

# TWO PERSPECTIVES ON ONE COMPETITION: SLOVENIAN COVERAGE OF ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS AT THE 2008 SUMMER OLYMPICS

Simon Ličen<sup>1</sup>, Andrew C. Billings<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ljubljana

<sup>2</sup>University of Alabama

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## **Abstract**

*Televised sports images are complemented by the speech of network-employed announcers who dramatize the narrative and interpret the on-screen events. The purpose of this study was to analyze Slovenian coverage of artistic gymnastics events at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Over 7 hours of broadcasts were recorded and analyzed. All references to athletes or teams spoken by the commentators were transcribed and coded according to a 17-item taxonomy to study discursive framing in sports broadcasting. Frequencies of each category of descriptors were then calculated and compared between groups. A total of 4,472 descriptors were transcribed and coded: 56% were spoken by the play-by-play announcer and 44% by the technical commentator. The color commentator provided more evaluative descriptions and background information (especially concerning the gymnasts' routines), while the play-by-play announcer offered more factual commentary, as well as more attributions of personality. Evaluative commentary most often relied on assessments of athletic talent and ability, experience, and consonance. It also featured emphases on national feelings. The share of broadcasters' subjective commentary in gymnastics is considerably higher than that found in team sports. Commentators wield tremendous narrative power with the masses as their dialogue transcends topics in sports.*

**Keywords:** *Olympics, media content, identity, sports broadcasting, media bias.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Sports events rank among the world's most popular television offerings. Broadcasts of elite competitions attract massive audiences: the International Olympic Committee (2008), for instance, estimates that 3.6 billion people—83% of the total potential TV audience and 53 percent of the world's population at the time—watched some of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Many viewers of televised sports experience a strong emotional involvement in this activity (Hastorf and Cantril, 1954). Further, many viewers regard the Olympics

not only as a sporting contest, but also as the greatest spectacle on Earth. Athletes in most sports are regarded as reaching the highest pinnacle of achievement when attaining a gold medal; in many sports and certainly in gymnastics, Olympic success eclipses national and even international championship titles. Hence, some sports organizations, including USA Gymnastics, try to capitalize on this presumed pinnacle event by organizing their exposure strategies around this event in an attempt to

increase both outreach and revenues (King, 2010).

Sports broadcasts combine televised images of athletic competitions and the speech of network-employed announcers. Their role transcends that of objective reporters: they explicate events, as well as include dramatic features to complement the athletic drama and generate involvement and excitement for the television viewer (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman, 1977). Broadcasting styles and contents differ between societies and are to some extent culturally defined, yet common principles pervade the telecasts, including “us” versus “them” dichotomies and favorable commentary about participants with whom viewers and announcers are likely to be already familiar—including, but not limited to, the network’s “own” national representatives (Billings, MacArthur, Ličen and Wu, 2009; Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng, 2010; Ličen and Billings, in press). Analyses conducted from a sociological perspective have also found gender bias in sports broadcasting which are typically expressed as issues of differences between the sexes (Billings, 2008; Angelini and Billings, 2010).

In the Slovenian television industry, sports broadcasters are referred to as “commentators” or “reporters.” Their duties while speaking on-air include describing the course of events and providing some subjective commentary; they are thus what is referred to in English-speaking TV markets as “play-by-play announcers.” Technical commentators occasionally join these reporters as their role typically includes conveying in-depth technical information. As a general rule, technical commentators (known, among other, as “analysts” or “color commentators” in English-speaking TV markets) are usually prominent former athletes or coaches whose task is to entertain the audience and provide technical insight. Professionals argue that the main task of the announcers is to prepare the ground for the color analysts since they are supposed to be the stars of the broadcasts (Hedrick, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to analyze Slovenian coverage of artistic gymnastics events at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Previous studies have analyzed the content of aggregated Olympic broadcasting (see Billings, 2008) while some (see Angelini and Billings, 2010) have isolated the “big five” sports in American Olympic broadcasting for analysis which included gymnastics along with diving, swimming, track and field, and beach volleyball. However, gymnastics competitions have never been studied separately outside the United States. This study aims to determine the content of the dialogue spoken by the announcing team during Slovenian renderings of Olympic artistic gymnastics events.

