in the morning”* (Interviewee 3). For further explanations he adds, *“[w]hen you classify it under the spectrum of journalistic genres, it is always something between a comment and a pure editorial coverage. It is always a comment perspective. It started as commented press coverage. It means that on the one hand, it is presented what already exists in the discussion sphere, but you represent a position and say which further topics are relevant. That is a certain position of commenting so that an own perspective or opinion is always a part of it. And this is the added value in most cases which you can provide [as a blogger]”* (Interviewee 3). In

addition, text formats depend on how bloggers estimate the role of their blog and which purposes they are following with it which in turn influences the way of covering information, text formats and text lengths in which a higher amount of information can be presented in more detail because *“we formulated a mission statement that we see ourselves as long-read platform. (...) Long texts that do not try to focus on click baiting, but that picks up the real topics and open thematic areas which the mainstream does not provide, eventually. It means that it cannot be written down in 200 or 300 words, but 1,500 words at least”* (Interviewee 2).

6.5.3 The writing style

GFB have individual writing styles which have been developed in the meantime during the personal blog maintenance through the years. The text format and selected topics decide whether a blog post is written from a subjective, objective or a combined perspective. For example, reports of experiences in the stadium during the match combined with a simultaneous match coverage suit well for a subjective-objective perspective in which colloquial language is combined with subject-specific formulations. Bloggers consider certain formulation rules when they cover topics related to their favourite club. That is, when writing many negative articles with criticism about the club, some GFBs think to jeopardise the good relationship to a club’s spokesman who enable bloggers the access to exclusive information or to players for interviews (i.e. the withdrawal of the press accreditation). Therefore, *“the code behind that: (...) everything is in favour [of the club]. (...) And the etiquette is: make remarks about people and in the broadest sense you tease them a little bit, but it should never degenerate into dismissals of sections of the population”* (Interviewee 4). GFBs of single-authored football blogs do not have to find compromises with others and decide on their own on text structure, writing style and author perspective. In comparison, bloggers in multiple-authored blogs try to find ways and compromises regarding small adaptations in the writing style to provide a recognition factor for readers. Therefore, kinds of style guides are developed so *“that it is more uniform, specific things about we write, (...) for*

example, the way I write a match result: [name of a blogger] likes to write it in the English way, one hyphen one, (...) I write it in the German way, one colon one” (Interviewee 6). Bloggers in this blog, furthermore, do not use abbreviation of names in a text in order to give readers a better access to the context and topic of a content, especially for those who are new in this blog. The reasons why bloggers consider a certain journalistic writing style is owed by former experiences because *“I used to work (...) journalistically before, started university where you must write a lot and in so far I had a formal system, and in other points I learned it auto-didactically. Especially, what has to do with the technical stuff about football, I was inspired content-related by other bloggers that already existed”* (Interviewee 3).

The qualitative content analyses points to the importance of interactions in the GFBS, but bloggers explained not to formulate intentionally the posts in a way to generate interactions. Consequently, *“I do not write the texts in order to provoke discussions. Maybe I did it once or twice, but then I wanted it by myself because I needed stories from the fans’ perspectives, and where I actively asked for interactions or feedbacks. However, usually in my opinion texts are a medium for my personal expression and to reach some people, of course”* (Interviewee 1).

The different bloggers who were interviewed *“try to use an understandable language about what is wanted to be said: (...) no nested and complicated sentences, but as easy and precise as possible”* (Interviewee 2). Moreover, famous sport authors such as *“Jonathan Wilson who publishes The Blizzard [or] in German language (...) Christoph Dieckmann who influences a person in the way of thinking”* (Interviewee 2) or *“[the German football-tactics blog] Spielverlagerung and some journalists and bloggers from the Anglo-Saxon countries”* (Interviewee 3) have an impact as role models on the blogger’s writing style. However, GFBS’ purpose is to write in an authentic way with the focus on emotionality (Interviewee 1) because readers need to recognise a continuous and personal writing style which is important during the process of identification with the blog by connecting texts with the author. In addition, there is a small line between emotional content which has the potential to change the atmosphere

within the blog to a populist one that again could negatively influence the general atmosphere in the fan community of certain football clubs. Related to this, bloggers write from an objective perspective without losing the subjective opinion. *“Thus, I would say that the majority [of the content] is journalistic even when it transports a lot of opinion and at the same time it contains much entertainment”* (Interviewee 6).

There are more external factors impacting the writing style and the formulation types. The personal network and the media range of the blog lead to more responsibility in the case of opinion expression. These two factors limit in some kind how thoughts are expressed because the longer a blogger produces content in terms of time, the more experienced he gets. Thus, with the experience with reader reactions to certain formulations, bloggers start to know their readership better. That is the reason why the personal opinion must be formulated in a way that nobody feels offended, but that in the same situation he can clearly express the opinion. For example, in the past they used to express their opinion without reflecting how people will think about it *“(...) because I had no relation with the people, but now it is different. And the people develop their own opinion about what we think [and how we express it]”* (Interviewee 6).

6.5.4 Editorial working steps

Although GFBs are entitled to work as professional and serious as possible. In order to reach the purpose of doing a good work and offering interesting content, bloggers implement editorial work in the process of content publication. Proof-reading in this context does not mean that whether informative or spelling mistakes can be prevented. Here, bloggers correct their content (e.g. spelling mistakes) and post-adapt after articles have been published, when readers point to mistakes or seldom when the blogger himself is not satisfied with some formulations. That is, *“(...) mistakes can happen. In this case, corrections are made or I have to probe a little deeper even when the text is already published. (...) When I find something that could have been formulated better, I re-formulate it”* (Interviewee 5). While some bloggers re-write some sentences without giving any advice to the change, others are transparent in their correction process:

“When you notice that inquiries are made, i.e. that something is unclear, it is corrected immediately (...), and that is done in a way that it can be retraced. Of course, there is a paragraph included and contains something like ‘update to the topic above, firstly, secondly, thirdly, has been revealed that’ [...]. There is the opportunity in the blog to delete [visually] the written type in a way that you can see where a paragraph is deleted so that your correction is transparent” (Interviewee 7).

Reviewing texts is an essential part in the process of writing and editing. Some multiple-authored blogs follow the concept that editorial work does not implement the point of changing formulations in order to guarantee individual freedom in textual production and expression. Bloggers in multiple-authored blogs react in a mobile application (i.e. a hidden and privately saved interaction room exclusively for the bloggers themselves) because *“we are giving feedback to each other which is relatively unvarnished (...), but [it is given] among ourselves in the chat” (Interviewee 6).* This is a different approach of co-creation that may go some way to dealing with the professional ethic within GFBs who may internalise it as a result of their professional journalistic experience or as an attitude that can be observed throughout German FBs. However, one multiple-authored blog has a special blog concept in which authors outside the blog can submit texts. These bloggers become to editors in this situation which is *“(...) another type of work because we receive many texts of other authors and there is the curating on focus (...)” (Interviewee 1).*

A final step in editorial work is the analytical evaluation of media data because *“we observe how many posts were read and how much interaction takes place because reaching people with the content is part of the main idea, and the higher the media range the higher is the relevance in certain respects” (Interviewee 3).* Moreover, media planning with reference to click rates are also analysed by few GFBs in order to find out reversals which means *“(...) from where do the people come to your website, and where do they click in your texts. (...) But it is not like that we develop a huge strategy out of this data” (Interviewee 6).* Thus, analysing media data is a part of editing because it helps bloggers to understand and get to know their readership. This information can help

to formulate phrases or implement information, links or pictures and videos in which readers probably are most interested. In general, it helps bloggers to enhance the content of the blog.

6.5.5 Cross-media distribution of content

GFBS have further social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram on which content is shared because it enhances the blog visibility as links from other social media bring readers to the blog website. There are technical differences between these social media why the various channels have different roles and are used differently in terms of content presentation and interaction behaviour. Therefore, the blog and social media play different roles in the context of the GFBS which means that *“I use my blog as archive, as my home where I can find everything, and when someone wants, he goes to it. And then I give a notice at places [inter alia other social media] in which I know that people are there who are interested in my stuff”* (Interviewee 7). Thus, the additional social media usage helps to reach more people but the platforms are differently important because *“when an article is done, it is published, and it is shared on Twitter and Facebook (...). I try to share it as much as possible with a lot of tags etc. so that a real effect is developed in order to reach as many people as possible with the devices I got (...)”* (Interviewee 2).

Instagram seems to be less important because it is more a visual social medium in which mainly photos or videos are posted instead of texts. Bloggers use it as an additional service for their readers, but without expecting more interaction. Interviewee 5 describes the role of Instagram as *“now and then I upload a photo and that it is. However, I cannot rely on that it will end in more interactivity on my website. It is just a service, more or less”* (Interviewee 5).

Twitter is a multi-functional social media which is used as publication channel and information source by following journalists, newspapers, other bloggers or other opinion-makers. Twitter *“is definitely my big medium in which I spend a lot of time, and*

in which I take out a lot of information (...). (...) I am not a fan of Facebook. I do have an account, but I only have it in order to take care of my different sites” (Interviewee 1). GFBs favour Twitter because the interaction atmosphere is more adequate and respectful than on Facebook because “(...) I am often scared how people argue there [on Facebook]. I have never experienced this kind of argumentation on Twitter in the football context. I do not know if it is correct to say it, but I think that there are more decent people on Twitter than on Facebook” (Interviewee 1).

6.5.6 Summary: Content production and distribution

Some GFBs participate in two different blogs: single-authored and multiple-authored blog. The participation in two blogs shows similarities and differences in working processes and topic selection, whereby the difference in working processes is mainly observed in editorial processes because the blog colleagues incorporate an editor function which again is an additional control layer in terms of content and language assistant. Thus, the processes of content production and publication are complex and can be separated in five different phases that again are part of the content-process routines with an own order:

- External impacts on the content production,
- Text formats,
- Writing style,
- Editorial work before the content release, and the
- Usage of cross-media for the content production and its publication.

The majority of the interviewees write about their favourite football club and visit matches in the stadium where they use mobile devices to make notes or to produce content on-the-scene in cases of live ticker. Therefore, free and paid applications are used which are useful for the common work with other bloggers in multiple-authored blogs. Moreover, ideas, thoughts and comments are exchanged between the content

producers. Thus, these applications are used multi-functionally as an archive of information, communication and interaction platform. Above all, a multiple-authored blog must be well-organised when various authors produce content why plans for the content production help to maintain the blog better without losing the control of the allocation of responsibilities and tasks. These plans, consequently, arrange the authors for the next articles and it determines responsibilities for content production by considering the information collection, writing, publication, and community management.

There are further aspects that influence the content production. Football is an emotional sport why bloggers prefer to calm down and relax before starting with the content production. That is, bloggers let pass time after a match in order to self-protect oneself and to formulate phrases less emotionally before it ends in harsh and unthinkingly criticism. Besides emotional factors, the time availability and the fixed production concept (i.e. the publication of articles at determined days and times) are further points that influence the content production because as the majority of GFBs produce content in their leisure-time, the production time is limited because of private circumstances.

Text formats in FBs are akin to the objective journalistic way of covering news. The main difference is that bloggers combine types of coverages (i.e. the objective coverage of matches and general topics with a subjective opinion) which are forbidden in journalism exceptional in columns. Moreover, the selected topics and the text format decide on whether a blog is written from a subjective, objective or combined perspective. Thereby, GFBs consider certain rules and codes for the topic coverage. While a blogger of a single-authored blog must not find compromises in content production with other bloggers, authors in multiple-authored blogs establish style guides in which elementary points (e.g. presenting the final results with a colon or hyphen) are determined to provide a recognition factor that is typical for the writing style of the blog.

While maintaining the blog through the years, GFBs developed an individual writing style which differs between bloggers. It becomes better the more experienced a blogger is. Impact factors are the readers' feedback to the adaption to the writing style or

personal role models. GFBs claim that a recognizable writing style is important for intensifying the relationship with readers because they connect a certain style with certain authors and develop a kind of identification with the blog and the blogger. A further interesting aspect is that the content and the writing style have developed as a result of the interaction between writer and reader because some GFBs changed the way of expressing their opinion. The reason is that in comparison to the beginning of their blogging career where no relation existed with users, GFBs developed a relationship with their readers in the meantime which again influence bloggers because readers develop their own opinion about the GFBs' opinion and expression style. However, as almost all GFBs have a journalistic background and work experiences, blog postings are akin to newspapers articles. Moreover, GFBs try to be authentic and emotional in their writing style, but without using too colloquial or justiciable language so that the blog is still estimated as a serious and credible content.

After a text is written, bloggers implement steps of control and modification by proof-reading a text on spelling mistakes or mistaken formulations and by re-controlling a correct linking to original sources. However, bloggers do not hesitate to adapt the content at a later time point after a release. In multiple-authored blogs reviewing or editing texts is an essential part in the content production process. Hereby, text passages or sentences are not formulated new so that a blogger's individual freedom in textual expression is always guaranteed. When a text is finalised and edited, bloggers aim to reach as much people as possible. Therefore, further social media accounts are activated to share the content and to inform followers about new released content. It shows that social media enhances the media range because it enhances the blog visibility by linking from social media accounts to the blog website (i.e. the original content source). The majority of GFBs have a Twitter and Facebook account. Twitter is estimated as more important because of its multi-functionality and it is the preferred publication platform for journalists to follow other content producers (i.e. journalists, newspapers, other bloggers or other kind of influencers and opinion-makers) who, in addition, seem to be more present in number on Twitter than on Facebook. Moreover, GFBs estimate Twitter

as a platform on which people interact more adequately and respectfully with each other than on Facebook.

In a final step, bloggers evaluate analytically media data to understand better their readership. This information is used in several manners, e.g. it helps to formulate phrases or implement information, links or pictures and videos in which bloggers know that their readers are probably most interested because they clicked more often on a certain link or spend most time to watch or read it. As a consequence, the analytical evaluation of media data of the blog or social media accounts generally helps bloggers to enhance the blog content.

6.5.7 Discussion: Content production and distribution

GFBS show that there is no need for a publishing house that provides a professional web site, quite the reverse they show that every citizen can construct and write a blog. For the content production bloggers need a computer, internet connection and the ability of presenting news in an interesting way (Lasica, 2003).

GFBS implement individual working processes that are akin to those of professional football journalists. Generally, working processes in the GFBS and in journalism can be divided into gathering (Step 1), processing (Step 2) and distributing news and content (Step 3) (Karlsson, 2011). The first step refers to the act whereby bloggers investigate, receive and collect information for their blog posts. During the processing phase the raw information is placed under individual demands and preferences (i.e. sometimes basing on the journalistic experience) using personally established procedures and routines in which information is transformed to qualitative readable content. Contextualised does it mean that although these processes are not static, there are parallels to Karlsson's (2011) two phases of journalistic acting who describes it as backstage and frontstage areas: Collecting information and writing an article are performed in the backstage area, while the distribution of the product is obviously presented in the frontstage by uploading it on the blogging platform and sharing it in social media where users consume it. It appears that the division of these stages, however, cannot be made strictly because sometimes bloggers gather information in the frontstage when users link to it in their comments and

bloggers incorporate it in an article after it has been published (i.e. as a posterior process of editing). Thus, content-process routines in the GFBS are reflective (especially when a situation for the content production changes) and in a constant state of development and refinement. Consequently, content production and distribution are not as static as Karlsson (2011) describes it because bloggers are influenced by the feedback that they get from peers (other bloggers, journalists or club officials and average readers).

While a FB is a social medium, GFBs use further social media such as Twitter and Facebook as well as other sport bloggers to share content and interact with followers (Allen & Reese, 2016). Allen & Reese (2016, p. 61) point out that “social media will continue to play an important role in the blogosphere helping to either add a multimedia flavour through video or audio or to add another communication channel, like twitter (...), into the mix to draw blog traffic and interest”. Social media are inserted in various ways during the work processes and it is not solely a platform on which bloggers connect with others or generate information. It is used by GFBs and sport journalists with the consideration of several purposes: Horky et al. (2017) found out that sport journalists exactly as GFBs consider social media for their work in many ways that deliver benefits. These are the (self-)marketing for product placement or the presentation of the blog and oneself; the setting of an audience which again enhances the blogger’s prominence, the topic distribution when rumours or scandals are published by users; the investigation of information and making information subject of discussion; the improvement of the status or relevance because social media are a kind of promotion or media marketing in the sense of enhancing the media offer and it develops a certain kind of closeness, intimacy and exclusivity; the exchange with other media producers and the collegiality in terms of networking helps to exchange information, opinion and further topics. Thus, using social media in various ways helps bloggers and sport journalists to check facts (Horky et al., 2017).

As mentioned before, some investigated blogs are multiple-authored blogs which means that several bloggers participate in one blog independently from the place they live. These collaborations are the results of technological innovations enabling fans in niche

areas to adapt new technology to their creative, strategic, and social needs as it is done predominantly by fan bloggers (Jenkins, 2003 in McCarthy, 2014). In these football blogging constructs editing is a regular feature, but bloggers do not rewrite the colleagues' sentences, but they correct spelling mistakes. Editing whole phrases and giving them a different writing style that do not fit the original blogger's style would destroy the sense of community and free voice for a blogger within a multiple-authored blog (Lasica, 2003). Thus, editing in relation to spelling corrections is a useful way to enhance the blog quality without causing trouble in the blogging team.

Moreover, while the majority of American Internet sport bloggers (Kian et al., 2011) had no experiences in professional writing or student journalism, all GFBs are experienced in journalism, student journalism or scientific journalism. As the experience plays an important role in structuring and formulating texts, additional parallels to the estimation of the GFBs' own writing style can be found from findings of McCarthy (2014) when asking fan bloggers about the quality of blogging who describes it as a combination of up-to-date content, originality, strong opinion, humoristic and good writing. The GFBs' writing styles, indeed, differ in terms of tone and style to those of professional journalists because fan bloggers have the textual liberty to connect objective reporting with subjective opinion why a different style of reportage to established mainstream media is provided (Schall et al., 2011). Furthermore, GFBs claim that a writing style must be authentic and recognizable to tie readers to the content and with which readers can identify. At this point a further difference to journalists can be made: bloggers have the freedom to write in an individual way they personally like without having the pressure of adapting it to the guideline of the publishing house (i.e. the house style). The personal writing style is an important distinctive feature for bloggers, whereas within newspapers the journalists' writing styles resemble more between colleagues (Schall et al., 2011). Furthermore, in blogs entertainment and satirical texts dominate especially when it is referred with football (Horky et al., 2017). Hence, the social media agenda setting in FBs seems to focus on topics such as rumours and speculations. Moreover, bloggers are not limited to an objective reporting because it is their personal decision how to present news and information. Thus, while sport

bloggers use social media (predominantly Twitter and Facebook) for research and distribution of information, professional sport journalists preferably use social media for the topic distribution of own articles and for the improvement of the editorial network (Horky et al., 2017).

McCarthy (2012) point out that sport bloggers emulate and usurp established sport journalists, but GFBs do not presume to replace any sort of established football journalism and mainstream media. Instead, they offer an additional platform with detailed information or not sufficiently discussed and covered news from mainstream media. Therefore, blogs act as tools of validation by verifying information and complementing it (Fischer, 2006).

Sport bloggers from foreign countries and GFBs utilise multi-media features in various manners: Post titles, comment functions, the embedding of illustrative videos and photos from external websites or social media) (McCarthy, 2012). Because of the journalistic background, hereby, bloggers know that headlines are important. It holds readers on their blog or brings them to it from other social media. Thus, headlines of blog posts resemble the headlines of professional online articles by using it as an appeal and index to the content so that readers can build a first association with it (McCarthy, 2012). Furthermore, contrary to the statement that bloggers in general do not consider editorial processes before content distribution (Fischer, 2006), GFBs implement editorial steps and double-check collected information.

As a conclusion, there are three descriptive impact factors that associate with working processes of the first generation of online journalists and which also can be related to GFBs: a technology-driven, audience-oriented and service-minded content production (Deuze & Paulussen, 2002). It is technology-driven because bloggers are not limited to a newsroom and can be everywhere at any time to collect information and cover news for their blog. GFBs are service-minded because they collect information from different sources and provide it summarised to their readers with the additional service of linking to original sources where they furtherly have the chance to find more information and to make their own conclusions. Last but not least, interaction is important for bloggers in

many ways. It means that GFBs are audience-oriented in terms of perceiving the importance of interaction between blog participants on their interaction platforms including other social media channels.

6.6. Interaction in football blogs

Although texts are produced in the same manner as it can be found in journalism, the difference between journalism and blogosphere can be seen especially in one certain action: The interaction. Bloggers interact with recipients and offer them a platform to discuss and interact with other recipients. There are different ways how people can interact with each other: commenting a post in the blog or other social media channels, commenting other comments and discuss with other blog participants, sharing the content on private social media accounts, or giving likes (e.g. thumbs up, thumbs down) to the blog post or comments. Interaction is diverse and the interviewees decided to activate the comment feature to offer readers the opportunity to give a feedback to the content or comments. The reasons for the implementation in the blog, the involvement and the mechanisms of commenting, the bloggers' estimation of their readership, the interaction rooms such as the blog or other platforms, the interaction activity, the quality of interactions (including the blog atmosphere) and the relationships between blog participants will be explained in the following sub-chapters until the chapter is closed with the added values of blogging and interacting.

6.6.1 Reasons for an activated comment feature

It depends on several factors whether bloggers allow interactions in their blog. When blogging first started, the blog software in web 1.0 did not offer a comment feature. GFBs, therefore, did not think about allowing comments. After the technical enabling of implementing comment features, the confidence in the technology and the own opinion gained and bloggers started then to offer comments in their blogs especially for one reason: enabling readers the right to express their opinion which through the years

developed in a blog community of like-minded people with a common share of interest. GFBs estimate the activation as a natural process in the blogosphere by offering a communicative exchange platform because *“I never thought about it. (...) You are growing into it and you read other blogs as well, and from my viewpoint it was never under discussion to close the comment feature”* (Interviewee 1), and *“comments are comments, and the people should express themselves when they have something to say”* (Interviewee 2) because GFBs have also the same right to do it.

The open access to the comment feature and the readers' comments are an enrichment and lead to a process of self-criticism in which GFBs reflect their content and the way of writing a post or formulating their opinion. Interaction works as feedback mechanism and it helps bloggers to know how readers think about their content or themselves. Besides being a media producer, bloggers are community managers who have the power to steer the comments in a particular direction and to influence the blog atmosphere: Maintaining a positive quality of interaction by intervening in moments when discussions seem to get out of control. Consequently, the GFBs have an impact on the blog atmosphere why it is important that there is *“the open community management and being open for criticism. That is, not to be offended when you are criticised, but to look if I did it well, if the readers could understand it or did I really consider everything that has to be considered [to understand the context]. In my opinion, readers' comments are absolutely enriching”* (Interviewee 6). Furthermore, it helps *“(...) to verify or falsify something because you can gather more opinions. You must moderate it (...), but it is good when you want to have different perspectives to a topic”* (Interviewee 7).

As a consequence, allowing comments in the blog means that a blogger must be available for questions and that discussions must be moderated which takes much time for these parts. There is a need of the bloggers' permanent attention that comments do not infringe the blog netiquette. For all these reasons disadvantages and advantages of enabling interactions are summarised as a consequence that *“you must handle [the discussions], and you cannot leave the people alone (...). They want their questions to be answered, and they want to interact with others. (...) Otherwise, I would miss the*

moderation because (...) I think it is really important that there is a corrective (...). In my opinion it is predominantly positive when you finally manage the discussion culture in a way that you cope with it” (Interviewee 7).

6.6.2 Mechanisms of comment feature and blogger involvement

Bloggers perceive themselves as community managers whose prime task is not the involvement in discussions, but deleting comments or referring to the blog netiquette. Thus, bloggers have the chance to influence the atmosphere during discussions with an activated comment feature. There are various processes that inter alia depend on the blogging software before a comment is published. For instance, there are several comment activation processes: When a reader writes a comment or a message is sent to the blogger with the advice that it has to be activated before it is visible for the public on the blog website (Interviewee 2). These processes simplify to sort out a comment because *“when the comment is out of line, it is deleted, of course”* (Interviewee 2). However, there are different rules and even when a comment is published, the website administrator can delete comments at every time point, while readers have a limited time windows to delete or rewrite own comments: *“[W]hen you are registered [as an user], the comment goes online immediately. You then have four minutes to edit it, and after it you cannot change it anymore. (...) [But] the admin can edit it all the time (...)”* (Interviewee 4). The main purpose of an activated comment feature is to enable readers the freedom of expressing their thoughts in their individual way. However, sometimes bloggers do not have another opportunity than intervening *“(...) when there is xenophobic philosophy or when the atmosphere surges up that people insult each other (...)”* (Interviewee 4). Thus, when political, sexual or untrue information are expanded, bloggers intervene because it is justiciable, but often these kinds of problems are resolved because users pay attention to the netiquette and appeal when commenters disrespect it. This behaviour may indicate the creation of a community sense with shared ethics, morals and ideas of respectful relationships with one another especially of those recipients using the blog on a regular basis.

6.6.3 Representation of blog users

There is a wide range of age in the FB readership. Bloggers cannot give detailed regarding the average age of their readership because *“with reference to the readers, it is always a felt empirical method. (...) In the blog you can just guess which educational background and which age they have (...). [In my articles], there are too many plays on words and allusions that someone cannot understand it when they have [have a certain level of education]. But it does not mean that it is a blog for well-educated persons”* (Interviewee 4). Although they do not track personified media data about their readers, bloggers think to know which social, educational and political background their readers have. However, *“I do not know whether I have a concrete image [of my readers]. Of course, there is the basic relation to the football club. And I assume that the blog community shares certain kinds of values, e.g. an anti-fascist position”* (Interviewee 3). Even when no empirical data is gathered, bloggers suggest that club officials or co-workers read the blog such as from *“the media and communication department [of the football club] who scans it, [who] hears [the podcast] (...). And people like the manager, for example, are also interested in it (...). Or I send him texts because we are regularly in contact. But I think that football players spend their time with other things and it is not the first thing they do when they come home (...)”* (Interviewee 4). The majority of the investigated blogs have an own podcast. Consequently, the followership cannot be limited to readers because there are users who prefer to listen to what a podcaster talks about. One interviewee gives an explicit example of what type of person prefers reading a blog or hearing a podcast which is often related to private circumstances. That is, *“(…) a friend delivers packages (...). In her situation it is great when podcasts last three hours because she has the time and is grateful that she can compile her radio program (...). Or people who commute a lot, who sit in the train for hours, they are happy about podcasts (...). (...) And then there are people who live near their office (...). They cannot listen to something neither at work nor on the way. They do not have to do something with podcasts because it does not fit into their way of life, for them it is not the right*

format. But what they are doing is reading the morning news. In fact, it partly overlaps” (Interviewee 7).

6.6.4 Interaction rooms in the football blogosphere

Football blogs are not limited to the blogging platform because bloggers use additional social media as publication tool and for further interactions with recipients and followers. The importance of the blog as a main interaction platform varies between the blogs because *“the [exchange on Twitter] is higher than in the blog. (...) People say that blogs and comments are dead. There is not happening very much in terms of commenting”* (Interviewee 1), while other bloggers say that *“it is more often commented [in the blog]. On Facebook it is shared or liked, or it is forwarded to the groups (...)”* (Interviewee 4).

GFBs comment that their readers seem to stay primarily on social media from which they come to the blogs because links to a current article are shared. The blog is the last platform to which readers come, but they follow bloggers on various social media channels. Social media are relevant platforms for sharing links and as an information and multiplication source for the blog. Thus, *“(...) as a logical consequence, photos make a great part of Instagram stories, and there comes little feedback in terms of content. While on Facebook and Twitter links to the blog articles are posted daily (...). A huge number of readers click on the blog because they are guided to it from social media”* (Interviewee 3). The level of importance may differ between Twitter and Facebook: Facebook is important for a high media reach, while Twitter is preferably used for discussions with peers.

Besides the blog and social media, there are other interaction rooms: Bloggers meet their followers casually or in arranged meetings in the stadium which are planned either in request in blog posts, podcast or in WhatsApp groups in which bloggers associate with followers who support the blog financially. These supporters receive a special gimmick by an earlier reception of texts than other readers or by being asked for interesting topics

used as the generation of input for new articles (Interviewee 1). Thus, opening a new interaction room in WhatsApp or other social media platforms creates a new (reader) group with further additional benefits within the overall reader group because bloggers enable financial supporters to develop a different type of relationship with the blogger than readers who do not get in touch with them outside the blog platform.

The interaction room cannot be limited or defined as one room. It underlies a dynamic process of inventions. Through the invention of social media, new technical and technological opportunities enable new forms of interaction, e.g. writing, liking or linking in comments to other interaction rooms such as forums or social media. Thus, there is a continuous process of interaction and its rooms in which the importance of the environment can decline after a while even though Ultras of clubs still prefer to discuss in forums because “(...) *ten years ago (...) the forum [of the club] was important when it was usual to comment in forums, but it is declining since then, and Facebook as well. (...) There are still these controversial topics (...), but they are not accessible online for everyone. (...) For instance, organised fans discuss internally in closed forums (...) [, and] they never comment in public (...)*” (Interviewee 6). That various interaction rooms reflect the expansion of interaction opportunities and blogs cannot be limited to the blogging platform. Football blogging means that bloggers must maintain the blog and further micro-blog channels at the same time, and they must concentrate on several platforms because social media have changed the way how followers interact with others.

6.6.5 The interaction activity

On the one hand (fan) bloggers’ interaction activity depends on the quality of discussion, on comments that advice to informative and spelling mistakes or whether they are directly asked by commenters. On the other hand the situation of the football club has also an impact on bloggers’ interaction activity because especially in bad situations readers use the blog or its social media accounts as the main online interaction rooms to complain about the situation and less about a posting. Thus, “*it is interesting when it*

apparently does not work well in terms of the performance of the club; people have a higher demand on exchanging opinions” (Interviewee 1). However, bloggers who do not write about topics to which readers cannot relate well (e.g. football politics or history), the interaction activity is low because more likely experts may be the target group that can discuss better about it. That is, *“[an article about football history] is commented and discussed fewer than, for example, my colleagues articles about ultras, media and their relationship. It is more breaking news and everybody has an opinion about it, while in my texts you need to dive deep into the topic”* (Interviewee 2).

Therefore, the situations of the club or the topical selection have an impact on the interaction activity, but either way GFBs comment few times. They already express their opinion in articles and want to enable readers to interact and communicate their opinion in the blog. It results in a low interaction activity of bloggers who mainly manage the community because *“(…) I comment rarely, but when I comment then it is with style and decency and with rating where certain things have to be relativised”* (Interviewee 4), or comments are made by bloggers to appreciate a reader’s advice to a mistake or important sources that is later included in the article (i.e. community management) because *“[I] just want to show that they accept the feedback, that it is a simple thanks, and then I link to the comment where the information was published so that these commenters receive a virtual applause and feel integrated [in the community]”* (Interviewee 6).

6.6.6 Added values of interactions

The previous results show that bloggers mainly want to offer a communication and interaction platform so that readers have an additional added value when they read the blog. However, GFBs also profit from the user comments (e.g. feedback from experts) because *“I am really interested in how they think about my writing style because I cannot estimate it. There comes feedback in terms of content which is helpful, and I thank them for it”* (Interviewee 2). Moreover, comments and feedback are a kind of motivational motor for bloggers, and *“it is inspiring. I like it (...) to learn from different*

aspects because (...) you can learn to recognise different perspectives (...)” (Interviewee 6). Besides that, comments show that readers esteem the blog and it confirms bloggers to continue writing because “[readers] play an important role for me in a way that I am thankful for every kind of feedback. (...) [That is,] everything that ‘pays’ into the whole thing, (...) it is less the content [of the comments] because everyone has the right to have an own opinion (...)” (Interviewee 4). Readers have an informative function because they provide further information about a topic and their feedback are a benefit for the blogger’s “(...) self-affirmation. It is the esteem which is behind that. It is the idea and stimulus to think new and to think about the things again” (Interviewee 4). GFBs, however, point out that the self-affirmation is not the catalyst for blogging.

6.6.7 Summary: Interaction in football blogs

GFB started with their blog for several reasons, but there is one common reason: The provision of communication and interaction platform for readers with a controlled community management. Interaction, consequently, plays a special role for GFBs. Their purpose is to provide information with a subjective impact, but to construct an interactive community. Further reasons for an incorporated comment feature (i.e. which activation depends on the blog software) are the importance of reader comments reflecting different perspectives towards a topic from which GFBs can learn. Thus, it is enrichment for the blog development and blog community. Moreover, it shows that FBs are subjectively interpreted by individuals who interact with the content and give meaning to the blog content. These individual meanings are important for GFBs’ personal development as a blogger and their content production. That is, FBs are co-created constructions which are the products of social interactions within its community. Bloggers use comments as a feedback mechanism to their work which further helps them to understand their readers better and to estimate what they could possibly think about future content. Besides this, interaction is a medium to verify and falsify released information. In the best case, bloggers receive more information which readers might

find on websites the blogger did not read through. However, there are also disadvantages and dangers because GFBs must permanently moderate comments or at least read it in order to intervene when it goes into a wrong direction or ends in an uncontrolled discussion with the potential of personal attacks. At the same time, this disadvantage can also be positive for bloggers who hereby have the chance to act as community managers and influence positively the atmosphere inside and outside the blog (i.e. within the fan base of a football club). It means that their prime task is not the involvement by deleting comments or by referring to the blog netiquette, but by managing the community in different and situation-depending ways. In this context, blog software offers various processes before comments are published such as automatic requests with activation links about its publication decide bloggers at the end. GFBs have the last decision-making power and delete provoking, sexual, untrue, political or justiciable comments. Readers still have the freedom to express their thoughts in an individual way, but blog administrators can delete comments that disrespect the blog netiquette.

The content and expression of comments might be related to the readers' educational and social background. GFBs do not personally know their entire readership except of few persons. Although they do not track personified data, bloggers think to know which social, educational and political background readers could possibly have. Bloggers assume their articles to contain plays on words and allusions that a not well-educated reader would not understand. Furthermore, bloggers know that club officials, spokesmen of a club and journalists read their blog to get insights into football topics off the field or insights into the atmosphere within a fan base (inter alia opinions, attitudes etc.). Thus, interactive FBs have a positive mediated radiation effect for journalists and football clubs who profit from the variety of perspectives and opinions in activated comment features.

Football blogs are not limited to written articles and expand their blog program with podcasts. Bloggers claim that there are differences between blog and podcast users which possibly have to do with the individual personal and professional background

because podcasts last longer time (e.g. 30 minutes and more) which are preferably listened by people who have time to listen it than people with few time who preferably may read articles.

Bloggers interact with users in different interaction rooms. A blogosphere is not limited to the blog website because other social media are additionally used for the content publication and interaction. A blog community is a continuous growing network of people because it is a community that starts in one way, but then fragments and develops as people get to know each other better. Depending on the blog the main interaction and communicative exchange occurs mainly in other social media accounts. Readers might stay primarily on social media and come from there to the blog after bloggers shared links in their social media accounts to current articles. Thus, readers follow bloggers either on one medium (e.g. the blog or a social media account) or on various (social) media (channels). However, interaction rooms are not limited to online environments because bloggers also meet their followers casually or arranged in the stadium. These organised meetings are planned either as requests in blog posts, in podcasts or in WhatsApp groups. Independently on the interaction room GFBs interact with few readers and are not as active as their readership to leaving the stage to their followers. They interact in situations in which the discussion seems to escalate or they become actively involved when readers address questions or advices directly to them.

While readers comment in different interaction rooms, the interaction activity varies and is connected to external factors. Especially during extraordinary phases in the league fan bloggers report on a higher demand on discussions in their blog to complain about it or celebrate it with other fans. On the contrary, club-unrelated GFBs experience a low interaction activity which might be the consequence of their focus on extraordinary and special football topics in which a little cycle of readers may be interested. Readers' comments are a motivational motor for bloggers and a catalyst for blogging because this kind of feedback tool is a benefit for the bloggers' self-affirmation and it has an informative function by delivering further perspectives and information.

As a consequence, interaction plays a central role in football blogging, and it occurs in different interaction rooms with a low interaction activity of bloggers and a higher involvement by readers whose comments deliver added values from the bloggers' viewpoints. Furthermore, the existence of various interaction rooms shows that blogs cannot be limited to the blog website. Thus, football blogging means that bloggers must maintain the blog and other micro-blog channels at the same time because social media have changed the way and opportunities of interactions.

6.6.8 Discussion: Interaction in football blogs

Interaction and interactivity is a great benefit of digital media because with the insertion of a comment section communication between readers and media producers are stimulated and a wide range of feedback possibilities are enabled (Beyers, 2004). GFBs value reader comments to give them the feeling that they have the blogger's full attention and their opinion are of importance. GFBs point out that returning attention is essential for building a close relationship and for giving readers the feeling of being heard. This opinion covers the findings of Gaudeul & Peroni (2010) who illustrate that bloggers who wish to gain an audience must concentrate on giving feedback to their readers' comments, otherwise readers turn away from the blog and the interaction activity declines within the blog community. Thus, bloggers and readers cannot be separated fully from each other in terms of content production because blogging is a social activity and with a certain point of limitation it is a collaborative process of co-creation in which readers and bloggers contribute their knowledge and opinion (Baumer et al., 2011). The football blogosphere is an open-communicative space in which bloggers and readers interact with each other. As many sports fans who become bloggers internalised the passionate nature to communicate their thoughts, it is a logical consequence for them to allow and encourage readers to comment (Allen & Reese, 2016). Thus, as the majority of GFBs work as print and online sport journalists they are used to the readers' involvement in discussions in comment features of news websites. Although personal attacks or disrespectful comments are disliked and removed in blogs,

GFBs think that readers should have the ability to comment which covers also the newspaper journalists` opinions (Nielsen, 2012).

As the readers` feedback is not solely an added value for bloggers, other users make also a profit from digital media. It enables users to analyse superficially the GFBs` working routines with reference to the information collection and content production. Thereby, the football blogosphere is a democratic and transparent space which generates knowledge that is constructively used by media producers themselves or their readership on the one hand, but which again enables the expression of the individual opinion in the comment feature and the encouragement of discussions in a community influencing important discourses in these fans or expert groups (Franz, 2005).

Although blogging is one-to-many communication in single-authored or a few-to-many communication in multiple-authored blogs, GFBs feel a sense of community in the football blogosphere. In other sport blogospheres bloggers are also socially motivated to share their knowledge and information with others and interact with other fans, experts or journalists as additional motivation why social interaction in sport blogging is a pleasurable aspect for bloggers (McCarthy, 2014). GFBs write about topics which interest them and blog users are like-minded persons who engage with the same themes and questions looking for information and discussions (Schall et al., 2011). Thus, GFBs are an important multiplier of news and opinion-makers in their blogging community. Moreover, links to other own social media channels and interactions play an important role for the blog prominence because the more comments are made and the more discussions occur in blogs the more intense is the relationship between bloggers and their community because discussions and comments (Schall et al., 2011). Thus, the interaction with readers or among them makes readers to multipliers of the blog content as well (Fischer, 2006).

Through the years of blogging, bloggers developed a sense for their readers` interests and realised that other content producers use their blog as information source. Blogs do also deliver added value for journalists and other bloggers (Fischer, 2006; Schall et al., 2011). These bloggers, journalists, experts and spokesmen of football clubs read fan

blogs because especially the comments represent the public opinion of a fan base why this peer group makes profit for their jobs as well. Price & Hall (2013) outlined that fans' reactions on micro-blogs are useful information for football clubs for further media purposes in order to build relationships with the fandom. Lasica (2003) claims that the building of a blog community leads to a changed dynamic of distributing content, i.e. information is first published and then filtered by the community, while in professional journalism information is filtered and then published. GFBs contradict this postulation by pointing out that information is double-checked first to verify information. However, interactions are important parts of the content process by co-creating content. Bloggers filter information and by linking to original sources readers are enabled to co-create blog content, judge the rules and principles how GFBs produce content. Involving readers into editorial processes, letting them provide meaningful and serious feedback or adding further information by inserting links into comments, bloggers increase loyalty, reputation and support of readers which incites readers to share the content with others (Bruns, 2010; Bruns, 2014; Lasica, 2003).

Against the assumption that blogrolls are an indicator of social motivation of bloggers to find each other and build an interconnected blogging community (McCarthy, 2012), only one interviewed football blogger incorporated the blogroll function. Hence, blogrolls cannot be used anymore as an indicator for social interaction between bloggers, and GFBs network virtually on Twitter (i.e. “*#tkdeutschland*”) or physically on events. Summarised, FBs are a network of ideas in which blog communities discuss, dissect and extend news created by mainstream media. Thus, Lasica (2003, p. 71) concludes that “[t]hese communities also produce participatory journalism, grassroots reporting, annotative reporting, commentary and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources and story ideas. The relationship is symbiotic”.

6.7 Relationships in the football blogosphere

GFBs and recipients build a relationship with each other by interacting in different interaction rooms (i.e. blog, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and personally in public). Recipients are important for GFBs with reference to the feedback reception or information and opinion exchange. Nevertheless, there is a variety of recipients to whom bloggers maintain a relationship, but who have different meanings and deliver different benefits from the bloggers' point of view: There are the "normal" reader who reads and in exceptions also comments, journalists and football club employees. In this chapter, the relationship to followers and the importance of network to media producers and club officials are explained which further give an insight into how GFBs estimate the status of their football blog in the German football media world.

6.7.1 The relationship between bloggers and followers

Bloggers build and maintain a relationship with readers in different ways. The relationships with readers who are no media producers or football club employees can be classified as superficial because there is no further relationship beyond the blog context (e.g. friendships or occupational relationships). In comparison to the total number of readers, few of them come from the bloggers' private network. However, GFBs estimate the relationship with readers who read it regularly as normal and good because *"(...) I am a fan as well. Accordingly, I am in contact with people with whom I go to the stadium, to the fan club in which I am organised. (...) It is a normal exchange which everybody has who does not write a blog, but with the difference that people recognise me as a blogger in the meantime. They know what I am doing and sometimes referring to it in conversations"* (Interviewee 1). However, readers are more or less passive and have a secondary function from the bloggers' viewpoint. It does not mean that the readership is uninteresting or unimportant because readers fulfil the role as multipliers of the content by sharing links in their social media accounts. Hence, *"at first, I think that the people a) read and b) like the content, and do not stop reading after*

the first paragraph, and that people (...) share it and forward it with a comment” (Interviewee 3).

