



# DRIVING THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?



Media Representations of Environmental  
Sustainability in Motorsport:  
The Case of Formula E

Timothy Robeers

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Timothy Robeers

**Supervisor**

Prof. Dr. Hilde Van den Bulck – Drexel University (USA)

**Doctoral committee**

Prof. Dr. Philippe Meers – Antwerp University (BEL)

Prof. Raymond Boyle – The University of Glasgow (UK)

**Doctoral jury**

Prof. Dr. Pieter Maesele – Antwerp University (BEL)

Prof. Dr. Richard Haynes – The University of Stirling (UK)

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**Contact information:** [timothy.robeers@gmail.com](mailto:timothy.robeers@gmail.com)



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University of Antwerp to be defended by

**Timothy ROBEERS**

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Media Representations of Environmental  
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**Supervisor:**

Professor Dr. Hilde Van den Bulck

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Antwerp, 2019

*DEDICATED TO OMA,  
YVETTE PHILOMENA CALLENS*



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# INTRODUCTION

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Over time, media and sport have become increasingly intertwined due to the expanding possibilities of their symbiotic relationship (Wenner, 2002; Rowe, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Sport provides the media with potentially dramatic content and in return, the media provides exposure for sport (Helland, 2010; Kidd, 2013). For example, by organizing and/or sponsoring the first ever motor races at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, newspapers and magazines (Flower, 1975) were able to tap into the highly exotic and dramatic content that the emergence and racing of motor cars generated. With the further development and evolution of media technologies over time, i.e. radio, television, the internet and the rise of social media, came the possibility for motorsport to reach greater (global) exposure. More so, it allowed motorsport to materialize on the opportunities to transition from a commercialised sport<sup>1</sup> to a true high commodity-value and spectacle sport which it still is today (Sturm, 2011).

This evolution of media technologies and the subsequent growth of the media has also provided other areas and topics with the opportunity to gain exposure and awareness and significance. One such area is the environment and subsequent derivatives such as environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES) and climate change (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012). Boykoff (2013) identified a fivefold quantitative increase in (UK broadsheet newspaper) coverage of event-based environmental issues (e.g. climate change) occurring across four periods between 2000 and 2010. Still, even now, coverage of the environment and ES suffers from issues such as limited newsworthiness (Lester, 2010), green fatigue (Cox, 2012), a lack of story context creating ‘missed critical opportunities to advance the climate story’ (Boykoff 2013, p. 96) and a framing that ‘remains within the broad ideological parameters of free-market capitalism and neo-liberalism’ (Carvalho, 2005, p. 21). Despite these lingering weaknesses, the

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<sup>1</sup> The commercial aspect of motorsport emerged from the onset as automotive manufacturers took part based on the ‘Race on Sunday – Sell on Monday’ principle (Walz, 2017; Miller, 2018).

emergence of more media platforms including online and social media has provided ES with increased exposure and possibilities for raising awareness and advocacy and campaigning. A direct result of this has been that for the last couple of decades, motorsport has come under increasing criticisms from environmental groups, political parties and the wider public (Dingle, 2009). In particular, criticisms revolve around a wasteful use of finite resources, harmful effects on human health (Tranter & Lowes, 2005) and behavior (Tranter & Warn, 2008) and its impact on public (Lowes, 2018) and natural environments (Miller, 2016). By focusing on ES in motorsport, the media can pressure motorsport businesses and organizations to become more sustainable. They achieve this by monitoring and scrutinizing motorsport's (ES) efforts, or by means of positively communicating corporations' ES efforts along with commitments to stakeholders (Trendafilova et al., 2013).

As a result, motorsport organizations, clubs and teams have started to acknowledge the need to manage and market itself as sustainable, either for profit-related reasons or for the greater societal/environmental good or both (Haase-Reed et al., 2007; Dingle, 2009). For example, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (hereafter: FIA), which functions as motorsport's governing body, has put great emphasis on its responsibility to establish and follow up on efforts to improve as well as monitor the environmental, socio-economic and safety aspects of motorsport and motoring in general (Dingle, 2009). Besides participating in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda and cooperating with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the FIA has developed a range of initiatives such as the FIA Action for Environment and the Make Cars Green Campaign (FIA, 2007).

In 2013, the FIA announced a new motorsport series that would embrace ES alongside the notions of energy and entertainment. This novel electric series called Formula E runs fully electric open-wheel race cars on city-centre race tracks around the globe. Electricity for race cars are generated emission free, i.e. through glycerin based generators, solar and wind power. Further, emissions through logistics would also be reduced through the use of sea freight and land based transport rather than relying on airplanes to shift cargo

(Sturm, 2018). In short, Formula E aims to (1) represent a pivotal vision for the future of the motorsport and (2) serve as a framework for both research on and development of electric vehicles (hereafter: EV) to raise awareness for and accelerate general interest in EV's as well as promote clean energy and ES (Jarvie, 2018).