In many countries, artistic gymnastics events are among the most popular contents in Olympic broadcasting. During the 2008 Beijing Games, U.S. broadcasting company NBC dedicated it over 14 hours of the network’s prime-time Olympic coverage, making it the sport that received the most attention during the Olympic fortnight (Billings, Angelini and Duke, 2010). Within those telecasts, most of the evaluative commentary referred to athletic ability (68.2% of all evaluative dialogue), followed by references to experience (12.9%), consonance (12.4%), composure (2.2%) and athletic strength (1.8%). Descriptors assessing concentration, commitment, courage and intelligence each collected less than 1% of evaluative commentary (Angelini and Billings, 2010). Figures for the entire prime-time programming were slightly different as athletic ability totaled 34.2% of the dialogue in prime-time broadcasting, followed by background commentary (23.5%), factual descriptions (19.2%), references to experience (10.3%), and evaluations of consonance (4.4%). Descriptors assessing body size and emotions accounted for around 2% of the commentary, while nine other categories of references (specifically, concentration, strength-related athletic skill, composure, commitment, courage, intelligence, extroversion, introversion, and

attractiveness) each collected less than 1% of the total commentary (Billings, Angelini and Duke, 2010). Although the frequency of specific types of descriptors changed, overall proportions remained similar to those recorded in U.S. Olympic broadcasting four years earlier (Billings and Angelini, 2007).

Television broadcasters dramatize their narrative and provide interpretation of the events shown on screen (Comisky, Bryant and Zillman, 1977). Different studies showed that the ratio of informative vs. evaluative dialogue varies considerably between societies; in different nations in Asia, Europe and the United States, subjective commentary amounted to between 27 and 41 percent (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman, 1977; Ličen and Doupona Topič, 2008; Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng, 2010). All studies observed broadcasts of team sports (NFL football, basketball, and baseball, respectively). Within individual sports, gymnastics has been found to contain a consistent form of divergent talk and is the individual sport most likely to contain biases. It tends to be considered prototypically feminine, a frame further increased by dialogic constructions of women athletes according to an adolescent or even prepubescent ideal (Angelini and Billings, 2010).

Dramatic ascription is much more likely to be used to bolster an athlete rather than dismantling them. Apparently, announcers do not think that disparaging a player or team is appropriate behavior, or they do not find it effective for creating excitement. Instead, they rely heavily on interpersonal conflict between teams and individual athletes to generate the “drama of sports” (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman, 1977).

A case study of a basketball game in Croatia has shown that when a color commentator teamed up with the play-by-play announcer, the former generated 75% of the dialogue, with the remaining 25% being spoken by the color commentator. The pundit was in charge of delivering opinions and evaluations as two in three

remarks he made were subjective. This was significantly more than the announcer’s share of subjective dialogue (Ličen and Doupona Topič, 2008).

Media research that focuses specifically on gymnastics is scarce, especially outside the United States. Slovenia has a considerably differing societal and gymnastical context: it is a post-socialist parliamentary democracy that seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991 with a population of two million, boasting ten Olympic medals won in gymnastics events since 1924. This is relatively few by many nations’ standards but enough to evoke among a large part of the population a sense of national pride bolstered by relatively infrequent individual achievements: the late Leon Štukelj is still considered a recognizable Slovenian personality even though he won his six Olympic medals between 1924 and 1936. In recent times, several competitors won medals at world and European championships, securing the sport steady media interest. This article aims to identify which topics announcers engaged in during Slovenian broadcasts of artistic gymnastic events at the 2008 Beijing Olympics: because of the highlighted differences between societies, Slovenian announcing style will presumably differ from that of American sportscasters. Reportedly, the lack of editorial policies on the Slovenian public television broadcaster allowed for comments that would be deemed sexist and racist in other societies to be spoken on-air. Announcers also tended to rely on different types of descriptors when speaking about Slovenian/foreign and male/female athletes, yet nationality and gender did not influence the attribution of positive commentary (Ličen and Billings, 2012). Hopefully, the results of this study shall provide insight specifically into gymnastics broadcasting in a post-socialist nation and thus pave the way for content analyses of sportscasts in other post-socialist societies.

Presumably, the color commentator<sup>1</sup> in Slovenian broadcasts will produce more evaluative commentary and make more remarks about personality and physicality than the reporter<sup>2</sup>. The latter is in turn expected to provide significantly more factual and background commentary. Four hypotheses were thus formulated to guide this study of Slovenian gymnastics broadcasting:

*Hypothesis 1:* The color analyst will produce significantly more evaluative descriptors than the play-by-play announcer.

*Hypothesis 2:* The color analyst will produce significantly more personality and physicality descriptors than the play-by-play announcer.