As some bloggers finance their blog with crowdfunding, there is a formation of groups within the reader group. That is, bloggers maintain different relationships within the readership because they have a more intense exchange and relationship with readers who support the blog financially (i.e. private people and no institutions or companies) by offering them a gimmick in terms of a private “(...) *WhatsApp group (...) where some very interesting bloggers participate but only readers or rather [financial] supporters (...). (...) Ideas are thrown into it or the text review is linked or (...) podcast sessions etc. (...) There are also discussions (...)*” (Interviewee 2). Thus, there is an extraordinary relationship and the GFBS seems to be an exception blogosphere because bloggers support each other financially. It means that FBs are limited to their own thematic cosmos on the one hand, but there is also a holistic and informal consensus between GFBs that the support of each other helps to maintain the media world of football blogging.

The media offer of blogs changes and expand through the time due to factors such as the inclusion of further authors in the blog, the financial support which helps to write a well-researched article or the changed demand on media content (i.e. podcasts). The change of blog format has an impact on the relationship, in particular a regularity in publishing content is an important factor when bloggers purpose to build and to develop a followership because “*in fact, you get the [high number of readers] by a regularity which is the key to everything: Regularity and all the things we offer what the people like (...)*” (Interviewee 6). Regularity is promoted and developed with the help of subscriptions because it changes the status of the blog (or rather what bloggers think their readers do think about the status of the blog). Moreover, a fan community can be developed better when a blogger is well-known and accepted by fans and followers. Thus, it is a cycle of the enhancement of a blogger’s prominence and the number of blog followers which enhance the blog status at least in the regional football media world. Furthermore, the more intense a relationship between bloggers and followers is the

better is the readers' backing and support when bloggers are offended. For instance, *"I started an e-mail newsletter (...) [and] now more than 200 people have subscribed it, and they receive a mail when a new text or podcast is online. They also come when you arrange to meet at a certain place before the match (...). I like this kind of community (...). And the people take part in arguments when (...) ultra-fans hold a banner [in the stadium against us]; there were many reactions and also a lack of understanding against the banner (...)"* (Interviewee 6).

6.7.2 The importance of network to media producers and informants

Bloggers allocate a different importance to the network with other journalists or informants. The acceptance from journalists plays an important role for some bloggers who are not regularly in exchange with local journalists but who know each other. Social media support the expansion of network beyond the local area because *"in the local journalism subculture (...) I know the one or the other, and (...) in the meantime [we became] friends. In the national context I get to know people via Twitter. There is '#tkschland' throughout Germany: That is a national football-Twitter-meeting which takes place once a year, and there are many journalists whom I then get to know at this event"* (Interviewee 1).

Although the bloggers' prominence grows and local journalists or television channels invite them to interviews, fan bloggers advice that they are no representatives of the club fandom because football clubs have diverse fan groups which cannot be represented by one person (Interviewee 1). However, self-marketing and publicity are important to reach readers, enhance the number of followers and network with other football media producers. The network with the latter group is therefore important that bloggers receive scholarships, start collaborations with publishers or are invited to workshops for enhancing the blogging strategy (e.g. product placement) in order to enhance the media range. This kind of network *"is very important. It is what we notice at [name of the blog]. In the last year, we had the luck to win a scholarship (...) [, and] workshops were also offered [by the Journalist's Association]. We have learnt that we must promote*

much more our brand than we used to” (Interviewee 2). The network with people from the football media world results in the bloggers’ demand on enhancing the status of the blog in the media world by categorising it as a brand and not exclusively as a private blog. Thus, the requirements of the own blog can change which are potentially influenced by the association with professional journalists.

Moreover, associating a good relationship with the football club is important for the status of the blog and for the information collection. This is the reason why *“you have a good relationship with participants (...) [, i.e.] with athletes, and the club officials”* (Interviewee 5). However, the background, experience and work as a professional journalist is a great help for bloggers and the content production because the placement of current and well-researched content is related to an already existing network: *“[The spokesman and I] know each other since ten years, and as reporters we used to collaborate with each other even when we were not always satisfied with each other, perhaps, but today there is not such a competition”* (Interviewee 6). Although a good relationship exists and can help to receive exclusive information, bloggers point out that they do not feel under pressure with reference to their criticism with the club. They can be critical without jeopardising this privileged relationship, immediately. As a consequence, the network and good relationship with club officials or club employees are therefore more important than the relationship with readers in the sense of getting exclusive information because bloggers receive current and first-hand information from club employees. In some cases, bloggers are even listed as journalists and get an accreditation. While some commenters reproach GFBs for having a biased opinion and being influenced by the club, bloggers with a professional journalistic background estimate the close relationship as a usual aspect of the working process. They see it as a chance to receive answers by themselves and not to depend always on published information from newspapers. Thus, *“[an accreditation of the club] is an actual part of the normal journalistic work (...). In my opinion it is a normal work when you write about someone (...) that you try to write about them as concrete as possible, and to ask questions when you are not sure about it. And it is not just asking questions, but to get them answered somehow. That is why I think that the relationship with people about*

whom I write is important. Actually, this relationship is very helpful” (Interviewee 7). In order to point out that the network and contact to the club does not limit the blogger’s freedom of opinion expression, Interviewee 3 adds that “under no circumstances [we are less critical]. It is a collegial-journalistic relationship in many ways which does not differ from other media that reports on the club”.

6.7.3 The status of football blogs in the German football media world

The invention of internet and online media shows that the request for print media decreases which leads to the aspect *“whether blogs or regional newspapers will still exist in ten years, I do not know. When regional newspapers are dead, (...) bloggers can work as freelancers or the football clubs give journalists a job because [the communication employees of football clubs] cannot write, they can just do public relations. [When I would work for my favourite club], I could not proceed with the blog as I am doing now or rather write critically about my employer. (...) I think, new ways will be found”* (Interviewee 6). New ways or concepts are already included in FBs because since a few years podcasts are the new trend (Interviewee 6). Thus, the produced program implements blog posts and podcasts which have the same value within the blog (Interviewee 1). While articles are written by one author, podcasts are produced by including at least two persons who talk or rather philosophise about football topics. That is, blog posts are still and half-dynamic formats and the content is usually a fixed text, but it is exceptionally adapted when mistakes or false information is corrected or when new information is updated, *“whereas [our] podcast is more likely a relaxed, cosy but cool conversation with my colleagues (...) and from time to time with some guests. (...) When I started the podcast, I needed a co-pilot because a podcast with one person is boring. It is a program which lives by its own because it has an own little fan base which some people financially support (...)”* (Interviewee 1). However, technical innovations, laws (e.g. general data protection regulation) or the rise of competitors (i.e. journalists who will be fired due to the decrease demand on print journalism or the insolvency of publishers) will have an impact on the blogosphere, but

“(...) [there will be a stronger legal impact on the future of blogging]. (...) The media world will change a lot. There will be many great but unemployed journalists because [printed] newspapers will not exist anymore (...), and the journalists will develop new concepts by using meaningful the already existing tools (...). That is the reason why I expect a lot of movement. Technical changes will always have an impact on the blogosphere and the legislator will define what will not work anymore. Thus, [blogs] will face this tense atmosphere” (Interviewee 7).

As the demand on well-researched and professional content increases, the reputation and status of FBs has positively changed from an amateur platform on which private persons express their thoughts and opinion to a serious information source for every kind of follower in comparison to the beginning of football blogging. There is a higher acceptance by other media producers using blogs as an information source because *“I think that blogs became relevant for journalists in the meantime because (...) they get information which they usually will not get, [e.g.] when they want to take up the atmosphere in the fan scene or the atmosphere in general (...). I think that the grubby image which blogs had for a certain time and still have, in parts, becomes better. It is becoming fewer because there are a lot of good formats by now” (Interviewee 1).*

The reception of an official accreditation of the football club is one aspect that shows that the reputation and status of FBs has changed positively. While in the past, journalists smiled at bloggers when they asked them for any kind of contributions (e.g. articles) (Interviewee 2), nowadays bloggers stay with other journalists in the mixed zone to *“(...) interview players after the match for the podcast” (Interviewee 4).* Thus, it seems that football clubs estimate blogs as an important platform to maintain a good relationship to the fan base which again shows the important role and regional media range from the club’s viewpoint. The estimation of the importance for the fan base and being a competitive platform is confirmed because *“[the club] had a cup match against a team from the fourth league. One newspaper offered a livestream in collaboration with the main club sponsor (...), but I had more readers for my [written] live ticker than*

the [newspaper name] for its livestream. It says a lot [about the status of the blog within the fan community]” (Interviewee 5).

Bloggers who work as professional journalists and operate the blog in their leisure-time *“never liked this dichotomy [of football blogging and professional football journalism] (...) because very outstanding club blogs are made by media. (...) You will never mess with this kind of professionalism as a hobby blogger. With professionalism I mean ‘full-time’. (...) I think that both have its permission. (...) It completes each other totally and the transition is very fluently because there is this subjective picture, i.e. this one story, in the supposed objective journalism” (Interviewee 6).* Consequently, FBs are well-established formats of journalism which readers and journalists accept and that can be seen *“(…) as a special cosmos in the media world, but also as a well-established offer that people know and take seriously. (...) The subject area, the problems and the things struggle with are akin mentally at every place so that [the Twitter-blogger-meetings] is a community that knows, supports, and appreciates each other” (Interviewee 1).*

6.7.4 Summary: Relationships in the football blogosphere

GFBs build and maintain a relationship with readers in different ways. They assign another level of importance to media producers (i.e. journalists, spokesmen, club officials and players) than to the average reader who just consumes the blog and exceptionally writes comments. The relationship to these average readers can be classified as superficial because there are readers who solely read the blog or become commenters and an active part in the blog and the content production. Thus, the average blog reader is a recipient of information to whom bloggers have no contact in terms of an intense and private friendship or other kind of relationship beyond the blog context. However, bloggers estimate this relationship as a good and normal one which bonds on mutual respect. GFBs also liaise more intense with readers who support the blog financially because these supporters receive a special gimmick: For instance, invitations to private WhatsApp messenger groups to agree meetings or receive feedback to content before it is published.

While bloggers maintain a superficial relationship with readers which can differ between groups of readers, it seems that bloggers allocate a different importance to the network with other media producers or informants. Although bloggers do not chiefly focus on journalists' acceptance for their blogging activity, the relationship with them helps to enhance the status of a blog and a blogger as a journalist. Thus, an acceptance as a good and serious journalist can result in the reception of scholarships and invitations to workshops or in collaborations with publishers helping to enhance blog strategies, product placement or expanding the media range. Moreover, the close relationship with club informants is helpful for the reception of press accreditations which are used for interviews in the mixed zone to receive first-handed information. This could be a possible explanation why bloggers emphasised that the network to journalists and informants has a different importance than to the consuming readership. However, bloggers explain that they have a collegial-journalistic relationship in many ways with other bloggers, journalists and above all with spokesmen. The advantage and difference lays in the higher independence of bloggers because they do not need first-handed information to maintain their hobby, but journalists have to because it is their main job.

Generally, the status of a blog depends on various factors from which the relationship with readers and the football media network are very important. Changes in the content production as consequences of changes in blog formats and the relationship and network with different groups of blog users have an impact on the development of blogs and on the way how recipients may estimate the importance of blogs in the context of the football media world. Thereby, bloggers are not afraid of trying out and implementing new concepts such as (live) podcasts or live tickers (during matches) which in the end contains high potentials to enhance the blog status. However, bloggers report on an enhancement of their status in the football media world because while in the past journalists did not take them seriously as influencers or opinion-makers, nowadays journalists use blogs and exceptionally interview bloggers to be informed about the mood of a club fan base. The developments in the FBs' acceptance show that blogs have the potential to be a competitive medium to professional online sources and newspapers.

Their close relationship with readers result in added values that journalists do not have such as getting direct feedbacks of fan groups or the public opinion of readers about football-related side issues and investigative blogging referring to topics such as the influences of statesmen on football associations or doping of football players.

6.7.5 Discussion: Relationships in the football blogosphere

The interviews show that GFBs attach great importance to transparency during interactions because transparency bases on an openness and user participation which additionally reflects the interactive potential of digital media (Karlsson, 2011). Thus, transparency and interactivity affect each other positively which both enable insights into gathering and processing phases in FBs, thereby users have the opportunity to question information presented in articles. Furthermore, the transparency of blogging has an effect on news organisations because the overall transparency makes blogs and news organisations more accessible and interactive (Lasica, 2003).

GFBs build relationships with different recipient groups, but they pursue the acceptance of professional football journalism and football clubs. There are several reasons forcing them to network with professional football journalists and club spokesmen: A good relationship to these recipients improves the media range because these collaborations contain various added values and readers might estimate blogs as a qualitative platform because established mainstream media work together with these blogs. Moreover, bloggers receive breaking news from club spokesmen and experts or they get questions directly answered by athletes and participants they usually report on. However, GFBs do not estimate themselves as an essential role in the general field of sport journalism in comparison to American sport bloggers even when they are a regular feature of the local sports media (Kian et al., 2011). Therefore, filling a niche towards the output of mainstream media and being interesting for a small fan and expert group show that GFBs generally are no potential threat to mainstream media or to replace mainstream media (Dart, 2009). GFBs respect journalistic profession values and codes but insist on the subjective coverage (Lasica, 2003; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007; Schultz & Sheffer,

2010). Moreover, FBs introduce new perspectives and opinions into regional and national discourses on various football-related or club-related topics helping to build communities of interests through the collection of information and hyperlinks (Lasica, 2003). Football blogs, consequently, are a new form of open and co-created football citizenship journalism which might trouble journalists from professional news media.

6.8 Role allocations in German football blogs

The previous chapters show that GFBS' working processes are akin to those of professional football journalism because there is a relation between the bloggers' experiences in journalism and the way of content production. The findings show that the majority of the interviewed GFBS have a journalistic background and transfer the working process from journalism to the blogosphere. Journalists usually produce content in a professional environment which means working as full-time employee or freelancer for a publisher. While in multiple-authored blogs a type of editorial office is also implemented, but which has the function of a processor that gives an opinion-based feedback instead deciding whether a blog post is released in the form it exists, editorial offices review texts and release the text in the name of the newspaper with an advice to the author. One FB collaborates often with external authors why a similar editorial process as in newspapers is implemented. It is related to the the bloggers' journalistic background as well as to the purpose of maintaining the blog in full-time (Interviewee 2). The following sub-chapters will give an insight into the GFBS' estimation towards the different role allocation regarding their own role, their recipients' roles and the football blog role in the context of the GFBS and the German football media cosmos.

6.8.1 The blogger's perception of his role

GFBS fulfil several roles in the blogosphere and cannot limited to one function. The roles range from opinion-makers, suppliers of information, supporters of discussions, observers of interactions and situational developments in football which in some kind

can differ within the same blog or between the blogs when bloggers participate in several blogs. It can be summarised that “(...) *in [blog name] sometimes we are opinion-makers. (...) [Our roles:] defining topics that provoke; that maybe were not looked at before or at least not from this perspective (...); and to ignite discussions. (...) [In my blog] I like to be a commentator with an own opinion. I also like just to be an observer when I write match coverage. (...) But I would never attribute to myself a fixed role or the function as an opinion-maker. [In the common blog] it is different. There we want to set topics and emotive subjects*” (Interviewee 2).

Besides influencing the readership with the own content by provoking discussions or releasing the own opinion, fan bloggers are a connecting link as a mediator between fan groups and also between the club and fans. Thus, “(...) *I think we can be a bridge (...) between people who come as new fans to the club and people who are fans of the club since a long time. (...) And maybe we can communicate matters which the club would like to communicate but cannot because of several reasons, and in turn, we could communicate things that the club would prefer not to be communicated. (...) things that are uncomfortable, inappropriate behaviour or something else*” (Interviewee 6).

Fan bloggers have controversial opinions when they are asked to their role as a representative of club fandoms. They often do not estimate their role as representatives and opinion-makers, but they see themselves as a person with a media range that partly influences people’s opinions because “*I am an individual person who has an opinion and who represents it, and who tries to enlighten the different perspectives. But I would never claim to say that ‘I speak in the name of the fan base’, and I would not attribute this function to myself*” (Interviewee 1).

The role as a community manager is important to the effect when readers discuss controversially which has the potential to digress from a topic to a disrespectful debate (Interviewee 6). In this situation, bloggers do not just provoke discussions with published information; they also must observe that a certain line of provocation is not crossed. However, in general “(...) *when readers want to know what is happening out there in the world of discussions, they can read in our blog which topics were set on the*

agenda from all directions, (...) that is content-related aspects that were not covered in other media [which we] present by ourselves in an editorial manner” (Interviewee 3).

6.8.2 Traits of the recipients

Although bloggers implement editorial parts in their working processes, mistakes in terms of false information or spelling mistakes can occur. In this case, readers are additional curators and lecturers because *“sometimes there are advices to spelling mistakes, word doubling [etc.]. (...) It is referred to texts and sometimes discussions arise from things I have written before” (Interviewee 1).* Bloggers pay attention to the sources from which information is collected because it must be verified and come from serious, objective and trustworthy sources. However, it cannot always be guaranteed that selected information (e.g. sport websites with alternative statistics or other numbers in statistics) is the right one, and in this case readers fulfil the role as informants who deliver alternative data by linking it in their comments. For instance, *“(...) when it was about the distribution of television money, one reader found another breakdown than we did during our research in which it was emerged that the whole thing was distributed differently. The link was in the comment at this day. (...) we implemented it in the main text corpus as an update. From time to time, you can find in the comments or we receive messages (...) with an advice which we take up with pleasure” (Interviewee 3).*

6.8.3 The usage of football blogs

A football blog is not exclusively limited to the written articles that are released on the platform. In recent years, bloggers expanded their concept (e.g. live tickers during matches) and record podcast sessions which are published live (e.g. during matches) or after the record (e.g. as a lookback to what has happened during the last days) at fixed days and times of day within the week. However, the blog has a general function which is *“(...) making an offer so that people can exchange opinions because there is a need to exchange experiences with the fan base. All the other formats that exist such as fan*

forums etc. are dead and nothing is happening anymore in it. [The blog] lives” (Interviewee 4). As a consequence of being a platform to exchange perspectives, blogs are used as approaching platforms for discussions, but bloggers do not estimate the blog platform as the most important source because *“the people do not always discuss. I do not want to transfer a wrong impression that my stuff is the middle of the discussion world about the club. It just happens. [For instance,] when I take up a point or present something that perhaps the television audience has not seen as well, [i.e.] (...) mostly things that happen in the stadium (...). (...) The general aim is the enrichment of the fan community or the coverage around the club with a further fan perspective”* (Interviewee 1). It means that a blog is an additional service for fans *“to make links fast and precisely available where you can find relevant content. [For example,] that the original links for stories are included and that the content is not just rewritten. And that is an offer of fairness towards the provider of the content”* (Interviewee 3).

Fan bloggers think that the blog plays an important role for fans because it contains current information about the club. This assumption can be related exclusively to blogs that release articles in a daily cycle. Thus, followers who are interested in the club read and find the information primarily in the blog before the newspaper is read (Interviewee 4). In fact, FBs about certain clubs are a niche which limits the cycle of readers, but fan blogs are a counterpart in the press world because *“you do not have a real house magazine. (...) A gap arose, and I think that we fill this niche in parts. This would be different in a normal city with proper sports coverage because there we would have no chance”* (Interviewee 7). Therefore, the purpose of FBs fulfil the role of offering information with an alternative perspective about a football club or a football-related topic for a specific cycle of regional readers who are fans of the club, who are experts or rather interested in general topics related to football, who want to be informed and entertained at the same time, and of whom a small group wants to discuss about released topics in the blog or in other social media accounts.

6.8.4 Summary: Role allocations in German football blogs

Bloggers describe their role in different types as opinion-makers, suppliers of information, supporters of discussions and observers of interactions between recipients, situational developments of a favourite football club or football topics in general. These roles do not necessarily occur in every blog, but it has the potential and it can differ within the same blog and also between blogs when one blogger participates in several blogs. Thus, bloggers represent a variety of roles which make them being flexible in the way of producing content and interacting actively in discussions with commenters. Fan bloggers, moreover, see themselves as a mediator and as a connecting link between fan groups and the club. In parts, fan bloggers are representatives of fans, otherwise bloggers advice in interviews that they cannot represent the whole fan base because it is diverse and not every fan group can be represented by one person. However, bloggers have responsibilities and managing the blog or fan community is one of the most important responsibilities because it can influence the mood of the fan base or it can initiate (football-political) discussions in the football society (e.g. the prohibition of pyrotechnics in the stadium).

Bloggers describe the function of their readership differently and their statements give room for interpretations. It means that normal readers seem to play a passive and secondary role (e.g. as additional curators and lecturers of texts) in comparison to journalists or informants, but at the same time readers are essential for multiplying the blog content by sharing links in their private social media accounts which again improves the media range. Moreover, bloggers depend on information that they search for on various websites of established and trustworthy news sources, and readers can function as informants who provide alternative and additional information or statistical data which bloggers did not consider for several reasons.

The blog content is decisive when it comes to the point of involvement of bloggers and recipient groups. It is not limited to the written content because podcasts expand the blogging concept. Blog users nowadays cannot be restricted to a group of readers; it is also a group of listeners of which some people do both or just one thing. Thus, the blog

is a platform for offering information with the contemporaneous offer of communication and interaction. Even when predominantly fan blogs are websites that are used daily by recipients, bloggers claim that it is not the most important platform for their readers. Bloggers assume their blog as an additional qualitative service for fans and as an alternative or even additional counterpart in the press world. Otherwise, bloggers think that their blog can deliver important information which readers cannot find in such a compressed way as it is done in a blog post. This is the reason why fan bloggers release articles in a fixed cycle and establish a kind of home newspaper containing a tailored press roundup about the favourite football club.

Therefore, the purposes of every FB type are the fulfilment of the role of offering information with an alternative perspective about a football club or a football-related topic for a small cycle of readers who either are fans of the club, experts or just interested in what bloggers are writing about. It is a small cycle that wants to be informed and entertained at the same time and of whom again only a small group wants to discuss about released topics.

6.8.5 Discussion: Role allocations in German football blogs

GFBS are communicators and providers of information who depend on mainstream news media, but who receive, comment and complement news from it at the same time (Fischer, 2006; Galily & Tamir, 2012; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007). It shows that journalistic content is important in bloggers' process of content production because they firstly provide important and interesting information which bloggers can use later. These dependencies are diminishing because some GFBS receive accreditations and can interview football players in the mixed zone after matches. Their status is similar to journalists' ones because GFBS collect and provide exclusive information which are implemented in articles, live podcasts or live tickers whereby users have the option either to read news in online newspapers or in the football blog. While other research findings suggest that bloggers are amateur content producers without journalistic backgrounds (Bruns, 2010; Fischer, 2006; McCarthy, 2012), it seems that the GFBS is

an exception in this context. Football media producers must prove the quality of their information and focus on conversations in online media which have an impact on the journalist's content production. Consequently, journalists and bloggers are complementary to each other at least in a niche such as the football coverage (Fischer, 2006).

Principally, FBs are a type of one-to or few-to-many communication enabling bloggers to position themselves as a single voice or a multiple voice of a small fan and expert group. The personal profit and benefit from the interactions with readers can simply be estimated as experts in the knowledge space which is "a role that helps [to] accumulate cultural capital as a fan" (McCarthy, 2014, p. 76). Football blogs keep news alive by sharing, recirculating and assessing them with new perspectives, insights and new information. Football blogs confirm the added value factor for other news media what Lasica (2003) points out as benefits of blogging for established publishing houses: Blogging helps regional newspapers and sport websites to be more visible, more accessible, more answerable and more transparent because bloggers link to original sources. Thus, FBs help generally to enhance the readers' trust which again improves the relationship between readers and news media. The GFBS might be special because many GFBS have a professional-journalistic background which potentially increases the credibility, authority and visibility in the eyes of followers.

However, GFBS do not define a title for their role, but they categorise it to different ones which show a collective versatility: For instance, investigative reporter, opinion-maker, moderator, blogger and others. This classification mirrors those of Kian et al. (2011) reporting that internet sport bloggers do not give them one defined role but several ones depending on the situation. For instance, GFBS and US-American internet bloggers consider themselves as bloggers, authors, writers, statistical analysts, columnists, investigative reporters and CEOs (at least interviewee 5), but the line and embracement of the roles as bloggers and reporters is indistinguishable for quality internet journalists.

GFBS point out that their community must be managed in order to prevent verbal escalations between commenters with different opinions. Thus, blogging is a social

engagement which works within a particular social dynamic where a blogger has the communicative power about it (McCarthy, 2014). The responsibility of the communicative dynamic within the blog community lays in the way bloggers intervene and interact with readers, and how they control and moderate comments that empower bloggers to limit the way of expressing (i.e. a symbolical framing of football within the reader-blogger dynamic) (McCarthy, 2014).

There is a scientific data gap to reveal how sport bloggers estimate themselves in the social-power-relationships with their readers and with the object of their fandom (McCarthy, 2014). To this point, GFBs estimate themselves as fans that developed to a experienced person that covers the opinion of the majority of fans, but without representing the totality of all fans. Bloggers estimate themselves as being a provider of information about topics in which they and other readers might commonly be interested. Moreover, McCarthy (2014) explain the social-power-relationship as a relationship in which bloggers offer their readers the chance to interact with others and to express their opinions, but at the same time readers must respect the blog netiquette. In this relationship, GFBs are less involved in discussions because they already express their opinion in blog posts. In this kind of relationship bloggers and readers interact but readers depend on information and guidelines that are selected, provided and defined by bloggers. These findings show that GFBs have the power to control the blog dynamic and atmosphere, and to give it certain directions when bloggers either do not intervene or take action in time when interactions in whatever kind occur within the blog. However, GFBs are enabler of opinion freedom who Nielsen (2012) calls populist mobiliser. That is, by activating the comment feature, readers are allowed to post online comments and to publish opinions and perspectives which bloggers had not considered before in their articles, and that build rapport with readers (Nielsen, 2012).

As a conclusion, news and content production in environments such as blogs is community-based. Bloggers focus on the personal engagement, the imagination of production and involvement rather than the distribution of breaking news and consumption. For these reasons, interactive football blogging deserves the perception as

participatory and citizen journalism because blog readers are always invited to be co-producers of blog content (Lünenborg, 2005). Consequently, the bloggers' roles become that of a hybrid user-producer because the boundaries between these two roles cannot be redlined, are irrelevant and increasingly blurred (Bruns, 2008; McCarthy, 2012). However, GFBs are a sort of limited producers. It means that even when they use already existing information from mainstream media for their blog content production and users co-create the blog content with their comments, GFBs might concentrate more on distributing and providing professional content in terms of professional journalistic writing. Thus, normal readers play a secondary role in the process of content production and readers are just involved because bloggers never thought about excluding them as they think that it is everybody's right to express one's own opinion on free accessible platforms such as blogs. It is a part of democratic values offering people the chance to interact in constructive discussions with other users in a free speech context. However, the activated comment feature is mainly an extra-benefit for users because for the majority of GFBs it is more important to connect with other bloggers, experts, journalists, club officials and spokesmen. The reasons are that these expert groups provide added values for the blogger and his blog. As a consequence, interaction is important in the GFBS but the importance of interaction and interaction groups must be categorised differently. A potential reason why bloggers pursue to be accepted by journalists and other professional participants of the football media worlds is their advance and rise to a professional level that again results in a higher overall status in the German football media world.

Chapter 7: Findings of the blog reader survey

The descriptive survey method collects data quantitatively, but the results are contextualised to previous findings in order to verify it (Olsen, 2004). It is not the aim of the descriptive survey method in this thesis to generate hypotheses and verify or falsify it statistically rather than interpret the descriptive data with reference to the findings from the content analyses and expert interviews as these methods were focused on primarily (Olsen, 2004; Salaria, 2012; Zurmuehlen, 1981). In addition to the unexplored GFBS, method triangulation for completeness purposes of findings is of significance in studying the complex system of this specific sport blogosphere. Thus, as the research was started by employing qualitative methods to generate more rich data for a better understanding of the blog phenomenon which again base on the researcher's subjective and individual impacts during the analysis, the existence of objectivity is impossible and furtherly the dualism of object and subject causes the researcher to reject statistical analysis completely and to interpret qualitatively the collected data sample in this descriptive survey with the findings of previous qualitative research steps (Dudovski, 2018; Hussein, 2009; Olsen, 2004). Moreover, methodological issues regarding the credibility of the produced scientific knowledge about the GFBS by enhancing the internal consistency and generalizability are not expected because it is increased by the triangulation approach through combining qualitative with quantitative methods in the same study which results in a more comprehensive and deeper depiction of the GFBS under investigation (Hussein, 2009; Olsen, 2004; Williams, 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to show the results of the online conducted descriptive reader survey concentrating on the readers' media usage of FBs, their interaction behaviour in terms of comment activity and behaviour expectations during interactions, their estimation of their own role, the blogger's role and the function of the football blog in the context of the blogosphere and finally the readers' perception of the FB status in the German football media world. This analysis is then compared and contrasted to findings of the media production and media reception research from media studies,

journalism research and other topic fields. For a better structure the results of the descriptive reader survey are divided into the following sub-chapters:

- Demographics of the German football blog readership
- Football blog usage
- Interaction and comment behaviour
- Role allocations of GFBs, the blog itself and blog users
- The readers' perception of the football blog status in the German football media world.

7.1 Demographics of survey participants

From the 251 survey participants, 98.8 % (n = 248) are older and 1.2 % (n = 3) younger than 18 years. Almost the half of the participants (n = 114; ca. 45.4 %) are academics (i.e. Bachelor degree, postgraduate qualification and doctorate), and 93 participants (ca. 37.1 %) have a general higher education entrance qualification. The remaining 17.5 % have either a secondary modern school qualification (n = 8), a national vocational qualification (n = 31) or the last school-leaving qualification was not specified (n = 2) (Figure 13). The respondents of this survey are highly educated who cover demographic findings in other blog user studies (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Kim & Johnson, 2012; Meyers et al., 2015).

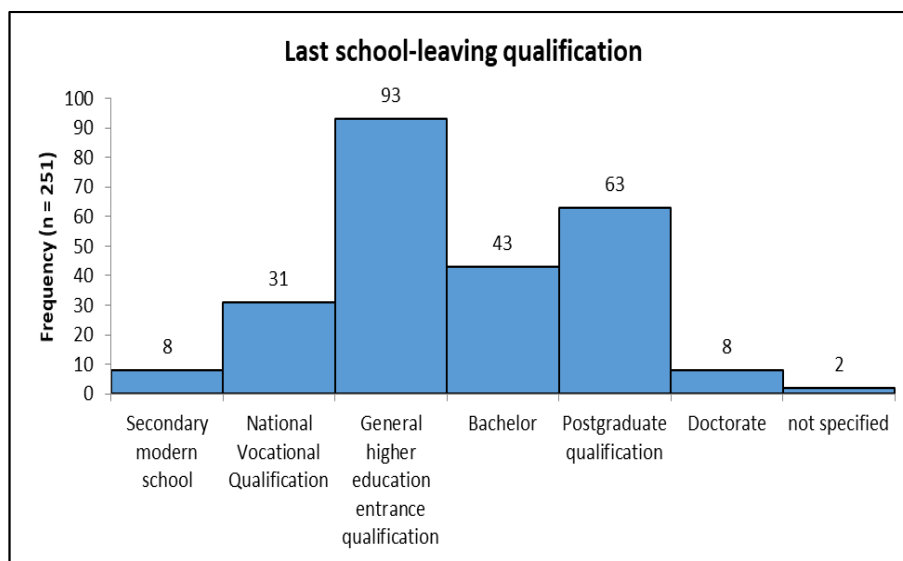


Figure 13. The football blog readers' last school-leaving qualification (mean 3.6 ± 1.3).

7.2 Football blog usage

The purpose of this sub-chapter is the description of the integration of FBs in the daily, weekly or monthly media consumption routine and its motives.

7.2.1 The consideration of football blogs into media reception routines

People from personal surroundings, online platforms and especially social media are important sources for the blog prominence because more than the half of German FB users first find out about it through social media ($n = 139$; 55.4 %) followed by sports websites ($n = 40$; 15.9 %) or friends ($n = 43$; 17.1 %) who suggest them (Figure 14). Blog readers are long-time readers which means that with 9.96 % ($n = 25$) a minority of the participants started to read FBs the maximum one year before the survey was conducted, while 91.4 % (i.e. 226 participants) use them for more than two years, and one-quarter even reads FBs since more than seven years ($n = 69$, i.e. 27.5 % of all survey participants). However, Figure 15 shows that blog users concentrate on a small number of blogs because more than two-third of them ($n = 151$; 70, 2 %) read 1-2 German FBs every week and 90.4 % ($n = 227$) of all 251 participants read these blogs

every day (n = 133; 53.0 %) or at least weekly (n = 94; 37.4 %). Therefore, it can be explained that FBs are an everyday media that is consumed very frequently.

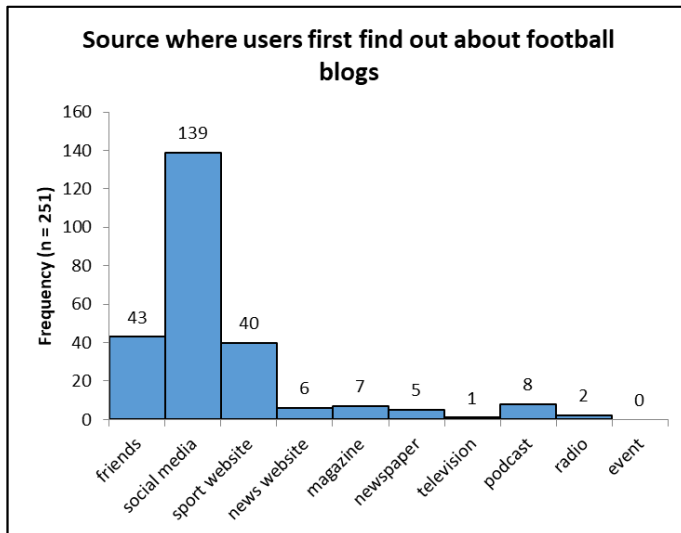


Figure 14. Source where users first find out about German football blogs.

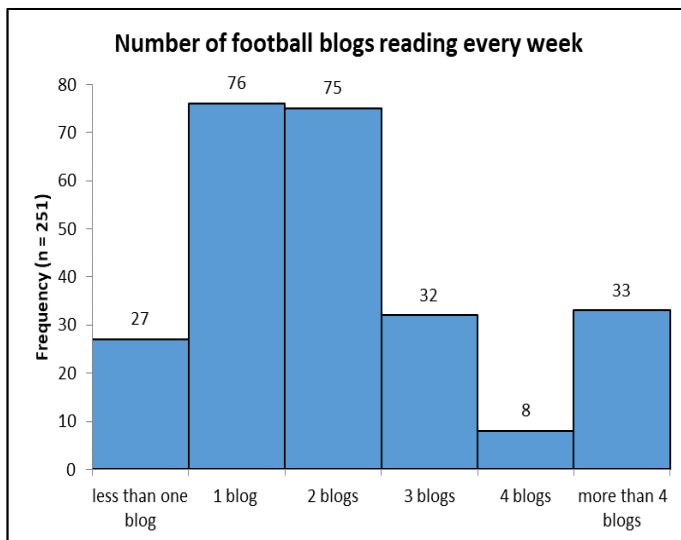


Figure 15. Number of German football blogs read weekly by users.

Although FBs are almost an everyday used medium, only 12 % (n = 30) of the readership supports them financially through donations, crowdfunding or visiting sponsored links. Moreover, to be a blog user does not necessarily mean to be a follower at the same time (i.e. users who follow certain bloggers or influencers with a “like” of a

social media account) because two-third of the survey participants (67.5 %) do not follow FBs neither in other social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter nor with a bookmark, while one-third (32.5 %) follow FBs mainly with a bookmark (n = 150; 59.8 %) and/or on Twitter (n = 108; 43.0 %), Facebook (n = 79; 31.5 %), Instagram (n = 52; 20.7 %) and/or YouTube (n = 35; 13.9 %) (Figure 16). A reason that Instagram and YouTube are less followed by users might be the result that the minority of GFBs has an Instagram or YouTube account. However, sharing articles is also a seldom considered process when consuming FBs because just a marginal number of 6.8 % of the readership shares football blog articles in their personal social media accounts or in e-mails with others, while 93.2 % do not share any football blog articles (Figure 17). More than half of the readership (n = 150; 59.8 %) agree to find out about new football blog entries in social media (Question 21). These results show that blog recipients do exceptionally follow blogs on social media, though, but they visit intentionally the blog website or one of the social media channels to get informed which again leaves the assumption that following in terms of liking a social media account does not consequently mean that a blog is not used. It might be quite the reverse that GFBs mainly concentrate on their Twitter account to share links and to interact with others which again may be the reason why most readers follow especially this social media account. However, micro-blog accounts are a side issue in the process of media production which bloggers use for sharing and spreading new blog posts. Therefore, blog users might not follow blogs, but visit directly the website at least with a bookmark.

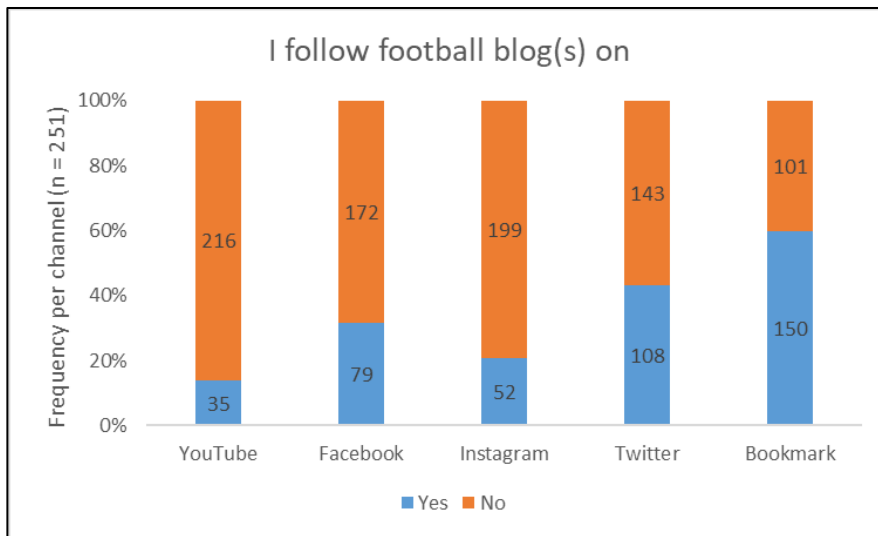


Figure 16. Platforms on which German football blogs are followed (multiple-answer-item).

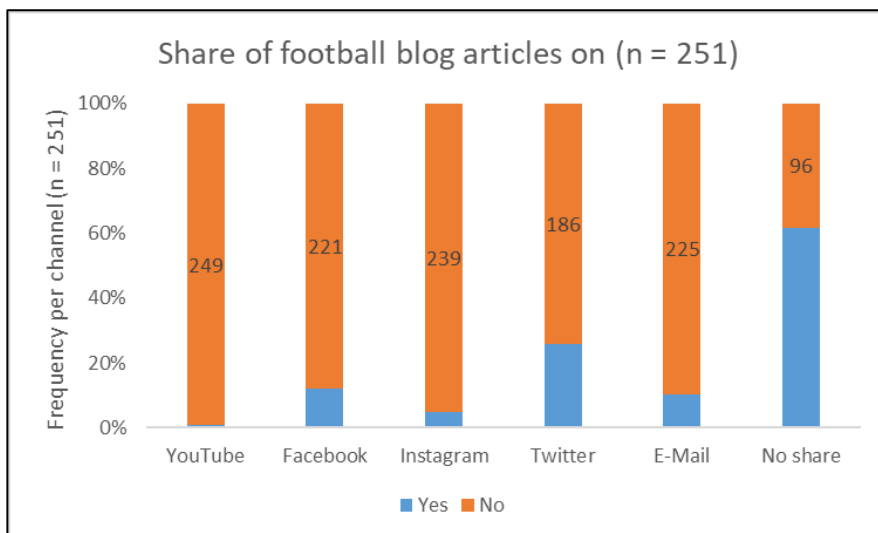


Figure 17. Platforms on which football blog articles are shared (multiple-answer-item).

7.2.2 Readers' motives for using German football blogs

Many GFBs have a journalistic-professional background which is helpful for writing articles in terms of the duration of text production and formulations of text passages. They attach value to headlines because it plays an important role not in the sense of click baiting as it can be observed in different online news websites, but it provides an insight on what an article is about and have therefore the potential to be a decision-

making factor whether a text is read. The German FB readership agrees with a minor tendency because 62.5 % (n = 157) declare headlines as a decisive factor for reading blog articles (Figure 18). Nevertheless, A football blogger’s writing style is no decisive and influencing reason for using a blog why the readership can be split into two groups: the one confirming (n = 118; 47.0 %) and the other disagreeing (n = 133; 53.0 %) that a blogger’s writing style is a reason to read blogs (Figure 19). While headlines and writing style are debatable variables within the readership with reference to blog usage and blog article reading, blog users mainly agree (n = 239; 95.2 %) that the topic of a blog article of prime importance of reading a blog (Question 24).

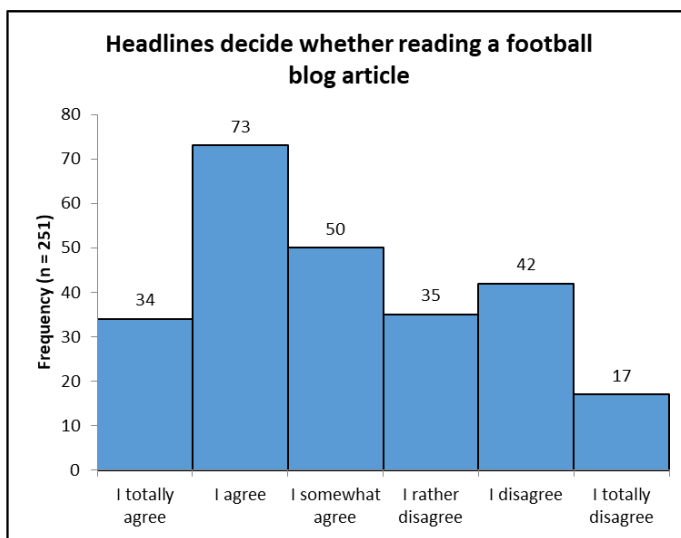


Figure 18. Headlines as a decision-maker for reading football blog articles (mean 3.1 ± 1.4).

