

Internal and external attributions for sporting success and failure (Sports Coverage)

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KEYWORDS

sports coverage, attribution theory

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The variable „Internal and external attributions for sporting success and failure” deals with the question which causal explanations media reporting gives for success or failure of athletes or sports teams. It identifies which attributions sports journalists and other stakeholders involved in sports events use to explain the performance of athletes and teams in their reporting.

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The reasons for sporting failure and success are often identified in the analysis of media coverage about sporting events- for example, in the analysis of live commentary during sports broadcasts or of match and competition reports. The theoretical foundation is attribution theory (e.g. Heider, 1958). Its general aim is to explain and justify actions of individuals (Möller, 1994). With regard to sporting competition, it is about attributions in performance situations and the question which factors can explain the success or failure of a team or athlete (Möller, 1994; Weiner, 1985, 1986). It is assumed that individuals, when explaining their own success or failure, proceed in such a way that their self-esteem does not suffer. Therefore, they tend to explain their own success more by referring to internal factors related to their personal characteristics such as their athletic or mental strength, whereas failures tend to be explained by external factors beyond their control such as luck, bad luck or refereeing (Strauss, Senkse & Tietjens, 2009). This attribu-

tion pattern is referred to as „self-serving bias“ and has already been identified in the coverage of sporting events and the statements of sports actors integrated in the reporting (e.g. Lau & Russell, 1980; Peterson, 1980). Some studies also analyze whether the explanation of failure and success in media reporting differs depending on whether the focus is on female or male athletes (e.g. Duncan & Messner, 1990; Eastman & Billings, 1999; Möller, 1993a; Klein, 1986; Rulofs, 2003) or whether athletes of one’s own nationality or of other nationalities are rated (e.g. Möller, 1993ab; Möller & Strauss, 1997).

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Combinations with survey methods are not common in previous research. However, it would be useful to interview athletes in order to compare their statements in mass media coverage and their survey responses explaining their performance.

EXAMPLE STUDY

The example category is from a study by Rulofs (2003), who conducted a quantitative content analysis of the coverage of the 1999 World Athletics Championships in German national quality newspapers and a special-interest journal to analyze how mass media presents female athletes compared to male athletes. Among other things, the study also analyzed which reasons were given in the reporting to explain success and failure of athletes, whereby a distinction was made between internal and external explanatory factors. The factors listed here are those from the original published codebook of the study (Rulofs, 2003, pp. 248, 250, 268). They were partially summarized by the authors of this database con-



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tribution and the numerical codes were slightly changed for reasons of clarity. Since the codebook does not contain more detailed explanations of the individual factors of the category, we added explanations. Rulofs (2003) does not give separate reliability scores for individual categories of the content analysis, but she does point

out that overall „in the entire category system, depending on the degree of difficulty of individual categories, an agreement of at least 80% was achieved“ (p. 68).

REFERENCES

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Code	Ausprägung
10	Sportliche Fähigkeiten (internal)
11	Ausdauer
12	Kondition
13	Koordination
14	Kraft
15	Schnelligkeit
16	Technik
17	Verletzung/körperliche Schwäche
20	Psychische Fähigkeiten/Charakter (internal)
21	Charakter/Persönlichkeit
22	Einstellung
23	Erfahrung
24	Intelligenz
25	Kampfgeist
26	Konzentration

Code	Ausprägung
27	Motivation
28	Nerven
29	Psyche
30	Risikobereitschaft
31	Selbstbewusstsein
32	Sensibilität/Einfühlungsvermögen
33	Siegeswillen
34	Taktik
35	Kooperation
50	Training/Vorbereitung (internal)
60	Externe Faktoren (external)
61	Äußere Bedingungen
62	Partner/in
63	Glück
64	Material/Kleidung/Sportgeräte
65	Publikum
66	Schwäche des Gegners/der Gegnerin
67	Trainer/in

Code	Ausprägung
68	Verein/Verband
69	Doping
99	Sonstige Faktoren

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