*Hypothesis 3:* The play-by-play announcer will produce significantly more background descriptors than the color analyst.

*Hypothesis 4:* The play-by-play announcer will produce significantly more neutral descriptors than the color analyst.

Previous research has shown that evaluative commentary amounts to between 27 and 41 percent of the dialogue in team sports; however, differences exist in commenting individual vs. team sports. There is little information on the share of objective vs. subjective commentary in individual sports; hence, an additional research question was formulated to determine the content of the commentary and the share of objective vs. subjective commentary in Slovenian Olympic gymnastics airings.

*Research question:* What are the proportions of objective and subjective commentary in gymnastic broadcasts on TV Slovenija?

<sup>1</sup> Again, the “expert” member of the commenting team whose main role is to provide technical insight.

<sup>2</sup> The reporter (also known as play-by-play announcer) describes the events in largely objective terms.

## METHODS

A total of 7 hours and 7 minutes of men’s and women’s artistic gymnastics broadcasts from the 2008 Beijing Olympics were recorded and analyzed. The material included live and delayed coverage of both qualifying and final stages of the competition. From TV Slovenija’s programming and audience reports released after the Games it was determined that TV Slovenija aired a total of 13 hours and 28 minutes of Olympic artistic gymnastics events; however, many of these broadcasts were not recorded and analyzed in this study because of last-minute lineup changes as TV Slovenija aired over 230 hours of live and delayed sports events (not counting studio programming) and editorial picks were made on a daily basis.

All broadcasts were commented by a male play-by-play announcer, Peter Kavčič<sup>3</sup>, and a male color commentator, Ivan Čuk<sup>4</sup>. Only their dialogue was analyzed for descriptors because this dialogue can be supervised and controlled by network editors and producers (see Billings, 2008).

In the first phase of the coding procedure, all the dialogue spoken on-air by the commentators during the analyzed broadcasts was transcribed by the leading author into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets with the unit of analysis being the descriptor, defined as any adjective, adverb, adjectival phrase or adverbial phrase applied to an athlete. Simultaneously, the identity (including gender and nationality) of both athletes and speakers were identified. Then, each noun and descriptor referring to

<sup>3</sup> Peter Kavčič is a sports journalist and broadcaster for TV Slovenija. In addition to gymnastics, he reports from football and track and field competitions.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Čuk, PhD, is a Full Professor of Gymnastics at the University of Ljubljana and a former gymnastics coach. He has been a color commentator in gymnastics broadcasts on TV Slovenija for many years. Both commentators agreed for their identities to be disclosed in this article.

athletes, teams, or gymnastic routines was coded according to a 17-item taxonomy, which is an expanded version of the classification introduced by Billings and Eastman (2003) to study discursive framing in sports broadcasting. Each descriptor was classified as belonging to one of the following categories: (a) concentration [i.e. “didn’t look as if he was concentrating on the match”]; (b) strength/speed-based athletic skill [i.e. “shows his strength”]; (c) talent/ability-based athletic skill [i.e. “the best gymnast on the rings”]; (d) composure [i.e. “can perform a bit more poised”]; (e) commitment [i.e. “came to Beijing with a single goal”]; (f) courage [i.e. “were most afraid of the pommel horse”]; (g) experience [i.e. “has Olympic experience”]; (h) intelligence [“he is rather crazy”]; (i) consonance [i.e. “the stars aligned for him”]; (j) expectations about performance [i.e. “first favorite”]; (k) outgoing/extroverted [i.e. “the amount of communication with part of the audience”]; (l) modest/introverted [i.e. “has no reason to smile”]; (m) emotional [i.e. “tears of joy”]; (n) attractiveness [i.e. “one of the most elegant competitors”]; (o) size/parts of body [i.e. “grabbed his thigh”]; (p) background [i.e. “the Chinese”] and (q) factual and other. Frequencies of each category of descriptors were then calculated. Significant differences between groups were detected with chi-square analyses by using the percentage of overall comments spoken by each commentator as expected frequencies (consistent with the work of Billings, 2008, and Billings, Angelini and Duke, 2010). For example, because 56% of all descriptors were spoken by the play-by-play announcer, it was expected that he would also make roughly the same proportion of comments about concentration, skill, emotionality, and so on. Two independent researchers recoded 30% of the coverage, with overall intercoder reliability using Cohen’s (1960) *kappa* reaching 91%.