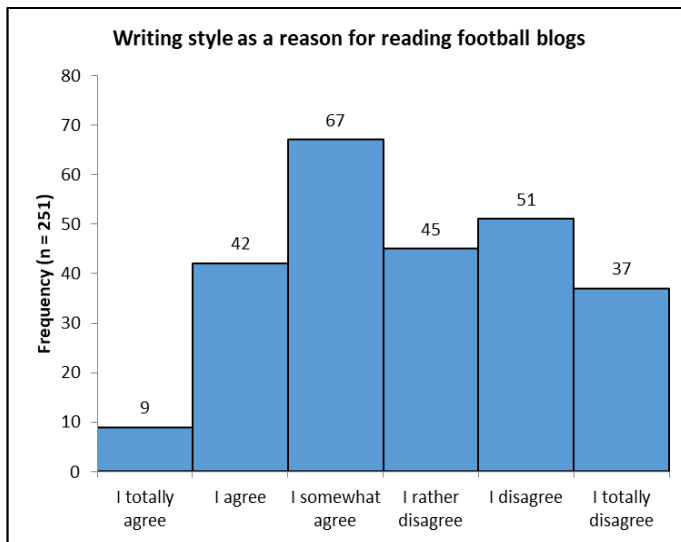


Figure 19. The football bloggers' writing style as a reason for the blog usage (mean 3.7 ± 1.4).

GFBs want to enable their readers to find information about topics from their individual football-related interest fields, and they enable users to interact with each other in order to discuss about the article content. Nevertheless, the readership is less interested in making comments why it is no substantial reason for FB reading ($n = 187$; 74.5 %) (Question 25), these interaction-supporting blogs are not even preferred by two-third of the readers ($n = 173$; 68.9 %) (Question 26). This result confirms the GFBs' observations that merely a small group of blog users comment frequently on football blog posts.

7.2.3 Summary: Football blog usage

The survey results show that the majority of recipients have an academic qualification and first get in touch with FBs through online media. Sport websites or social media have the strongest impact for readers' attention to find out about FBs. Social media is probably the most important transfer-tool that connects people with blogs. It is possibly the consequence that bloggers use different social media to spread information and refer to new blog entries which again makes it easier to reach new potential readers. Once a recipient started to read a blog, he becomes a loyal reader because almost all users read

one or two FBs in a daily or weekly frequency since more than two years and one-quarter even since more than seven years. FB content is free and no paywalls can be found in the GFBS, but even when it is considered in the usual media consumption process, only one-tenth supports them financially (e.g. donations, crowdfunding or visiting sponsored links).

Football blog readers, though, are not the type of users who follow their favourite blog on different social media nor do readers share links which contradict the GFBS` assumption that readers are multipliers of blog content. That is, only one-third and less than 10 % of the readers, respectively, follow blogs in further micro-blog platforms (i.e. Twitter and Facebook are the prime social media in this context) or share links in their individual social media accounts or via e-mail. Readers preferably bookmark the blog website as an URL (Uniform Resource Locator) in the internet browser. Although “following” with reference to GFB`s other social media accounts is no option for many FB readers, almost two-third of them find out about new blog entries through social media. Thus, blog recipients exceptionally follow blogs on social media, though, but they visit intentionally the blog website or one of the bloggers´ social media accounts to get informed about new entries.

Headlines of articles are an eye-catcher and decisive factor for blog reading for two-third of the readership because it induces people to find out more what the topic in the headline is about. A football blogger`s writing style is not a decisive factor for blog usage for 47 % of the readership. This reader group seems to be generally interested in what bloggers write about in the blog. This fact is additionally confirmed in the survey because almost all readers (95.2 %) agree that the topic selection of a blog is the decisive reason for reading a FB.

Especially GFBS who work as professional journalists enjoy the freedom of media production because there is no editorial staff deleting text passages or intervening in other ways. Thus, enabling comments is a natural factor which GFBS perceive as a typical act in the context of the blogosphere. Nevertheless, for three-quarters of the readers an activated comment feature is not a reason to read a blog, and furthermore

two-third of the readership does not even prefer a blog because of the comment opportunity. It reflects the football bloggers' observation that just a small group of blog consumers writes frequently comments who maybe read a certain FB because of its activated comment feature.

7.2.4 Discussion: Football blog usage

In comparison to other German blogs with diverse topic fields, FBs are consumed by far more regularly and as an everyday or weekly information medium. While previous studies point that blogs are an outsider medium (Schultz et al., 2017) used by few people in a regular frequency, almost all survey participants (i.e. 90.4 %) indicate a daily or weekly use of preferably one to two football blogs. These results give evidence about the importance of German FBs as an everyday media from the blog users' perspective. In addition, Meyers et al. (2015) find out that recipients use agriculture blogs on an almost daily basis. When relating this high frequency of blog usage to the reach of professional football news media, FBs are both an additional offer and above all a formidable opponent to other football news media (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). Johnsons & Kaye (2004, pp. 633) analysed blog users motives for reading blogs and concluded that recipients "view blogs as a new and better form of journalism than the mainstream media, one that is opinionated, analytical, independent, and personal". Moreover, blogs are used for informational purposes because blogs seek out the latest news, alternative viewpoints, and some scientist also use blogs for research purposes where readers can find scientific findings (Porter et al., 2009). FB users' motivation for accessing blogs, hence, are surveillance and guidance, convenience and information seeking as well as the combination of information and entertainment. These motivational approaches can also be found in other studies (Hoffjann & Haudkiewicz, 2018; Kim & Johnson, 2012; Meyers et al., 2015). Especially the providing of football-related topics in an entertained way are interesting and worthwhile approaches. In addition, a further assumption for the preferred FB consumption compared to other football news media is the absence of a paywall that enables users a free access to

information. German FBs give a summarised overview of the latest events of the day as an information filter and link to original sources. Thus, football media users must not pay for journalistic articles because GFBs act as pre-selectors of topics and information who already give an insight into the latest news of the day which they previously received from other football news media.

The topic selection of a FB is one of the main reasons why recipients read FBs. It can be concluded that GFBs and their readers cover the same personal interest field why readers consume the blogs. Contextualised to the GFBS, it is either the fandom of the same football club or the interest in football-related social and historical topics. Allen & Reese (2016) analysed the way sport blogs utilise social media and generate revenue for their blog. Hereby, blogs are online publications, designed to be read by recipients who are interested in the blogger's topics. Blogs share links of their own blog posts in other social media channels from which Twitter is mainly used by bloggers (Allen & Reese, 2016). These findings can also be found in the GFBS because bloggers share their links in other social media and use preferably Twitter, whereas German FB users instead seldom share blog posts in their individual social media accounts or do not follow blogs there. In cases it is done, Twitter is also the preferred social medium to share German FB content. On the basis of this research results, German FB users prefer to consume blogs and only a small group of them share links of blog posts. Thus, respondents may use blogs for the same reasons German internet editors do who estimate blogs as suitable platform for long discussions and investigation of background information (Neuberger, 2016).

7.3 Interaction and comment behaviour

This sub-chapter aims to show the interaction behaviour and comment activity of the German football blog readership. The comment activity within the readership of German FB is very low. Only a small number of blog readers are involved regularly in terms of commenting. Thus, only 2.4 % (n = 6) of the readership indicates a daily, 12 % (n = 30) a weekly and 10.8 % (n = 27) a monthly involvement into written conversations and

interactions by leaving comments on posts or other comments, whereas almost 75.0 % (n = 188) of the readers comment nearly never on articles, i.e. one-third of all readers do comment less than once a month (n = 89; 35.5 %) or two-fifth do never leave any comment in the comment section (n = 99; 39.4 %). Therefore, the German FB readership seems to be a followership that prefers to read the content and get informed about football-related topics of their interest fields, but just a small group is pre-actively involved in written interactions, but who again does not leave a comment for interaction as a main reasons. This evaluation covers the average number of comments that are made on FB articles among the investigated blogs (apart from dieblaue24 where some articles have more than 500 comments) showing that a blog readership might be large, but the number of commenters is low. As a result, FBs are predominantly used as an information tool exactly as other news websites.

Although the comment activity is low, it can be concluded that readers are interested in articles and other reader comments because they do not solely read the blog articles and are generally likewise interested in blog user opinions in comments because 77.5 % (n = 195) of the readership (Figure 20) reads additionally the comments on football blog articles. Thus, readers fulfil the function of a passive observer and a kind of social interaction and discussion voyeur who are interested in other people's interaction behaviour and opinions, but without being actively involved at the same time. Moreover, the discussion of a blog topic between commenters might be a potential reason to hopefully find further information or alternative options about it.

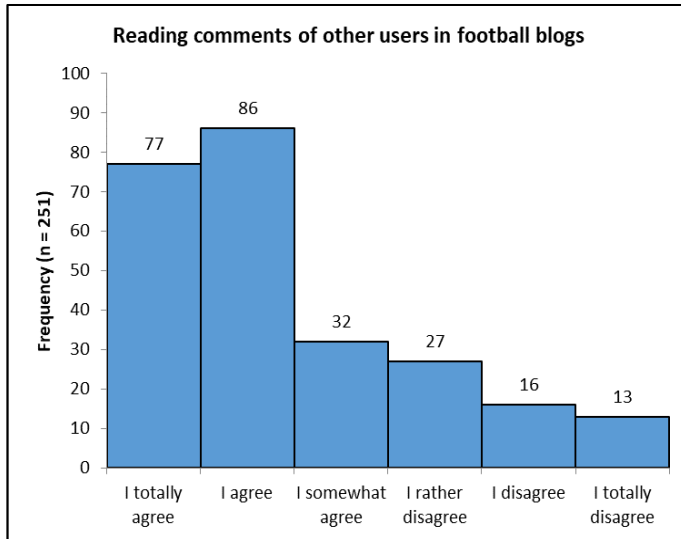


Figure 20. Agreement by readers to read articles and other users' comments (mean 2.4 ± 1.4).

Although few readers leave a comment or are actively and regularly involved in discussions in the comment section, the majority of the readership ($n = 191$; 76.0 %) agrees that GFBs should enable discussions and therefore activate the comment feature in the blog. The majority ($n = 186$; 74.0 %), moreover, has the opinion that an integrated and activated comment feature enhances the football blog's attractiveness (Figure 21), and it agrees that a blog netiquette is therefore a must-have and necessarily ($n = 222$; 88.3 %) (Figure 22).

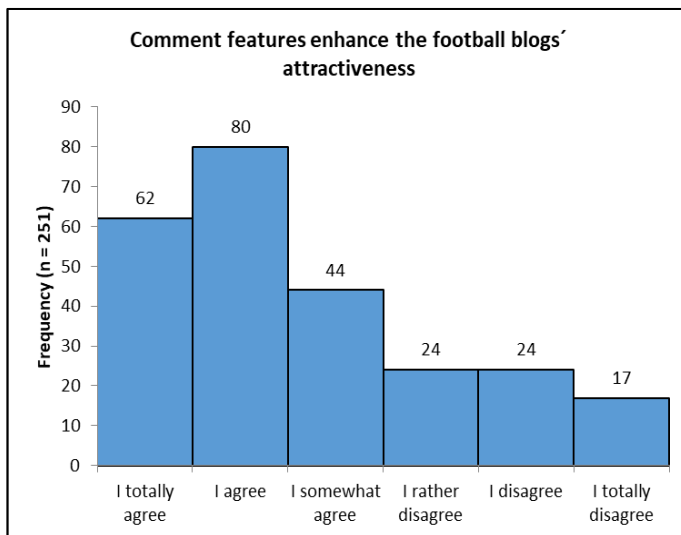


Figure 21. Readers estimate football blogs with an activated comment feature as more attractive than without (mean 2.6 ± 1.5).

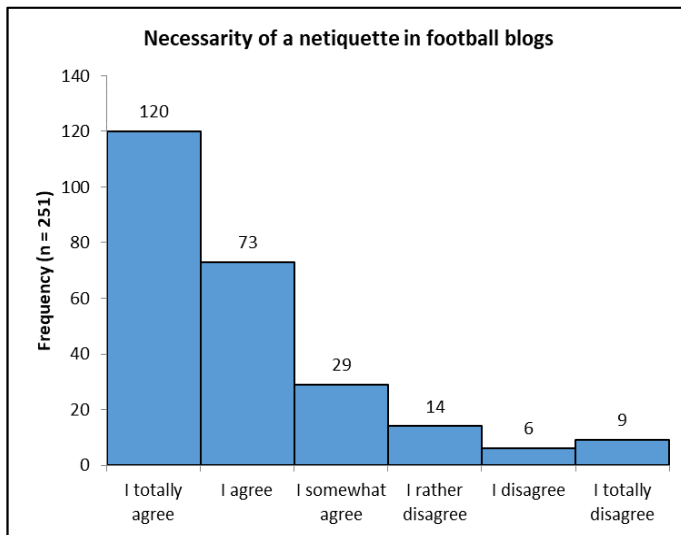


Figure 22. A netiquette in football blogs with activated comment features is a must-have (mean 1.9 ± 1.2).

While GFBs mentioned in interviews that readers comment to cool down after a match win or lost, express own thoughts and discuss with others about it, no clear tendency can be found regarding interactive reasons when commenting: The readership is split into halves because 100 readers (51.0 %) agree to having this motive while 96 blog users (49.0 %) do not (Figure 23). The same tendencies and diversities in responses can be observed when asking for the belief that the own comments contribute to the building of a football blog community (i.e. 52.8 (n = 103) agreement and 47.2 % (n = 92) disagreement) (Figure 24), the estimation that own made comments influence other readers (45.4 % (n = 88) pro and 54.6 (n = 106) contra) (Figure 25), and other reader opinions have an impact on the personal way of thinking about football-related topics (two-fifth agrees (n = 80; 41.2 %) and three-fifth disagrees (n = 114; 58.8 %)) (Figure 26). Although the readership mainly disagrees that other readers influence one, it shows that other readers have the potential to be opinion-makers. These results show that the GFBS is a very opinion-based communication sphere in which people influence each other.

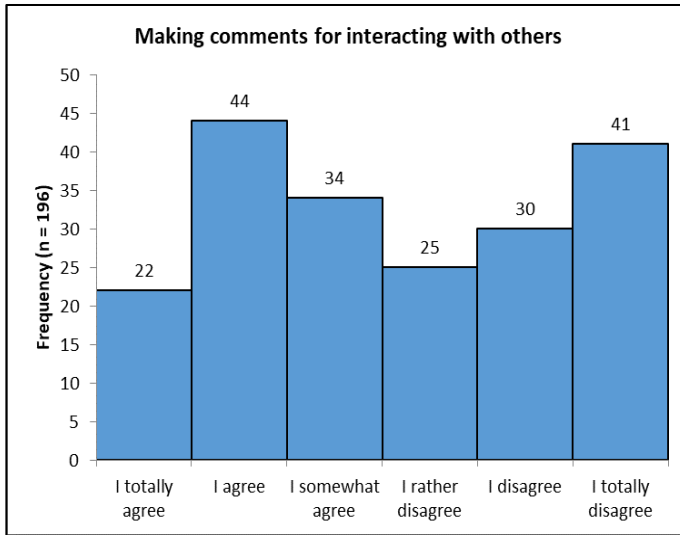


Figure 23. 50% of the readership indicates the demand for interaction as a reason for writing comments (mean 3.6 ± 1.7).

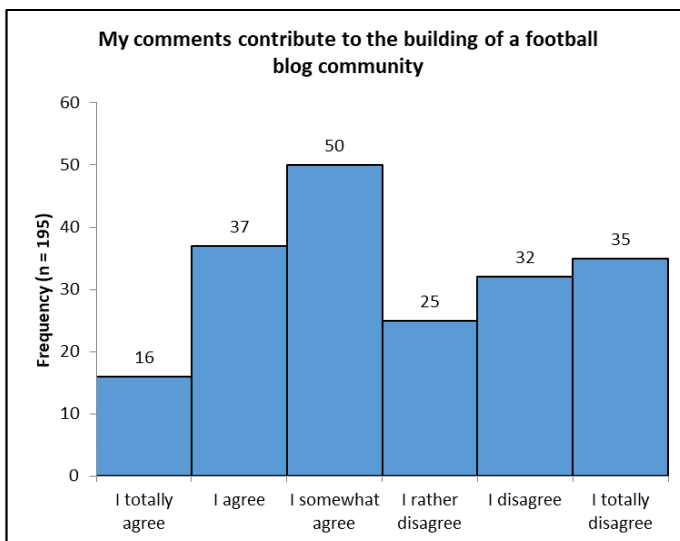


Figure 24. Belief of contribution to the blog community building with making comments (mean 3.6 ± 1.5).

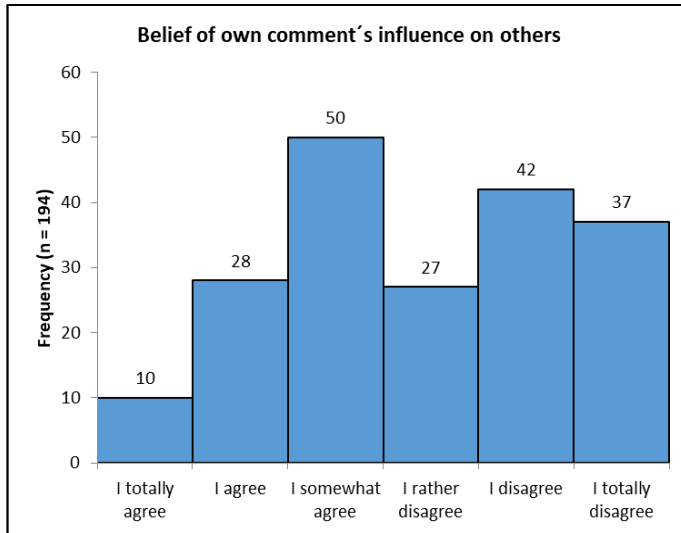


Figure 25. Belief of the own comments' impact on other readers (mean 3.8 ± 1.5).

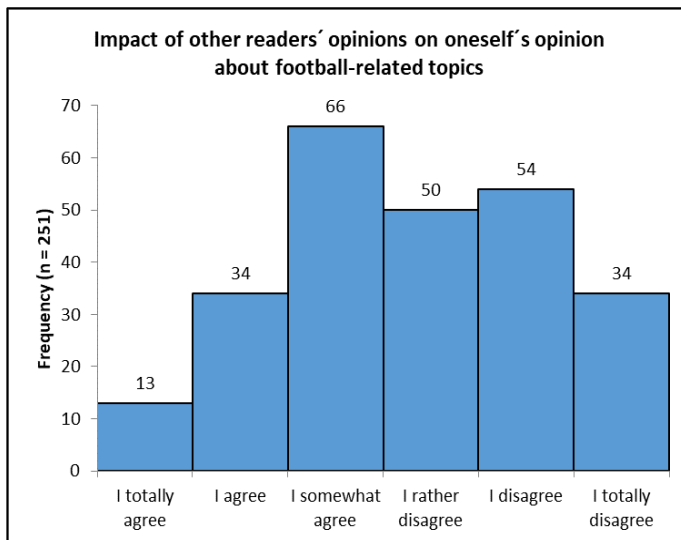


Figure 26. Impact of other reader opinions on oneself (mean 3.7 ± 1.4).

While the participants show controversial attitudes towards their influence on other readers, they predominantly disagree to have an impact on the blogger's opinion ($n = 114$; 58.7 %) (Question 46). Thus, one half of the commenters think to have no influence on other readers or on GFBs.

Moreover, blog commenters express their opinion towards a covered topic and less on the football blogger's writing style because 73.1 % ($n = 142$) disagree that their

comments are important feedback to the writing style (Question 47). This result confirms the GFBs' arguments that advices to spelling mistakes or the writing style are exceptions. A further interesting result regarding the interaction behaviour: Almost three-quarter (n = 137; 70.9 %) and two-third of the commenters (n = 127; 65.6 %), respectively, do not have the demand on a follow-up communication or even aim to provoke discussions neither with GFBs nor other commenters when leaving a comment (Questions 48 & 49). Thus, football blog comment features are a type of forum in which people write down their thoughts without focusing on a chat with other users. However, it can be observed that people discuss with each other about certain topics such as transfer news or team performances. Contradicting results are found regarding the discussion atmosphere: When discussions occur and debates develop, commenters mainly agree that the football blog atmosphere during discussions is friendly (167 of 251 responders, i.e. 66.4 %) (Figure 27) and respectful (148 of 251 responders, i.e. 62.8 %) (Figure 28), while merely quite the half thinks that the discussion atmosphere is not hostile (140 of 251 responders, i.e. 57.7 %) (Figure 29) which again might depend on the topic and the GFBs' ability of community management.

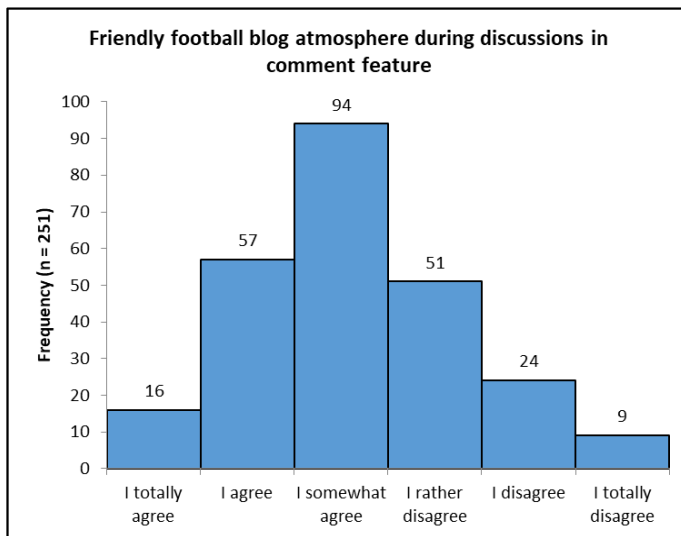


Figure 27. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment feature is friendly (mean 3.1 ± 1.1).

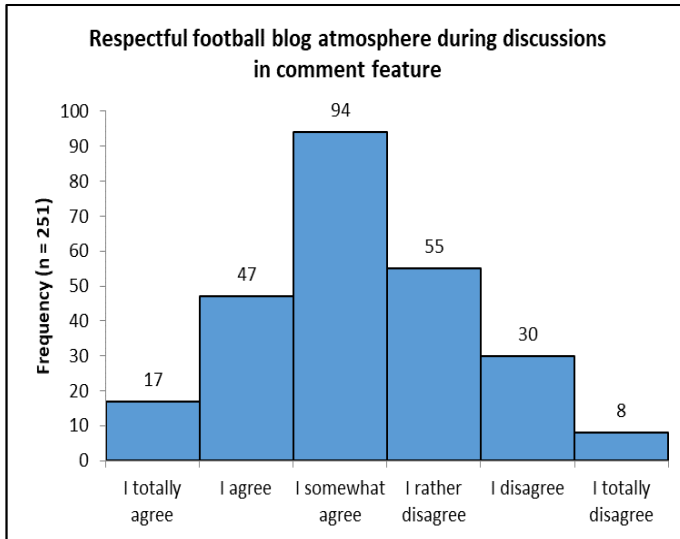


Figure 28. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment feature is respectful (mean 3.2 ± 1.1).

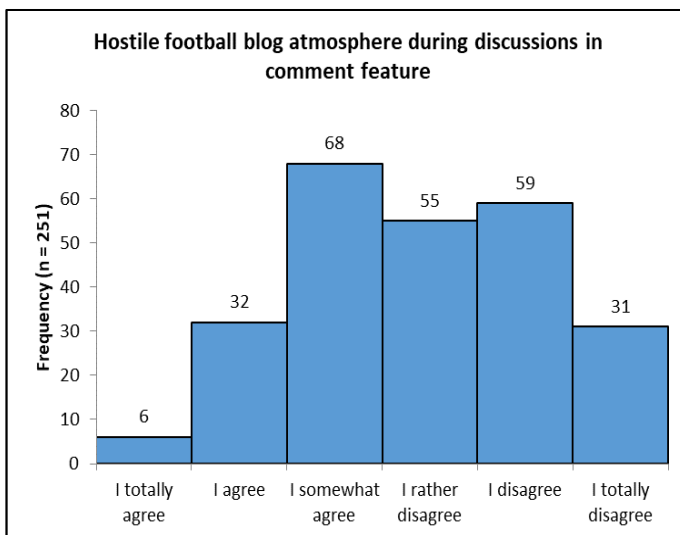


Figure 29. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment feature is hostile (mean 3.8 ± 1.3).

However, while GFBs point out that reader comments are important to them when containing information or alternative perspectives, blog commenters think the opposite because 137 of 193 commenters (70.9 %) believe that their comments have no added value and do not contain interesting information that GFBs consider for future blog articles (Figure 30).

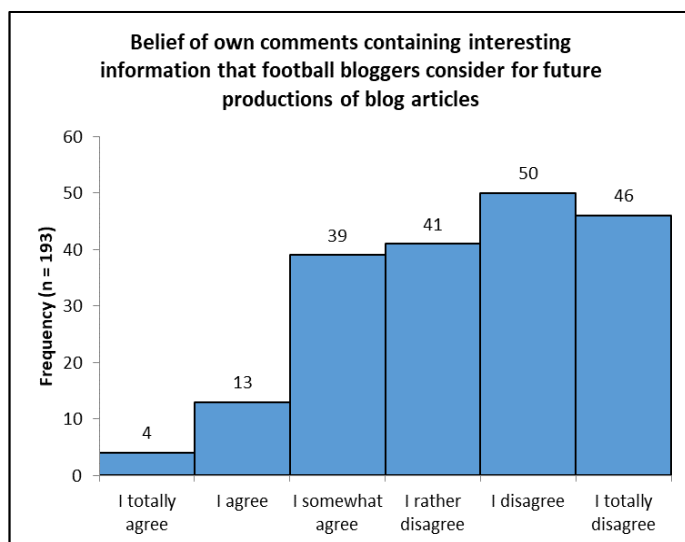


Figure 30. The majority of football blog commenters believe that their comments contain no interesting information that football bloggers can use for future blog articles (mean 4.3 ± 1.3).

7.3.1 Summary: Interaction and comment behaviour

The comment activity in the GFBS in terms of number of participants in comparison to the total number of readers is very low. That is, a small number (ca. 25 %) writes comments on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, whereas two-fifth just reads blog articles and never leaves a comment. German football blog readers, therefore, prefer reading the blog content and other reader comments, but with the absence of active involvement in any interactions in the comment feature. Summarised, German FB readers prefer staying in the background, leave no comments, but are interested in the article and other reader opinions and the interaction course between readers. Moreover, the comment activity and number of commenters is low, though, three-quarters of blog readers agree that GFBS should enable discussions in the blog but with the implementation of a netiquette. Another controversial result within the group of commenters is that one half believes that own comments contribute to the building of the blog community, are influencing other recipients or bloggers, and other reader opinions have an impact on their personal opinion about football-related topics.

The comment activity is one side of the coin; the way of interacting is another one when it comes to the interaction behaviour. The majority of commenters (almost 75 %) do not

think that their comments contain important feedback on the GFBs' writing style. Thus, the writing style is not a point what readers pay attention to when consuming FBs. Readers want to express their opinion and do not look for follow-up conversations or a chat with others. Moreover, three-quarter of the commenters thinks that their comments do not even contain interesting information that GFBs consider for future postings.

Therefore, the blog is an information and communication platform in which readers get informed and entertained, and on which they just want to express what they think without focusing on the exchange of opinions with other commenters or bloggers. However, discussions between commenters exist and cannot be prevented. Almost two-third of FB commenters estimates the football blog atmosphere during discussions as friendly, respectful and not hostile. One-third thinks the opposite: Discussions are very emotional, but this perception may depend on every individual's own limit of acceptance and tolerance during discussions. This perception may be also situation-related because some topics have the potential for escalations. That is the reason why blog readers think that GFBs need a good community management and should intervene in situations when it tends to escalate.

7.3.2 Discussion: Interaction and comment behaviour

While some researchers investigated the user's motives for consuming blogs, few focus on the interaction behaviour. Hence, there are few studies that could be considered to discuss the results in this chapter and to find parallels and differences with other research findings.

Neuberger (2016) describes that blog users estimate blogs as suitable tools for the investigation of background information as well as for discussions and interactions between users or users and bloggers. There are several reasons for making comments on blog articles and interacting in a blog with other people. It is assumed that users who already know the blog community in terms of interaction dynamic and level of constructive debating tend more to interact with other blog participants. The reason is

that many FB recipients are loyal long-term readers who read a blog for many years and who consequently may know the small group of commenters that participates frequently in discussions. Johnson & Kaye (2004) as well find that political blog users consume blogs for over seven years and spend nearly an hour a day either to interact with bloggers, read comments or follow incorporated links to additional information. Thus, there might be a relation between the time of blog usage and the interaction activity in certain blog communities. However, other blog research findings of other German blogospheres confirm the situation of interaction behaviour in the GFBS: The level of interaction and participation is generally low and users are less interested in interactions even though a dialogue is technically enabled on the platform (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Hoffjann & Pleil, 2015). Beyond that, the small commenter groups in German blogospheres concentrate on commenting the topic of an article instead of giving feedback to the blogger's writing style or making topic suggestions for further blog posts (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). This finding shows a reserved involvement and interaction in German blogospheres which makes it to be a media culture of consumers who prefer consuming content passively instead of discussing with other people in a virtual room. Furthermore, German FB commenters preferably discuss about the topic of a blog article because online media users generally think to have a low impact on changing the way of news coverage why FB users do seldom suggest topics or exceptionally give direct feedback to the content producers' working style (Gnahn & Raith, 2015).

7.4 Role allocations in German football blogs

While in the previous research step the GFBS themselves give an insight into how they estimate the different role allocations in the GFBS, the following sub-chapters will present the blog users' perspectives.

7.4.1 The roles of football bloggers and readers

While bloggers think that their readers are mainly lecturers, curators and additional deliverymen of information (i.e. the latter counts for commenters), football blog readers allocate their own role as a passive-active receiver who firstly receives information and later actively looks for more information who mutually checks it by clicking the included links in blog articles. Readers think that bloggers are pre-selectors of information from other sources whose task is the linking to original sources so that blog users can retrace and verify information. 80 % of the readership (n = 201) (Figure 31) agree that GFBs are obligated to link to original sources because they (n = 176; 70.1 %) want to find additional information that bloggers may not have mentioned in the article (Figure 32). Some survey participants, furthermore, are sceptical towards the published information in blog articles because more than half (n = 136; 54.2 %) checks links in articles for the verification of information (Figure 33). However, GFBs should not underestimate the effect of linking to original sources because for 91.2 % (n = 229) of the readership it contributes to the blog credibility (Question 15). Consequently, when bloggers want to be perceived as truthful and transparent media producers, they should think about the positive effect of linking to original sources on their readership as it has the potential to enhance the reputation.

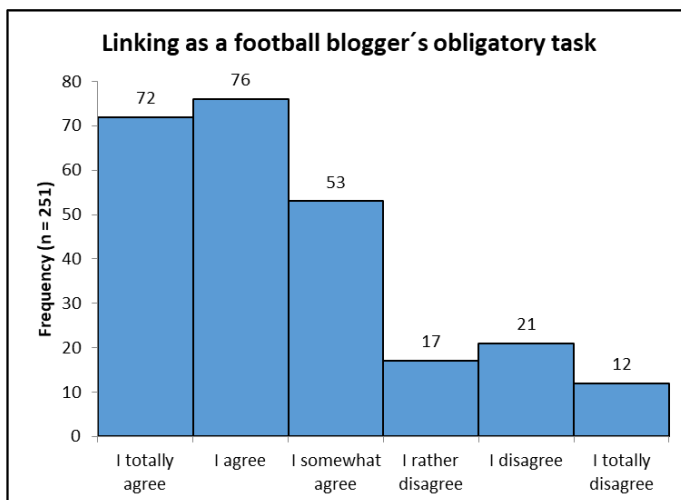


Figure 31. Linking to original information sources is a football blogger's obligatory task (mean 2.5 ± 1.4).

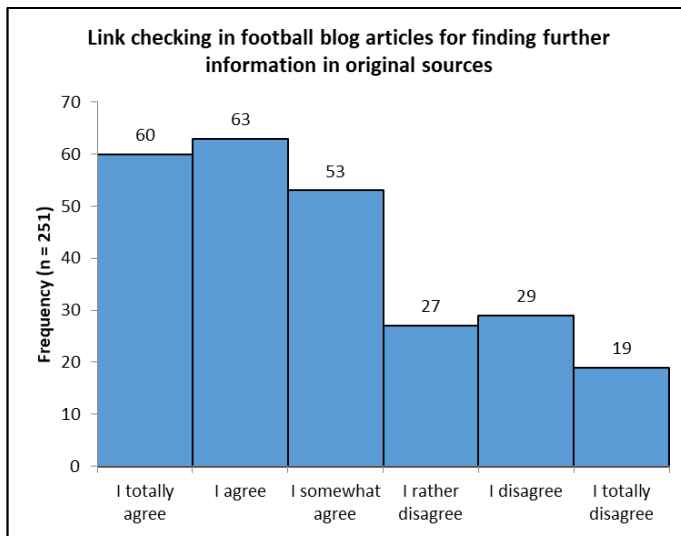


Figure 32. Readers check links in blog articles to find further information about a football-related topic (mean 2.8 ± 1.5).

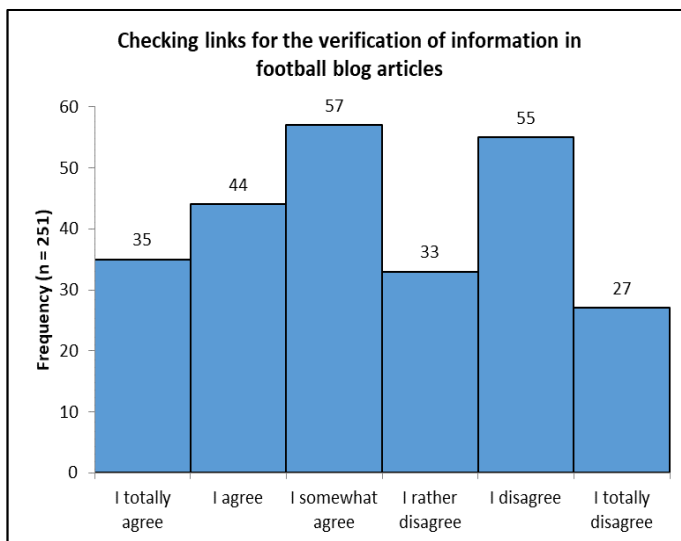


Figure 33. Controversial results regarding the checking of links for control and verification of published information in football blog articles (mean 3.4 ± 1.5).

Although the blog readership is critical towards a correct way of media content production and the presentation of information, the reader's task to give generally feedback to the blogger's way of thinking is watched controversially within the readership because almost half of them ($n = 142$; 56.5 %) (Question 41) thinks that they are meant to give feedback to GFBs on their opinion. Consequently, commenters do

both commenting own thoughts on the content of an article and the GFBs' statements regarding certain themes. It shows, moreover, that bloggers are the presenters and suppliers of information who offers current information on the blog platform (either with a personal statement or not), and readers fulfil the role as critics and gatewatchers who reacts to a blogger's attitude in cases of dissatisfaction, agreement or disagreement. Apart from this, commenters use FBs as an interaction and communication platform to express their opinions about topics and the blogger's opinion. Therefore, 76.0 % (n = 191) of the blog readers think that a football blogger should always enable discussions in the blog (Figure 34). Thus, the football blogger is also the community manager and enabler of opinion-based exchange between readers. Nevertheless, just 57.7 % (n = 145) (Question 55) agree that GFBs should mediate between readers in discussions when the line between discussions and insulting debate is blurred. Thus, the bloggers' participation in the comment feature is generally wanted by 71.3 % (n = 179) (Figure 35).

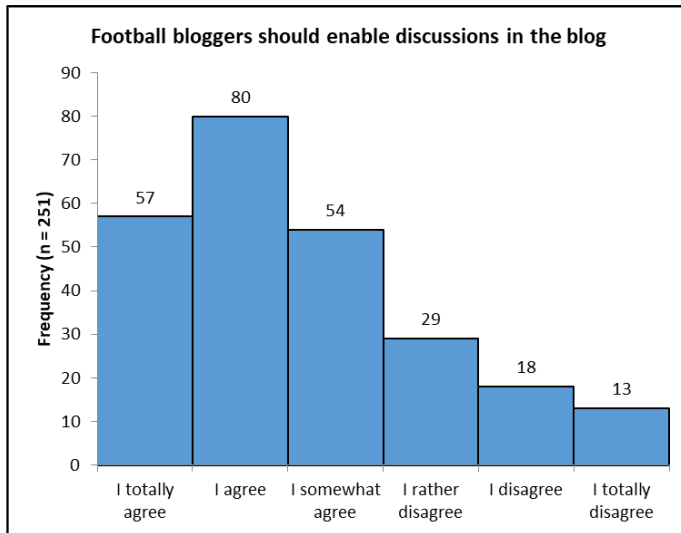


Figure 34. Football bloggers should activate the comment feature and be an enabler of discussions in the blog (mean 2.6 ± 1.4).

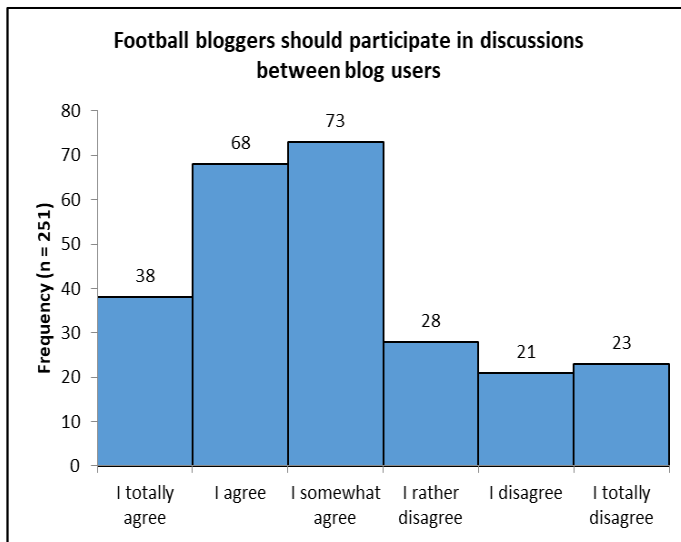


Figure 35. Football bloggers should generally participate in discussions between blog users (mean 2.9 ± 1.4).

GFBs check links of commenters with the intention to find additional information what also two-third of the readership does ($n = 164$; 65.3 %) (Figure 36) who check links with the intention to find information that a blogger might not mention in the blog article. Concerning this, FB readers do not estimate other media as more credible because 73.7 % ($n = 185$) disagree that link-checking is considered during media reception because of an alleged less credibility of FBs than other football news media (Figure 37).

There are possible reasons explaining the desire for checking links that might be exist. Readers long for information in order to construct their own opinion which then bases on a variety of information from different sources. Additionally, they are not getting tired of looking for more information about certain topics and scepticism could be a catalyst for this. It can be assumed that German FB readers are fundamentally critical towards other opinions and published information especially in the time of a high fake news contribution in social media.

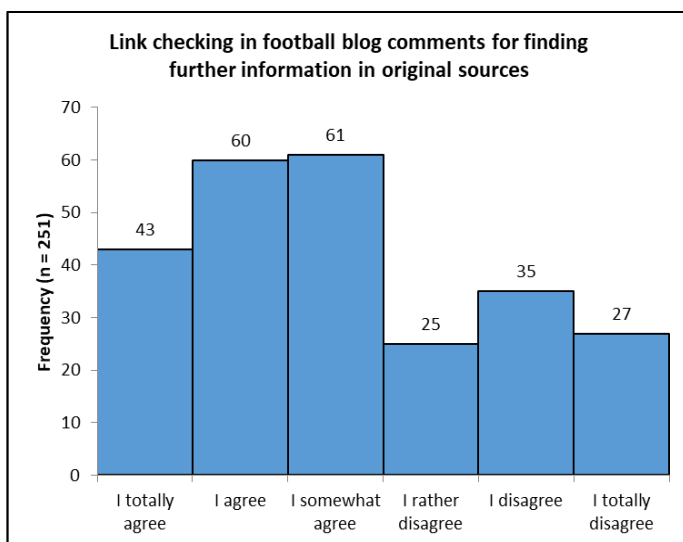


Figure 36. Readers also check links in comments to find further information (mean 3.1 ± 1.5).

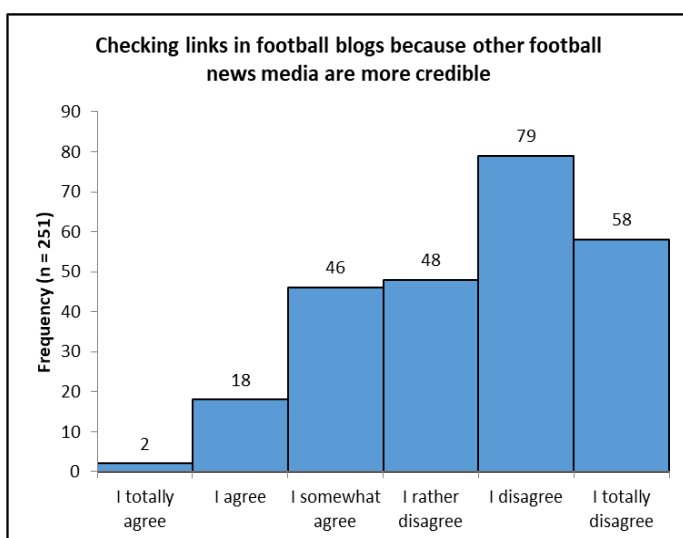


Figure 37. A possible greater credibility of other football media is no reason for checking links in football blog articles (mean 4.4 ± 1.2).

The majority of the investigated GFBs has a journalistic background or internalise media production processes akin to those of journalists by holding on the press code during investigation and media production. At the same time they link to other original news sources and shows the difference in the working process compared those of online journalists of publishing houses who do not link to sources of other competitors in order to hold web visitors on their own website and keep the role as a news gatekeeper.

Although this difference exists and GFB depend partly from information on other professional news websites, 61.0 % (n = 153) of blog readers make no differences and estimate bloggers as journalists (Figure 38). Thus, GFBs are not only a kind of information pre-selector, they are also information suppliers at the same time. This aspect can be related to the fact that some German bloggers offer podcasts and live commentary and have access to the mixed press zone in football stadiums where they interview players. This point shows that GFBs can offer the same services like other professional news media from print to radio.

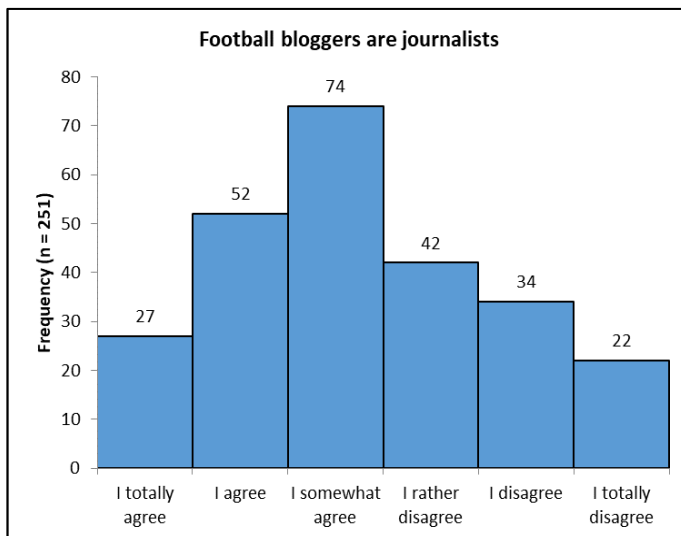


Figure 38. The reader majority agrees that football bloggers are journalists (mean 3.2 ± 1.4).

In comparison to professional football news journalists who do not react with a personal statement to reader comments on a publisher website, GFBs act differently and answer questions or participate generally in discussions. This community management is divided into different acts such as deleting hostile comments or comments with fake news or the control of discussions by interacting in different ways such as commenting other comments or giving a reference to the maintenance and respect of the blog netiquette. Therefore, 80.0 % (n = 201) readers think that a football blogger should react to insulting and disrespectful comments (Question 59), and 170 blog readers (67.7 %) agree that bloggers are community managers (Question 60) and opinion makers at the same time (n = 181; 72.1 %) (Question 61). Moreover, 86.8 % (n = 218) football blog

readers believe that GFBs are interested in their opinion (Figure 39), and bloggers give the feeling to 85.2 % of the readers (n = 214) that they are important to them (Figure 40).

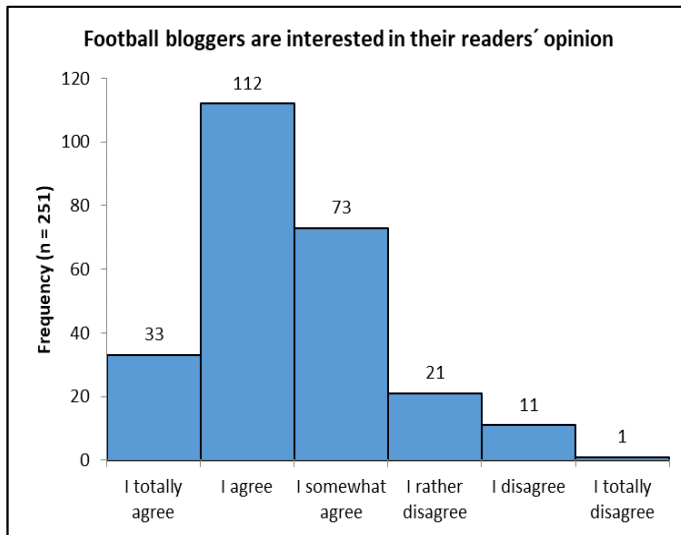


Figure 39. Readers believe that football bloggers are interested in their opinion (mean 2.4 ± 0.9).

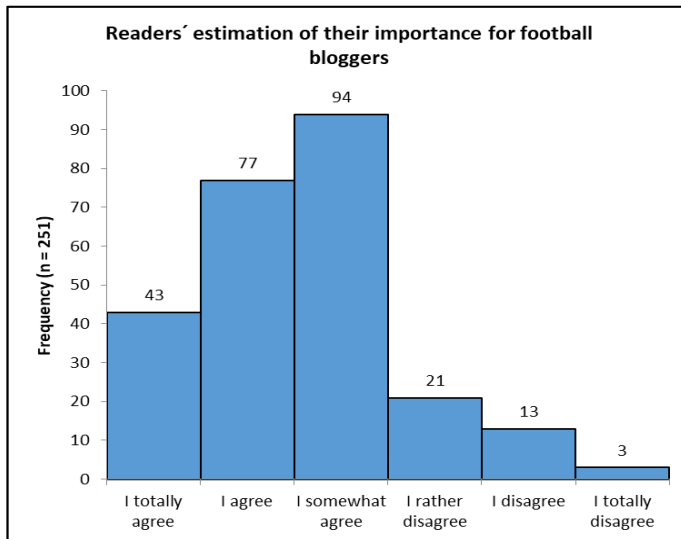


Figure 40. Readers think that they are important to football bloggers (mean 2.5 ± 1.1).

7.4.2 The role of the blog content allocated by football blog users

Many GFBs expand their blog program by including a podcast in the blog service repertoire. The interviewed GFB mentioned that podcasts increased importance within the last years and that the number of listeners is increasing why it is an advantage in

growing the followership when blogs additionally offer a podcast. However, 112 blog readers (44.6 %) do not fully agree to this claim (Figure 41), but more than the half (n = 139; 55.4 %) thinks that FBs should offer a podcast which again shows the importance of podcasts.

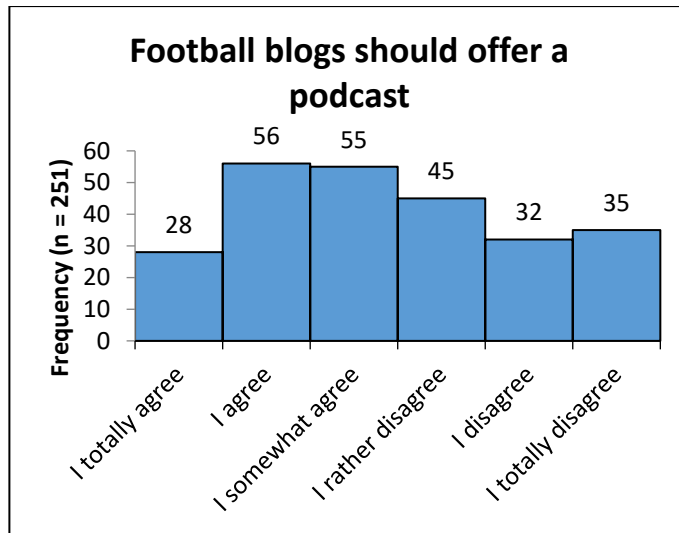


Figure 41. Controversial belief towards the additional offer of a podcast within a football blog (mean 3.4 ± 1.5).

Nevertheless, a football blog is still perceived as a text-based information platform because the majority of FB users (n = 177; 70.5 %) prefer to read a football blog article than listening a football podcast session (Figure 42) which might be related to the point that two-third (n = 168; 66.9 %) do not think that football podcasts are more interesting than football blog articles (Figure 43). As one GFB explained that the usage of the blog and podcasts may depend on the private living and working circumstances of a user, the time invest could also be a further reason because reading the short FB articles with averagely 500 words, football podcast sessions last often longer than 20 minutes for which a user must take time which is not necessarily given.

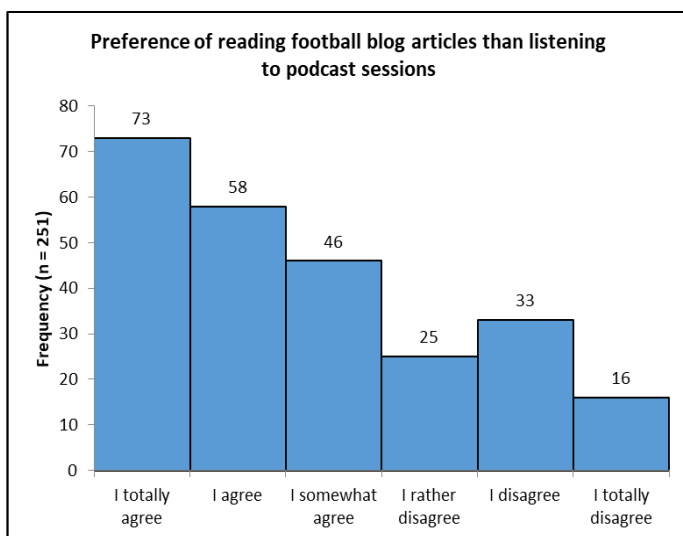


Figure 42. Reader preference of reading blog articles than listening podcast sessions (mean 2.7 ± 1.5).

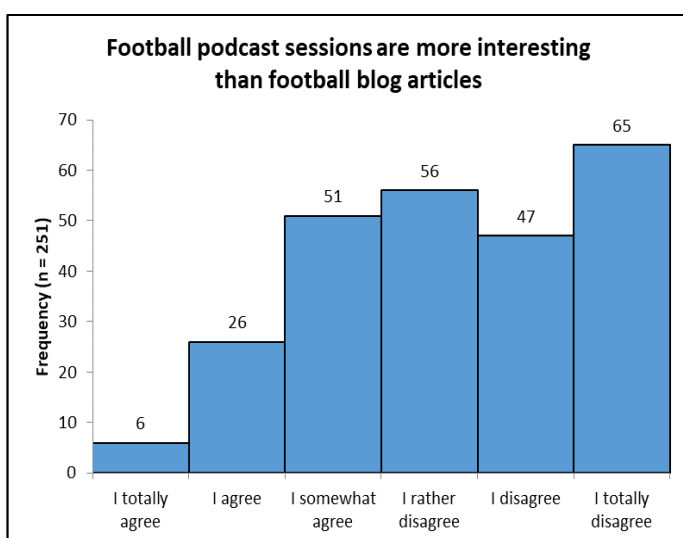


Figure 43. Mainly no agreement that football podcasts are more interesting than football blogs (mean 4.2 ± 1.4).

Football blogs play a central role in the daily process of media reception because some GFBs collect daily information from various media coverages in online newspapers and link them in articles. This kind of media coverage collection makes GFBs to be perceived as an overall news presenters (i.e. confirmation rate of 89.6 % (n = 225) among the survey participants (Figure 44).

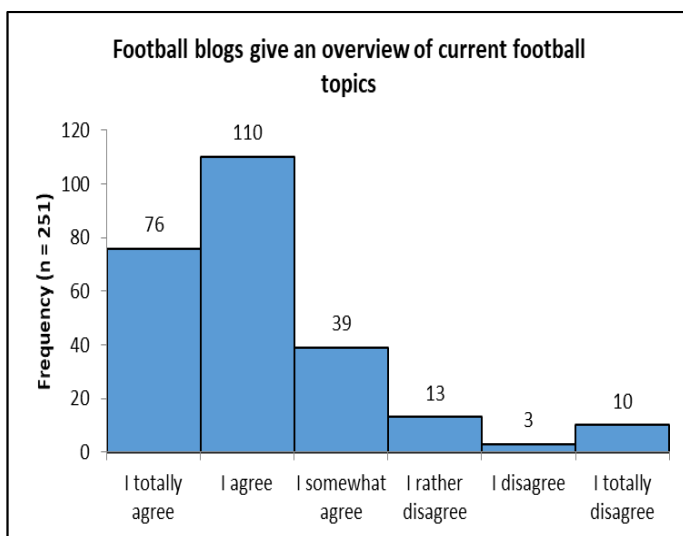


Figure 44. Football blogs give an overview of current football topics (mean 2.1 ± 1.1).

Blogs can be created in various ways. GFB combine formal and colloquial language when producing media content and articles can be informative, entertaining. The GFBs' purpose is not solely to inform but also to entertain readers in order to build a close relationship. Both objectives are confirmed by readers who agree that FBs inform them ($n = 234$; 93.2 %) (Figure 45) and provide entertainment ($n = 223$; 88.8 %) (Figure 46). This approach of infotainment (i.e. a combination of information and entertainment) works well and is liked by the majority of FB readers.

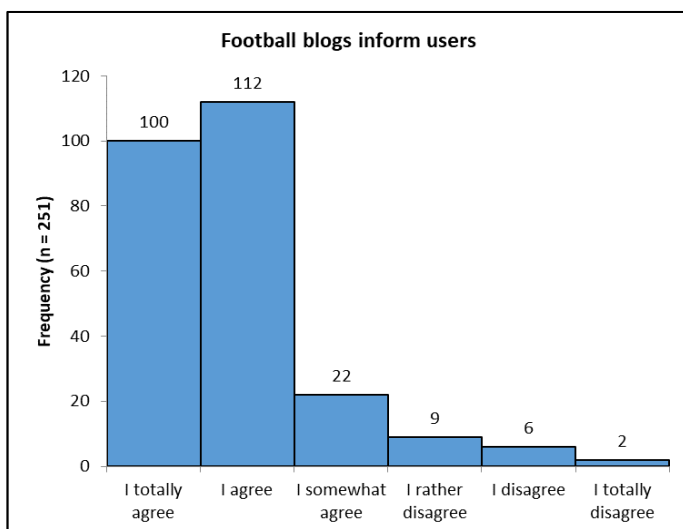


Figure 45. Football blogs inform readers in general (mean 1.8 ± 0.9).

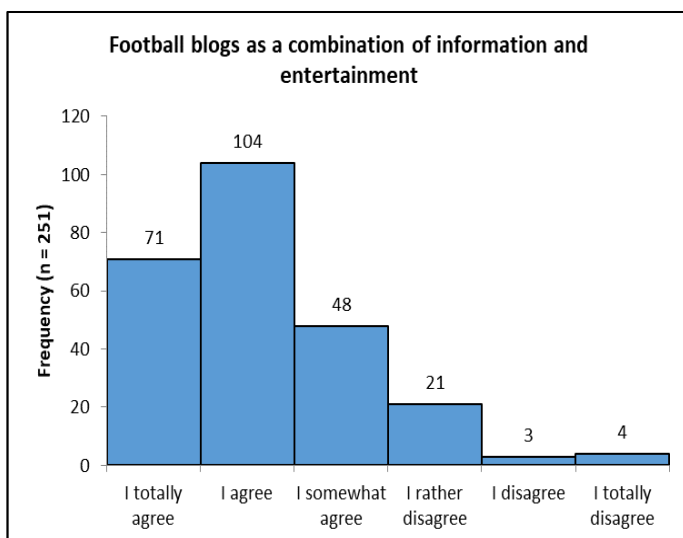


Figure 46. Combination of information and entertainment in German football blogs (mean 2.1 ± 1.0).

7.4.3 Summary: Role allocations in German football blogs

FB readers allocate several roles themselves and GFBs which often are developed in different ways of interactions between bloggers and their readership: FB readers estimate themselves as a passive-active receiver who consume information by reading a blog article and the original sources from which bloggers collect information. Thus, GFBs are pre-selectors of information and topics whose obligated task is linking to all used sources to enable readers the retracement, verification and investigation of original and in articles unmentioned additional information. Furthermore, almost 54 % of the readership has a sceptical attitude when reading FB articles why they click on included links to verify incorporated information. Nevertheless, as readers think that linking is a blogger's obligation, bloggers should include the process of linking because almost all readers (91 %) agree that linking contributes to the football blog credibility. When bloggers want to be perceived as credible, transparent and truthful in their content presentation, they should implement the links to original sources. Generally, a FB is a medium in which bloggers publish topics of their interest fields in a combined subjective-objective way why some news content is biased through the implementation of commentaries. GFBs sometimes ask questions to start interactions and discussions on

articles, but only 56% of the readership thinks that they are meant to give feedback to the blogger's opinion. Consequently, bloggers are opinion-makers, presenters and suppliers of information who offer current and sometimes biased information. Articles base on a pre-selection process in which GFBs decide which information is interesting and important mainly from their viewpoint, even when bloggers also think about what their readership may find interesting. FB readers, however, fulfil the role as critic who reacts to bloggers' statements for several reasons (e.g. agreement, disagreement, support of a blogger opinion etc.). Furthermore, the majority of recipients estimate bloggers as enablers of discussions and community managers who should participate in discussions, but only 58 % agrees that bloggers should mediate between users in discussions. Thus, blog users make a difference between a blogger's participation and mediation in discussions.

In cases where commenters appeal to new or not aforementioned information by linking to it in the comment, bloggers and two-third of the blog readership click it to find additional information. In this context, many readers fulfil the role as an unsaturated information inspector who permanently looks for further information, but who also wants to control whether statements made in articles or comments correspond to the original information. Although checking links is a usual media reception process in the GFBS, an alleged perception of less credibility of blogs is not a reason why readers click links. A possible reason could be the longing for information to form a sophisticated opinion about a football-related topic because nowadays the amount of fake news is growing in online media and users may prefer to read an original news source in order to verify a comment. Therefore, football blog readers can be estimated as being fundamentally critical towards published opinions or comments which show that they are generally critics towards bloggers and other commenters.

However, bloggers mainly fall back on information that is published in other online news websites. These websites are maintained by publishing houses for which professional journalists work. Even when bloggers use other journalists' information, the readership majority (61 %) has the opinion that bloggers are journalists which make

them stay on the same status level as their professional colleagues who work for publishing houses. Consequently, from the users' point of view GFBs are journalists who pre-select information in order to make it available in a compressed way for their readers.

All in all, GFBs are seen as information pre-selectors, enablers of discussions, information suppliers, community managers, opinion-makers and journalists in one. Especially the estimation as journalists could be results of that bloggers offer the same services as other professional media such as live tickers, live podcasts, coverage of a match and more. Besides these role functions, readers classify GFBs as belonging to a type of community manager whose tasks are divided into various aspects such as participating in discussions, reacting to insulting and disrespectful comments, deleting user accounts or control discussions in various ways (e.g. making comments with reference to the netiquette). Readers feel well, accepted and heard by GFBs because three-quarter thinks that they are interested in what readers think about football-related topics. That is, readers confirm the bloggers' comment in interviews that bloggers want to know what the readership's opinion is which again results in the point that readers think they are of importance for GFBs (ca. 85 %).

Even though bloggers point out that podcasts are becoming more important why it may be advisable to implement a podcast to enhance the service repertoire, readers have a controversial opinion regarding this because quite the half does not agree to it and almost 71 % prefers to read football blog articles than listening to podcast sessions. Moreover, circa 67 % does not think that football podcasts are more interesting than football blog articles. However, FBs are an important part of the online media users' daily media reception because of the overviews of current topics in football presented which again confirms the bloggers' role as information pre-selectors and the narrow passage of football-related information. Bloggers have the opportunity to present pre-selected information in a way which they personally like. Therefore, FBs are seen as a combination of information and entertainment which means that readers are both informed and entertained at the same time.

7.4.4 Discussion: Role allocations in German football blogs

In general, a blog is a social medium representing a unique opportunity to provide information to a large recipient group without the constraints of traditional media's gatekeeping barriers (Meyers et al., 2015). Blogs fulfil the function of gatewatchers where in this sphere also recipients represent the role of active gatewatchers of FBs who control, verify and investigate information from the world of media and press in order to provide a multi-perspective viewpoint on several topics, and to secure a coverage, publication and spread of true information (Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Bruns, 2009; Meyer et al., 2015, Neuberger et al., 2007). FB users appreciate to be able to find information from a variety of sources which additionally covers the findings of other researchers (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Meyers et al., 2015). Apart from that, Smith (2008) recognised blogs with an activated comment feature to be valuable communication platforms because these blogs prevent people from having a voice in the debate of a certain topic by excluding the traditional gatekeeping barriers as it can be found in traditional media outside the online context. Beyond that, while Kwak et al. (2010) point that American amateur basketball fans perceive messages from mainstream sources as more positive as news from blogs, German FB users assess the football blog credibility as high as those of other football news media. It can be assumed that within the last decade sport blogs, in general, gained more credibility from the recipients' viewpoint, especially from those people who consume both FBs and other football news media sources. Furthermore, results of Nölleke et al. (2016) indicate that German sports journalists perceive social media as valuable tools for their profession (information research). Johnson & Kaye (2004) and Porter et al. (2009) conclude that readers find blogs to be a credible source of information. Thus, blogging has an impact in the media world and the perception of blogs seems to be nowadays more positive and bloggers seen more as journalists because bloggers fact-check mainstream media. Therefore, GFBs have the opportunity to cover topics more detailed which have been ignored or not given enough attention to (Allen & Reese, 2016). Consequently, bloggers

fulfil the role as fact-checkers and confront journalists with the deconstruction of news coverages who trigger discussions and challenge mainstream football media which results in that blogs are influential sources for news and information (Banning & Sweetser, 2007). Thus, GFB and football blog readers fulfil an interacting and common role in terms of gatewatching when bloggers fact-check information and include links to original sources, users become to gatewatchers who can control bloggers' and other journalists' work at the same time. The recipients' choices to get to and track information is even greater when it is online once because FB users can select news from an established news media house or go to independent media producers such as bloggers (Banning & Sweetser, 2007).

Blogs have the freedom of choosing entertaining topics and blogging in contrast to journalistic newspaper articles online and offline. FBs are not objective tools in which information are presented in a distant and sober manner, but information are presented in a distinctive way which is influenced by bloggers' personal style of expression, and GFBs and their readers appreciate the combination of information and entertainment (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). Thus, GFBs represent an entertainer function and act as information suppliers at the same time. In terms of free media content as it is offered in blogs which in particular produce user generated content, FB consumers do not have the chance to invest much time into an extensive use of certain media. It means that in comparison to online news with paywalls, FBs offer free access to information and it enables a selective support that helps recipients and other mediators because content of other media can be incorporated in an article which results in a pre-selection of information with the chance of trackbacking it through links (Fischer, 2006).

The results of the football blog survey cover findings of other blog studies and give also an insight on which roles readers allocate themselves, bloggers and the blog. The relationships and functions of these three factors are until a certain degree complementary with each other and with journalism in general. That is, Neuberger (2016) points out that editors observe blogs for the investigation by trackbacking incorporated links or the link overview in blog articles. They also monitor the readership

and its atmosphere which offer interesting information, for instance, for regional football journalists who look for football fans' opinions and the atmosphere in fandoms. In reverse direction, blog recipients monitor the football journalism, comment it and blog articles, and interact with others by discussing about topics and giving them the opportunity to read alternative viewpoints at the same time. However, while FBs have the potential to be competitors for journalists, they should not be underestimated by established media in general, even though the impact of especially football fan blogs can be reduced to a regional level where especially in this environment FBs about a specific club can compete with regional newspapers. Neuberger (2016) points out that blogs do not have any impact on the consumption of mainstream media in the sense of being a competitive and more often regarded medium, but that there is a competition between blogs and local weekly papers. Accordingly, blogs are used as a research tool to identify issues and give insights to a specific environment such as a football club fandom. Therefore, blogs represent an opportunity for recipients of any kind to monitor topics, be informed and entertained mutually, and discuss about topics. This nature of FBs leaves to the conclusion that in the past it used to be a type of passive medium that gathered and spread messages or second-handed information (Porter et al., 2009), but with the collection of first-handed information from interviews and presentation in live tickers or podcasts, FBs developed to an active and widely accepted medium within a blog community and fandom of specific football clubs.

7.5 The reader perception: The status of football blogs in the football media world

GFBs assume their blog to be an additional qualitative service for fans and an alternative or even additional counterpart in the press world. Interesting findings can be found in the reader perception regarding the status in the German football media world. As three-fifth of the readers see bloggers as journalists why marginal differences should be found between the estimation of the status of a football blog and those of other mainstream news media.

The survey participants show that FBs have some advantages in comparison to other mainstream news media: One advantage is their topic coverage which is not offered by other mainstream news media to which 91.2 % of the readers (n = 229) (Figure 48) agree because FBs deal with niche topics that underpins their uniqueness in the German football media world. There are some aspects that pay into a close relationship between bloggers and users: As fan bloggers cover topics about a specific football club, thereby they cover the same interests as their readers. Consequently, compared with other football journalists it may be easier for GFBs to build a community and a good relationship to its members because blog readers (91.6 %; n = 230) think that GFBs are closer to football fans (Figure 47). This clear attitude is potentially the result that GFBs concentrate on one certain football club and stay in the same fan corner as their readers. These considerations might make them to be an expert who can write in a more detailed and sophisticated way about the specific topic (inter alia including the atmosphere in fan groups), while football journalists must focus on a variety of football topics and football clubs and do not come as close as GFBs with fan groups in the stadium because they work in the press box which is separated from the fan zone. This is the reason why bloggers assume that football journalists read blogs in order to receive an insight on the atmosphere within a fan group.

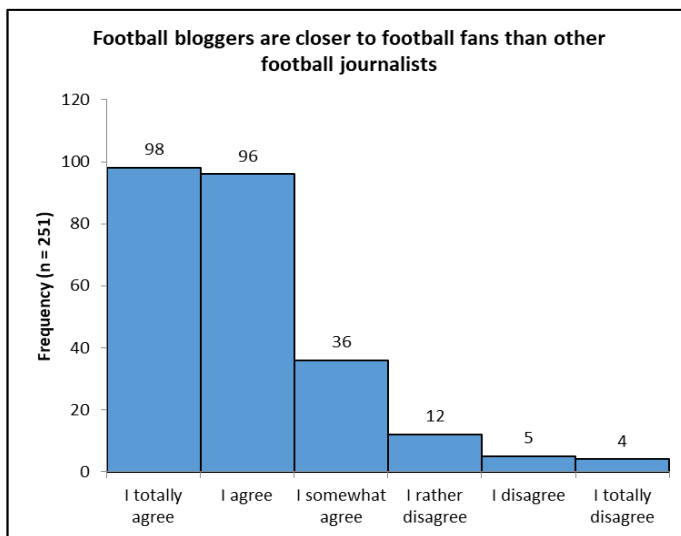


Figure 47. Football bloggers are closer to football fans than other football journalists (mean 1.9 ± 1.0).

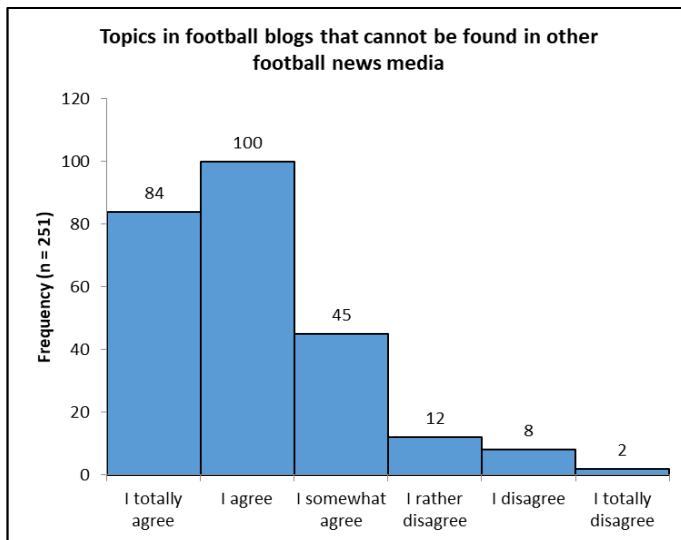


Figure 48. Football blogs as the source of unique football-related topics (mean 2.0 ± 1.0).

Although FBs are specified in certain football-related topics which cannot be found in established football news media, 87.6 % of the readers (n = 220) categorise FBs as an additional offer of the content of other football news media which leads to the assumption that readers do not perceive the FBs' content as a first-handed content basing on the blogger's personal investigation or information collection because they use existing information from other news web sites. Thus, a FB is the product of professional journalists' previous initial investigation of information. Only few bloggers get the chance to collect this kind of information through press accreditations and the opportunity to interview players. As a result, GFBs fall mainly back on information from second or third media parties, but therefore blog readers think that bloggers invest more time for the investigation of information than other football journalists (61.4 % agreement; n = 154) (Figure 49).

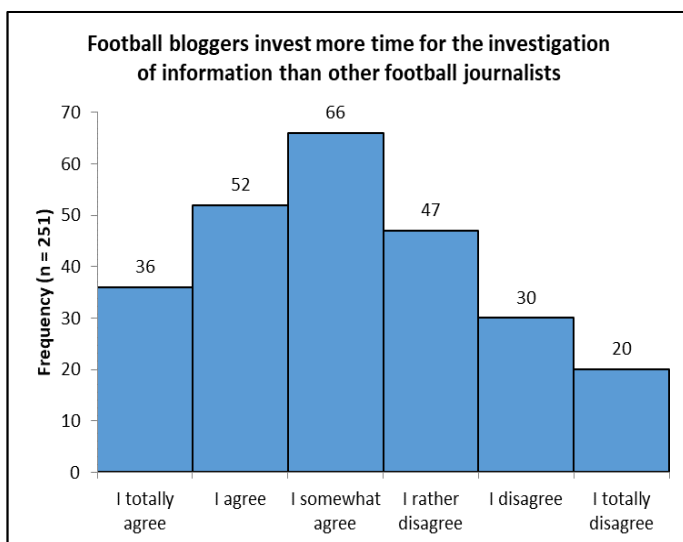


Figure 49. Perception of a higher time-invest of bloggers for the investigation of information compared to other football journalists (mean 3.1 ± 1.4).

Nevertheless, the majority of blog readers ($n = 210$; 83.7 %) reckon that FBs are as important as other football news media. Therefore, it can be assumed that readers estimate the FB status as equal to those of other mainstream football news media, even though almost 90 % of the readers think that they are an additional offer to other football news media. This perception can be the result of a constant professionalisation of the blogs during the last years because GFBs invest much time to enhance the blog quality and technological service.

While the readership has a clear opinion regarding the uniqueness of football-related topics in FBs, opinions differ with reference to the writing quality because the readership is split in almost equal parts with the agreement ($n = 129$; 51.4 %) and disagreement ($n = 122$; 48.6 %) that football blog articles can be compared with articles from other football news media in the writing quality (mean 3.4 ± 1.4) (Question 29). Nevertheless, almost two-third of the participants ($n = 155$; 61.8 %) prefer to read FBs than other football news media (Figure 50).

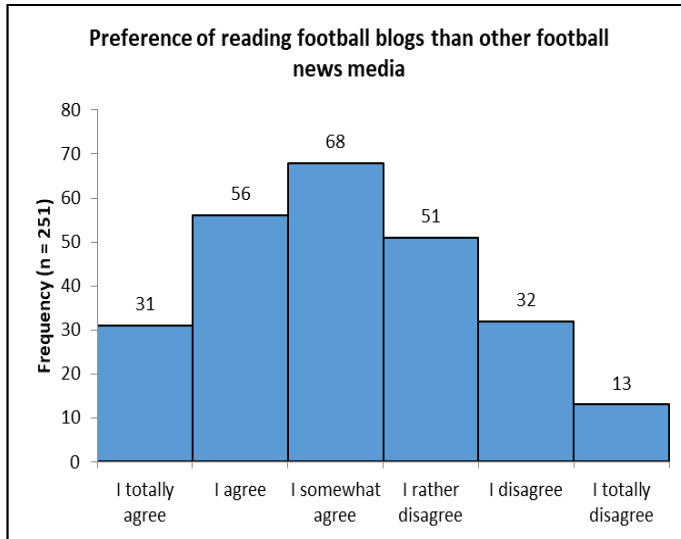


Figure 50. Readers' preference of reading football blogs than other football news media (mean 3.1 ± 1.3).

Moreover, football journalists of news websites use a formal and objective but non-colloquial writing style, whereas GFBs combine deliberately these two approaches. These assumptions are confirmed by readers of whom 85.7 % (n = 215) agree that there is a difference in the writing style (Figure 51).

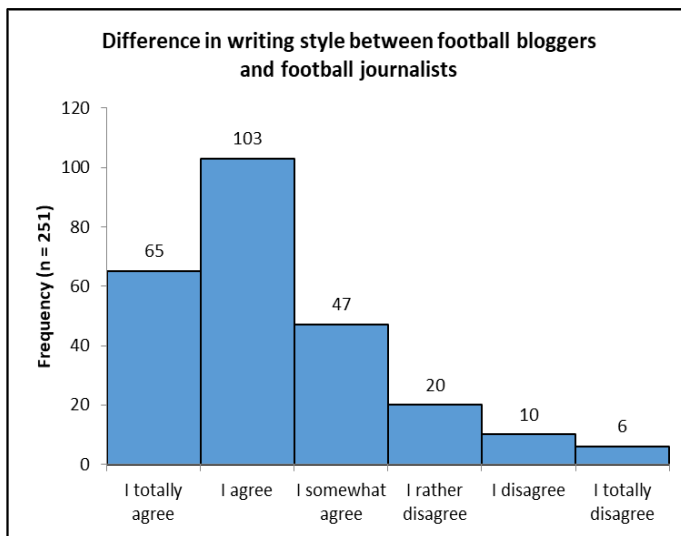


Figure 51. Readers' perception to differences in the writing style between football bloggers and football journalists (mean 2.3 ± 1.1).

As mentioned before, some GFBs have a professional journalistic background and still work or used to work for (online) newspapers and publishing houses as employees or freelancers. Their experience in journalistic writing and editorial processes are a great support for the production of blog media content. Consequently, in their opinion it has an impact on the quality. However, the readership does not agree as a common whole on this point because only 49.0 % (n = 123) and 42.6 % (n = 107) agree that a professional journalistic background of the football blogger is important for the blog quality and blog credibility, respectively. Thus, the majority in these two points do not agree and estimate these two factors as not being decisive for the blog quality (Figure 52) and credibility (Figure 53).

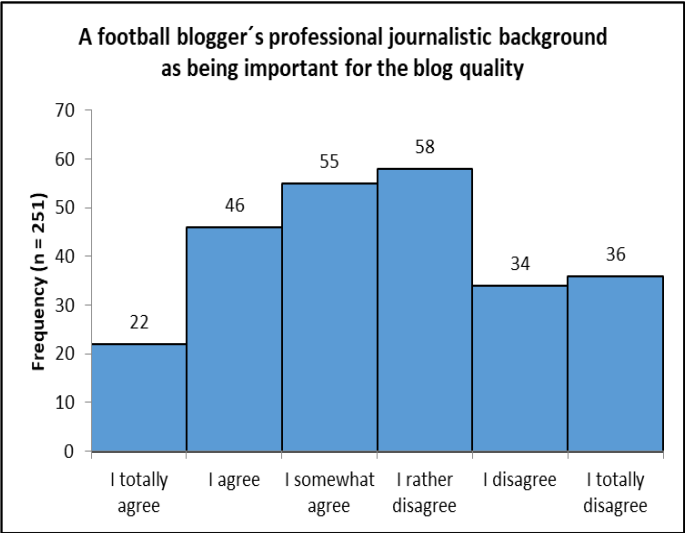


Figure 52. Controversial results regarding the impact of the football bloggers' professional journalistic background on the blog quality (mean 3.5 ± 1.5).

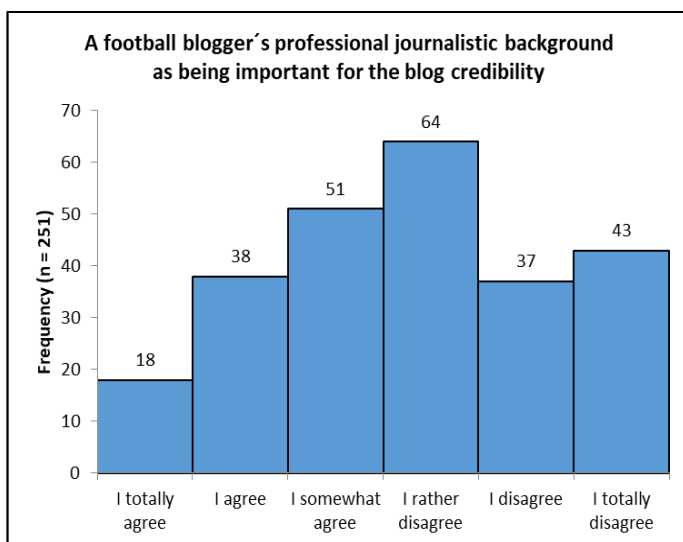


Figure 53. Controversial results regarding the impact of the football bloggers' professional journalistic background on the blog credibility (mean 3.7 ± 1.4).

7.5.1 Summary: The status of football blogs in the football media world

The previous sub-chapters show that bloggers are seen as journalists why GFBs can be elevated to the same level as their journalistic colleagues in terms of the comparability within the German football media world. However, as well as GFBs mentioned in the interviews, almost 88 % categorise FBs as an additional offer to the content of other football news media, but which are as important as other football news media (ca. 84 % of agreement). Thus, differences exist between blogs and other journalistic services, and the readership majority agrees that GFBs write about topics which are not offered in other football news media. This point makes German FBs to be a niche topic medium in which media recipients can find information and topics that established news media do not cover in their publications. What furthermore pays into the positive perception of FBs is that almost all blog readers think that GFBs are closer to football fans than other football journalists. Therefore, it is easier for GFBs to build a blog community with like-minded people who develop a close relationship to each other, although blog participants do not necessarily know each other personally or in a private context. GFBs, moreover, who write about a certain football club, are also fans as well as their readers who express their subjective opinions without being entitled to be an opinion-maker or

objective media producer. Apart from this, due to the closeness to readers and club fans, GFBs can encapsulate an atmosphere within a fan group which makes them to be an important media producer from which other journalists can profit by integrating this information in own articles. The blogger interviews show that there are little to no differences between bloggers and journalists in terms of working processes. Meanwhile, few bloggers get accreditations from football clubs which helps them to receive first-handed information and expand their blog service to comment a football match live from the press box in stadiums. Nevertheless, bloggers primarily fall back on already published information from journalists. Print or online journalists, though, must concentrate on various topics that have nothing to do with each other, i.e. journalists do not write about one football club, they also must cover regional sport or other football clubs (Bölz, 2018). Thus, fan bloggers concentrate exclusively on one specific club why they have the opportunity to invest more time for investigations of information in a variety of original sources. The higher time investment related aspect is also shared by almost two-third of the blog readership.

While the readership has a clear opinion regarding the uniqueness of the selection of football-related topics in FBs, opinions differ regarding the writing quality. The readership agrees (ca. 86 %) a difference in the writing style between bloggers and other football journalists, but almost 50 % also agrees that the FB postings are comparable to other journalists' articles. This opinion, however, is controversial to the fact that almost all readers think that bloggers are journalists. Here, it could be of interest to know how FB readers define journalism, journalists or rather the writing quality, and what characteristics are essential. Nevertheless, almost two-third of users prefer to read blogs than other football news media even though the majority estimates the writing quality as less qualitative.

The results show that bloggers are seen equally to journalists with reference to the status in the German football media world which leads to the conclusion that FBs are important platforms for the German football media world and should not be underestimated by established media because blog readers mainly prefer to read blogs.

Reasons might be the way how bloggers write and present information about football-related topics and that FBs cover topics which cannot be found in other football news media. Consequently, newspapers, online news websites or other professional journalistic football news services are not the non-plus-ultra in the German football media world and FB readers do not take professional journalistic content as a yardstick to estimate media content as important. It means that a professional journalistic background is not decisive whether a medium is felt as qualitative, credible or even necessarily for the consumption of certain media content at least for the half of the blog readership. Hence, GFBs' professional journalistic background is partly important for the quality and credibility of the blog which confirms the GFB's interview statements that their professional journalistic background helps them regarding the quality of media production.

7.5.2 Discussion: The status of football blogs in the football media world

The investigation of the GFBS shows that the majority of German FBs cannot be described as amateur bloggers because they also offer fan-journalistic blogs with similar working-processes and content of other news media sources. Neuberger et al. (2007) point out that many German bloggers have a journalistic background which covers the finding in this thesis. FB users, therefore, could estimate bloggers as journalists why it can be assumed that important characteristics such as information resources, quality and working processes (inter alia cross-linking to original sources) are factors in order to describe and compare the journalistic work (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). These are the potential characteristics why German FB users elevate FBs and bloggers on the same status level as those of professional-journalistic content and professional journalists. Although blog users estimate blogs as additional offer to the content of other professional football news media, football fan blogs are competitors to regional newspapers because the consumption behaviour and request for information decides on the status of a medium (Neuberger, 2016). That is, as users consume FBs on a regular basis and prefer reading a blog than other football news media, the high request for new

content shows the importance level of FBs for the German football media world (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). Furthermore, findings show that fashion blog users think likewise that relevant information can be found in blogs which cannot be found in the traditional journalistic offers (Fischer, 2006; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). Thus, GFBs provide texts about niche topics to which a specific group of interest wants to be informed. Moreover, Lawrence et al. (2010) already found out that also political blog readers read mainly political blogs than newspaper articles because users consume media that correspond to their interests or even more users gravitate toward blogs that accord with their fandom of a specific club, a social interest or political belief. Furthermore, Woodly (2008) shows that blogs help mobilise opinions, set the agenda and provide insights into a community for journalists, while providing blog recipients with an alternative and new technology of knowledge. Bloggers provide a room to interact, participate and exchange opinions and alternative perspectives. Thus, bloggers cover predominantly these niche topics because the media-oriented landscape (i.e. the expansion of media content services such as online news, blogs podcasts etc.) and the social framework (i.e. the formation of diverse publics within a society) changed why journalists mainly seem to produce the first-handed content, while bloggers act as multipliers of this content (Fischer, 2006). However, the football blog 120minuten.net, for instance, is an investigative blog that presents niche topics in a professional journalistic way as it can be found in other professional media, whereas their niche topics cannot be found in other football news media. Consequently, this football blog is a medium with a unique selling point in the German football media world. Therefore, these findings must be regarded more sophisticated because of the higher need of research time for new articles, these bloggers publish fewer than other GFBs and their readers might perceive this blog distinctive to other football club related fan blogs.