## RESULTS

A total of 4,472 descriptors were transcribed and coded from the broadcasts that were analyzed. Of those, 2,505 (56%) were spoken by the announcer and 1,967 (44%) by the technical/color commentator. Table 1 shows the distribution of evaluative commentary between the two broadcasters.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the color commentator would produce significantly more evaluative descriptors than the play-by-play announcer. As the last row in Table 1 shows, Ivan Čuk as the technical analyst indeed produced significantly more evaluative commentary than what would be expected if deriving from the total share of his commentary ( $\chi^2(1) = 27.80$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). A more detailed analysis by categories reveals further ramifications of the disparity: the analyst made significantly more comments about concentration ( $\chi^2(1) = 11.89$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), athletic strength and speed ( $\chi^2(1) = 22.56$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and consonance ( $\chi^2(1) = 138.78$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). However, the play-by-play announcer actually offered more evaluative commentary assessing composure ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.88$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), commitment ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.48$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and, by a large margin, experience ( $\chi^2(1) = 74.95$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Comments about courage and intelligence were so few that a reliable  $\chi^2$  analysis could not be conducted. All in all, the total distribution of evaluative commentary supports the assumption that the color commentator would provide more evaluative commentary than the play-by-play announcer, thus confirming Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 focused on the depictions of personality and physicality, positing that commentary discussing these two traits would be most frequently found in the pundit’s dialogue. Table 2 presents the distribution of dialogue about athletes’ personality and physicality between the pool of on-air talent.

Table 2 shows that the play-by-play commentator actually mentioned significantly more personality descriptors. The total difference ( $\chi^2(1) = 14.03$ ;  $p < 0.01$ )

derives from a great imbalance of assessments of emotionality ( $\chi^2(1) = 25.41$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) as other types of comments were equally split among the two announcers. Despite the prevision, it was the announcer, not the color commentator the one that provided significantly more attributions of personality and physicality descriptors about competitors. Hypothesis 2 is thus rejected.

The third type of commentary was neutral dialogue between the two

announcers. This dialogue was divided into two categories: one included references to background information and the other comprised of factual and other information about the competitors. Hypotheses 3 and 4 provide the assumption that the play-by-play announcer will convey more of both background and factual commentary. Table 3 shows the distribution of both types of comments.

Table 1. *Evaluative attributions by commentator.*

Category	Play-by-play commentator		Color commentator		$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>
	N	Share	N	Share		
Concentration	12	29.3%	29	70.7%	11.89	***
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	9	20.4%	35	79.6%	22.56	***
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	312	54.9%	256	45.1%	0.26	
Composure	49	69.0%	22	31.0%	4.88	*
Commitment	43	69.4%	19	30.6%	4.48	*
Courage	8	72.7%	3	27.3%	1.25	
Experience	182	85.4%	31	14.6%	74.95	***
Intelligence	1	25.0%	3	75.0%	1.56	
Consonance	249	34.3%	477	65.7%	138.78	***
Stated expectations	258	53.2%	227	46.8%	1.55	
<i>Total</i>	1123	50.4%	1102	49.6%	27.80	***

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significance at  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significance at  $p < 0.01$ .

Italicized  $\chi^2$  values indicate categories where one or both groups had an expected value of less than five.

Table 2. *Personality and physicality attributions by commentator.*

Category	Play-by-play commentator		Color commentator		$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>
	N	Share	N	Share		
Outgoing/Extroverted	10	71.4%	4	28.6%	1.35	
Modest/Introverted	10	83.3%	2	16.7%	3.64	
Emotional	102	77.9%	29	22.1%	25.41	***
Attractiveness	24	51.1%	23	48.9%	0.46	
Size/Parts of body	11	42.3%	15	57.7%	1.98	
<i>Total</i>	157	68.3%	73	31.7%	14.03	***

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significance at  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 3. *Background and neutral attributions by commentator.*

Category	Play-by-play commentator		Color commentator		$\chi^2(1)$	<i>p</i>
	N	Share	N	Share		
Background	795	52.7%	713	47.3%	6.59	*
Factual	430	84.5%	79	15.5%	167.54	***

\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significance at  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*\* indicates  $\chi^2$  significance at  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 4. *Objective vs. subjective commentary by commentator.*