The respondents indicate that GFBs are closer to fans than professional journalists. As well as the findings in the German fashion blogosphere, it shows that football fan bloggers direct better at their readers' expectations due to their communicative intention than possibly regional journalists. Thus, bloggers are estimated as being more closely to fans and this could be a reason why readers assess blogs as more qualitative than

services of established media (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). In addition, because of the fusion of information from own investigations and other media sources, blogs provide the content for other media producers and readers. Fischer (2006) assumes that bloggers exactly as journalists undertake a comparable role with their blogs and leave their mark on the public opinion. Especially the latter point is confirmed by football blog readers of whom almost a third-quarter thinks that GFBs are opinion-makers. However, Fisher (2006) points out that blogs fulfil a complementary role in journalism only in those cases when blogs fulfil the demand of classical tasks of journalism (i.e. following the press code). The content and interview analysis in this thesis show that GFBs do fulfil these expectations. Consequently, in the blog readers' perception FBs have a complementary role and reach an equal status. These findings are confirmed by the results of Neuberger et al. (2007) and Nölleke et al. (2016) saying that blogging and journalism fulfil both a complementary role to each other because social media appear to be considered sources for sports journalists and both channels profit from each other. Additionally, the recipients' expectations and evaluation towards blogs in general and daily newspapers show that blog postings are assessed as critically as it is done with newspapers which shows that a blogger bonus does not exist because users assess the content of an article instead of the source (Neuberger, 2016; Trepte et al., 2008). That is, the credibility of FBs is the same as those of media outlets, but respondents tend more to disagree that a football blogger's professional journalistic background makes a blog more credible. Credibility, by the way, is not a property of the content or source because every recipient perceives it differently (Borah, 2015). credibility is comprised of the "source credibility (associated with the credibility of the message originator), message credibility (concerned with the characteristics of the message), and medium credibility (dealing with the channel through which the message is delivered)" (Borah, 2015, p. 299). It means that being a blogging journalist does not consequently result in a higher credibility of a blog, even when Borah (2015) show that in the case of a general audience, journalist bloggers are perceived as more credible than non-journalist bloggers. However, the major research findings show that the blog credibility might therefore not differ from journalistic offers. Johnson & Kaye (2004) and Benning & Sweetser (2007)

find no significant observable but little differences between blogs and traditional media in terms of credibility. That is, blog readers think blogs are moderately to very credible and blogs are even more credible than other online and traditional news sources (e.g. online televisions, radio or magazines) (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). In addition, the surveyed blog recipients from the study of Johnson & Kaye (2004) rated blogs higher on depth of information what covers the results in the FB user survey. These findings confirm the previous aspect that the content is the decisive factor that influences the readers' perception and journalism is no longer the untouchable opinion pacemaker that has the demand on being the main credible source in the media world (Lünenborg, 2005). Banning & Sweetser (2007, p. 461) think that “[p]erhaps the public sees personal blogs and newspapers as similar news sources, equally socially distant. The similarity between traditional (online media and newspapers) and non-traditional media (personal blogs and media blogs) in the minds of the study participants was echoed in their perceptions of the media’s credibility”. These findings can be transferred to the football blog survey respondents.

Allen & Reese (2016) conclude that blogs enable also ordinary people to have an impact on a community opinion in a way that was only reserved for media producers from large media outlets. Even when blogs allow people to interact with each other, football blog commenters do not think that their opinion has any impact on other readers' or the blogger's opinion. Nevertheless, the advent of social media and blogging has changed the status of the traditional journalism. Football blog recipients prefer reading blogs than other football news media. A comprehensible explanation could be connected to the findings regarding online news sources and follow-up communication that there is a multidimensional relationship between sports journalism and blogs because “(...) sports journalism competes with other sources to achieve attention within social media, and social media have turned out to be a competitor on the market for exclusive news. Journalists integrate social media into their work by disseminating news via these channels. Lastly, social media complement journalists' tools to gather information, and journalism complements other sources that are discussed on social media platforms. Obviously, German sports journalism and social media maintain a rather peaceful and

productive co-existence. German sports journalists do not perceive social media as the saviour of their profession, but they still perceive them as valuable tools with specific and previously unknown strengths” (Nölleke et al., 2016, p. 14). Consequently, FBs fulfil special functions as a competitor that potentially critic mainstream media in a new and intertextual communication in which the distinction between consumer and producer becomes blurred (Bruns, 2009). While blogging was first seen as an amateur blogosphere and communication platform with poor quality and unreliable nature (Carlson, 2007; O’Sullivan, 2008), the majority of GFBs nowadays work in nearly professional practice routine of journalism why football blog users possibly estimate blogs as important as other football news media. Apart from that, the blogosphere has the potential of developing public relations, but journalistic practitioners seldom follow this aspect and approach, although journalists use blogs at a similar way and level to that of the general audience (Porter et al., 2009). That is, journalists use blogs for the reception of information and investigation and as a journalistic source (Neuberger et al., 2007), but only few write their own blog. In comparison to other sport journalists, some football journalists recognise and use the opportunity to reach the population directly through blogging and placing content in blogs.

As a conclusion, football blog users are composed of different groups in terms of educational and professional background which recipient groups consume blogs for several reasons from which the investigation of additional and unique information is one of the main ones. Consequently, as the average blog user and probably other football journalists consider FBs in the process of media consumption for any reasons, German FBs can be defined not only as a contemporary medium to journalism but as a highly potential competitor to professional journalists at least on a regional level because survey respondents categorise GFBs to be journalists what, furthermore, makes a distinctions between the football blogosphere and football journalism difficult. At the same time, the results show that football blogging in Germany should not be underestimated by professional journalists as it is done by some of them (Neuberger, 2016; Nölleke et al, 2016).

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Implications

In three preceding research chapters, the framework of GFBs, blog users and the blog content were used to document and discuss the objectives in this thesis that explain the media culture of the GFBS basing on the interplay of media production, media content and media reception. In this final chapter, the research findings are summarised and the doctoral thesis is concluded by examining the broader implications of the research project. In particular, it was considered how GFBs' mediated working practices and processes are. It is also drawn up, how the interaction behaviour between blog participants and the relationship between GFBs and several peer recipient groups influence these content-process routines. Moreover, with reference to the last research objective the relationship between football blog participants in the content-process routines is critically evaluated to generate a better theoretical understanding of their roles in this relationship and its influence on the content production of FB postings. The contributions of this work to media studies emphasising that previously discussed literature to blogospheres are partly state to the art and obsolete as well. In addition, the methodological usage including the advantages and limitations of sport communication research by using qualitative and quantitative methods and the chance for such methods to break out the traditional hegemonic quantitative-oriented research in the German communication research are reflected in order to enable a broader consideration of qualitative methods in the research process. As final step, the strengths and limitations of this research project, the practical applications of the work, and approaches for future research projects are finally summarised.

8.1 Synopsis

This summary of findings compares and discusses the results of all three research steps: The GFBs' working processes and practices, impact of the blog participants' interaction behaviour on working processes, and relationship between blog participants as well as their role allocations in working practices as a consequence of the existing social

interaction in the GFBS. Giving a short overview, it can be explained that there are several factors affecting the media culture of the socially interactive GFBS:

- The intentions for blog participation,
- The blog features,
- The occupational working processes and the professionalism of the GFBS,
- The relationship between blog participants and the social media usage,
- The blog participants' role functions and allocations,
- The status of FBs in the German football media world.

8.1.1 (RO1) The investigation of the German football blogger's working practices and processes of media content production

GFBS are blogging for several reasons. Some changed in the meantime of their blogging career: While in the beginning the own blog was used to express own thoughts about football-related topics or use writing as a tool for self-therapy, nowadays the blog developed to a central medium for the daily media consumption for bloggers and their readership. It is difficult to evaluate a pattern for standard motivations when starting football blogging, but blogging is a way of personal development (i.e. when it becomes more professional or content is produced in a higher frequency), and GFBS establish themselves as experts in a special field who create a public record of their thoughts and news with reference a football club or other football-related topics and whose blogging platform is used as an information source and communication platform for interactions (Allen & Reese, 2016).

There are common findings but also differences in the GFBS which makes this online media sphere diverse. Even when the same software program is used, the designs differ from each other and FBs vary in the main emphasis of the blog (topic), layout, writing style, and shape of text matters. However, parallels to journalism in this context can be

seen because FBs resemble the formal features of online and print news articles titles as a result that headlines function as appeals or an index of content and are a decisive factor for German FB users to read a posting. A further common aspect to newspapers can be deduced from the findings when relating it to the number of media producers in a blog which is diverse in the GFBS. However, a balanced number of single-authored and multiple-authored blogs can be found. It is common that FBs are shared by several people who produce content commonly or independently from each other but for the same blog website. For instance, the blog writing alternates between authors and in multiple-authored blogs with mainly male bloggers tasks such as taking photos, writing content or uploading the content are split among the blogger group. Moreover, the majority of FBs in Germany write about daily news of a specific football club which makes them to be a fan blog. German FBs contain double long texts (averagely 600 words) than articles of other football news media which could be the results that GFBS predominantly cover topics in a very detailed form and with full explanations to contextualise the content for people who are not familiar with a club or topic. The postings contain links to other online sources and are an overview of what events happened regarding the favourite club or a specific topic. GFBS write types of long-reads which include facts and objective coverages (e.g. results, percentage of ball possession, or summarised match coverages of established online newspaper sources) combined with their experiences in the stadium or a detailed presentation of own opinion. This way of content production fits well to readers' expectations who read blogs to get informed and entertained at the same time. The entertaining effect, additionally, is the result of the subjective writing style bloggers interpolate in their articles.

Some of the investigated bloggers have a professional-journalistic background why it is not surprising that GFB's working processes (in terms of information gathering and selection) and work standards (e.g. double-checking of information for verification reasons) are similar to other professional football journalists (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018). The information collection is a very central and important process for the productions of postings and social media play an important role because it is used both for information

collection and in few cases for content multiplication in individual social media accounts. GFBS have their individual concept of using and integrating the delivered information in the blog in a transparent way. That is, external information is embedded as links in the text so that readers can retrace it. There are different ways of gathering and investigating information (i.e. either from other news sources or self-collection via interviews or other kind of information investigations) which differ between FBs and sometimes within a blog (inter alia as a result of the involvement of different authors or varying topics in postings). Bloggers feel responsible for their content and their readers also expect that true and double-checked information are published in articles. That is, bloggers consider rules and establish criteria for the information collection and do not use any sort of information and pay close attention to its correctness which must be confirmed by at least two independent sources (double-checking of information). Thus, truthfulness and verification of information are two essential points during the selection process of news. Furthermore, the verification is guaranteed by citing sources correctly in the text and by respecting the (journalistic) press code (e.g. verifying information before using it in articles). Even when some articles contain opinions, bloggers want to present true information why links to original online sources are incorporated in texts so that readers can read more or check published news in postings. In this checking process, two points influence the inclusion of links: The bloggers' demands on themselves and on their (former) profession as a journalist as well as their knowledge that readers are sceptical and click on links either to find more information, re-read or monitor it.

However, there are differences between football blogging and traditional journalism: While both are journalistic environments, in interactive FBs is no editorial staff that intervenes the produced product like editors in publishing houses (e.g. delete or re-write text passages). Bloggers in multiple-authored blogs maintain it alternatively by giving feedback to each other before a text is published but without changing phrases or sentences in order to secure a blogger's freedom of expression and content production. Thus, the GFBS is an alternative communication and content production medium on which any citizen has the chance to create content in a personally preferred way. Differences with mainstream media can also be seen. Editorial processes exist, but it is

converted differently: A textual (not a stylistic or linguistic) restriction in multiple-authored blogs means that there is the need of a blogger's orientation to the general, standard and uniform guidelines such as the presentation of match results with a hyphen instead of a colon. Furthermore, FBs deliver an added value that newspapers or online news websites do not provide, i.e. a pre-selected and summarised overview of news for which blog recipients do not have to invest time anymore, but still receive the option to re-read articles in cases of interest. Beyond this, mainstream media focus on holding users on their websites, but GFBs make the opposite and enable their users to re-read information from the original sources it is coming from. In this context, FBs become to a multiplying platform that interconnects news and sources with each other, while gatewatching these sources simultaneously. These are the reasons why FBs are complementary and equal media sources to other mainstream news media. The professional degree of GFBs might differ between them, but they define professionalism as a full-time blog maintenance, a blogger's former journalistic work experience, time management and the financial concept. The dichotomy of professional working processes between the football blogging and football journalism is not necessary because bloggers are convinced that it is their duty to respect journalistic standards and the German press code. Findings show that working processes are almost similar between GFBs and football journalists which is the result of their mainly professional journalistic background. Nevertheless, GFBs do not explain professionalism by justifying and limiting the aspect of professionalism with experiences in journalistic writing, but with the opportunity to invest as much time as possible, that is whether blogging is carried out as the main job or income source. In this context, professionalism means that maintaining a blog as a first job helps bloggers to invest almost the whole day for press reviews, be currently informed, receive first-handed information by interviewing participants or realise projects together with famous sport authors.

8.1.2 (RO2): The analysis of the impacts of the interaction behaviour between football blog participants on the media production

Blog participants have different reasons for blogging, reading or interacting socially in FBs (Table 8). There are various motives for starting to write a blog why a richness of blog contents in terms of topic selection has been developed in the GFBS as football blogs are being produced by a range of different people for a range of different reasons. Fan bloggers started primarily with blogging for self-therapeutically reasons: They outlet frustrations and joyful emotions when their favourite club lost or won matches or when they were not satisfied with the coverage of regional and national media in this context. What firstly started as the simple down-writing of own thoughts, developed to the intentions of sharing knowledge and offering readers a platform to communicate and interact with each other which finally builds an interactive blog community. However, economical reasons are exceptional motives and can be related to bloggers who blog as a profession or intend to earn money with blogging as first income source. The majority of bloggers forgoes sponsoring from companies and when financial support is wanted they prefer crowdfunding concepts or donations. Another alternative is the collaboration with publishing houses, but in any case bloggers aim and demand to produce the content to their own requirements and ideas. The content analyses and survey results show that blog users and bloggers when participating have interests of financial independence: Bloggers want to produce content independently from sponsors and readers want to have free access to information why only a small group of users supports FBs financially with donations or crowdfunding. Thus, blogs are used as a platform to get informed and entertained, but also to discuss about various topics in a respectful way in this online environment in which readers have gratis access to information in comparison to newspapers' paywalls. Moreover, the football blogosphere is a media world in which topics are presented that sometimes distinguish from those in mainstream media. Thus, FB readers find football side-issues in well-researched and investigated articles that cannot be found in mainstream media. Especially when side issues such as social and historical football topics fill the main blog content, bloggers provide an alternative

information platform by offering an open-access and payless journal with the full access to well-researched content.

Blogging	Blog consumption	Social interaction (bloggers' view)	Social interaction (users' view)
Self-therapy	Topic selection of a blog	Enabling interaction for democratic reasons	Wish to express the own opinion
Outlet frustrations or joyful emotions	Read other people's opinions	Interaction as a natural factor of the football blogosphere	No demand on conducting follow-up conversations
Dissatisfaction with the coverage of regional and national media	Dissatisfaction with the coverage of regional and national media	Activating the comment feature for the communicative exchange with others and the reception of other's opinions	Connection of the interaction activity with external factors (e.g. during extraordinary phases in the league)
Down-writing of own thoughts and opinion	Generally interested in the blogger's latest content	Interaction and readers' comments are enrichment for the blog development and blog community.	No belief of own comments to contain interesting information for the blogger
Share knowledge	Finding more investigated, sophisticated and detailed information about football topics than in other football news media	Comments as feedback mechanism to their content	Comments about the content and less about the blogger's writing quality
Economic reasons (exceptional motive)	Few financial support of blogs	Comments for verification and falsification of information	Impact on other readers' opinions
Presentation of side issues in football	Finding information about side issues in football	Leaving the stage of discussions to the blog users	Low interaction activity in blog content with special football topics (e.g. football history)
Freedom of media production without the censoring of an editorial staff	Getting insights into football topics off the field	Low activity level in the comment feature (due to the former expression of own thoughts in texts)	A small group with continuous involvement in interactions
offering readers a platform to communicate and interact with other	Reception of information about new entries in the blog's social media accounts	Interaction on different communication platforms (e.g. social media)	Interaction on different communication platforms (e.g. social media)
Construction of an interactive blog community	Preference of reading football blogs than other football news media	Construction of an interactive blog community	Making comments for interacting with others and building a blog community

Table 8. Blog participants' motives for blogging, consuming blogs and socially interacting.

GFBS and users value the entertaining selection of topics which can also be found in other blogospheres (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). This finding shows among other things that bloggers focus on their audience because it is their most important reference group whose continuous blog usage and involvement is relevant for the survival of a FB even when giving low feedback to the writing style or topic propositions in the comment feature. The time investment for the interaction with their readership differs between bloggers because every single blogger assigns the importance of the self-involvement in interactions differently. In addition, it is a small group of users that comments frequently on articles and therefore uses the blog for expressing thoughts or interacting with others (i.e. who has not be necessarily the blogger himself). However, regarding Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz (2018) all these aspects show the main difference between bloggers and journalists which makes a blog to be a niche medium but with a high level of importance for media consumers. Consequently, the involvement of the audience into the working processes is important for a football blog and the inclusion of the readership is a basic and democratic factor for the production of FBs and it enables the free speech for everyone in the blogosphere when the level and way of expression fits the established blog netiquette. Thus, FBs enable dialogues which are used by a small recipient group, but which makes GFBS to be participatory and citizen journalists who interact with readers and enable participation in the blog community (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Lünenborg, 2005).

8.1.3 (RO3:) The critical evaluation of the relationship between football bloggers, users and blog content to understand their role allocations in the blogosphere and the status of football blogs in the German football media world

While the GFBS is a media world in which social interactions are wanted by bloggers, users do not prefer blogs in which these are enabled. It shows that social interaction is important in some way, but blog users prefer reading blogs than being involved in discussions even though they commented once on a posting or on other comments. That is, the GFBS is a type of voyeurism room in which people prefer reading articles and

other comments but without being primarily and actively involved in written conversations and debates. Furthermore, it also has an impact on how blog participants estimate the role within a blog or the blogosphere. Thus, while bloggers estimate the readers' comments as an important feedback for showing new perspectives, building a positive atmosphere, enhancing the blog post quality or looking for new topics, commenters, and readers think the opposite and estimate themselves as a passive consumer who from time to time leaves a comment that has an impact on other readers but less on bloggers. Beyond this, it is a small group of blog users that consequently comment on articles whose comment activity depends on external factors such as extraordinary situations in the club or controversial topics to discuss. Even when few people interact in blogs, different types of relationships can be defined within the GFBS: GFBs build and maintain a relationship with different groups of readers. That is, bloggers assign another level of importance to media producers (i.e. journalists, spokesmen, club officials and players) than to readers who just consume the blog. The relationship to these average readers can be classified as superficial because the average blog reader is a recipient of information to whom bloggers have no intense contact and receive no direct benefit for their status and work. However, bloggers estimate this relationship as a good and normal one which bonds on mutual respect. GFBs, in addition, liaise more intense with readers who support the blog financially because these supporters receive a special gimmick (e.g. the invitation to a private WhatsApp messenger group for blog supporters in which meetings are agreed, feedback is given to the blogger or articles before its public release). It can be summarised that the relationship and atmosphere in FBs is mainly positive and friendly, and bloggers perceive it as an important factor for the users' blog perception, but they concentrate more on the relationship with other media producers who enable them the access to breaking news or information and from whom they pursue to receive their acceptance as journalists on equal terms. As a consequence, interaction plays a central role in football blogging and it occurs in different interaction rooms with a low interaction activity of bloggers and a higher involvement by readers whose comments provide added values from the bloggers' viewpoints. Furthermore, because of the usage of other social media

and microblogs for the information collection, publications and interactions (e.g. communicative exchange of opinions on Twitter) blogs cannot be limited to the blog website. Football blogging means that bloggers must maintain the blog and other social media accounts at the same time and cannot concentrate on solely one platform because Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have changed the way followers interact and behave during the interaction. Consequently, blog followers spend their time on different social network services. Social media play an important role in the football blogosphere and it adds a multimedia flavour through texts, videos, audios or other sources in postings. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are probably the most important transfer-tools in the football blogosphere that connects people with blogs due to the fact that bloggers use different social media to spread information and to refer to new blog entries which again makes it easier to reach new potential readers in other media. Moreover, the interaction and relationship between involved persons in the football blogosphere influences the content of a blog and demonstrate that the content is produced collaboratively co-created passively or actively, but bloggers decide as last instance which content is published in the blog. Consequently, interaction is essential and is a vital part in FBs.

Everywhere social interactions occur, relationships are built. In this context, role allocations, moreover, are defined and the integrated media elements (bloggers, users and the blog) fulfil different roles which can also change within the same blog depending on the produced content or topic selection (Table 9).

The football blogger(s)	The blog users	The blog
Gatewatcher of the mainstream media	Gatewatcher of the blog and mainstream media	Daily used media source
Pre-selector of information	Informants	Media source of objectively presented information and subjectively impacted entertainment
Transparent provider and multiplier of information	Provider of alternative perspectives	Medium of special interest fields
Narrow passage of football-related information	Active and passive co-creator (i.e. producer)	Credible media source
Observer of situational developments in football	Skeptic (e.g. regarding links)	Communication and interaction platform
Opinion-maker	Passive-active blog consumer	Information platform
Enabler of discussions	Controller of published news	Medium of group communication
Community manager	Multipliers of blog content	Fanzine
Mediator between fan groups, club and fan groups, science and interested people	Critic of blogs and mainstream media	Alternative, additional and equal medium compared with other mainstream football news media
(Citizen) journalist	Producer	Media-cultural product

Table 9. The football blog participants' role functions and allocations.

The GFBS is a medium space of gatewatching and co-creating. Bloggers gather pre-selectively information either from other mainstream news media or from own collected information and provide it to their readership, while readers are enabled to monitor both the mainstream media and blogs. Thus, blog recipients are sceptical and critical users of mainstream media and blogs, but they preferably include FBs in their daily use of media to get informed and entertained about football-related topics. This critical attitude, moreover, combined with the active involvement in the comment feature makes bloggers and commenters to providers of information whether it is delivering news or presenting alternative opinions. The criticism is expressed positively and negatively in comments why bloggers must act as community managers that function as mediators on the one hand between commenters, on the other hand bloggers can mediate between a fan base and a football club when certain issues must be spoken (e.g. fan behaviour in the stadium) that football clubs cannot communicate because it would ignite discussions with fans and lead to a broken or a difficult relationship between the club and the fan

base. That is, even when bloggers decide finally which information to consider in articles, users co-create the content passively because bloggers think about their readers' expectations towards some formulations or selected topics and actively by expressing opinions or publishing links or delivering additional information sources. Therefore, FBs are media sources in which information are presented objectively but with subjective and partly colloquial formulations. This combination results in the aspect that FBs present news in a way that cannot be found in newspapers because newspapers must cover news in an objective way. Thus, although information and entertainment are combined blogs are a credible media platforms and GFBs' working processes and standards do not differ from those of other professional journalists which again makes GFBs to be a type of professional online journalists. However, GFBs are citizen journalists who are average citizens rather than salaried journalists, write and submit stories which are less the outcome of direct investigative reporting but collected available information on newsworthy topics. These working practices, moreover, show similarities to mainstream media journalists who compile information and stories of news agencies that are furtherly evaluated and commented. In addition, football blog participants use blogs as information and interaction media that present topics of special interest fields in football and are fanzines, (i.e. a media of group communication).

GFBs and readers represent a variety of roles which make them being flexible in the way of producing or consuming content and interacting with each other. Therefore, the purposes of every type of FB are the fulfilment of the role of offering information with an alternative perspective about a football club or a football-related topic for a small cycle of readers who either are fans of the club, experts or just interested in what bloggers are writing about. In addition, it is a media consumer cycle that simultaneously wants to be informed and entertained and of whom again only a small group wants to discuss about released topics. The blog content, however, is decisive when it comes to the point of involvement of bloggers and recipient groups: It is not limited to the written content because podcasts expand the blogging concepts. Thus, blog users nowadays cannot be restricted to a single group of readers. The readership is divided in the average reader who passively consumes the blog content without writing any comments, the

reader who consumes the content and writes comments, the reader who supports blogs financially, and professional media participants such as journalists, club spokesmen or club officials who use FBs to receive insights on a fandom's mood. There is also a group of podcast listeners, but no dichotomy of content consumption exists because blog users read articles and/or listen to podcast sessions.

The GFBS' self-image and public-image are close to each other showing that the orientation of their readership, the interaction with users and between them as well as the close relationship to users are important for the role as a blogger (Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018). German FBs are communities of blogging practices in which groups of participants "(...) share certain routines and expectations about the use of blogs as a tool for information, identity, and relationship management" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1409). Among football fans, blogs facilitate conversations and it extends the chance to find like-minded people. While in the past, football club fans discussed mainly in forums, now FBs enable the communication between fans with the contemporaneous opportunity to get informed about football and club-related topics. Thus, the nature of football fosters social interactions which are a main characteristic of the social media world (Nölleke et al., 2016). As a result, the increasing relevance of FBs as an information and interaction platform implies also chances for publisher's journalistic services. While some German publishers break into the football blogosphere (e.g. the Hamburger Morgenpost with their blog HSV24) to distribute news and integrate the spirit of social media in the repertoire, other media outlets can use relevant FBs of private persons to receive the public opinion of a certain football fan base. However, some journalists and GFBS value blogs as a channel to publish and promote their own content (Gulyas, 2013; Nölleke et al., 2016). Moreover, users attribute credibility and relevance to blogs and, in addition, Neuberger (2016) attributes neutrality, accuracy and continuity exclusively to journalism. He explains general blog characteristics that can be found in the GFBS: The subjective perspective that in German FBs also contains an objective coverage as a part of the blog content, the easy access to the author, diversity of intense discussions and opinions, external linking and entertainment. GFBS describe themselves as journalists wherefore they profess to follow journalistic norms. These

findings contradict to those of other researchers explaining that the audiences' blog usage and their perceptions show that media coverage in blogs does not have the same professional and qualitative level as the one of professional journalism (Neuberger, 2016; Gil de Zuñiga et al., 2011). Furthermore, Neuberger (2016) claims that while in professional journalistic news production and quality assurance are largely non-public within the editorial department, in participatory journalistic contents such as blogs contributions are only reviewed after publication and further elaborated. Especially this assumption cannot be transferred to the GFBS because bloggers follow the German press code containing the objective of a truthful coverage that is guaranteed by journalistic working-processes such as the double-checking of information before using and releasing it. Apart from this, football blogging covers patterns of the journalism-as-process model. That is a paradigm of interactive media production looking at journalism as an on-going, two-way conversation between the audience and the media rather than just reporters' and editors' performing act (Robinson, 2011). In this context, journalism is not defined as the product (i.e. the story or the newspaper) but as a process (i.e. the continuous information flow) which is already converted by GFBs who initiate the start of news content release and enable users to enrich it with comments and links to other news sources.

Consequently, there may be differences between blogging and journalism, football blog users, however, elevate FBs on the same importance level as other mainstream news media by which credibility and quality in terms of writing and information collection are decisive factors. The status of a blog in the German football media world depends on various factors from which the relationship to readers and the network to media producers or informants from the football media world are very important. Although bloggers do not estimate their blogs as a competing platform with media publishers' services, bloggers are not afraid of trying out and implementing new concepts such as (live) podcasts or live game tickers that enhances the blog status because users prefer reading a live ticker of a fan blog than of established news media. Beside this, some GFBs receive accreditations which enable them to expand their media services and conduct interviews to receiving first-handed information without the need of falling

back upon other news media sources. Thus, bloggers' status in the football media world enhances, although journalists read blogs to be informed about the mood of a fan base, but simultaneously and controversially do not take them seriously as journalists, influencers or opinion-makers. Thus, the development in the acceptance of blogs show that FBs are competitive to professional online sources and newspapers because especially their closeness to fans and close relationship with their readers makes FBs an important medium for blog participants and an important information source within the German football news media landscape. The reason for this is the building of an interactive blog community with like-minded people who develop a close relationship to the blog and other users. It also shows that a good relationship with the readership results in a positive perception of the media product. Media publishers, for instance, enable readers to comment online articles on news websites, but they do not maintain close contact with their readers by answering questions or commenting other comments. Comments are deleted or the comment feature is deactivated instead. Therefore, as media publishers aim to hold readers on their websites they should concentrate on giving feedback or answering comments in order to develop and maintain close relationship with their users. Otherwise, users may feel ignored and consequently leave the news website. Moreover, FB users estimate bloggers as equal media producers as other professional journalists leading to the conclusion that FBs should not be underestimated by established media because readers mainly prefer to read blogs than other football news media. Consequently, newspapers, online news websites or other professional journalistic services are not the non-plus-ultra of football media anymore and their background as an objective and professional journalism service are not even the main criteria to be accepted by media users as an important media source. It means that a professional journalistic background is not decisive whether a medium or a FB is estimated as a qualitative and credible information source.

8.2 Methodological reflections

The mixed-method approach was used to analyse the media culture of the GFBS in the context of previously defined research objectives. The qualitative methods (i.e. content analysis and blogger interviews) had the advantage to extract detailed information with reference to the working processes and practices as well as the impact of interactions in blogs on the content-process routines. Methodological limitations, however, also existed because these methods are time-consuming and require the researcher's ability to interpret the evaluated information correctly by placing it in context with the research objectives and by not losing the link to the time-oriented currency in the online world because it is a dynamic sphere in which contents and working processes can change within short time as a result of technological innovations or changes in recipients' media consumption. Thus, merely a small and random sample of blog postings and group of bloggers were investigated. The latter ones were additionally limited by the fact that just blogs and bloggers were investigated to which the administrators or rather bloggers agreed to. In contrast, there is a high number of blog users in comparison to the amount of bloggers why a quantitative method (i.e. surveying) was used: Firstly, it fit best to the third research objective in terms of methodological use; secondly, the descriptive method is useful when it is aimed to present the status quo to describe the population of the FB readership; thirdly, it enables to reach as many people as possible to receive representative results. However, as football blogging communities are very critical towards any kind of published information in the blog or in mainstream media, the researcher depended on the bloggers support to spread the survey link in their blogs as the aim was to ask blog users for their media reception and interaction behaviour. Furthermore, the survey results cannot be retraced to the participants' first touching point which makes it difficult to distinguish from which blog or platform the survey participants came. That is, it may be possible that a high number of survey participants are followers of the same blog which again can make the results biased. Consequently, the interaction behaviour, media reception and media perception is influenced by the source that is consumed. Therefore, the majority of the results may base on the readership of few blogs whose answers may refer to one blogger or merely few bloggers

which makes a generalisation of the quantitative findings throughout the whole blogosphere more difficult. Moreover, the participants were more likely to be consumers of German FBs who may have been more enthusiastic about the FB format in comparison to traditional football journalism offers. Although bloggers in interviews point out the existence of different blog user groups, the descriptive survey may not cover the variety and complexity of the blog readership and it is assumed that journalists or club officials did not participate. The latter peer groups could not be extracted anyway because the professional background was not asked in the questionnaire. It would have been necessary to place the survey in different groups (inter alia journalists, spokesmen of football clubs, club officials etc.) for the derivation of a comparability between recipient groups, even when a between-group-comparison is not the purpose of the descriptive survey as it intends to describe a population as a whole. Moreover, a representative and relatively unbiased between-group-comparison could have been difficult in terms of the reception of significant results because the different recipient groups contain very low to very high number of subjects. As a conclusion, a methodological mixed-method approach regarding the investigation of media reception is a suggestion for future blogosphere research, and methods should be used (e.g. interviews) that either allow a between-recipient group-comparison or give more detailed information to how blog recipients are divided in groups and how these groups perceive and use blogs.

One methodological key outcome of this study is the benefit of data, method and theory triangulation: The combination of these triangulation approaches enable a holistic and sophisticated evaluation and analysis of research questions and increase the credibility of the produced scientific knowledge by enhancing the internal consistency and generalizability through the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same research project. The considered theories in the theoretical framework and the case study approach guided the research process and led to the integration of narrative and descriptive methods in this project wherefore the combination of qualitative comparative methods with quantitative data demonstrated the adjustability and flexibility of the case study design and made a significant contribution to the understanding of the interactive

GFBS (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Chetty, 2013; George & Bennett, 2005; Harrison et al., 2017; Keutel & Werner, 2011; Ponelis, 2015). The used case study methods helped to understand situationally, explore inductively and analyse holistically the participants' perspectives and multiple subjective realities that represent the complexity of co-created processes, practices, social interactions and relationships in the GFBS. The broad scope of methods established the meanings of experiences from participants' viewpoints whereby qualitative data enabled an in-depth analysis and descriptive data extended the discovering of subjective meanings and understandings of the GFBS-contextualised experiences. Although the thesis based on the researcher's interpretivist worldview for which other researchers usually and exclusively use qualitative methods, it was decided to put descriptive data in a qualitative context with previously collected qualitatively sampled data so that findings can be transferred from one context to another. This approach resulted in a sophisticated and data-rich consent construction of the GFBS and common patterns that base on individual cases which again are used for the theoretical model of this study project. Consequently, the methodological and data triangulation was helpful for the holistic, comprehensive and in-depth investigation and understanding of the complex GFBS in its context. The collective alignment of these elements with the theoretical and conceptual framework determined a justifiable structure of this study and developed the validity, reliability and credibility of the research findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008;

8.3 Theoretical reflections and the theoretical model of this thesis

Lünenborg (2005) points out that it is necessary to use a holistic approach to understand a media culture and journalism as a cultural process by analysing three factors together: media production, content and reception. While in German media studies and journalism research, research projects focus on either one factor, the usage of a multi-factorial approach is rare to find. The internet is therefore predestined to use this holistic and multi-perspective approach because the structure and abilities in the online media world have an impact on online media producers' working processes which in contrast are

well-known from journalists of traditional media. The GFBS shows that the familiar patterns from professional-journalistic communication in terms of content production and interaction behaviour is dissolved and that the football blogosphere is a journalistic genre that has its own bound forms which mainly follows professional-journalistic patterns, but which also develops constantly due to media users' higher acceptance and technological innovations (Lünenborg, 2015). Thus, focusing on merely the media production or the media producer's intentions is too limited why the holistic approach was used to grasp the whole process of media communication in the GFBS. The findings show that the GFBS is a type of modern citizen and participatory journalism that follows professional journalistic rules and combines theoretical approaches from the production of user-generated content production and journalism as a cultural process (Bruns, 2009; Lünenborg, 2015), the co-creation in online media (Baumer et al., 2011; Bruns, 2009; Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008) and the existence of media producers' and media recipients' role allocations as 'producers' in this interactive and interacting community (Bruns, 2007). Moreover, theoretical patterns of citizen journalism (Bruns, 2007; Bruns, 2008; Bruns, 2010) and participatory journalism (Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008; Fischer, 2006; Lünenborg, 2005) belong to the blogosphere. While current online journalism and blogosphere theories describe the blogging journalism as an amateur field of media production, the GFBS is different and contradicts the postulation of amateur journalism. That is, FB participants attach great importance on a credible, truthful and accurate publication and presentation of information and news wherefore bloggers' working process routines and their status in the football media world can be compared to those of professional football journalists with the difference that information and entertainment are combined in media coverage (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018). FBs, moreover, are interactive information tools that aid the change process of journalism and make journalism more complex because GFBSs combine journalistic services (such as video, radio and text) and expand the circle of competitors in the German football journalism. Consequently, the football blogosphere breaks traditional role models in football journalism and in media production, media content and media reception. The media culture of the GFBS can be defined as a

journalistic environment with consumers and producers pursuing a high level of journalistic professionalism in terms of content production, content presentation and interaction behaviour without making a claim that it is a competing source for the professional football journalism sphere.

8.4 Theoretical model of interactive production, consumption and co-creation processes in the German football blogosphere

The GFBS is far more complex than considered theories considered in this thesis with regard to content production practices and reception processes because findings show that the interaction behaviour and relationships within the FB community have an impact on the GFBS' working processes and the audiences' FB reception, and both components influence the co-creatively produced content (Figure 54).

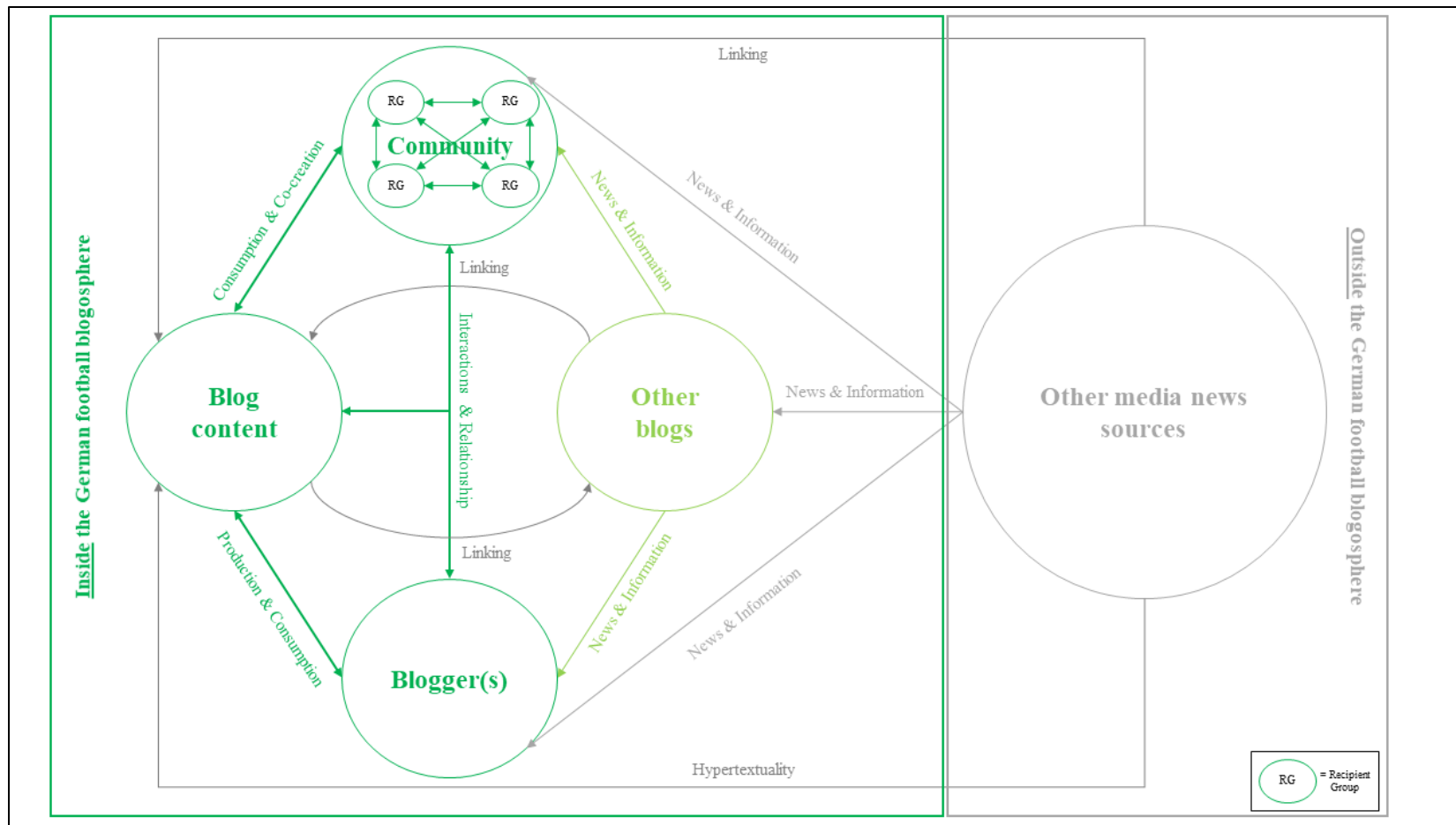


Figure 54. The theoretical model of production, consumption and co-creation processes in the interactive German football blogosphere.

The theoretical model of this thesis shows that media-cultural processes in the GFBS are complex when it is related to the triangulated media-cultural interaction of blog content production, blog content and blog consumption. In this theoretical model all considered theories are integrated, connected but also expanded in its construction especially with reference to the impact factors of the interaction behaviour and relationships between FB participants. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the model in more detail: Firstly, the GFBS can be declared as an own professional journalistic genre which theoretically functions independently from other media outside the blogosphere. Thus, when analysing an online sphere such as the blogosphere, the German football media world can be divided into mechanisms inside the GFBS and outside the GFBS. However, other media sources that are outside the GFBS become structurally an important part of the GFBS as its content is integrated in postings either by linking or including text passages in blog articles (hypertextuality). Once a blog content is produced by GFBs after the information was collected from other media sources, other football blogs and/or the community which consists of different recipient groups (RG) (i.e. readers who do not comment on articles, readers who occasionally comment on a blog content, journalists or club spokesmen etc.), it is published on the blog website or in other social media accounts of the blog or blogger(s) where blog recipients consume the content. This cycle of production and consumption is expanded by the involvement of the blog community that co-creates the content by commenting interesting opinions, viewpoints, links to sources and more. Therefore, a discussion between commenters or more seldom between commenters and bloggers influences partly the opinion of other readers by following a discussion on an article. Thus, interactions and relationships with each other have an impact on the blog content because the communicative exchange can change opinions or in parts it makes bloggers their own mind up what their readers may think about formulations, selected topics or could find interesting. Consequently, the GFBS is a media-cultural process in which bloggers, consumers and the blog content interact with each other and make this kind of participatory journalism a dynamic genre in which content is mutually developed because blog participants co-create and *produce* FB content. Moreover, GFBs working processes are comparable with professional football

journalists' ones because the majority has a journalistic background and transfers editorial processes to the blogosphere. Furthermore, bloggers and the community are both important for the content production because the FB audience mainly consumes but co-creates the blog content and GFBs mainly produce but consume their recipients' co-creatively produced content.

It has to be mentioned that this theoretical model cannot be transferred completely to other professional journalistic news media worlds and the words 'blogger', 'blog content' and 'other blogs' cannot be easily replaced by other journalistic-related words (e.g. journalist instead of blogger), even when there are parallels in working processes and practices between FBs and other online media news sources. The grey and the green frame around the spheres "inside the German football blogosphere" and "outside the German football blogosphere" portray the independences of both journalistic systems because they exist by their own, but they can also fall back informatively on the other journalistic system. In addition, differences between the GFBS and other news media sources or blogospheres can be found because professional online journalists who work for publishers will not link to external sources or include hypertexts of opponent online papers to their own online articles, whereas it is a transparent and usual working step for GFBs. Another difference to other blogospheres is the reception of club accreditations which enable a direct access to athletes which promote the GFBs' status to those of other professional journalists. It shows the theoretical and potential independence of GFBs from other news media because with these accreditations some GFBs pave the way to collect information directly from the covered subject without any dependence from the content and information publication of other news media sources.

There are also dependencies from other news media sources which can be inside or outside the GFBS: Currency plays an important role in the selection of topics and timeline of content production because GFBs write mainly about current topics or breaking news and information that happened one day before or on the day of the article production and publication. In cases of no direct access to these information, bloggers fall back on information and news from other professional news media sources, whereas

bloggers with good relations and direct access to head coaches and spokesmen, for instance, can react faster in the sense of writing and publishing an article why the currency and actuality of a topic and the speed of publication show that they produce content in a professional journalistic manner and strengthen their position as independent football journalists who are not mandatory depending on former released news on websites outside the GFBS.