Category	N	Share
Concentration	41	0.9%
Athletic skill— Strength/Speed	44	1.0%
Athletic skill— Talent/Ability	568	12.7%
Composure	71	1.6%
Commitment	62	1.4%
Courage	11	0.2%
Experience	213	4.8%
Intelligence	4	0.1%
Consonance	726	16.2%
Stated expectations	485	10.8%
Outgoing/Extroverted	14	0.3%
Modest/Introverted	12	0.3%
Emotional	131	2.9%
Attractiveness	47	1.1%
Size/Parts of body	26	0.6%
Background	1508	33.7%
Factual	509	11.4%
Objective commentary	2017	45.1%
Subjective commentary	2455	54.9%
<i>Total</i>	1123	50.4%

Data from Table 3 shows that the announcer did not give significantly more background descriptors; rather, the color commentator spoke more in terms of additional information than his fellow announcer ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.59$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In this study, all specific references to gymnastic routines and acrobatic exercises (e.g., “this was a handspring, a salto forward with 2/1 twist”) were classified as background commentary. This pairing was purposely selected to differentiate additional (hence the selection of the “background” category) sport-specific commentary from other types

of factual and neutral dialogue. As this analysis was part of a larger study which applied an existing taxonomy (Billings and Eastman, 2003) to study a number of Olympic events (see Ličen and Billings, 2012), it was not possible to add a sport-specific category assembling “descriptions of routines” to further differentiate it from other types of background information (e.g., nationality). Hence, background commentary—plenty of which consisting of references to routines—was more frequently provided by the technical analyst, rejecting Hypothesis 3. In turn, the play-by-play announcer provided much more factual commentary than the technical analyst ( $\chi^2(1)$

= 167.54;  $p < 0.01$ ). This confirms Hypothesis 4.

Finally, a research question was formulated to determine the frequencies of each type of comments in gymnastic broadcasts on TV Slovenija. Table 4 shows that both announcers spoke a total 2,017 objective descriptors (defined as factual and background commentary combined) and 2,455 subjective descriptors (understood as the sum of evaluative commentary, personality, and physicality ascriptions). This equals in a 45/55 ratio of objective vs. subjective commentary. The single type of comment that was most frequently spoken by the announcers was background information (33.7%). Evaluative dialogue most often involved assessments of consonance (16.2%), athletic talent and ability (12.7%), and speculations on likely outcome, placings etc. (10.8%). All in all, in gymnastics broadcasts on TV Slovenija, objective commentary constitutes 45% of the dialogue, while subjective commentary amounts to 55% of on-air speech, answering research question 1.

## DISCUSSION

Starting from behind, this content analysis has shown that the share of broadcasters' subjective commentary in gymnastics is considerably higher than that found in team sports (Bryant, Comisky and Zillman, 1977; Woo, Kim, Nichols and Zheng, 2010). This holds true even when comparing gymnastics and team sports broadcasts within Slovenia (Ličen and Doupona Topič, 2008), eliminating the possibility of specific cross-cultural influences. Individual sports thus provide ample opportunity for interpretation. What this means for the viewers can be only partially predicted: actual meaning is produced through "a negotiation of the many levels of meanings implicit in the text and the many levels of social group, class, and individuality embedded in the audience member" (Real, 1989: 59). The learning experience is thus an individualized occurrence. Nonetheless, there are likely

some general characteristics that apply to broadcasting content world-wide: even though the shares of distinct types of comments were significantly different than those found in U.S. prime-time broadcasting (Billings, Angelini and Duke, 2010), evaluative commentary in both nations most often relied on assessments of athletic talent and ability, experience, and consonance.

The technical commentator provided abundant background information which included details about gymnastic routines and acrobatic exercises. This confirms that sports broadcasts provide information in addition to entertainment, fulfilling the content and mission traditionally ascribed to public broadcasting (and, to some extent, to the media in general). Since its foundation in 1927, the core responsibility of the British Broadcasting Corporation was to "inform, educate and entertain." This ethos is widely adopted in other European countries (Holtz-Bacha and Norris, 2001). Although the role of sport media is often perceived as limited to entertainment, this study confirms that sportscasts can provide sports-specific information, in addition to information about the world in general (Real, 1989; Billings, 2008).

Approximately five percent of the dialogue consisted of personality and physicality descriptors. As competitors in the Olympics are deemed representatives of distinct social groups (typically their nations, but also gender groups etc.), the way they are described might influence the perception of all members of the same group (Tajfel, 1981). Artistic gymnastics is especially prone to gender stereotypes as it is considered a "female-appropriate" sport (Vincent, Imwold, Masemann and Johnson, 2002). It is also a specific sport in that aesthetics can influence the score awarded by the judges. Here, most descriptors that were coded as focusing on attractiveness actually referred to elegance (e.g., "an extremely elegant competitor"). At times, female competitors were referred to as "girls" (Sl. *dekleta*), potentially constructing their image according to an adolescent ideal (Duncan, Jensen and Messner 1993).