As a consequence, the theoretical model shows the uniqueness of the media culture of the GFBS and the specific production, consumption and co-creation processes of interactive German FBs. These media-cultural processes resemble and differ from other journalistic media cultures such as other sport blogs, fashion and lifestyle or political blogs or other professional football journalistic news sources. Moreover, the theoretical model includes the findings of the defined research objectives: It shows that GFBS' working practices and processes of media content production are influenced by external factors, but bloggers can also stay in their own blogosphere to produce content through their direct access to information sources, the fall back on other football blogs (research objective 1) and/or the involvement of their consumers. The latter aspect has a potential impact on the blog and its production either through the communicative exchange in the comment feature between different recipient groups or the different relationships a blogger maintains with various recipient groups (inter alia, journalists, donators, commenters, average readers) (research objective 2). Furthermore, the three elements blogger, blog and recipients interact with each other that impacts the media-cultural process in the GFBS which shows that every element has its own role that potentially is influenced by other media elements (research object 3): In a generalised role description, the bloggers are the main producers of the blog content and also consumers of the recipients' input, whereas the recipients are mainly consumers of the blog content who also co-create it with their communicative involvement, and the blog is a co-created content which is mainly produced by bloggers and expanded by recipients' comments. These previously information define the status of FBs in the German football media world as an independent football media sphere that can be elevated to the same importance level of other news media sources because it is a parallel media world that

can exist by its own, but which also interacts with and extracts news and information in different ways (i.e. multi-medially, hypertextually and cross-linking) from other media sources.

As a summary, the GFBS is a media-cultural process of content produsage and participatory journalism practices in which above all the direct interaction and the developed relationships between blog participants have a high impact on the content. GFBS professional journalistic background, makes them work as professional as football journalists from other professional news media why there are no differences in terms of working processes and practices except that bloggers are potentially more often involved in interactions between blog participants than journalists are on a publisher's website because the GFBS with its activated comment features and interactions changes the journalistic environment which compel an adaptation of the usual and journalistic working processes accustomed in the environment of traditional journalism.

The theoretical model of the GFBS as an interactive, media-cultural process shows that current theories from media studies and journalism research are considered, expand and individualised to the specificity and characteristic of a journalistic media culture such as the GFBS. As a conclusion, due to the high structural complexity and impact factors on the production, consumption and co-creation in the GFBS, it is recommended to consider the three media-cultural components (production, content and reception) and additionally the interactional factors (interaction behaviour and relationships among blog participants) when it is aimed to understand a blogosphere from a media-cultural viewpoint because parallels to other theories can be found, but in a blogosphere it is the interaction and relationship between participants which have the main impact on the specific media production and consumption.

8.5 Contributions to knowledge

The main empirical contributions of this research is the explanation of the media culture of the GFBS in terms of content-process routines, its varieties as a result of the impacts of an interacting community that can be divided in various groups of consumers with

different role allocations and to which bloggers maintain different relations. Moreover, the interplay of the bloggers, the blog and blog participants makes a football blog to be a unique medium that is equal but also different to other professional-journalistic services why FBs are categorised by users as special and equal to other mainstream football news media. The extensive methodological approach, furthermore, gives a basic insight to the participants' role allocations and the interaction behaviour that is usual in this journalistic environment. The findings also contribute empirically by contradicting the postulation that the blogosphere is a communication room in which content is produced on an amateur level and follows the publish-then-filter-model in which participants mainly focus on the interactive function (Borah, 2015). The GFBS works differently in these contexts: The findings show that professionalism is a sacrosanct journalistic quality norm that is pursued and obeyed by GFBS whose purpose is the production of subjective but professional content in which their community is interested. Two further contributions in this research project are at the same time a limitation but also a suggestion for future research and for practical applications: Firstly, the blog recipients can be divided into different groups independently from the age but from their educational level. That is, the interaction behaviour and the reception purposes and processes may differ between various recipient groups. Therefore, it is interesting to know in detail (i.e. through future investigations with qualitative interview methods) how these groups interact in the community and the blogosphere and how and why FBs are used as a daily consumed medium in certain groups.

Secondly, during the research process an important methodological contribution arose: A football blog cannot be limited to the blogging website because bloggers use additionally various social media to produce content and release information about new blog entries. Consequently, when analysing a blogosphere it is helpful to analyse the bloggers' social media accounts additionally because interactions, for instance, occur in some cases preferably in micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter) than on the blog website. Thus, football blogging must be understood as a way of communication that occurs on different (micro-) blogging platforms, but from which the blog website is used to present longer texts than on other microblog platforms. Although it was defined to analyse the

content of the blog website, it was technically impossible to analyse the bloggers' microblog contents with reference to the selected blog postings because a time limitation of posting visibility did not show the selected postings in the bloggers' account feeds.

8.6 Suggestions for future research

Findings in this research project cannot be compared and transferred without any barriers to other (sport) blogospheres because every blogosphere has its own media-cultural uniqueness because of different cultural citizenships. Football as a sport contains a high potential for an interacting community because the consumers' attitudes and opinions show a high degree of individuality that splits blog users into different groups. Moreover, football is a topic field about which the majority of football fans think to be an expert and have an in-depth knowledge. The findings in this thesis provide insights to the production, consumption and co-creation background of this citizen and simultaneously professional journalism: The FBs' impact on consumers is increasing and becoming more powerful in the football media spectrum. It is therefore suggested for future research to concentrate on the media reception of FBs in terms of analysing separately the different recipient groups (e.g. average readers, professional journalists, club officials etc.) to understand better the complexity of FB usage and users as well as classify better the role of football blogging and FBs in the specific media world.

8.7 Concluding remarks

Since the beginning of the internet era, digital media have become more sophisticated in its technological possibilities which allowed participants to become creative, connected and participated consumers of media texts: FB recipients become a hybrid role between user and producer of media (Bruns, 2006; McCarthy, 2012). During the progress of internet technology new forms of communication were developed such as blogs that offer the opportunity to private people to share personal impressions, opinion and

experiences with the readership (Baumer et al., 2011). However, FBs are also a platform for discussions, conversations and exchange between bloggers and readers who both shape the interaction (Baumer et al., 2011).

Football blogging is a distinct style of sports communication which fills a niche for a small group of sport media readers. Blogging can be seen as a way for fans to react to the output of mainstream media in the football media world in which social elements are also a fundamental pleasure and motivation for starting a blog (McCarthy, 2014). Researchers tried to define blog and the blogosphere, but both seem not to fit for every kind of blogosphere. That is, although containing similarities these definitions (that count for the political blogosphere) cannot be transferred completely to the football blogosphere. The blog is a dynamic tool and communication area which changes through the time due to new technological inventions (i.e. social media channels, the inclusion of comment features in podcasts etc.) as well as political and law decisions such as the GDPR that limit the collection of personalised data. Thus, blogs and the blogosphere cannot be limited on the blog website especially in football blogging because micro-blogs or other social media (primarily Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) are also used to reach people and communicate topics and current articles. Moreover, podcasts play a central role in FBs and especially in fan blogs with reference to a specific club because matches are commented verbally live by using different concepts. However, the GFBS covers some aspects of some researchers' trials to define weblogs. The analysed German blogs, however, are journalistic products that resemble professional-journalistic services of mainstream news media. The heterogeneity in topics and design of German FBs make it nearly impossible to create a general definition of "German football blog". Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish between football blogging and football journalism in terms of working processes, whereas differences can be found in the interaction behaviour both by media producers and media recipients. Although GFBS compared do not necessarily need the close relationship or access to players or the club as a job guarantee, findings show parallels between fan bloggers (especially single-authored GFBS) and regional sport journalists

with regard to the work load and the variety of tasks that must be carried out before an article can be published (Bölz, 2014; Bölz, 2018; Postel, 2018).

Moreover, participatory and citizen journalism is connected with the thought that content is produced on an amateur level (e.g. publish-then-filter-model) (Borah, 2015). The GFBS contradicts this assumption and theory because the working processes and practices of information collection and presentation is akin to those of professional journalists why the main implication is that this kind of citizen football journalism can be related with professional football journalism (filter-then-publish-model) instead of describing it as amateur football journalism. In addition, there are further implications of findings in this research on existing theoretical knowledge in journalism and blogosphere research: Whilst the theoretical framework of this study concentrate on theories and theoretical concepts from cultural studies related media triangulation (Lünenborg, 2005), occupational and editorial working processes in traditional German football journalism (Bölz, 2014), citizen journalism as news produsage (Bruns, 2010) and participatory journalism practices in the media (Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008). All these theories can be confirmed separately from each other through the findings, but it can also be expanded in their own meaning because the GFBS shows that all theories can be combined with each other. That is, Bölz' (2014) evaluation of the working practices in the professional German football journalism shows that journalists have a very close relationship with athletes, but their work depend on their good relation with a football club and players which again has an impact on their news coverage because negative and critical news coverage can result in individual restrictions (e.g. receiving no access or timeslot for an athlete interview) and is therefore often left out and. Consequently, journalists stay in a symbolic communication room in which readers are almost excluded and it is more important to maintain the close relationship and socialise with football club participants. The results are a biased coverage which is not as objective as it is proclaimed or preferred by journalists. The readership, on the contrary, plays a more central role in the GFBS because there is a participating audience that influences the journalistic content production. However, GFBS with direct access to information always have the opportunity to act like professional journalists who produce

and release content without the need of a further interaction with the participation of their readership in content production wherefore bloggers' currency, actuality, exclusivity and speed of publication can be the same as from professional football news media sources. Participatory and citizen journalism in the GFBS is a nice-to-have and no must-have although the interactive GFBS is an online media that enables an audience participation in content-process routines. Therefore, the GFBS is a blogosphere in which reader participation is not an elementary but potential factor in bloggers' working processes. As a summary, working processes in the German football journalism and the GFBS resemble, but in the GFBS it is also expanded by the co-creating participation of the blog audience which finally shows that German football blogging has to be understood as a cultural process in which bloggers, recipients and the blog content are dynamic elements that define the journalistic culture, production, consumption and co-creation processes in interactive blogs.

Football blogging does not replace football journalism, but German football journalism faces a challenge which bloggers in turn use for their content production and that makes blogs to a new competitor in the German football media world: football clubs and athletes themselves publish information in their social media channels which bloggers incorporate in their blog articles. It represents a significant change in journalism as the shift in the balance of 'information power' has swung more in favour of athletes who themselves now release content and therefore do not necessarily need journalists for self-marketing or exclusive news publication. This raises questions about the 'mediated' nature of the media and how information sources are controlled by players, their agents and sponsors, and how they are manipulated before journalists even try to put their own spin on things. It also raises questions about the future of journalism when ordinary individuals have direct access to athletes via their range of social media feeds. Consequently, the interactional factor effects the working process and shows that readers passively and actively co-create the blog content. GFBs take information from modern mainstream sports journalism and link it in postings and they attribute working processes following the German press code in their own working style. Blog users have an impact on the working process because bloggers also think about their readers'

expectations when producing blog content. Thus, GFBs, blog content and users fulfil different and similar roles. Different in the context that users are consumers of the blog content and similarities when the roles switch and users become producers in the moment they comment on articles and give an insight into their thoughts or links to new information sources which makes bloggers to consumers of their users' content. Bloggers and users are gatewatchers and news-distributors who control the mainstream news media, blogs and who also give insights into the public opinion of a certain fandom. In this interrelation, the blog content fulfils the role as a qualitative and credible information platform on which consumers have the opportunity to interact with each other. As a result, German football blogging is a type of participatory and citizen journalism in which user generated content is offered and co-creation exists without presuming to be a central process-step in the production of German FB articles.

Other researchers explored that bloggers from different topic fields use and depend on already published news which they catch up, analyse, criticise to discuss about it and insert it in their own content as a kind of gatewatching (Allen & Reese, 2016; Banning & Sweetser, 2007; Banner et al., 2011; Carlson, 2007; Galily & Tamir, 2012; Herring et al., 2004; Herring et al., 2006; Hoffjann & Haidukiewicz, 2018; Lasica, 2003; Porter et al., 2009; Singer, 2006). Although GFBs use existing information from other news services to produce content, there are useful implications for different communities that profit from German FBs: GFBs do not necessarily depend on previously released news because information can be collected and released directly by them. It shows, moreover, that the professional journalism or publishing houses are not the only football news publishers. GFBs are new competitors in the media market of the German football news media world. Even more, publishing houses or football clubs have access to football fans and receive information about the mood of a fandom that discusses and debates about various topics related to the club or news coverage of a publishing house. Therefore, a new source and room for critical feedback can be found in the GFBS which journalists can use either to produce new content or as a feedback mechanism to their own work. Publishing houses and professional journalists who are gatewatched in the GFBS and thereby from a system outside their own professional journalism sphere,

receive new impressions and criticism which contain feedback and room for own developments and changes in working processes, new services or news generations. The recipients are enabled to find news and information which are more specific in relation with their favourite team or topic of interest and they have the opportunity to discuss with like-minded people and the blogger about it. Football clubs and their athletes or press departments, on the contrary, can also use FBs as a feedback mechanism to topics they or which have been placed by bloggers so that GFBS can be used as a bottle neck to place or receive feedback to issues without getting into uncomfortable discussions with the fandom. Moreover, companies and their marketing and communication departments that act as football sponsors have the opportunity, if applicable for and wanted from few bloggers, to expand the group of multipliers for placing topics and information about their football engagement and making it more popular through a higher media reach in the GFBS. Another advantage is the direct feedback to their engagement which can help companies to change sponsoring strategies or developing specific projects and topics which could be of interest for the targeted group of interest. Football media producers or other sport bloggers are another community that profit from these study findings because the analysis of the occupational processes and impact of the interaction behaviour on the content and the relationships with different recipient groups deliver approaches of how content is produced and can be enhanced in a sport-related media sphere, and that bloggers should strive for content-related independence from other news media sources by socialising with football club participants and the press departments of football clubs which enable them a direct access to players by handing over media accreditations. Also researchers in sport journalism shall consider that there are similarities between sport blogospheres, but interactive impacts on the media product and its procedural (co-)production and consumption elements do also exist and might be blogosphere-related. Maybe participatory and citizen journalism are no crucial for the existence of a blog or its production. Thus, to understand production, consumption and co-creation processes in online media, it is recommended to analyse all participating elements because journalism is a media-cultural process in which all elements have an impact on each other.

For the understanding of the media culture of the GFBS all involved components of football blogging were analysed: working practices and processes of blog content production; the content; the interaction behaviour between participants as the artefactual by-products of and on the interaction; participants' roles in the relationship between bloggers and readers and its impact on bloggers' working processes; and the status of FBs in the German football media world.

The readers' involvement in the interaction has an essential impact on the blog content and shows that football blogging can be defined through the social and collaborative activity (Baumer et al., 2011). The investigations here are the firsts, to the author's knowledge, that examine the media culture of the GFBS. These analyses allow us to understand how a football blog is created through the process of writing and reading and through the interactions of participants engaging in those processes and in the GFBS in general. While working activities are divided into posting and commenting, bloggers and readers play different roles in the co-creation of a football blog.

Previous studies on the relationship between bloggers and readers emphasised the impact of interaction on the blog content in technology or politics blogs (Baumer et al., 2011; Schall & Müller, 2011). Thus, football blogging does not mean that merely the blogger creates the blog content, but that readers are also involved in the constructing with reference to posting comments that contains interesting aspects for bloggers' new blog entries. It is a collaborative way of co-creating content which is realised through a complex construct of social interactions and the placement of individual interpretations of the provided content. Thus, commenters participate in blog discussions which show that there are mutual impacts on the consumption, involvement and relationship in places in which participation occurs (Baume et al., 2011). Consequently, the interaction and relationship between the involved persons in the football blogosphere influences the content of a blog and demonstrate that the content is produced collaboratively co-created, but bloggers decide as the last instance which content is published in the blog. Nevertheless, findings in this study base on an interactive blogosphere in which blogs provide an activated comment section enabling the communicative exchange between

blog participants. Moreover, even though some similarities in the media production, content and reception can be observed between different German FBs, the interconnectional sphere of various FBs emphasize the existence of a diverse and complex football blogosphere why FBs cannot be classified and defined as one common blogosphere. Reasons therefore are above all the topical selection, interaction activity and interaction standard of involved persons.

The research findings emphasize that the FB production, content and reception influence each other. Predominantly the relationship among FB commenters or bloggers and their users or other media producers influence bloggers' working practices and blog content. The study results confirm that FBs are competing media platforms for traditional media because the majority of media users prefer the opportunity of interactions and communication where opinions can be expressed and discussions occur or can be read, respectively (Neuberger, 2016). Consequently, when the aim is to understand a blogosphere and its media culture, researchers should focus on three aspects: blog content production, the blog content, and the blog consumption in terms of interaction patterns with the content and participants and the interaction behaviour of involved participants (Lünenborg, 2005). It is recommended to use a mixed-method approach for the investigation of blogospheres: A researchers should firstly analyse the blog content to discover patterns of working practices in terms of writing style, usage and consideration of sources, investigation of information, interaction behaviour of the blog community and its impacts on the content. Secondly, through in-depth interviews with bloggers more detailed information about these elements can be received. Researchers should also consider that bloggers may differ between recipients and divide them in groups which different benefits for bloggers. Hence, the blog recipient view is indispensable for the understanding of a blogosphere and its media culture because users influence to different degrees actively and passively the blog content and blogger's interaction behaviour. As a further matter, when bloggers make differences between certain recipient groups, researchers can include different survey methods (e.g. questionnaires and interviews) to analyse relationships and whether the importance of the relationship is perceived mutually. Furthermore, these groups may have different

impacts on the blog content and the bloggers' practices. Findings of future research, consequently, can better explain and make understand the complexity of a blogosphere in terms of the variety of blog reception and its impact on the production and the content.

Although the GFBS is a part of the participatory and citizen journalism (Fischer, 2006; Lünenborg, 2005), the blog content production in the GFBS differs to other ones and contradicts the publish-then-filter-model which apparently is typical in blogospheres (Borah, 2015; Fischer, 2006). In contrast, GFBs consider the filter-then-publish-model with the difference that FB users act as text editors and information providers by a proactive involvement and additional filtering of information. The GFBS confirms Lünenborg's (2015) findings that online media have an impact on the hegemony of the German football journalism because football news consumers perceive and categorise FBs as important, credible and qualitative as other professional football news services. For these reasons, professional football journalists cannot claim that GFBs work unprofessional or less qualitative in because FB consumers elevate the credibility, quality and importance of German FBs on the same level of other professional football news media. The inclusion of new technological services in the blog content makes football media consumers to see no differences between FB services and publishing houses services. As a final conclusion, the German football blogosphere can be defined as an interactive, co-creatively producing and professional online media-related totality of an intellectual, creative and cultivated blog community within the football media world in Germany.

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Appendix

I. Abbreviation List

FB/FBs = football blog(s)

GFB/GFBs = German football blogger(s)

GFBS = German football blogosphere

QICA = qualitative content analysis

QnCA = quantitative content analysis

II. Table of blog passages translated from German to English

Blog	Date	Original quote	Translation
Königsblog	Sep 2017 (a)	<p>(...) wurde die keineswegs schlechte Leistung der Blauen in der ersten Hälfte von großen Teilen des Publikums niedergepiffen und in den social networks kritisiert und verhöhnt.“</p> <p>Zum königsblog-Comeback gewinnen die Blauen 3:1 gegen den VfB Stuttgart“</p> <p>“Schön, Torsten, dass du wieder schreibst. Dieses Blog ist für mich einfach DIE Quelle für das Schalke Stimmungsbild und ein Prima Stammtischersatz“</p> <p>“Du sprichst mir heute bereits zum zweiten Mal aus dem Herzen. Danke dafür!“</p>	<p>“(…) the average and by no means bad performance of the Blues (...) was criticised and mocked in the social networks”</p> <p>“[w]ith the comeback of Königsblog the Blues win 3:1 against VfB Stuttgart”</p> <p>“So great, Torsten, that you write again. For me this blog is the ONLY source that represents the thoughts of Schalke fans and it is a great replacement for groups of regulars”</p> <p>“@Altix For the second time today you say exactly what I am thinking. Thanks!”</p>
	Nov 2017 (d)	<p>“Einer der angesprochenen, Domenico Tedesco lobhudelnden Texte, ist von Philipp Selldorf: „Ein Trainer, der den Unterschied macht“. Von Philipp Selldorf sollte man überhaupt immer alle Schalke-Texte lesen. Außerdem wurde heute im Taktikblog spielverlagerung.de ein Interview mit Domenico Tedesco veröffentlicht, dass ich ebenfalls als sehr lesenswert erachte. Und von Domenico Tedesco kann man sich auch das Verbale meistens ganz gut anhören. Die PK zum Spiel zum Beispiel...“</p> <p>„Glückauf königsblog. Et is Derby, und während Schalke auf Platz zwei steht und allenthalben der Trainer gelobhudelt wird, stecken</p>	<p>“[o]ne of the mentioned texts that gushes over Domenico Tedesco [head coach of Schalke 04] is written by Philipp Selldorf: `A coach who makes the difference` [embedded link to an online article]. Generally, you should read every text related to Schalke which are written by Philipp Selldorf. Besides, an interview with Domenico Tedesco was published today in the tactics blog spielverlagerung.de which I truly consider as very worth reading [embedded link to the football blog]. And from Domenico Tedesco you can also listen to his words mostly well. The press conference after the game for example (...). `The Pre-press-conference of S04 against Dortmund` [embedded link to the club's YouTube channel]”</p> <p>“Glückauf [welcome shout which is typical for the club fans] Königsblog. It's a derby. And</p>

		<p>die Gelben in einer Krise und der ihrige Coach wird in den Medien bereits abgeschrieben.“</p> <p>„(...)finde den Text super“</p> <p>„[Leser]: Hier übrigens eine aktuelle Veröffentlichung von spielverlagerung.de mit einem Tedesco-Interview. – [Blogger]: Danke! Sehr lesenwert, habe ich auch gleich oben im Text verlinkt (...)“</p>	<p>while Schalke is on the second place in the league and the head coach is glorified fulsomely, the Yellows [nickname for the opponent team] have a crisis and their coach is written off by the media”</p> <p>“(...) I really like your text”</p> <p>“[reader:] By the way, here is a current publication on spielverlagerung.de with the ‘Tedesco’-interview [link] – [blogger:] Thank you! It’s [the embedded link in the user’s comment] worth reading, I linked it in the text...”</p>
	Dec 2017 (e)	<p>“Erst zurückhaltend. Aber dann singt und „dirigiert“ Domenico Tedesco den „Schalke ist die Macht“-Chant, und es wird einem ganz weihnachtlich zumute.“</p> <p>„Fühlt Euch eingeladen, alle Gedanken, Erwartungen, Meinungen und Bewertungen zum Spiel unten in das Kommentarfeld zu schreiben.“</p>	<p>“[f]irstly observing, but then Domenico Tedesco conducts the chant ‘Schalke is power’, and it feels like Christmas”</p> <p>“feel free to write your thoughts, expectations, opinion and valuations of the match in the comment feature”</p>
dieblaue24	Aug 2017 (a)	<p>“Und ich find deine Posts immer verlogener!“</p> <p>“@Oliver Griss Finde deine positiven Artikel in letzter Zeit immer besser Oli.“</p> <p>„Bin hetero,kann meine Frau bestätigen.Die ist übrigens auch Löwenfan.“</p> <p>„Jetzt musste ich mal kurz schmunzeln.“</p>	<p>“(...) in my opinion your posts become more and more mendacious”</p> <p>“@OliverGriss in my opinion your positive articles became continuously better, lately”</p> <p>“I’m hetero[sexual], my wife can testify it. By the way, she is a fan of the Lions [nickname of the club], too.“</p> <p>“For a moment I had to grin quietly to myself [about the reader’s provocative comment after the reader misunderstood a previous blogger comment to a conversation between two men]”</p>
	Sep 2017 (b)	<p>““Ich habe immer gesagt: Jeder wird seine Chance kriegen! Jetzt müssen die anderen Jungs einspringen.” Sagt 1860-Trainer</p>	<p>“I have always said: Everyone will get his chance! Now the other guys must help out’ said the 1860-head coach Daniel Bierofka before the</p>

	<p>Daniel Bierofka vor dem Auswärtsspiel gegen den Letzten Unterföhring (Samstag, 14 Uhr, Sportpark Heimstetten, dieblaue24-Liveticker).“</p> <p>„Beim Training am Mittwoch versuchte es der Trainer mit [...] in der Viererkette.“</p> <p>„Jeder wird seine Chance kriegen!“</p> <p>„Die Hoffnung, dass der Blogbetreiber selbst mal einschreitet, habe ich ja nun schon aufgegeben. Die Hoffnung, dass ihm das mal auf die Füße fällt hingegen nicht.“</p>	<p>away match against the last team of the league Unterföhring (Saturday, 2 PM, Sportpark Heimstetten, dieblaue24-Liveticker) [will be played]”</p> <p>“[a]t the training on Wednesday the head coach tried to play a back-four-formation with [names of players]”</p> <p>“Everybody will get his chance”</p> <p>“I’ve lost the hope that the blogger will intervene but I didn’t lose the hope that it will fall on his feet one day”</p>
Oct 2017 (c)	<p>“Dieser Kommentar wurde vom dieblaue24 Team entfernt. Bitte beachtet die Netiquette!”</p> <p>“Die “tz” schreibt von “Schikane” - aber trifft’s das wirklich?“</p> <p>„Laut dem Blatt (...)“</p> <p>“mei du wida imma wen i moan es gehd haust oan ausse“</p>	<p>“This comment was deleted by the team of dieblaue24. Please respect the netiquette!”</p> <p>“The ‘tz’ [a Bavarian newspaper] writes about ‘chicane’ - but is that really true?”</p> <p>“(…) referring to the newspapers”</p> <p>“Oh man, it’s you [another commenter] again. Every time I think, it cannot get worse, you spew it up (...)”</p>
Dec 2017 (e)	<p>“Das Stimonaris-Aus: So erklärt sich Verwaltungsrat-Boss Drees - Über die Gründe des Blitz-Rückzugs von Saki Stimoniaris ist weiterhin nichts bekannt - wenige Stunden nach der persönlichen Erklärung des MAN-Betriebsratschefs verschickte der TSV 1860 eine Presseerklärung zum Rücktritt des 46-Jährigen. „Wir bedauern das Ausscheiden von Herrn Stimoniaris und bedanken uns für sein ehrenamtliches Engagement für unseren Verein“, sagt Dr. Markus Drees, Vorsitzender des Verwaltungsrats: „Sein</p>	<p>“The end of Stimonaris: That’s how the chief director of the board explains the situation [headline of the blog entry] – [text] There are still no information about the sudden retirement of Saki Stimonaris - few hours after the personal statement (...) TSV 1860 released official information to the 46-year-old’s retirement. `We regret the departure of Mr. Stimonaris and thank him for his voluntary work for our club` says Dr. Markus Drees, Chairman of the Board of Directors: `We are delighted to take notice from his promise to continue with his</p>

		<p>Versprechen, dem Verein weiterhin freundschaftlich verbunden zu bleiben und mit Rat und Tat zur Seite zu stehen, nehmen wir erfreut zur Kenntnis.“</p> <p>„wenige Stunden nach der persönlichen Erklärung des MAN-Betriebsratschefs verschickte der TSV 1860 eine Presseerklärung zum Rücktritt des 46-Jährigen.“</p> <p>„Und Deinen Kommentar will keiner lesen!“</p>	<p>friendly and personal connection to the club, and that he will support the club in word and deed”</p> <p>“(…) few hours after the personal statement of the workers council chief of MAN [chairman of the club] the TSV 1860 [München] sent a press release with reference to the resignation of the 46-year-old [chairman]”</p> <p>“[a]nd no one wants to read your comment”</p>
Textil- vergehen	Aug 2017 (a)	“Krieg der Scheiß Fußballmafia DFB“	“War against the f***ing football mafia DFB [German Association of Football]”
	Sep 2017 (b)	<p>„Mit (...) standen bei Hertha vier Spieler auf dem Platz, die auch gegen vergangen Bundesligaspieltag angefangen hatten“</p> <p>„Warum eigentlich benutzt Ihr so gern englische Wörter, die ja nun wirklich nicht in die deutsche Alltagssprache eingeflossen sind? Jedenfalls finde ich ‚law key‘ durchaus verzichtbar.“</p>	<p>“[t]here were four players (...) of the opposing team on the pitch who also started in the last league match”</p> <p>“Why are you using English words which aren’t really used in the German everyday language? However, I think ‘law [low] key’ is absolutely unnecessary.”</p>
	Nov 2017 (d)	<p>„16 Punkte von 18 möglichen. 5 Siege und 1 Unentschieden aus den vergangenen 6 Spielen. Das will erklärt werden. Und nach seinem Treffer in der 92. Minute zum 1:0 gegen St. Pauli ist es vor allem Sebastian Polter, der im Mittelpunkt steht. Weil er mit dem Treffer mehr erreicht hat, als nur ein Unentschieden in einen Sieg umzuwandeln. Der Kurier nennt den Angreifer “Mentalitätsmonster”, die Morgenpost vergleicht Polters integrationsstiftende Kraft mit der von Torsten Mattuschka und die Berliner Zeitung sieht den Stürmer immun gegen Druck. All das ist der bestmögliche Fall, den sich die Verantwortlichen von Union bei der Verpflichtung von Polter zu Beginn des Jahres sich ausgemalt haben dürften. (...) Die Bild hat</p>	<p>“16 of 18 possible points. 5 wins and 1 draw in the last 6 matches. That must be explained. And after his goal for a 1:0 against St. Pauli [opposing team] in the 92nd minute, it is especially Sebastian Polter who is in the centre of attention. Because he achieved more with his goal than just turning a tie into a win. The Kurier [newspaper] calls him ‘mentality monster’, the Morgenpost [newspaper] compares Polter’s integrative and supporting attitude with this one of Torsten Mattuschka [a legend of the club], and the Berliner Zeitung [newspaper] estimates the striker as being immune to pressure. All that [the coverage] is the best possible case which the club officials could have been imagined after the signing of Polter in the beginning of the year. (...) The</p>

	<p>auch über Polters Tor geschrieben. Und wir haben im aktuellen Podcast natürlich auch über das 1:0 gegen St. Pauli gesprochen, die Stimmung im Stadion, die leichten Unstimmigkeiten zwischen Gegengerade und Waldseite, Christopher Trimmels 5. Gelbe Karte, den nächsten Gegner Heidenheim, das Schiedsrichter-Desaster beim DFB und noch viel mehr.“</p> <p>„Ich trage die Öffnungszeiten mal noch im Post nach“</p> <p>„(...) die Bilder die Steffi macht, die Podcasts die für uns erstellt werden, der Blick über den Tellerrand (...)“</p> <p>„Danke! Ich trage die Öffnungszeiten mal noch im Post nach.“</p> <p>„Bezüglich des Negativsupports bin ich klar auf eurer Seite. Find ich auch immer unheimlich nervig, eben weil völlig unklar ist, worauf er sich überhaupt bezieht. Einfach nur pöbeln um zu pöbeln – wem soll das helfen oder wen soll das beeindrucken?“</p> <p>„Was ich sagen will : Ich empfinde Euch als abgehobene Schickimicki Unioner, die sich selbst bauchpinseln und keinen Kontakt zur Basis haben.“</p> <p>„@icke Ich versuche hier in der Sache zu argumentieren und habe das auch im Podcast getan. Kein Grund, hier das alte Spiel wieder aufleben zu lassen, wer ein besserer Unioner sei. Niemand von uns behauptet das von sich. Und man kann auch einfach damit leben, dass Menschen eine andere Meinung haben. Ich kann das</p>	<p>Bild [newspaper] also wrote about Polter’s goal. And of course, we spoke about the 1:0 against St. Pauli in our current podcast as well, the atmosphere in the stadium, the minimal differences between back straight and forest-side [in the stadium], Christopher Trimmel’s 5th yellow card, the next opposing team Heidenheim, the referee-disaster of the DFB [German Football Association] and much more.”</p> <p>“enter[s] the opening hours in the post”</p> <p>“(...) Steffi takes the pictures, we all produce the podcasts (...), [and we all] look outside the box”</p> <p>“Thank you! I’ll add later the opening hours in the post”</p> <p>“With reference to the negative support [as mentioned in the podcast] I am totally on your side. In my opinion it is very irritating because it is not obvious to which situation it is related. Just behaving loutishly because of wanting to behave this way – who might help this behaviour and who might be impressed about it?”</p> <p>“What I want to say: I think you all [the bloggers] are an arrogant bunch of jet-setter fans of Union Berlin who are flattered and who is not in contact to the [fan] base.”</p> <p>“@icke I just try to argument in the nature of things and I already did it in the podcast. [There is] no reason to revive the old games of who is the better fan. No one of us said that he is. And you can just keep on living [with the fact] that [other] people have another opinion. But I can do it anyway. Regards.”</p>
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		jedenfalls. Grüße.“	
	Dec 2017 (e)	„ich frage mich etwas, wo die ganzen Kritiker herkommen.“	“I wonder where all these critics are coming from.”
	Sep 2017 (b)	“Im Artikel steht auch was über Rückendeckung für Rebbe. Kann aber auch ein Anzeichen für die von Mahatma geäußerte Einschätzung sein. http://www.sportbuzzer.de/artikel/vfl-fuehrung-rueckendeckung-fur-rebbe-neuordnung-im-januar/ “	“[i]n the article is something about support [of the current manager] (...). http://www.sportbuzzer.de/artikel/vfl-fuehrung-rueckendeckung-fur-rebbe-neuordnung-im-januar/ ”
	Oct 2017 (c)	“Wie ist eure Meinung zum gestrigen Spiel?“ „Warum suchst du dir nicht einen Verein bei dem alles toll ist anstatt hier permanent alles schlecht zu machen? Wär doch besser für alle...“	“[h]ow is your opinion about the match of yesterday?“ “Why are you not looking for another club where everything is great instead of criticising everything permanently? It would be the best solution for everyone...”
	Nov 2017 (d)	“Wir tun uns in der relativen Anonymität des Blogs recht leicht mit Bewertungen von realen Personen, wohl wissend, dass wir nichts von dem, was wir schreiben tatsächlich verantworten müssen. Wir sollten uns daher zum Prinzip machen, nur so über andere zu reden bzw. zu schreiben, als würden sie uns gegenüber sitzen und als müssten wir mit unserer eigenen Person und unserem Ansehen für das einstehen, was wir von uns geben. Ich denke, das täte der Diskussion und dem Umgang miteinander im Blog nur gut.“	“in the anonymity of the blog it is very easy for us to judge real persons knowing that we don’t really have to take responsibility for what we are commenting. We should therefore follow the principle to speak or write about others as if they would sit in front of us and as if we must take responsibility as a person and with reference to our reputation what we are talking about. I think it would generally help during discussions and the interaction with each other in the blog”
	Dec 2017 (e)	„Bayern gegen Paris: Ein tolles Fußballfest kommt jetzt.“	“the match [of the UEFA Champions League] between Bayern and Paris, a great football events, is broadcasted now”
An Old International	Aug 2017 (a)	“[f]or the new season Red Star have moved back to the Stade Bauer, their home for more than 100 years. It questions what the club and the city of St. Ouen have done over the last two years. The question what to do with the Bauer remain unanswered. As do those concerning a new stadium in the dock area of St. Ouen”	
	Sep 2017 (b)	"[i]t was not only the show just before kick-off when the teams came onto the pitch, it was	

		moreover and more importantly the fact that throughout the ninety minutes they sang, created chants and noisy and supportive of their team"	
	Nov 2017 (c)	“But what was it like to have played in this momentous match? I was fortunate, in 2001, to have an opportunity to interview George Robb, called up to play on the left wing for England after an injury to Tom Finney. Robb had a distinguished career. He was capped 18 times for England’s amateur team and played for Great Britain at the 1952 Olympics before turning professional and making 200 appearances for Tottenham Hotspur during the 1950s. What was sometimes referred to in the press as ‘The Match of the Century’ was his only full international appearance"	
	Dec 2017 (e)	“[f]urther accolade came from England where the Sun spoke of ‘a terrifying show’ to test the mettle of Peter Bosz’ side. (...) The Daily Mail wrote that the display was menacing (...)” “Magazine Review: View from the Allotment End. Review of an opinionated but no less dedicated and well organized fanzine from the North East of England”	
nurderfcm.de	Aug 2017 (a)	„Ich muss dem Schreiber hier mal ein dickes Kompliment machen“ “Eine klasse Zusammenfassung vom gestrigen Spiel“ „Vielen Dank für das Lob und für[']s regelmäßige Vorbeischaun“	“I must compliment the writer [on his blog entry]” “A high-class summary of the yesterday’s match” “Thank you for the compliments and for regularly visiting my blog”
	Sep 2017 (b)	“...wie immer eine Freude das Spiel nochmal zu erleben“	“(...) and it is always a joy to experience the match again”
	Oct 2017 (c)	“Ach, krass. Okay, das habe ich so im Stadion nicht mitbekommen. Danke für die Aufklärung!”	“[o]h well, okay, I didn’t detect it [a foul by a player of the opponent team] that way in the stadium. Thank you for clarification!”
	Nov 2017	“Von dieser (nicht böswilligen,	“(...) apart from this (not malicious

	(d)	<p>sondern schlichtweg unglücklichen) Aktion einmal abgesehen, trat Fortuna Köln zunächst kaum in Erscheinung”</p> <p>„Blöde Geschichte, kann aber passieren“</p> <p>„Ganz ehrlich? Was konnte da schon groß schief gehen?“</p>	<p>but simply unfortunate) action, Fortuna Köln was barely visible on the pitch”</p> <p>“Stupid story but shit happens”</p> <p>“Honestly? What could go wrong?”</p>
	Dec 2017 (e)	<p>“Völlig verdiente Führung und die Kurve mit einem selbst angestimmten “Döp, döp, döp” – der Tormusik, die eigentlich der Heimmannschaft vorbehalten ist“</p> <p>„Die Spielzusammenfassung bei 'Sport im Osten' (via YouTube)“</p> <p>„10 Minuten waren gespielt, als erneut Beck frei zum Schuss kam (...).Lange warten mussten die knapp 1.500 Clubfans nicht (...) bis (...) endlich zu seinem absolut verdienten Tor [kam]. Völlig verdiente Führung und die Kurve mit einem selbst angestimmten “Döp, döp, döp” – der Tormusik, die eigentlich der Heimmannschaft vorbehalten ist. Großes, großes Kino.“</p> <p>„Der flache Abschluss in die rechte Ecke küsst noch den Innenpfosten und landet dann zum 3:1 hinter der Linie. Stark gespielt und noch stärker abgeschlossen, sodass es mit einer verdienten Führung und einem sehr, sehr guten Gefühl in die Pause ging.“</p>	<p>“[a] fully deserved lead and the fan base [started to sing] with a self-initiated ‘Döp, döp, döp’ - which originally is the goal chant of the home team (...)”</p> <p>“(…) the summary of the match [can be found] on `Sport im Osten` [the football television program] (via YouTube)”</p> <p>“10 minutes were played when Beck got the chance to take a shot at the goal. (...) The nearly 1.500 fans must not wait much time (...) until the first goal was scored. (...)fully deserved lead and the fan base [started to sing] with a self-initiated ‘Döp, döp, döp’ - which originally is the goal chant of the home team. Great show.”</p> <p>“[t]he flat shot in the right corner of the goal kisses the inside of the post and crosses the line of the goal to mark the 3:1. It was played strongly and even better finished successfully so that the team went into the half-time with a deserved lead and a very, very good feeling”</p>
120minuten	Oct 2017 (a)	<p>„(...)vielen Dank für Ihr ausführliches Feedback, es freut uns sehr, dass Ihnen die Idee gefallen hat“</p> <p>„Vielen Dank für das Lob. Ich möchte ergänzen, dass wir den Autoren so viel Gestaltungsspielraum wie möglich gelassen haben (...)“</p>	<p>“thank [their readers] very much for [their] detailed feedback. We are very pleased that you liked our idea”</p> <p>“Thank you for the compliment. I would like to add that we have given the authors as much freedom as possible in textual creativity”</p>

III. An overview of original and translated interviewees' quotes

<p>Interviewee 1</p>	<p>“I got frustrated and then I started on a Wordpress platform to write down all these things”.</p> <p>“the writing is always a kind of self-therapy. When I watch a game and write about it afterwards, it is archived in my head, and I can forget about it in principle.”</p> <p>“[that the followers wait for the texts and the podcast] is a great feeling with reference to the esteem, (...) and, of course, it motivates me to keep on doing it. Because of being regular formats it is a kind of commitment. When it is foreseeable that a text or a podcast session must be published one day later, then I Have a bad consciousness”.</p> <p>“via this blog I have done a book project [about the football club] (...) which have read many people. And then I had a public appearance in a talk show of [a regional television channel] where I was and thereby people had a face which they could relate with the blog then (...). Sometimes it happens that people talk to me that I have never seen before in my life and who are telling me anything”.</p> <p>“I try to monetise the blog project in that way that I have started something like crowdfunding [because] I am a big fan of this voluntary pay culture in the internet”.</p>	<p>Aus Frust. (...) Und habe damals auf einer Wordpress-Plattform damit begonnen, das Zeug aufzuschreiben.</p> <p>“(…) das Schreiben (...) ist häufig ein kleines bisschen (...) Selbsttherapie. (...) Wenn ich so ein Spiel sehe und dann darüber geschrieben habe, ist das für mich im Prinzip wie abgelegt (...) im Kopf (...) kann das im Prinzip einfach abhaken.“</p> <p>[dass die Follower auf die Texte und den Podcast warten,] ist ein tolles Gefühl von Wertschätzung (...) und treibt mich natürlich auch an. (...) [W]eil es regelmäßige Formate sind, [ist es] auch ein Stück weit Verpflichtung. (...) [W]enn es (...) absehbar ist, dass mal ein Text oder eine Podcast-Folge einen Tag später kommen muss, habe ich da schon auch ein schlechtes Gewissen.</p> <p>(...) ich habe ja auch über diese Blog-Geschichte ein Buchprojekt [über den Verein] dann gemacht, (...) was viele Leute dann gelesen haben. Und dann gab [es] irgendwann mal so ein Talkshow-Auftritt im [regionalen TV-Sender], wo ich (...) war und dadurch haben Leute ein Gesicht zum Blog (...). [Es] kann passieren, dass mich Menschen ansprechen, die ich in meinem Leben noch nie gesehen habe und die mir dann irgendwas erzählen.</p> <p>Ich versuche dieses Blog-Projekt dahingehend zu monetarisieren, dass ich eine Art Crowdfunding-Geschichte</p>
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	<p>“what I would never do is to sell the blog to a company that sponsors it (...) [because] my idea behind it is of bringing people who consume the blog or podcast regularly to give me regularly a small financial contribution (...) as esteem for the work”.</p> <p>“(...) matches that I visit, about which I write and also [club-unrelated]current topics that are relevant for the club. Thus, it caters to the daily business of the season”.</p> <p>“(...) the start line-up, then special situations during the match (...) [and] things that happen in the stadium that are important to me (...)”.</p> <p>“the inter-correlation between football and society in general”.</p> <p>“I always read what others have written in order to have a basis whether I failed to notice something obvious, and [the sources] then are Kicker-online [and a regional sport television program] (...)”.</p> <p>“watch again the one or other match scene when it is available. When I miss something, I read some statistics up [on specific online portals] such as whoscored.com”.</p> <p>“in the same way how seminar papers are written at</p>	<p>gestartet habe [weil] (...) ich bin ein großer Freund dieser freiwilligen Bezahlkultur im Netz.</p> <p>Was ich nie machen würde, wäre jetzt zu sagen, ich verkaufe den Blog an eine Firma, die das Ding jetzt sponsert (...) [weil] bei mir ist die Idee tatsächlich dahinter, dass Leute, die Blog und Podcast regelmäßig konsumieren, dazu bekommen möchte, mir regelmäßig einen kleinen Obolus (...) [zu geben] (...) als Wertschätzung für die Arbeit.</p> <p>Das sind die Spiele, die ich besuche, über die ich dann auch schreibe oder ebenso vereinsrelevante Themen, die jetzt gerade aktuell sind. Da richtet sich das tatsächlich nach dem Tagesgeschäft der Saison.</p> <p>(...) Anfangsaufstellung, dann irgendwelche Spielszenen (...) [und] Dinge, die im Stadion passieren, die mir wichtig erscheinen (...).</p> <p>Der Zusammenhang zwischen Fußball und Gesellschaft im ganz großen Sinne.</p> <p>Ich gucke dann immer nochmal, was die anderen geschrieben haben, um eine Grundlage zu haben, ob ich jetzt irgendwas Krasses übersehen habe. Und [die Quellen] sind dann Kicker-online [und eine regionale Sportfernsehsendung] (...).</p> <p>Ich gucke mir dann auch die eine oder andere Spielszene, wenn sie verfügbar ist, nochmal an. Wenn ich da selber was nicht gut mitbekommen habe und gucke ein paar Statistiken [auf spezifischen Online-Portalen] nach. (...) [z.B.]</p>
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	<p>the university. [That is,] looking in the internet for information, whether there are books, which persons can be found who can tell you more about [the topic]”.</p> <p>“the majority of texts (...) are match coverages or also travel experiences [to the stadium] (...)”.</p> <p>“I do not write the texts in order to provoke discussions. Maybe I did it once or twice, but then I wanted to because I needed stories from the fans’ perspectives, and where I actively asked for interactions or feedbacks. However, usually in my opinion texts are a medium for my personal expression and to reach some people, of course”.</p> <p>“(...) it is another type of work because we receive many texts of other authors and there is the curating is ion focus (...)”.</p> <p>“is definitely my big medium in which I spend a lot of time, and in which I take out a lot of information (...). (...) I am not a fan of Facebook. I do have an account, but I only have it in order to take care of my different sites”.</p> <p>“(...) I am often scared how people argue there [on Facebook]. I have never experienced this kind of argumentation on Twitter in the football context. I do not know if it is correct to say it, but I think that there are more decent people on Twitter than on Facebook”.</p>	<p>whoscored.com (...).</p> <p>(...) wie man das in der universitären Hausarbeit wahrscheinlich auch machen würde. Erst mal im Netz gucken, was es so gibt, ob es Bücher gibt und dann gucken, wen man findet, der einem noch mehr erzählen kann.</p> <p>[D]er größte Teil der Texte (...) sind Spielberichte oder auch Reiseberichte [zum Stadion] (...).</p> <p>Ich lege die Texte jetzt einfach nicht so an, dass ich dann eine Diskussion heraufbeschwören würde. Das gab es bei ein, zwei Gelegenheiten mal, wo das aber auch gewollt war, wo ich auch Fan-Geschichten brauchte (...) und wo ich dann schon auch Interaktionen aktiv oder Rückmeldungen eingefordert habe. Aber in aller Regel sind die Texte für mich ein Medium, mich auszudrücken und dann noch ein paar Leute dann natürlich mit zu erreichen.</p> <p>(...) eine andere Form von Arbeit, weil wir da viele Texte von anderen Autorinnen und Autoren bekommen und da geht es dann um das Kuratieren (...).</p> <p>Das ist mein großes Medium auf jeden Fall, wo ich viel unterwegs bin und wo ich mir auch selber viele Informationen hole (...). (...) bei Facebook bin ich jetzt nicht so der große Freund. Ich habe da zwar einen Account, aber den habe ich eigentlich um quasi die entsprechenden Seiten zu betreuen.</p> <p>(...) ich da häufig ein bisschen Angst bekomme, wie Leute dort auch argumentieren. Diese Form der Argumentation habe</p>
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	<p>“I never thought about it. (...) You are growing into it and you read other blogs as well, and from my point of view it was never under discussion to close the comment feature”.</p> <p>“the [exchange on Twitter] is higher than in the blog. (...) People say that blogs and comments are dead. There is comment-related not happening very much“.</p> <p>“it is interesting when it apparently does not work well in terms of the performance of the club, people have a higher demand on exchanging opinions”.</p> <p>“(...) I am a fan as well. Accordingly, I am in contact with people with whom I go to the stadium, to the fan club in which I am organised. (...) It is a normal exchange which everybody has who does not write a blog, but with the difference that people recognise me as blogger in the meantime. They know what I am doing and sometimes they refer to it in the conversations”.</p> <p>“in the local journalism subculture (...) I know one or the other, and (...) in the meantime [we became] friends. In the national context I get to know people via Twitter. There is #tkschland throughout Germany: That is a national football-Twitter-meeting which takes place once a year, and there are many journalists which I then get to</p>	<p>ich zumindest bei Twitter im Fußballkontext so krass noch nicht erlebt. Ich weiß nicht, ob man das so sagen kann, aber ich habe irgendwie das Gefühl, dass bei Twitter vernünftige Leute unterwegs sind als bei Facebook.</p> <p>Habe ich nie drüber nachgedacht. (...) man wächst auch rein und liest selber auch den einen oder anderen Blog und für mich stand das nie zur Debatte, Kommentare zu schließen.</p> <p>Der [Austausch] ist [bei Twitter] deutlich stärker als im Blog. (...) Man sagte, Blogs und Kommentare sind eigentlich tot. Da passiert kommentarmäßig jetzt nicht so furchtbar viel.</p> <p>Interessanterweise ist das beim Vereinsbloggen scheinbar auch so, dass wenn das sportlich nicht so gut läuft, dass Leute ein größeres Austauschbedürfnis haben.</p> <p>(...) Bin ich selber Fan. Dementsprechend habe ich natürlich Kontakt zu den Leuten, mit denen ich in das Stadion gehe, zu dem Fanclub, indem ich da organisiert bin. (...) Das ist ein ganz normaler Austausch, den jeder andere auch hat, der jetzt keine Blogs schreibt. Mit dem Unterschied, dass die mich inzwischen auch als Blogger kennen. Dass die auch wissen, was ich mache und sich da manchmal in den Gesprächen darauf beziehen.</p> <p>In der lokalen Journalismus-Szene (...) kenne ich schon den einen oder anderen und (...) inzwischen [sind wir] auch ganz gut befreundet. Im</p>
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	<p>know at this event”.</p> <p>“I think that blogs became relevant for journalists in the meantime because (...) they get information which they usually will not get, [e.g.] when they want to take up the atmosphere in the fan scene or the atmosphere in general (...). I think that the grubby image which blogs had for a certain time and still have, in parts, becomes better. It is becoming fewer because there are a lot of good formats by now”.</p> <p>“(...) as a special cosmos in the media world, but also as a well-established offer that people know and take seriously. (...) The subject area, the problems and the things struggle with mentally are akin at every place so that [the blogger-Twitter-meetings] is a community that knows each other, that supports each other, and that appreciates each other”.</p> <p>“I am an individual person who has an opinion and who represents it, and who tries to enlighten the different perspectives. But I would never claim to say that ‘I speak in the name of the fan base’, and I would not attribute this function to myself”.</p>	<p>überregionalen Kontext [lernt man] Leute über Twitter kennen. Es gibt deutschlandweit dieses #tkschland: Das Deutschlandweite Fußball-Twitter-Treffen, was einmal im Jahr stattfindet und da sind auch eine ganze Menge Journalistinnen, Journalisten unterwegs, die ich dann eben über die Schiene kenne.</p> <p>Ich glaube schon, dass die Blogs inzwischen für die Journalistinnen und Journalisten relevant geworden sind, weil (...) die sich da auch ein paar Informationen holen, wo sie so nicht rankommen würden, [z.B.] wenn es nur darum geht Stimmung innerhalb von der Fanszene aufzugreifen oder auch Stimmung insgesamt aufzugreifen (...). (...) Ich glaube dieses Schmuttelkind-Image, was Blogs eine Zeitlang hatten und zum Teil vielleicht auch immer noch haben, das wird besser. Es wird weniger, weil es einfach inzwischen eine ganze Reihe richtig gute Formate gibt.</p> <p>(...) in der Medienwelt zwar als eigener Kosmos, aber schon auch als Angebot, was Leute kennen und ernstnehmen, durchaus etabliert hat. (...) Die Themenbereiche, die Probleme und mit was man sich als Fan so rumschlägt, die sind ja überall ähnlich, sodass das auch eine gute Community ist, die sich auch kennt, auch unterstützt [und] schätzt (...).</p> <p>Ich bin eine einzelne Person, die eine Meinung hat und die auch vertritt und auch entsprechend versucht die Grautöne und Zwischentöne zu beleuchten. Aber ich würde es mir überhaupt nicht anmaßen, mich</p>
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	<p>“sometimes there are advices to spelling mistakes, word doubling [etc.]. (...) It is referred to texts and sometimes discussions arise from things I have written before”.</p> <p>“whereas podcast more likely a relaxed, cosy but cool conversation with my colleagues (...) and from time to time with some guests. (...) When I started the podcast, I needed a co-pilot because a podcast with one person is boring. It is a program which lives by its own because it has an own little fan base which some people financially support (...)”.</p> <p>“the people do not always discuss. I do not want to transfer a wrong impression that my stuff is the middle of discussion world about the club. It just happens. [For instance,] when I take up a point or present something that perhaps the television audience has not seen as well. For the most part things that happens in the stadium (...). The general aim is the enrichment of the fan community or the coverage around the club with a further fan perspective”.</p>	<p>hinzustellen und zu sagen: „Ich spreche jetzt für die Fanszene“ und so würde ich mich auch nicht vereinnahmen lassen.</p> <p>Es gibt manchmal (...) Hinweise auf Rechtschreibfehler, Wortdoppelung [etc.]. (...) Es wird auf die Texte Bezug genommen und mitunter gibt es dann auch Diskussionen, die sich an einer Sache entspinnen, über die ich geschrieben habe.</p> <p>Währenddessen Podcast eher ein lockeres, lauschiges, aber sehr cooles Gespräch mit meinem Kollegen (...) ist und immer mal wieder mit ein paar Gästen. Das hat auch nochmal einen anderen Fokus oder eine andere Funktion auch für mich selbst. (...) Als ich den Podcast gestartet habe, brauchte ich einen Copiloten, weil Podcast allein ist langweilig. (...) Das ist schon ein Format, was auch für sich alleine lebt, weil es auch eine eigene kleine Fanbase hat, was auch von Leuten mitunter finanziell unterstützt wird (...).</p> <p>Die Leute diskutieren jetzt nicht bei weitem immer. Ich will jetzt nicht einen falschen Eindruck erwecken, dass jetzt plötzlich mein Kram da der Nabel der [Vereins]-Diskussionswelt ist. Das passiert mitunter einfach. [Zum Beispiel,] wenn ich etwas aufgreife oder etwas nochmal herausstelle, was vielleicht auch der Fernsehzuschauer nicht gesehen hat. Meistens auch Sachen, die im Stadion passieren (...).(…) dann ist der Zweck auch natürlich die [Vereins]-Fangemeinde oder die Berichterstattung, um den [Verein] über irgendwelche Fanperspektive zu bereichern.</p>
Interviewee 2	"for myself, blogging was an outlet or rather a way to keep	(...) für mich war Bloggen immer ein Ventil

	<p>on being fluent in the language and in English”.</p> <p>“[because of the transparency] I started with blogging so that knowledge can be shared, (...) is available and does not hide behind paywalls. This was one of the reasons, why and how I started with it”.</p> <p>“should find a way [finance the blog] with the help of financial supporters so that we can really profit from it by a) covering our costs, firstly, and b) by offering authors as a reward which conversely means that we probably can consult much more big names [of football journalism] for the blog”.</p> <p>“women’s football [or] media how we consume football [that we write down in] personal texts”.</p> <p>“(...) then you click on a website on which you usually must overcome a paywall and that is not good, of course, because you cannot buy thousands of pages and articles per month for ten or twenty Euros”.</p> <p>“(...) write about what [I] want to write (...) because our interest is to reveal different topics in football for ourselves and to explain it in an appropriate way to the readers”.</p> <p>“(...) that a source is really proved (...) what the source</p>	<p>beziehungsweise auch ein Weg, die Sprache, das Englisch flüssig zu halten.“</p> <p>(...) [wegen der Transparenz] habe ich (...) mit dem Bloggen [begonnen], dass man Wissen teilt, (...) zugänglich macht und nicht hinter Bezahlschranken versteckt. Das war einer der Gründe, warum und wie ich das gemacht habe.</p> <p>Wenn wir das irgendwie hinkriegen sollten über unsere Unterstützer, dass wir davon wirklich a) zu allererst mal unsere Kosten decken und b) dann auch den Autoren ein bisschen was bieten können an Entgelt, was dann im Umkehrschluss wieder heißt, (...) dass wir wahrscheinlich auch bessere [und] noch etwas größere Namen heranziehen können.</p> <p>(...) Frauenfußball, Medien, wie wir Fußball konsumieren, persönliche Texte.</p> <p>(...) dann kommt man schon mal auf eine Seite, wo man eigentlich eine Paywall überwinden müsste und das ist natürlich dann blöd, weil man kann nicht für zehn oder zwanzig Euro im Monat tausende von Seiten oder Artikeln kaufen.</p> <p>Ich schreibe über das, worüber ich schreiben möchte (...), weil wir auch Interesse haben daran, verschiedene Themen im Fußball zu erschließen für uns selber und dann auch das entsprechend den Lesern darzulegen.</p> <p>(...) dass man wirklich Quellen prüft [und] dass man abwägt,</p>
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	<p>wants to express so that a possible reply is presented”.</p> <p>“(…) link to a discussion either on Facebook or on Twitter so that it is obvious that there is a discussion occurring and on which source [the blogger] refers to”.</p> <p>“we formulated a mission statement that we see ourselves as long-read platform. (…) Long texts that do not try to focus on click baiting, but that pick up the real topics and open thematic areas which the mainstream does not deliver, eventually. It means that it cannot be written down in 200 hundred or 300 hundred words, but 1,500 words at least”.</p> <p>“try to use an understandable language about what wants to be said: (…) no nested and complicated sentences, but as easy and precise as possible”.</p> <p>“Jonathan Wilson who publishes The Blizzard [or] in German language (…) Christoph Dieckmann who influences a person in the way of thinking”.</p> <p>“when an article is done, it is published, and it is shared on Twitter and Facebook (...). I try to share it as much as possible with a lot of tags etc. so that a real effect is developed in order to reach as many people as possible with the devices I got (...)”.</p>	<p>(…) was will die Quelle sagen, dass man eventuell eine Gegendarstellung hat.</p> <p>Da versuche ich aber trotzdem zu einer Diskussion zu verlinken entweder auf Facebook oder auf Twitter, sodass zumindest ersichtlich wird, dass da eine Diskussion stattfindet und worauf ich mich beziehe.</p> <p>Da haben wir einerseits ein Mission Statement gesetzt, dass wir uns als Longreads-Plattform verstehen. (…) [L]ange Texte, die sich nicht darum bemühen, nur auf Klickzahlen zu schielen, sondern die wirklich Themen aufgreifen und auch Themenfelder eröffnen, die der Mainstream (…) vielleicht nicht geliefert bekommt. (…) Das heißt, es ist nicht irgendwie in zwei-, dreihundert Wörtern abgehandelt, sondern mindestens tausendfünfhundert Wörter.</p> <p>Ich versuche das wirklich in einer klaren Sprache rüberzubringen, was ich zu sagen habe: (…) keine verschachtelten Sätze, sondern einfach und so präzise wie möglich.</p> <p>Jonathan Wilson, der auch The Blizzard herausgibt. Im Deutschen war das (…) Christoph Dieckmann, (…) der einen auch im Denken irgendwo beeinflusst hat.</p> <p>Wenn ein Artikel fertig ist, wird der veröffentlicht, wird geteilt auf Twitter und Facebook (...). Ich versuche, den soweit wie möglich zu teilen mit vielen möglichen Schlagwörtern etc., sodass wirklich ein Effekt entsteht, dass der so viele Leute</p>
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	<p>“comments are comments, and the people should express themselves when they have something to say”.</p> <p>“when the comment is out of line, it is deleted, of course”.</p> <p>“[an article about football history] is commented and discussed fewer than, for example, my colleagues articles about ultras, media and their relationship. It is more breaking news and everybody has an opinion about it, while in my texts you need to dive deep into the topic”.</p> <p>"I am really interested in how they think about my writing style because I cannot estimate it. There comes feedback in terms of content which is helpful, and I thank them for it”.</p> <p>“(…) WhatsApp group (…) where some very interesting blogger participate but only readers or rather [financial] supporters (...). (...) Ideas are thrown into it or the text review is linked or (...) podcast sessions etc. (...) There are also discussions (...)“.</p> <p>“is very important. It is what we notice at [name of the blog]. In the last year, we had the luck to win a scholarship (...) [, and] workshops were</p>	<p>wie möglich erreicht mit den Mitteln, die ich habe (...).</p> <p>Kommentare sind Kommentare und die Leute sollen sich äußern, wenn sie was zu sagen haben.</p> <p>Wenn der Kommentar unter der Gürtellinie ist, wird er selbstverständlich gelöscht.</p> <p>[Ein fußballhistorischer Beitrag] wird weit weniger kommentiert und diskutiert über Twitter oder Facebook als beispielsweise der Text von meinem Kollegen (...) zu den Ultras und die Medien und deren Beziehung. Das ist aktueller, dazu können sich auch die Kicker-Leser äußern mit ihrer Meinung zu Ultras und mit ihrer Meinung zu Medien, während in meinem Text, da muss man wirklich schon in die Materie gehen.</p> <p>Mich interessiert natürlich auch immer, weil ich es wirklich nicht einschätzen kann, wie die mein Schreibstil ankommt. (...) Inhaltlich kommt schon mal was zurück. Das ist auch hilfreich. Und ich bedanke mich dann auch immer artig.</p> <p>(...) WhatsApp-Gruppe (...), wo wir ein paar sehr, sehr interessante Blogger dabeihaben, (...) aber nur Leser beziehungsweise [finanzielle] Unterstützer (...). (...) Da werden wirklich Ideen reingeworfen oder [die] Textvorschau wird verlinkt oder (...) Podcast-Folge etcetera. (...) [Es] wird auch diskutiert (...).</p> <p>Ganz wichtig. Das merken wir grade bei [Blogname]. Wir hatten im letzten Jahr das Glück, ein Stipendium zu gewinnen (...) [und es] wurden</p>
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	<p>also offered [by the Journalist’s Association]. We have learnt that we must promote much more our brand than we used to”.</p> <p>“(…) in [blog name] sometimes we are opinion-makers. (…) [Our roles:] defining topics that provoke; that maybe were not looked at before or at least not from this perspective (...); and to ignite discussions. (…) [In my blog] I like to be a commentator with an own opinion. I also like just to be an observer when I write a match coverage. (…) But I would never attribute to myself a fixed role or the function as opinion-maker. [In the common blog] it is different. There we want to set topics and emotive subjects” (Interviewee 2).</p>	<p>auch Workshops angeboten [von der Journalistenvereinigung]. Und da haben wir gelernt, dass wir wirklich mit unserer Marke (...) viel mehr hausieren gehen müssen.</p> <p>(...) Meinungsmacher sind wir bei [Blogname] doch auch schon mal. (...) [Unsere Rollenfunktionen:] Themen setzen, die auch gerne reizen sollen; die vielleicht noch nicht betrachtet wurden oder zumindest nicht aus dem Blickwinkel betrachtet wurden und (...) Diskussionen entfachen. (...) Bei [meinem Blog] bin ich gerne mal Kommentator mit einer Meinung. Da bin ich auch gerne nur Beobachter, wenn ich einen Spielbericht schreibe. (...) nur eine fixe Rolle oder eine Meinungsmacher-Rolle würde ich mir nicht zuschreiben. Bei [dem gemeinsamen Blog mit anderen] sieht das anders aus. Da wollen wir Themen und Reizpunkte setzen.</p>
Interviewee 3	<p>“I had a feeling that there missed a thematic perspective towards the newspaper coverage about the club, and that it was not examined enough and that especially I am qualified to contribute in terms of content to it and where blogging has the freedom to do so”.</p> <p>“some topics are automatically relevant because it is about what happens in the club or in its environment at the moment. At the same time, sometimes we take up topics that have nothing to do [with the club], and related to this we are following a process of</p>	<p>dass ich das Gefühl habe, dass in der medialen Diskussion in der Berichterstattung [zum Verein] diese thematische Perspektive gefehlt hat; dass die nicht ausreichend beleuchtet wurde und dass ich inhaltlich dazu gerade qualifiziert genug bin, diese Perspektive einzubringen (...) und wo bloggen die Freiheit gehabt hat (...).</p> <p>[M]anche Themen sind automatisch relevant darüber, was eben gerade im Verein sportlich und im Umfeld passiert. Und gleichzeitig ist es so, dass wir in diesen täglichen Blogs hin und wieder Themen mit aufnehmen, die nicht direkt was mit [dem Verein] zu tun haben und dazu folgt ein</p>

	<p>estimation [whether a club fan could be interested in a potential topic]. In this format in which we write something every day, the latest events of the day are a fixed point of content, of course, but otherwise the format and spectrum of topics is that open that everything which feels relevant can be included [even though] it is not current (...)"</p> <p>“social media or rather blogosphere and traditional media represent a great part of the story. And then there is Instagram which many football players use actively. That is a source which is checked regularly for colour content [such as the posting of the players’ dogs] which is quite nice to liven up the format because in the layout it is technically a certain welcome change”.</p> <p>“(...) we have an arrangement that one day before the match I usually write because with the other blog I write, the focus is on the tactical access to the match”.</p> <p>some time or other [name of a blogger] started to publish a press roundup on Facebook and then in the blog. Before that, it was just presented from time to time, and since then the format is released as a commented press roundup every day in the morning”.</p> <p>“when you classify it under</p>	<p>Einschätzungsprozess, [ob man sich als Vereinsfan für das Thema interessieren könnte]. (...) Bei diesem Format, wo man täglich was schreibt, sind natürlich tagesaktuelle Themen ein Punkt, aber andererseits ist das Format und das Themenspektrum (...) so offen, dass man alles, was sich relevant anfühlt, einbringen kann, was nicht immer tagesaktuell ist (...).</p> <p>Social Media beziehungsweise Blogosphäre und klassische Medien machen einen großen Teil der Geschichte aus. Und dann gibt es noch Instagram, wo viele der Spieler aktiv sind. Das ist noch sowas, was man dann regelmäßig checkt für Color Content [wie das Posten von Fotos der Spielerhunde]. Das ist halt immer ganz nett für die Auflockerung, gerade für dieses Format, weil es im Layout und technisch eine gewisse Abwechslung bringt.</p> <p>(...) haben wir eine Regelung, dass am Tag vor dem Spiel ich in der Regel schreibe, weil ich mit dem anderen Blog, was ich mache, es um einen taktischen Zugang zum Spiel geht (...).</p> <p>Und irgendwann hat [Bloggername] angefangen, zuerst auf Facebook und dann im Blog eine tägliche Presseschau zu machen. Vorher erschien immer mal wieder was und seitdem ist das Format so (...), dass täglich am Anfang diese kommentierte Presseschau erscheint.</p> <p>Wenn man das auf dem Spektrum journalistischer Genres einordnet, ist es immer</p>
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	<p>the spectrum of journalistic genres, it is always something between a comment and a pure editorial coverage. It is always a comment perspective. It started as a commented press coverage. It means that on the one hand, it is presented what already exists in the discussion sphere, but you take in a position and say which further topics are relevant. That is a certain position of commenting, thus, an own perspective or opinion is always a part of it. And this is the added value in most cases which you can deliver [as a blogger]”.</p> <p>“[that] I used to work in a kind of journalistic earlier, started university where you must write a lot and in so far I had a formal system, and in other points I learned it autodidactic. Especially, what has to do with the technical stuff about football, I was inspired content-related by other bloggers that already existed”.</p> <p>“[the German football-tactics blog] Spielverlagerung and some journalists and bloggers from the Anglo-Saxon countries”.</p> <p>“we observe how many posts were read and how much interaction takes place because reaching people with the content is part of the main idea, and the higher the media range the higher is the relevance in certain respects”.</p>	<p>was zwischen Kommentar und reinem redaktionellem Bericht. Es ist immer eine Kommentarperspektive. Es hat angefangen als kommentierte Presseschau. Das heißt, man listet einerseits, was schon in der Diskussionssphäre vorkommt, aber nimmt eine Position dazu ein, sagt, welche Themen vielleicht außerdem noch relevant sein könnten. Das heißt, eine gewisse Stufe an Kommentieren und an eigener Perspektive, eigener Meinung ist immer dabei. Und das ist in vielen Fällen auch der Zusatzwert, den man [als Blogger] schaffen kann an der Stelle.</p> <p>Ich habe schon früh in irgendeiner Weise journalistisch gearbeitet, habe dann (...) studiert etwas, wo man auch viel schreibt und insofern ein formales System [hatte] und in anderen Punkten autodidaktisch mir das angeeignet. Gerade was die fachliche über Fußball schreibende Seite des Ganzen angeht, ist es sowas, wo ich inhaltlich von gewissen anderen Blogs auch inspiriert bin, die es vorher schon gab.</p> <p>Spielverlagerung (...) und ein paar Journalisten und Blogger im englischsprachigen Raum.</p> <p>Wir werfen ein Auge drauf, wie viel Posts gelesen werden und wie viel Interaktion stattfindet, einfach weil ein Teil der Idee ist es, Leute zu erreichen mit den Inhalten und umso größer die Reichweite, umso größer ist in gewisser Weise auch Relevanz.</p>
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	<p>“at the moment [my own blog] has no comment feature due to technical reasons” (Interviewee 3).</p> <p>“I do not know whether I have a concrete image [of my readers]. Of course, there is the basic relation to the football club about it is in the blog. And I assume that the blog community shares certain kinds of values, e.g. an anti-fascist position”.</p> <p>“(…) as a logical consequence, photos make a great part of Instagram stories, and there comes few feedback in terms of content. While on Facebook and Twitter links to the blog articles are posted daily (…). A huge number of readers click on the blog because they are guided to it from social media. In this context, Facebook is a bigger factor with regard to the amount of followers” (Interviewee 3).</p> <p>“under no circumstances [we are less critical because of the contact with the club]. It is a collegial-journalistic relationship in many ways which does not differ from other media that reports on the club”.</p> <p>“(…) when readers want to know what is happening out there in the world of discussions, they can read in our blog which topics were set on the agenda from all directions, (….) that is content-related aspects that were not covered in other media [which we] present by</p>	<p>[Mein eigener Blog] hat im Moment keine Kommentarfunktion aus technischen Gründen.</p> <p>Ich weiß nicht, ob ich da [von meinen Lesern] in irgendeiner Weise ein konkretes Bild von habe. (...) Natürlich ist die Grundbeziehung (...) [zum] Verein, um den es geht. Und ich gehe davon aus, dass die Community um das Blog herum insofern gewisse Werte teilt, dass es zum Beispiel eine antifaschistische Position (...) einnimmt.</p> <p>(...) logischerweise bespielen die Fotos einen großen Teil der Instagramgeschichte und da ist relativ wenig inhaltliches Feedback (...). Während wir auf Facebook und Twitter täglich die Links zu den Blogbeiträgen posten (...). Eine relevant große Zahl von Lesern klickt auf den Blog, weil sie aus sozialen Netzwerken dort hingewiesen werden. Da ist Facebook nochmal mengenmäßig ein größerer Faktor als Twitter (...).</p> <p>Auf keinen Fall [sind wir durch den Kontakt zum Verein unkritischer]. Es ist ein kollegiales journalistisches Verhältnis in vielen Fällen, was sich nicht großartig von dem unterscheidet, was andere Medien auch zu den Vereinen haben, über die sie berichten.</p> <p>(...) Wenn Leser wissen wollen, was gerade in der Diskussionswelt stattfindet, dann können sie bei uns nachlesen, was alles für Themen auf die Agenda gesetzt wurden von allen Seiten, (...) also inhaltliche Aspekte, die woanders nicht abgedeckt wurden, [die wir] einfach selbst</p>
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	<p>ourselves in an editorial manner”.</p> <p>“at first, I think that the people a) read and b) like the content, and do not stop reading after the first paragraph, and that people (...) share it and forward it with a comment.</p> <p>“(...) when it was about the distribution of television money, one reader found another breakdown than we during our research, in which it was emerged that the whole thing was distributed differently. The link was in the comment at this day. I think that we implemented it in the main text corpus as an update. From time to time, you can find in the comments or we receive messages on Facebook for the team with an advice which we take up with pleasure”.</p> <p>“to make links fast and precisely available where you can find relevant content. [For example,] that the original links for stories are included and that the content is not just rewritten. And that is an offer of fairness towards the provider of the content”.</p>	<p>in redaktioneller Weise präsentieren.</p> <p>Zu allererst denke ich daran, dass die Leute das a) lesen und b) toll finden oder zumindest gut finden und nicht gleich nach dem ersten Absatz wieder abbrechen und dass die Leute (...) das teilen und weiterleiten mit einem Kommentar weiterleiten.</p> <p>(...) als es um die Verteilung der TV-Gelder ging, hat ein Leser eine andere Aufschlüsselung gefunden als wir in der Recherche, aus der hervorging, dass die ganze Sache anders verteilt ist. Der Link stand dann an dem Tag in den Kommentaren. Ich glaube, in dem Fall haben wir das an dem Tag noch in den Haupttext geschrieben als Update. Hin und wieder kommen auch in den Kommentaren oder erreichen uns auf Facebook als Nachricht an das Team Hinweise, die wir dann auch gern mit aufnehmen.</p> <p>(...) [die Links] schnell und präzise und gut [erreichbar machen], wo man tatsächlich die Inhalte, die relevant sind, findet, zugänglich gemacht zu bekommen. [Zum Beispiel,] dass man die Originallinks für Stories und nicht die rausgeschrieben und zusammengeschrieben findet. Und das ist ein Angebot der Fairness den Anbietern der anderen Inhalte gegenüber.</p>
Interviewee 4	<p>“I was sick to death of all these stereotypes, permanently to justify and to be ashamed for being a [name of city-fan].”.</p> <p>“just wanted to write down the thoughts which were there anyway, and [I] wanted to</p>	<p>Ich hatte die Schnauze voll von diesen ganzen Klischees, (...) sich dauernd rechtfertigen zu müssen oder schämen zu müssen, dass man [Stadtname-]Fan ist.</p> <p>(...) einfach die Sachen von der Seele schreiben, die sowieso da</p>

	<p>produce the format exactly in this way because it corresponds to my personality”.</p> <p>“when you (...) provide something in public, either yourself, your opinion or something else, then you become vulnerable on the one hand, on the other hand you receive a position of esteem (...) which you notice on public events in the way people face you, that is very respectful” (Interviewee 4).</p> <p>“of course, I am doing it [i.e. writing blog posts in form of a gloss] because of my media past and I know in which cases I am justiciable. Consequently, I do not enter into this area of insults or other things”.</p> <p>“it is better that I do not write it at the same day, especially not after the club has lost because I then become too harsh (...). I got into the habit of doing it on Sunday evening when the last match [of the league] is played. (...) But in principal it is important that the match of [club name] is over”.</p> <p>“the code behind that: (...) everything is in favor [of the club]. (...) And the etiquette is: making remarks about people and in the broadest sense you tease them a little bit, but it should never degenerate into dismissals of sections of the population”.</p> <p>“when you are registered [as an user], the comment goes</p>	<p>sind, und wollte das Format genauso machen, weil das meiner Persönlichkeit entspricht.</p> <p>[W]enn du (...) irgendetwas öffentlich zur Schau stellst, entweder dich selber, deine Meinung oder sonst irgendetwas, dann wirst du auf der einen Seite natürlich angreifbar, (...) auf der anderen Seite bekommst du aber auch so eine "herausgehobene Stellung", (...) das merkt man schon, wie man mir dann auch gegenübertritt, das ist dann schon (...) sehr respektvoll (...) bei öffentlichen Veranstaltungen.</p> <p>(...) mache ich [das] natürlich aufgrund meiner Medienvergangenheit [und] ich weiß schon, wo ich dann justiziabel werde. In diesen Bereich gehe ich dann einfach nicht rein, wo es dann in die Beleidigung geht oder sonst irgendetwas.</p> <p>Es ist besser, ich mache es nicht am selben Tag, vor allen Dingen nicht nach Niederlagen, weil es dann manchmal zu harsch wird (...). Ich habe mir das angewöhnt, Sonntagabends zu machen (...), wenn auch das letzte Spiel durch ist (...). Aber grundsätzlich wichtig ist, dass das [Vereinsname]-Spiel gelaufen ist.</p> <p>Der Kodex dahinter: (...) alles zum Wohle des [Vereinsname]. (...) Und von der Etikette her: man lästert und man zieht über Leute auch her und (...) im weitesten Sinne neckt man (...) ein bisschen, aber es darf niemals ausarten in Abqualifizierungen von</p>
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	<p>online immediately. You then have four minutes to edit it, and after it you cannot change it anymore. (...) [But] the admin can edit all the time (...)"</p> <p>"(...) when there is xenophobic philosophy or when the atmosphere surges up that people insult each other (...)"</p> <p>"with reference to the readers, it is always a felt empirical method. (...) In the blog you can just guess which educational background and which age they have (...). [In my articles], there are too many plays on words and allusions that someone cannot understand when they have plenty up top. But it does not mean that that it is a blog for well-educated persons"</p> <p>"the media and communication department [of the football club] which scans it, hears [the podcast] (...). And people like the manager, for example, are also interested in it (...). Or I send him the texts because we are in contact regularly. But I think that football players spend their time with other things and it is not the first thing that they do when they come home (...)"</p> <p>"it is more often commented [in the blog]. On Facebook it is shared or liked, or it is</p>	<p>Bevölkerungsgruppen.</p> <p>Wenn du angemeldet bist, dann geht der Kommentar sofort online. Du hast dann selber [als User] nochmal vier Minuten Zeit, um zu bearbeiten und danach kannst du es auch nicht mehr ändern. (...) [Aber] der Admin kann immer bearbeiten (...).</p> <p>(...) wenn da fremdenfeindliches Gedankengut oder die Stimmung so hochschlägt, dass die Leute sich gegenseitig beleidigen (...).</p> <p>Was die Leser generell angeht, ist das immer gefühlte Empirie. (...) [B]eim [Blog kannst du] am Schreibstil meistens nur erahnen, was für einen Bildungshintergrund und welches Alter die vielleicht haben (...). (...) [In meinen Beiträgen] sind zu viele Wortspiele und Anspielungen drin, dass man sie nicht verstehen würde, wenn man nicht ein bisschen Grips hat. (...) Das heißt jetzt aber nicht, dass das ein Blog für Bessergebildete ist.</p> <p>Die Medien- und Kommunikationsabteilung, die scannt das, die hört das (...). Und Leute wie [der Sportdirektor] zum Beispiel, die interessiert das dann auch (...). Oder ich schicke ihm dann auch mal etwas, weil wir stehen dann auch immer im regelmäßigen Kontakt. Aber ich glaube, dass Fußballprofis (...) ihre Zeit mit anderen Dingen [verbringen], (...) dann ist es auch nicht das Erste, was du machst (...).</p> <p>(...) es wird eher kommentiert [im Blog]. Bei Facebook wird es dann mal geteilt oder es wird</p>
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	<p>forwarded to the groups (...)"</p> <p>"(...) I comment rarely, but when I comment then it is with style and decency and with rating where certain things have to be relativised"</p> <p>"[readers] play an important role for me in a way that I am thankful for every kind of feedback. (...) [That is,] everything that 'pays' into the whole thing, (...) it is less the content [of the comments] because everyone has the right to have an own opinion (...)"</p> <p>"it is a self-affirmation, it is the esteem which is behind that. It is the idea and stimulus to think new and to think about the things again"</p> <p>"(...) interview players after the match for the podcast"</p> <p>"(...) making an offer so that people can exchange opinions. Because there is a need to exchange experiences with the fan base. All the other formats that exist such as fan forums etc. are dead and nothing is happening anymore in it. [The blog] lives"</p>	<p>in die Gruppen geschoben oder die Likes (...).</p> <p>(...) ich kommentiere so gut wie nie mit, aber wenn ich kommentiere, dann hat es meistens etwas mit Stil und Anstand zu tun und mit Bewertungen, wo gewisse Sachen auch relativiert werden.</p> <p>[Leser] spielen eine große Rolle für mich insofern, dass ich für jedes Feedback dankbar bin. Ich erhoffe mir Feedback. (...) [Das heißt,] Alles, was ‚einahlt‘ auf das gesamte Ding, (...) weniger der Inhalt [der Kommentare], weil jeder darf seine Meinung haben (...).</p> <p>Es ist Selbstbestätigung, es ist die Wertschätzung, die dahinter steht. Es sind auch Anregungen und Impulse, auch selber mal wieder Sachen neu zu überlegen oder nachzudenken.</p> <p>wenn ich die [Spieler] dann nach dem Spiel interviewe für das [Podcast].</p> <p>(...) ein Angebot zu schaffen, dass man sich austauschen kann. Weil es gibt einen Need, sich auszutauschen, innerhalb der [Vereinsname]-Fans. Alle anderen [bisherigen] Formate, die es da auch noch gibt, Fan-Forum etc., die sind mehr oder weniger tot, da passiert nie etwas. [Der Blog] ist lebendig.</p>
Interviewee 5	<p>"firstly, I lost my job (...) and then the newspaper was sold. (...) At that time I already saw that newspaper is not the future. (...) My plan was to offer all 36 football clubs in Germany a blog as the one I have now, and I blocked names of the clubs, i.e. I bought websites [or rather] addresses (...)"</p>	<p>(...) [E]rst (...) bin ich ausgeschieden (...) und die Zeitung (...) ist dann verkauft worden. (...) Ich habe damals schon gesehen, dass die Zeitung nicht die Zukunft ist. (...) Mein Plan war, dass ich für 36 Vereine in Deutschland sowas anbiete wie [meinen Blog]. Ich habe damals alle Namen geblockt von den Vereinen (...),</p>