However, analogous descriptors were used to describe male competitors as they were referred to as “boys” (Sl. *fantje*). Such descriptions fall short of journalistic standards which state that males and females above the age of 18 are to be referred to as men and women, respectively (Reuters, 2008). Here, they likely served more to establish a sense of familiarity with the competitors, rather than diminishing their value.

In addition to providing sports-specific information, TV Slovenija’s technical analyst provided copious amount of interpretive commentary aimed at explaining athletic success and failure to the viewers. The role was filled by a gymnastics expert and former coach. During the broadcasts, he often provided insight into the routines, directing the viewers’ attention to technically relevant details (e.g., “his shoulders are leveled with the bottom part of the rings”) and explaining consequences of successful or mistaken exercises (e.g., “this is one tenth of a point’s deduction as there was a slight lost of balance”). Such subjective commentary is certainly admissible and desirable when the person providing it is an expert in the sport.

Content analyses often study potentially nationalized sports broadcasting. The construction of an imagined national community by employing the rhetoric of the first person plural has been found to occur in many nations (Billig, 1995) including Slovenia (Ličen and Billings, 2012). In gymnastics, every Slovenian national mentioned during broadcasted dialogues was referred to as “ours” at least once (e.g., “our Mitja Petkovšek”), and 26 out of a total of 149 descriptors (17.4%) pertaining to Slovenian athletes involved this attributive pronoun. This may still seem relatively small until compared to entities such as U.S.-based NBC, who as the result of a conscious effort to ban specific pronouns to determine “their” team never used this attributive pronoun (0.0%) when describing American athletes (Billings, 2008). Only two athletes representing Slovenia competed in the gymnastics competition in Beijing,

and only one of them was shown during the broadcasts analyzed in this study. This does not suffice to generalize any nation-specific findings that might surface from a comparison of the network’s “home” and “rival” athletes; however, it does point to a clear tendency to emphasize national feelings. Also noteworthy is the lack of derogatory commentary found in Slovenian athletic broadcasts (Ličen and Billings, 2012); even though Mr. Kavčič and Mr. Čuk openly cheered for Slovenian competitors, their emotional outpurs were limited to expressions of support for Slovenian athletes and did not cross into insulting or derisive references to other competitors’ looks, clothing, names, or past experiences.

## CONCLUSION

Media portrayal plays an essential role in securing the exposure and popularity of any sport. Ideally, TV networks that broadcast sports appoint independent and trained professional announcers to provide detailed accounts of a sports competition. However, experience from Slovenia and some other post-socialist nations (Ličen, 2009) shows that sometimes, announcers with limited knowledge or skills are hired to comment on sports that are less popular in that particular environment. This was not the case for broadcasts of Olympic gymnastics in Slovenia as a former coach was hired as technical analyst to complement a play-by-play announcer.

One of the potential limitations of this study is the small sample of announcers whose dialogue was observed. Analyzing the dialogue of the network’s two regular gymnastics broadcasters certainly provides a representative picture of media content in this sport but might differ from announcing styles in other individual sports. Yet, this testifies that two commentators wield tremendous narrative power with the masses: the couple was thus the only source of both technical information and personal stories. As a consequence, their commentary and approach became TV

Slovenija's stance and policies on one of the most popular Olympic sports.

This study has shown that as much as 55% of on-air dialogue during gymnastics broadcasts was evaluative—a share considerably higher than those found in studies involving team sports broadcasts. The color commentator provided more evaluative descriptions and background information (especially concerning the gymnasts' routines), while the play-by-play announcer offered more factual commentary, as well as more attributions of personality. Gymnastics broadcasts thus offer plenty of opportunities to entertain, inform, and educate even about topics that go beyond topics in sports (see Real, 1989; Billings, 2008). Further analysis should be aimed to assessing the extent to which broadcasters in different societies actually engage in them and thus provide viewers with an experience that goes beyond the enjoyment of gymnastic routines.

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Corresponding author:

Simon Ličen. PhD

Slamnikarska 6

SI-1234 Mengeš

Slovenia, EU

[Simon.Licen@guest.arnes.si](mailto:Simon.Licen@guest.arnes.si)

+386-41-397-139 (Cell)

simonlicen (skype)