	<p>“journalism is a trade that I practice, [and my platform] (...) is not a blog because I am no blogger, but a journalist. I do not want to be called a blogger. I hear it from colleagues, too, that they wonder what I am doing with my blog, and I think it is derogatory”.</p> <p>“(...) I cannot imagine to start the working day at 9 o'clock in the morning because actually you work 24 hours a day to stay updated”.</p> <p>“now and then employ an intern”.</p> <p>“I have an advertiser, a big one (...) who places advertisements on my website. (...) The [name of the agency] can be read on the website”.</p> <p>“(...) even when I have heard it before, though, I have to prove it as journalist. Unless it is proved, then I can leave it in the blog, otherwise I must delete it”.</p>	<p>quasi die Webseiten [bzw.] die Adressen gekauft (...).</p> <p>Journalismus ist [ein] Handwerk und es ist auch der Beruf, den ich mache, [...] (...) ist es kein Blog, weil ich bin ja nicht der Blogger, sondern ich bin Journalist. Blogger will ich nicht genannt werden, muss ich sagen. Das höre ich auch von Kollegen, dass die sagen, (...) was will der mit seinem kleinen Blog [und] ich finde es schon abwertend.</p> <p>(...) kann man sich das nicht so vorstellen, dass man um neun Uhr seine Arbeit beginnt, sondern eigentlich ist deine Arbeit 24 Stunden lang am Tag, (...) damit du up-to-date bleibst.</p> <p>ab und zu mal einen Praktikanten habe.</p> <p>Ich habe einen Vermarkter, einen großen, (...) der kümmert sich um die Werbung auf meiner Seite. (...) Das steht ja bei mir auf der Seite [Vermarktername].</p> <p>(...) ich habe das zwar auch mal gehört, aber ich muss das als Journalist auch belegen können politisch. Deswegen muss man sowas rausnehmen. Es sei denn, es ist bewiesen, dann kann ich es drin lassen, aber so muss ich es löschen.</p> <p>(...) die wichtigste Regel im Journalismus oder im Sportjournalismus, richtig zitieren können. (...) [Sich am Pressekodex zu halten,] (...) Sollte jeder machen.</p> <p>Aus politischen Gründen, wenn ich zum Beispiel eine Information habe (...) [und] ich wusste das aber schon seit</p>
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	<p>“(...) the most important rule in sport journalism is to cite in a correct way. [Holding on the press code] should do everybody”.</p> <p>“due to political reasons, for example when I have an information that I already knew weeks or months before, I cannot write about it because I would divulge an informant”.</p> <p>“(...) when I write a text, (...) there are information which are in my mind. Thus, I cannot speak from the collection of information. [But] when I have an interview [with a player], it is something different. Then it takes regularly thirty minutes to one hour. I listen to the recorded tape and write it down (...)”.</p> <p>“(...) mistakes can happen. In this case, corrections are made or I have to probe a little deeper even when the text is already published. (...) When I find something that could have been formulated better, I re-formulate it”.</p> <p>“now and then I upload a photo and that is it. However, I cannot rely on it that it will end in more interactivity on my website. It is just a service, more or less”.</p> <p>“you have a good relationship with the participants (...) [, i.e.] with the athletes, and the club officials”.</p>	<p>Wochen oder Monaten und kann es aber nicht schreiben, weil ich einen Informanten preisgeben würde.</p> <p>(...) wenn ich einen Text schreibe, (...) dann sind das Informationen, die im Kopf gespeichert sind. Also kann man nicht von Informationsbeschaffung reden. [Aber] [w]enn ich ein Interview [mit einem Spieler] mache, dann ist es was anderes. (...) Dann dauert das Interview in der Regel dreißig Minuten bis eine Stunde. Dann höre ich es ab [und] schreibe ich es rein (...).</p> <p>(...) da können da schon mal Fehler passieren. Da gibt es Korrektur oder da muss ich dann schon mal nochmal nachfassen, nachdem auch der Text schon online ist. (...) wenn ich halt was sehe, was vielleicht hätte besser formuliert werden können, dann formuliere ich das nochmal um.</p> <p>Ab und zu lade ich halt ein Bildchen hoch und fertig. Aber darauf kann ich mich nicht verlassen, dass das mir mehr Interaktivität bringt jetzt auf meiner Seite. Ist halt nur ein Service mehr oder weniger.</p> <p>(...) dass man ein sehr gutes Verhältnis hat zu den Beteiligten (...) [,d.h.] zu den Sportlern und zu dem Funktionsträger. [Der Verein] hat[te] ein Pokalspiel (...) bei einem Viertligisten. Die eine Zeitung hat ein Livestream angeboten in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Hauptsponsor (...), aber ich habe mehr Leser (...) auf dem Live Ticker als die [Zeitungsname] beim</p>
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	<p>“[the club] had a cup match against a team from the fourth league. One newspaper offered a livestream in collaboration with the main sponsor of the club (...), but I had more readers for my live ticker than the [newspaper name] for its livestream. It says a lot [about the status of the blog]” (Interviewee 5).</p>	<p>Livestream. Das sagt viel aus.</p>
<p>Interviewee 6</p>	<p>“In the past I worked as sport journalist”.</p> <p>“it is okay to consider [football topics occurring in the region but not being club-specific]. But I do not necessarily include it in the headline (...) [because] during the time I know to which headlines people react well”.</p> <p>“totally absurd things. Once in a summer break we published many photos of players in swimming pools, and it was very entertaining. Everybody knew that it was just a silly thing. You do not have to take it seriously every day and to publish the highest art of content. [The blog] lives from its daily currency”.</p> <p>“I always used to write about what I am interested in, but I know as well what the readership wants to read. It is both [approaches]. (...) I relatively write much about sport politics and side issues (...). Usually, I do not have to do it theoretically for my readers. Firstly, I do it because it is interesting because I always think I do not get information or news about what is happening outside [the club], and I do not mean football matches</p>	<p>Ich habe früher als Sportreporter gearbeitet.</p> <p>[Über andere Fußballthemen zu schreiben, die in der Region passieren, aber nicht klubspezifisch sind,] kann man machen. Was ich dann aber nicht mache, ist, das unbedingt in die Überschrift zu ziehen (...) [, denn] über die Zeit bekomme ich mit, worauf die Leute besonders gut reagieren.</p> <p>völlig absurde Sachen zu machen. Wir haben einmal in einer Sommerpause sehr viele Bilder von Spielern am Swimming Pool gebracht. Und das war auch unterhaltsam. Jeder wusste, dass es Quatsch ist, du musst nicht immer jeden Tag wahnsinnig ernst sein und die höchste Kunst [erbringen] (...). [Der Blog] lebt von der Tagesaktualität.</p> <p>Ich schreibe schon immer das, was ich selber interessant finde. Aber ich weiß auch, was das Publikum will. Das ist beides. (...) Ich schreibe verhältnismäßig viel über Sportpolitik und über randständige Themen (...). (...) Das müsste ich für dieses Publikum theoretisch nicht machen. Das mache ich erstens, weil es mich interessiert, weil ich immer das Gefühl habe, dass ich irgendwie außerhalb [vom Verein] viel zu wenig mitkriege, was eigentlich passiert. Und</p>

	<p>but something like the polarisation in the opponent club. Then, I receive information about it somehow, [i.e.] there is something on Twitter and it is interesting, (...) but on the one hand I know that people are interested in it, on the other hand I am interested as well”.</p> <p>“under a hashtag you can find everything (...), the flyer of the fan stand in the stadium as a photo post, or a text that could be interesting for us, or someone took a picture of something interesting. You can find it all very easily on Twitter”.</p> <p>“(...) the person who writes, is responsible for everything: (...) he writes the headline, he writes the texts, he selects the pictures by himself, selects [everything] for Facebook and Twitter and posts it”.</p> <p>„that is our opinion, we must combine coverage and opinion in one format, [and] that is an unusual format for German media. But in the end it is a format (...) which could be sent out as newsletter and it would work (...)“.</p> <p>“we have an opinion and it is relatively obvious in every post because I change into the first-person-perspective so that the people can see that it is me, it is what I think, which I write it in that way [for clarification]“.</p> <p>“that it is more uniform,</p>	<p>damit meine ich nicht Fußballspiele, sondern so was (...) wie die Polarisierung beim [gegnerischer Vereinsname]. Das kriege ich dann irgendwie mit [, d.h.] da ist was bei Twitter und das ist interessant, (...) aber einerseits weiß ich, dass die Leute sich dafür interessieren, aber ich finde es auch selber interessant.</p> <p>Und unter einem Hashtag kann man dann alles finden (...) den Kurvenflyer aus dem Stadion [als] Foto, einen Text, der vielleicht für uns interessant ist. Oder jemand hat was Interessantes fotografiert. Das sieht man über Twitter tatsächlich super gut alles.</p> <p>(...) wer schreibt, macht alles selbst: (...) er macht die Überschrift selbst, er schreibt die Texte, sucht die Bilder selbst raus, sucht [alles] für Facebook, Twitter raus, postet es auch selbstständig per Twitter, Facebook.</p> <p>Das ist unsere Meinung, wir müssen Bericht und Meinung in einem Format [verbinden und] das ist für deutsche Medien ungewöhnlich als Format. Aber das ist im Prinzip letzten Endes ein Format (...), das könnte man auch als Newsletter verschicken und dann würde das funktionieren (...).</p> <p>Wir haben eine Meinung und die wird relativ deutlich in jedem Post, weil ich zum Beispiel dann in die Ich-Perspektive wechsele, damit den Leuten klar ist, das bin jetzt ich, das meine ich, das schreibe ich dann auch so [zur Aufklärung].</p> <p>(...) dass es auch einheitlich ist, bestimmte Sachen, die wir</p>
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	<p>specific things about we write, (...) for example, the way I write a match result: [name of a blogger] likes to write it in the English way, one hyphen one, (...) I write it in the German way, one colon one”.</p> <p>“Thus, I would say that the majority [of the content] is journalistic even when it transports a lot of opinion and at the same time it contains much entertainment”.</p> <p>“(...) because I had no relation with the people, but now it is different. And the people develop their own opinion about our what we think [and how we express it]”.</p> <p>“we are giving feedback to each other which is relatively unvarnished (...), but [it is given] among ourselves in the chat”.</p> <p>“(...) from where do the people come to your website, and where do they click in your texts. (...) But it is not like that we develop a huge strategy out of this data”.</p> <p>“the open community management and being open for criticism, i.e. not to be offended when you are criticised, but to look if I did it well, if the readers could understand it, or did I really consider everything that has to be considered [to understand the context]. In my opinion, readers’ comments are absolutely enriching”.</p>	<p>schreiben[,] (...) zum Beispiel wie schreibe ich ein Fußballergebnis: [Bloggernamen] schreibt das gerne auf die englische Art, eins Bindestrich eins, (...) ich schreibe es gerne auf die deutsche Art, Eins Doppelpunkt Eins.</p> <p>(...) Deswegen würde ich schon sagen, dass größtenteils journalistisch ist, auch wenn es viel Meinung transportiert und viel Entertainment beinhaltet.</p> <p>(...) weil ich auch keine Beziehung zu Leuten hatte, aber jetzt ist es anders. Und die Leute bilden sich ihre Meinung über unsere Einordnung [und Ausdrucksform].</p> <p>Wir geben uns gegenseitig Feedback, das auch relativ ungeschminkt (...), aber untereinander im Chat.</p> <p>(...) von wo kommen Leute auf dich drauf und wo klicken die Leute drauf in deinen Texten. (...) Aber es ist nicht so, dass wir daraus jetzt eine riesige Strategie entwickeln.</p> <p>Dieses offene Community Management und auch offen für auch Kritik sein, also dieses nicht sich beleidigt zurückziehen, wenn man mal kritisiert wird, sondern auch gucken, habe ich das richtig gemacht, konnte man das vielleicht so verstehen oder habe ich wirklich alles berücksichtigt, was zu berücksichtigen ist. Ich finde [Leserkommentare] wahnsinnig bereichernd.</p>
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	<p>“(...) ten years ago (...) the forum [of the club] was important when it was usual to comment in forums, but it is declining since then, and Facebook as well. (...) There are still these controversial topics (...), but they are not accessible online for everyone. (...) For instance, organised fans discuss internally in closed forums (...) [, and] they never comment in public (...)”.</p> <p>“just want to show that they accept the feedback, that it is a simple thanks, and then I link to the comment where the information was published so that these commenters receive a virtual applause and feel integrated [in the community]”.</p> <p>“it is inspiring. I like it (...) to learn from different aspects because (...) you can learn to recognise different perspectives (...)”.</p> <p>“in fact, you get the [high number of readers] by a regularity which is the key to everything: Regularity and all the things we offer what the people like (...)”.</p> <p>“I started an e-mail newsletter (...) [and] now more than 200 people have subscribed I, and receive a mail when a new text or podcast is online. They also come when you arrange to meet at a certain place before the match (...). I like this kind of community (...). And the people take part in arguments when (...) ultra-</p>	<p>(...) vor zehn Jahren (...) war dieses [Vereinsname]-Forum selbst noch wichtig, als auch noch in Foren diskutiert wurde, ist eher abnehmend seit der Zeit. Und Facebook selber ist auch abnehmend. (...) Es gibt diese widerstreitenden Themen (...), aber die finden nicht für alle offen online statt. (...) Zum Beispiel, organisierte Fans diskutieren intern in geschlossenen Foren (...), (...) die kommentieren nie öffentlich (...).</p> <p>(...) einfach zeigen, dass man dieses Feedback annimmt, dass es ein einfaches Danke ist (...) und verlinke zu dem Kommentar, wo das drin war, damit die auch diesen virtuellen Applaus kriegen und auch integriert sind [in der Community].</p> <p>(...) für mich ist es inspirierend. Ich mag es, (...) verschiedene Aspekte kennen zu lernen, weil (...) man kann lernen, verschiedene Perspektiven zu sehen (...).</p> <p>Die [hohen Leserzahlen] holt man sich tatsächlich durch die Regelmäßigkeit, das ist für mich der Schlüssel zu allem: Regelmäßigkeit und mit dem, was wir dann auch anbieten, dass es auch das ist, was den Leuten gefällt (...).</p> <p>Ich habe ein E-Mail-Abo gemacht (...) [und] jetzt haben schon über 200 Leute sich da eingetragen und kriegen immer eine E-Mail, wenn ein neuer Text draußen ist oder ein neuer Podcast da ist. Die kommen dann auch, wenn man sich irgendwie verabredet vorm Spiel an dem Ort (...). Ich mag diesen Community-Aspekt (...).</p>
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	<p>fans hold a banner [about us in the stadium], there were many reactions and also lack of understanding against the banner (...)."</p> <p>“[the spokesman and I] know each other since ten years, and as reporter we used to collaborate with each other even when we were not always satisfied with each other, perhaps, but today there is not such a competition”.</p> <p>“whether blogs or regional newspaper will still exist in ten years, I do not know. When regional newspapers are dead, (...) bloggers can work as freelancers or the football clubs give journalists a job because [the communication employees of football clubs] cannot write, they can just do public relations. [When I would work for my favorite club], I could not proceed with the blog as I am doing now or rather write critically about my employer. (...) I think, new ways will be found”.</p> <p>“never liked this dichotomy [of football blogging and professional football journalism] (...) because very outstanding club blogs are made by media. (...) You will never mess with this kind of professionalism as a hobby blogger. With professionalism I mean full-time. (...) I think that both has its permission. (...) It completes each other totally, and the transition is very fluently because there is this</p>	<p>Und die Leute haben auch Anteil, als (...) die Ultras ein Transparent über [uns] hochgehalten haben [im Stadion], gab es sehr viele Reaktionen darauf und auch sehr viel Unverständnis gegenüber diesem Transparent (...).</p> <p>[dass der Pressesprecher und ich uns] kennen fast zehn Jahre und auch als Reporter haben wir miteinander gearbeitet, vielleicht waren wir nicht immer zufrieden wechselseitig, aber heute gibt es diese Nöte nicht.</p> <p>Ob es diese Formate Blog oder Regionalzeitungen in zehn Jahren noch so gibt, keine Ahnung. Wenn die Regionalzeitung tot ist, (...) dann kann man sich damit schon irgendwie selbstständig machen oder die Vereine stellen die Leute an, weil sie können selber nicht schreiben, die können nur PR machen. [Wenn ich für einen Verein arbeiten würde], könnte [ich den Blog] so nicht mehr betreiben oder kritisch über meinen eigenen Arbeitgeber schreiben. (...) Ich glaube, da werden sich auch neue Wege finden.</p> <p>Ich mochte diese Dichotomie (...) [noch nie], weil sehr, sehr hervorragende Vereinsblogs auch von Medien gemacht werden. (...) Als Hobbyblogger kommst du gegen Professionalität nie an. Mit Professionalität meine [ich] hauptberuflich. (...) Ich glaube, dass beides eine Berechtigung hat. (...) Das ergänzt sich sowieso total und der Übergang ist wahnsinnig fließend, weil [es] in diesem vermeintlich objektiven Journalismus das</p>
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	<p>subjective picture, i.e. this one story, in the supposed objective journalism”.</p> <p>“(…) I think we can be a bridge (…) between people who come as new fans to the club and people who are fans of the club since a long time. (…) And maybe we can communicate matters which the club would like to communicate but cannot because of several reasons, and in turn, we could communicate things that the club would prefer not to be communicated. (…) [For example,] things that are uncomfortable, inappropriate behaviour or something else“.</p>	<p>subjektive Bild, also diese einzelne Erzählung, gibt.</p> <p>(…) ich glaube, dass wir eine Brücke sein können (…) zwischen Leuten, die neu zu diesem Verein kommen und Leuten, die schon lange bei diesem Verein sind. (…) Und vielleicht können wir auch manchmal Sachen kommunizieren, die der Verein gerne kommunizieren würde, aber nicht kann aus Gründen und umgekehrt auch, dass wir Sachen kommunizieren, die der Verein lieber nicht kommunizieren würde. (…) [Zum Beispiel] Sachen, die sind auch unangenehm, Fanfehlverhalten oder irgendwas.</p>
<p>Interviewee 7</p>	<p>“who has the time to write in the morning? Because we all [bloggers in the multiple-authored blog] have a job, normal jobs, und because of our children who have to be at a certain time in school. In fact, it is more a question of time management [for producing more content]”.</p> <p>“what you can read in the internet every day, what you can read in newspapers, what you can hear in the subway. [Everything could be relevant for the content production], and what [of all these collected information] you finally edit, does everybody depending on how relevant he thinks it is”.</p> <p>“have targeted time of days that mainly follow the daily rhythm“.</p> <p>“there is one basic rule: (…) Is it justiciable? Is it relevant to criminal law? Then [I] do</p>	<p>Wer schafft das Vormittag, was zu schreiben? Weil einfach wir alle ja auch Arbeit haben, ganz normale Jobs, und weil [wir] Kinder haben, die bis dann und dann in der Schule sein müssen und das ist tatsächlich mehr so eine Frage des Zeitmanagements.</p> <p>Was man den Tag über im Internet liest, (…) was man in Zeitungen liest, was man in der U-Bahn hört (...). (...) [Alles könnte relevant sein für die Medienproduktion]. Und was davon man am Ende bearbeitet, macht jeder, wie er das für (...) relevant empfindet.</p> <p>Wir haben angestrebte Uhrzeiten, die folgen meistens auch einfach nur dem Tagesrhythmus.</p> <p>Es gibt eigentlich exakt eine Grundregel: (...) Ist es justiziabel? Ist es strafrechtlich</p>

	<p>not [insert it in the text]. It is relatively obvious: Is it an insult? Then I am not allowed to write it. Is it something that I claim and which can put somebody at a disadvantage? Then I am not allowed to write it. Do I have a proof? Do I have two sources? Then I am allowed to write it. In the end it has to do something with common sense. (...) It is just a kind making safe that it is true when it is really about facts”.</p> <p>“When you notice that inquiries are made, i.e. that something is unclear, it is corrected immediately (...), and that is done in a way that it can be retraced. Of course, there is a paragraph included and contains something like ‘update to the topic above, firstly, secondly, thirdly, has been revealed that’ [...]. There is the opportunity in the blog to delete [visually] the type in a way that you can see where a paragraph is deleted so that your correction is transparent”.</p> <p>“I use my blog as archive, as my home where I can find everything, and when someone wants, he goes to it. And then I give a notice at places in which I know that people are there who are interested in my stuff”.</p> <p>“(..) to verify or falsify something because you can gather more opinions. You must moderate it (...), but it is good when you want to have different perspectives to a topic“ (Interviewee 7).</p>	<p>relevant? Dann nicht. Es ist relativ klar: Ist es eine Beleidigung? Dann darf ich es nicht schreiben. Ist es was, was ich behaupte und jemand zum Nachteil reicht? Dann darf ich es nicht schreiben. Habe ich Beweise? Habe ich zwei Quellen? Dann darf ich es schreiben. Das ist eigentlich letzten Endes nur gesunder Menschenverstand. (...) Das ist eigentlich nur eine Art von Absicherung, dass das wirklich stimmt, wenn es wirklich um Fakten geht.</p> <p>Wenn du merkst, da kommen Nachfragen, da ist was missverständlich (...), dann wird das halt auch umgehend berichtigt, und zwar so, dass es nachvollziehbar ist. Dann kommt nämlich unten ein Absatz, da steht dann meinetwegen ‚Update zum Thema oben, erstens, zweitens, drittens, hat sich ergeben‘ [...]. Du hast im Blog die Möglichkeit, Schrift so durchgestrichen anzuzeigen, dass du siehst, wo ist welcher Absatz rausgestrichen, dass du damit deine Korrektur transparent machen kannst.</p> <p>Ich habe meinen Blog als mein Archiv, als mein Zuhause, wo alles ist, und wer will, geht dahin. Und dann sage ich auf den Medien Bescheid, wo ich weiß, dass die Leute rumschwirren, die sich dafür interessieren.</p> <p>(..) was [zu] verifizieren oder falsifizieren, weil du einfach dadurch mehr Standpunkte einsammeln kannst. Du musst es moderieren (...). Aber trotzdem ist es gut, wenn du verschiedene Perspektiven auf</p>
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	<p>“You must handle [the discussions], and you cannot leave the people alone (...). They want to their questions to be answered, and they want to interact with others. (...) Otherwise, I would miss the moderation because (...) I think it is really important that there is a corrective (...). In my opinion it is predominantly positive when you finally manage the discussion culture so that you cope with it”.</p> <p>“(...) A friend delivers packages (...). In her situation, it is great when podcasts last three hours because she has the time and is grateful that she can compile her radio program (...). Or people who commute a lot, who sit in the train for hours, they are happy about podcasts (...). (...) And then there are people who live near their office (...). They cannot listen to something, neither at work near on the way to it. They do not have to do something with podcasts because it does not fit into their way of life, for them it is not the right format. But what they are doing is to read the morning news. In fact, it overlaps partly”.</p> <p>“[having an accreditation of the club], is an actual part of the normal journalistic work (...). In my opinion it is a normal work when you write about someone (...) that you try to write about them as concrete as possible, and to ask when you are not sure about it. And not just asking</p>	<p>was haben möchtest.</p> <p>(...) Du musst dich darum kümmern und du kannst die Leute nicht alleine lassen (...). Die möchten Fragen beantwortet kriegen, die wollen sich auch austauschen können. (...) Andererseits würde mir auch was fehlen, weil (...) ich finde es wirklich wichtig, dass du ein Korrektiv hast (...). Ich empfinde das als überwiegend positiv, wenn man es denn schafft, die Diskussionskultur dahin zu lenken, dass man im Großen und Ganzen klarkommt.</p> <p>(...) Eine Freundin von uns ist Postzustellerin (...). Für die ist das tippi-toppi, wenn Podcasts auch drei Stunden lang sind, weil die einfach die Zeit hat und auch sehr dankbar dafür ist, dass sie sich ihr Radioprogramm selbst zusammenstellen kann (...). Oder Leute, die viel pendeln, die stundenlang im Zug fahren, die freuen sich über Podcasts (...). Und dann gibt es Menschen, die wohnen neben der Arbeit (...). Die können weder auf der Arbeit noch auf dem Weg dahin großartig was hören. Die haben mit Podcasts eher nichts zu tun, weil das nicht in deren Leben passt, (...) für die ist das nicht das Format. Und was die aber machen, die lesen frühmorgens mal schnell: Tatsächlich überschneidet es sich teilweise.</p> <p>[Eine Akkreditierung vom Verein zu haben,] ist eigentlich nur ganz normale journalistische Arbeit (...). Ich empfinde das als ein normales Arbeiten, wenn du über jemanden berichtest (...), dass du versuchst, möglichst konkret und genau zu sein und auch nachzufragen, wenn du dir nicht sicher bist. Und nicht nur</p>
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	<p>questions, but to get them answered somehow. That is why I think that the relationship with people about whom I write is important. Actually, this relationship is very helpful”.</p> <p>“there are few [football bloggers] who are left over from that time [ten years ago]”.</p> <p>“(...) [there will be a stronger legal impact on the future of blogging]. (...) The media world will change a lot. There will be many great but unemployed journalists because [printed] newspaper will not exist anymore (...), and the journalists will develop new concepts by using meaningful the already existing tools (...). That is the reason why I expect a lot of movement. Technical changes will always have an impact on the blogosphere and the legislator will define what will not work anymore. Thus, [blogs] will face this tense atmosphere”.</p> <p>“you do not have a real house magazine. (...) A gap arose, and I think that we fill this niche in parts. This would be different in a normal city with a proper sports coverage because there we would have no chance”.</p>	<p>Fragen zu stellen, sondern sich vielleicht auch mal ein paar beantworten zu lassen. Und insofern glaube ich schon, dass es wichtig ist, einen Draht zu den Leuten zu haben, über die man schreibt. Das halte ich tatsächlich für eher hilfreich.</p> <p>Es gibt nur noch ganz wenige [Fußballblogger], die aus der Zeit [von vor zehn Jahren] noch übrig sind.</p> <p>(...) [Einen stärkeren juristischen Einfluss auf die Zukunft des Bloggens wird es geben]. (...) Bei Medien wird sich noch ganz viel ändern. Du wirst irgendwann eine wahnsinnige Schwemme haben an tollen Journalisten, die arbeitslos sind, weil es keine Zeitungen mehr gibt (...). Und die werden auch wieder Formate entwickeln (...), das vorhandene Angebot an Zeugs (...) sinnstiftend zu nutzen. Und von daher erwarte ich einfach nur ganz viel Bewegung. Technik bestimmt immer mit und der Gesetzgeber definiert, was nicht geht. Und in dem Spannungsfeld bewegt es sich.</p> <p>(...) du hast keine wirkliche Hauszeitung. (...) Da ist eine Lücke entstanden und ich glaube, dass wir die zu Teilen wenigstens ausfüllen. Das würde mit einer anständigen Sportberichterstattung in einer normalen Stadt anders sein, da wäre für uns eigentlich kein Platz.</p>
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IV. Manual of semi-structured interview questions

German // English:

Wie gehst du bei der Erstellung und Veröffentlichung eines Blogbeitrags vor? // *How do you proceed in writing and publishing a blog article?*

Wie recherchierst du nach Informationen für deine Blogbeiträge? // *How do you look for information for your blog articles?*

Wie hast du deinen Schreibstil entwickelt? // *How did you develop your writing style?*

Welche Gründe führten dazu, Interaktionen in deinem Blog zu ermöglichen? // *What were the reasons to allow interactions and user participation in your blog?*

Könntest du mir bitte erläutern, welche Rolle du in deinem Blog und während den Interaktionen in der Kommentarfunktion einnimmst? // *Could you please explain which role and function you represent in your blog and during interactions in the comment feature?*

Könntest du bitte die Rolle deiner Leser während des Schreibens eines Blogbeitrags beschreiben? // *Could you please describe your readers' role and function during the process of writing a blog article?*

Welchen Nutzen kannst du aus den Interaktionen mit und Unterhaltungen zwischen den Lesern deines Blogs ziehen? // *What benefits can you extract from the interactions and written conversations between your readers?*

Wenn du an den Start deines Blogs zurückdenkst: Spielt dein Blog oder spielen Fußballblogs im Allgemeinen heutzutage eine bedeutendere Rolle für Leser von Fußballmedien als früher? // *Thinking about the beginning of your blog and blogging career: Does your blog or rather do football blogs in general play a more important role nowadays than it used to do in the past?*

Wie wird die Zukunft deines Blogs und deine Art zu bloggen aussehen? // *How will the future of your blog and your way of blogging look like in the future?*

Hat dir etwas im Interview gefehlt? Hat dich irgendetwas während des Interviews gestört? // *Did you miss anything during the interview? Did anything disturb you during the interviews?*

Danksagung // *Acknowledgements*

V. Translation and coding process of interviews: An example

B: (...) #00:00:16-3# Guten-Tag. #00:00:16-8#

I: Hallo, guten-Tag Herr-Wagner. Wie geht es? #00:00:21-0#

B: Gut, gut. Ich habe Mittagspause. In der Schule ist es ruhig und da können wir ein bisschen erzählen. #00:00:28-6#

I: Ja, super. Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit nehmen für das Interview, vor allem auch in Ihrer Mittagspause, jetzt, wie ich das mitbekomme. Genau. Also damit ich Sie nochmal kurz vorher abhole, ich hatte das ja schon in der Mail erwähnt, dass ich meine Doktorarbeit über die Medienkultur der Deutschen Fußball-Blogosphäre schreibe. Und in dem Zusammenhang möchte ich gerne analysieren, wie die Blogs zum einen aussehen, wie Beiträge verfasst werden, wo bekommen die Blogger ihre Informationen her, wie ist das Interaktionsverhalten mit den Lesern und inwieweit hat das vielleicht auch einen Einfluss auf die Arbeitsweise. Und der Fokus liegt dabei sozusagen auf deutschen Fußballblogs beziehungsweise auf Fußballbloggern, die eine aktivierte Kommentarfunktion haben oder eine Art von Interaktion zulassen. Und dadurch, dass Sie ja zum einen Ihren eigenen Blog in Old-International und aber auch bei 120minuten schreiben, würde ich gerne Sie zu beiden Blogs befragen, wenn das in Ordnung wäre. #00:01:38-9#

B: Ja, klar. Das geht, das passt. #00:01:41-7#

I: Super, perfekt. Also, da fange ich mal mit der ersten Frage an. Nach welchen Kriterien wählen Sie denn die Themen aus für Ihre **Postings**? #00:01:53-7#

B: Also, ich fange jetzt mal an. Ich spreche jetzt mal für 120 Minuten. Da haben wir einerseits ein Mission-Statement ja gesetzt, dass wir uns, ja, als **Longreads**-Plattform verstehen. Das heißt also, lange Texte, die sich nicht darum bemühen, nur auf Klickzahlen zu spielen, sondern die wirklich Themen aufgreifen und vielleicht auch Themenfelder eröffnen, die, ja, der Mainstream, der Kicker-Leser, der Bild-Leser, der Sportschau, der DAZN-Abonnent eben vielleicht nicht geliefert bekommt. Also, wir versuchen wirklich, Texte zu finden oder, ja, Themen zu finden, die ein bisschen längere Halbwertszeit haben, als nur bis zum nächsten Tag oder bis zur nächsten Woche. Und das Ganze natürlich mit der entsprechenden Tiefe, also thematischen Tiefe. Das heißt, also es ist nicht irgendwie in zwei-, dreihundert Wörtern abgehandelt, sondern mindestens tausendfünfhundert Wörter. Also es ist wirklich lang. Und dementsprechend kommt dann natürlich auch die Tiefe automatisch zustande. #00:03:09-4#

I: Und wie sieht das dann aus? Welche Themenschwerpunkte genau haben Sie sich denn gesetzt jetzt für Sie persönlich, sage ich mal? #00:03:17-3#

B: Also ich persönlich bin Fußballhistoriker. Das heißt, ja, das interessiert mich qua-natura, weil ich halt darin auch promoviert habe. Und aber jetzt bei 120 Minuten, da kennen wir eigentlich fast gar keine Grenzen oder setzen wir uns fast gar keine Grenzen. Also wir [bei 120 Minuten] haben mehrere Textvorschläge, die regelmäßig bei uns eintrudeln. #00:03:47-7#

I: Von wem? #00:03:48-9#

B: Von allen möglichen. Also von Bloggern, die meinen, sie können was schreiben oder sie wollen was schreiben beziehungsweise auch von eigenen Redaktionsmitgliedern oder von anderen. Das ist nicht so, dass wir, also, als wir begonnen haben vor vier Jahren, mussten wir wirklich Leute anschreiben und fragen, wollt ihr, könnt ihr euch vorstellen, mal was zu schreiben. Inzwischen ist es so, dass das irgendwie, es ist kein Selbstläufer, aber dass wir irgendwie doch gute Mal so drei, vier Monate Vorlauf haben, was Texte angeht. Und da ist wirklich alles dabei. So Frauenfußball, Medien, wie wir Fußball konsumieren, persönliche Texte. Also wie gesagt, wie ich bereits sagte, da kennen wir, setzen eigentlich uns fast gar keine Grenzen. Wenn wir natürlich merken, dass da ein Text oder eine Idee kommt, die wirklich dünn ist und wir nochmal nachhaken und es stellt sich heraus, ja, da ist nichts, dann, ja gut, dann, das hatten wir auch erst relativ selten. Nur ein- oder zweimal, dass wir wirklich sagen mussten, tut uns leid, das ist zu dünn. #00:05:04-0#

I: Okay. Also, nachdem sozusagen schon der Beitrag verfasst wurde, haben Sie dann sozusagen innerhalb der Redaktion sich das durchgelesen und dann besprochen, dass es dann doch zu wenig ist? #00:05:13-8#

B: Na zumindest haben wir einen etwas längeren Textentwurf bekommen und haben dann, ja, mit, wir diskutieren halt jeden Text mit mindestens zwei Redaktionsmitgliedern und wenn dann zwei anmerken, okay, da muss noch nachgehakt werden und da und da und dann kommt nichts zurück. Gut, dann ist es ja entweder okay, der Autor hat, ja, es ist wirklich, die Thematik ist zu dünn oder der Ansatz ist zu dünn oder der Autor hat halt keine Zeit oder hat es vergessen oder ist halt nicht mehr relevant für ihn. Also es gibt ja, wir haken dann auch nicht nach. Also es gibt da, aber, ja, es passiert halt. Man hat ja auch selber oftmals Ideen, die man dann so einwirft in so einer und wo man sagt, oh, da würde ich gern mal nachhaken und da und da und da, so viele Themen. Man kann nicht überall dranbleiben, nicht immer. Manchmal kommt man vielleicht darauf zurück, aber es ist nicht so, dass es wirklich, dass man jetzt, wenn man, also ich hätte jetzt mehrere Textideen, dass ich die wirklich alle in einem Jahr auch umsetzen kann, weil ja, man hat Familie, man arbeitet. Man braucht ja auch ein bisschen Recherchezeit und **Einlesezeit** dafür. #00:06:30-5#

¶
 B: (...) #00:00:16-3# Hello. #00:00:16-8# ¶
 I: Hello Mr. Wagner. How are you? #00:00:21-0# ¶
 B: Good, good. It is lunch break. It is quiet in school and we can talk a little bit. #00:00:28-6# ¶
 I: Yes, great. Thank you for taking the time for this interview, especially in your lunch break, now, I know you are in it. Exactly. So that I can pick you up again shortly, I had already mentioned in the mail that I am writing my doctoral thesis about the media culture of the German football blogosphere. In this context, I would like to analyse how these blogs look like on the one hand, how articles are written, where do the bloggers get their information, how is the interaction behaviour with the readers and to what extent may this also have an impact on the working processes. And the focus is, so to speak, on German football blogs or football bloggers who have an activated comment function or allow some kind of interaction. And by writing your own blog in Old International and also at 120minuten, I would like to ask you about both blogs if that were okay. #00:01:38-9# ¶
 B: Yes, of course. No problem. #00:01:41-7# ¶
 I: Great. Perfect. Ok, let us start with the first question. Super, perfekt. Also, da fange ich mal mit der ersten Frage an. What criteria do you use to select the topics for your postings? #00:01:53-7# ¶
 B: So, I'm going to start now. I speak now for 120minuten. On the one hand, we made a mission statement that we see ourselves as a longreads platform. So that means long texts that do not strive to squint only at clicks, but that really take up topics and perhaps also open up subject areas that the mainstream, the kicker reader, the image reader, the sports show, the DAZN subscriber may not be delivered. So, we're really trying to find text or to find topics that have a slightly longer half-time than just until the next day or week. And all of this, of course, with the appropriate depth, i.e. thematic depth. That is, it is not somehow dealt with in two or three hundred words, but at least a thousand and five hundred words. So it's really long. And, of course, that is how the depth comes automatically. #00:03:09-4# ¶
 I: And how does it look like? What are the main topics you have set for yourself now? #00:03:17-3# ¶
 B: So I personally am a football historian. That means that interests me quite a bit, because I also did my doctorate in it. And now at 120minuten, we actually know almost no limits or we set almost no limits. So we [at 120minuten] have several text suggestions that come in regularly. #00:03:47-7# ¶
 I: By whom? #00:03:48-9# ¶
 B: Of all kinds. So from bloggers who think they can write something or they want to write something, or even from their own editorial members or from others. It's not that we, so when we started four years ago, we really had to write to people and ask, do you want, can you imagine writing something. In the meantime it is somehow, it is not a sure-fire success, but that we somehow have a good three or four months in advance when it comes to receive texts. And there is really everything there. So women's football, media, how we consume football, personal texts. So as I said, as I said, we know that there are almost no limits. When we notice, of course, that a text or an idea comes up that is really thin and we follow it up again and it turns out there is nothing, then well, then we only had it relatively rarely. Just once or twice that we really had to say that it is too thin. #00:05:04-0# ¶
 I: OK. So, after the article has already been written, so to speak, did you read it through within the editorial team and then discussed that it is too little after all? #00:05:13-8# ¶
 B: Well, at least we got a slightly longer draft of the text and then with, we just discuss every text with at least two editorial members and if there are two, okay, we still have to check and here and there and then nothing comes back. Well, then it is either okay, the author has it really is, the topic is too thin or the approach is too thin or the author has no time or has forgotten it or is no longer relevant to him. So there is the point, we do not follow up. So there is, but yes it happens. You often have your own ideas, which you then throw into someone like that and where you say, oh, I would like to check it out and here and there and so many topics. You cannot stay on everywhere, not always. Sometimes you may come back to it, but it's not that it really is that now, if you can, so I have several text ideas that I can really implement all of them in one year, because you have family, one works. You also need a little research time and reading time for it. #00:08:30-5# ¶

-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Content-process-routines > Text-form: Long-reads ¶
 Benefits > the blog-itself: mission statement ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Definition of long-reads ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Definition of long-reads ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Selection of topics > non-club-related topics: football history ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Content-processes > editorial-work: selection and-curation of third-author's text ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Network-and-connections > relationship-with-media-producers ¶
 That is, the network expands automatically because other media producers send or submit texts for the publication in the blog. ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Network-and-connections > relationship-with-media-producers ¶
 The blog developed in a way that it has a high-demand-of-texts (i.e. 3-4 month in advance) ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Selection of topics > no-club-relation ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Content-processes > editorial-work: selection and-curation of texts ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Content-processes > editorial-work: reviewing texts ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Professionalism > non-professional-blogging: leisure-time-blogging ¶
-  **Westphal, Marc Philip (K-GK-C/S)**
 Information-sourcing-and-investigation > selection-of-information: literature-review ¶

VI. The descriptive survey for German football blog readers

Dear participants,

Within my doctoral thesis about the media culture of the German football blogosphere at the University of Gloucestershire (GB) I have constructed a survey for football blog readers to examine the media reception and interaction behaviour.

By answering the survey you would support to understand better the processes of media production and media reception in the context of online media cultures.

Participants must be at least 18 years old.

Please, fill in the survey by yourself and answer the questions spontaneously.

This is no test! It is a measure of attitudes and opinions. Thus, no answer is right or wrong. The answering of the survey regularly will not last longer than 10 minutes.

The survey should be answered spontaneously and without longer interruptions.

I would be very thankful for an active participation and thank you very much in advance for your participation and support.

The collected data will be secured with a password in a password-protected folder on the hard desk of my personal laptop and on my personal external hard desk. Exclusively I will know the password, and consequently it is me as only person having an access to the data folder. Data will be saved for five years and deleted after the deadline. When the study is finished, results will be published on conferences and in my doctoral thesis. No one will be able to identify participants by their name.

Kind regards, Marc Westphal

PhD student at the University of Gloucestershire

* *Necessary*

1. I am over the age of 18 years. *

Just mark one oval.

Yes / No

2. Last school-leaving qualification. *

Just mark one oval.

Secondary modern school / National Vocational Qualification / General higher education entrance qualification / Bachelor / Postgraduate qualification / Doctorate / not specified

3. How did you first find out about football blogs? *

Just mark one oval.

from friends / from social media from a sport website from a news website from a magazine / from a newspaper from television / from a podcast from radio from an event

4. How long have you been reading football blogs (in years)? *

Just mark one oval.

0-1 / 2-3 / 4-5 / 6-7 / > 7

5. How many football blogs do you read each week? *

Just mark one oval.

< 1 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 /> 4

6. How often do you read football blogs? *

Just mark one oval.

daily / weekly / monthly / less than 1 per month

7. How often did you comment on a football blog article? *

Just mark one oval.

daily / weekly / monthly / less than once a month never

8. I support football blogs financially (e.g. by giving donations, by crowdfunding, visiting sponsored links). *

Just mark one oval.

Yes / No

9. I follow football blog(s) on... *

multiple answers are possible.

YouTube / Facebook / Instagram / Twitter / with a bookmark of the home page or web page

10. I share football blog articles on... *

multiple answers are possible.

YouTube / Facebook / Instagram / Twitter / in e-mails as web site links / I do not share football blog posts

11. The headlines of football blog articles decide whether I read a text or not. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. I believe that a football blog should also offer a podcast. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. I prefer reading a football blog article than listening a football podcast session.

*

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Football podcasts are more interesting than football blog articles. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. Links in football blog articles to original information sources contribute to the credibility of a football blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Linking to original information sources is an obligatory task of a football blogger. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

17. I check links in football blog articles in order to verify information in a blog posting. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

18. I check links in football blog articles with the intention to find additional information that a blogger might not mention in the blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

19. I check links in football blog comments with the intention to find additional information that a blogger might not mention in the blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

20. I check links in football blog articles because other football news media are more credible than football blogs. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

21. I mostly find out about new football blog articles from social media. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

22. The football blogger's opinion is important for me. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

23. I read football blogs because of the writing style. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

24. I read football blogs because of the topics bloggers write about. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

25. I read football blogs because I have the opportunity to comment. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

26. I prefer football blogs where I have the opportunity to comment. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

27. I read football blogs because they give me an overview of current topics in football. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

28. Football bloggers write about topics which are not offered in other football news media.*

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

29. Football blog articles can be compared with articles from other football news media in quality of writing. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

30. There is a difference in the writing style between football bloggers and other football journalists. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

31. I believe that a football blogger is a journalist. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

32. Football blogs inform me. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

33. Football blogs are more than an information, they also provide entertainment.

*

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

34. A football blog should have a netiquette (i.e. behavioural rules when commenting). *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

35. An integrated comment feature (i.e. enabling readers to make comments) enhances the attractiveness of football blogs. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

36. I read comments of others in football blogs articles. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

37. I just read the football blog articles but no comments. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

38. The opinion of other readers has an impact on how I think about football-related topics. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

39. I feel that football bloggers are interested in their readers' opinions. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

40. Football bloggers give me the feeling that readers are important to them. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

41. I believe that I am meant to give feedback to football bloggers on their opinion.

*

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

42. I have commented at least once on football blogs. *

If no, please move to question No 51: A football blogger should always enable discussions in the blog.

Just mark one oval.

Yes / No

43. I comment on football blogs to interact with other people.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

44. My comment contributes to the building of a football blog community.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

45. I believe that the comments I leave on football blogs may influence other readers.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

46. I believe that the comments I leave on football blogs may influence football bloggers.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

47. I believe that the comments that I leave are important in giving feedback to football bloggers on their writing style.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

48. I comment in order to provoke discussions with football bloggers.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

49. I comment in order to provoke discussions with other football blog readers.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

50. I believe that my comments contain interesting information that football bloggers consider when they write blog articles.

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

51. A football blogger should always enable discussions in the blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

52. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment section is friendly. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

53. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment section is respectful. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

54. The football blog atmosphere during discussions in the comment section is hostile. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

55. A football blogger should be a mediator in discussions between readers. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

56. A football blogger should participate in discussions in the comment section between blog users. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

57. I believe that a professional journalistic background of the football blogger is important for the quality of the blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

58. I believe that a professional journalistic background of the football blogger is important for the credibility of the blog. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

59. A football blogger should react to insulting and disrespectful comments. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

60. A football blogger is a community manager. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

61. A football blogger is an opinion-maker. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

62. I prefer to read football blogs than other football news media. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

63. Football blogs are an additional offer to the content of other football news media. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

64. Football blogs are as important as other football news media. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

65. Football bloggers are closer to football fans than other football journalists. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

66. I believe that football bloggers invest more time for investigation of information than other football journalists. *

Just mark one oval.

(1 = I totally agree; 2 = I agree; 3 = I somewhat agree; 4 = I rather disagree; 5 = I disagree; 6 = I totally disagree)

1 2 3 4 5 6

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