Despite the enormous growth and variety of media as well as the global public and political acknowledgement to protect the environment, stories about the environment and its subsidiaries such as ES and climate change have been shown to be neither innocent nor neutral in their representations (Cox, 2012). Bearing this in mind and as much as the FIA and Formula E might try to change perceptions through their increased ES efforts, it remains unclear **how and to what extent the media represent the presence of ES in Formula E and how and to what extent it affects the overall representation of Formula E**. This constitutes the main research question of this Ph.D. As such, this research question addresses the need to examine a phenomenon, ES, that has truly become a key issue in contemporary global societies and (predominantly) Western media as well as the need to expand academic theory relating to motorsport and the media. Drawing from a variety of academic literature, this Ph.D. will answer this main research question by means of a set of secondary research objectives. First, and with a view to the use of CSR and ES as a means for an organization such as Formula E to manage its own organizational identity and image it will look at *how Formula E chooses to represent itself in relation to ES?* Second, and by means of media type comparison, this Ph.D. also aims to ascertain *how and to what extent media representations of (ES in) Formula E differ depending on different media types?* A third objective draws from the symbiotic interplay of integrating celebrity activists in corporate and organizational environments, namely *how and to what extent does the involvement of a major celebrity activist impact media representations of ES in Formula E?* A fourth and final objective is aimed at contextualizing the previous research questions and their subsequent findings by looking at *how and to what extent is the current situation of media representations of (ES in) Formula E similar to earlier representations of motorsport?*



In short, this Ph.D. looks at the mediated relationship between a motorsport series (Formula E) and ES. Indeed, only a decade ago, Pflugfelder (2009) stated that what existed of motorsport studies was very limited and fragmented in nature. These limitations are a little strange, considering the huge financial and social significance of motorsport (Hassan, 2011). In the meantime, much work has been done and a steady increase of academic contributions have followed, yet only a limited number in the area of sport media and representation studies (e.g. Evans, 2013; Evans, 2014; Sturm, 2011; Sturm, 2017), let alone in relation to the environment (Sturm, 2018).

Considering this Ph.D.'s aim of ascertaining how and to what extent the media represents efforts by Formula E to improve on environmental sustainability as well as how and to what extent these representations affect media representations of Formula E, the focus of this Ph.D. lies with the relationship between the media and the motorsport industry, and more specifically Formula E. This Ph.D. acknowledges the importance of the reception side of Hall's (1980) communication model and how audiences as active actors help construct, i.e. decode and (re)code, mediated messages about (ES in) Formula E. However, starting a Ph.D. involves making some hard choices about what to include and what to leave out. Consequently, the focus on the production side, i.e. the motorsports-media relationship, has come at the expense of an analysis of the mediated relationship between Formula E and audiences and is as such not covered in this Ph.D.

Specifically, this Ph.D.'s main research question is explored and addressed by means of five empirical chapters. The empirical studies that make up these chapters are all formulated and formatted in the form that they are (to be) submitted and published in academic journals or books. They are preceded only by a brief introduction as a means of situating the chapter more concretely in function of the main research question.

Chapter three or the first empirical chapter is entitled 'A Self-Representational Analysis of (Commodification in) Formula E's Adoption of Environmental Sustainability'. It adopts a political economy and case study

approach to gain valuable insights in Formula E's organizational identity. More specifically, it investigates how and to what extent Formula E integrates ES in its self-representation. For this, varying factors of commodification and notions of marketing prove important (Mosco, 2009). It achieves this by means of applying a systematic quantitative content analysis with a qualitative thematic analysis to Formula E's organizational website.

Chapter four is titled 'Environmental Sustainability and the Framing of Formula E Motor Racing in UK and Flemish Newspapers' and - following on from the previous chapter - presents a case study of the media coverage of ES in Formula E. As such, it combines a systematic quantitative content analysis with a qualitative framing analysis on a longitudinal (four years) sample of newspapers from both the UK and Flanders. This comparative study not only shows that ES does not take up a leading position in news reporting on Formula E in either of the two geographical regions, but that its presence does not wane over time. Further, ES does not constitute a frame itself, yet it does form part of dominant motorsport frames. Interestingly, newspapers also use ES as part of subsequent counter frames, indicating a clear split in newspaper representations of Formula E and ES.

Transgressing from the printed press in chapter four, in chapter five, entitled 'We Go Green in Beijing: Situating Live Television, Urban Motorsport and Environmental Sustainability by Means of A Framing Analysis of TV Broadcasts of Formula E', a further case study presents a sample of UK live-television coverage of Formula E's three consecutive season-opening races in Asia to which this Ph.D. applies a qualitative framing analysis. Interestingly, findings indicate the emergence of a (secondary) ES frame in the inaugural Formula E broadcast which functions as a neglected frame throughout the other broadcasts and indicates the use of ES as a 'green selling card' or marketing tool (McComas & Shanahan 1999).

The sixth chapter on celebrity activism in Formula E, which applies a qualitative framing analysis to online media articles and related audience comments from three two-month periods across a timespan of four years,

consists of an extended version of the (to be) published article. Indeed, besides the celebrity-related frames required for publication in a scholarly journal on celebrity studies, it also includes motorsport-related frames. Results indicate that a celebrity's personal involvement with Formula E positively affects media coverage of Formula E over time and that audiences read media messages differently as the study finds both hero frames and hypocrisy frames.

The seventh and last of the empirical chapters of this Ph.D. is titled 'The Need for Speed? A Historical Analysis of the BBC's Post-War Broadcasting of Motorsport'. The article underlying this chapter was not originally part of the initial Ph.D. outline as the opportunity to conduct a co-operative project with Prof. Dr. Richard Haynes presented itself only later during the course of this Ph.D. Its added relevance for this Ph.D. lies in providing additional contextualization to 21<sup>st</sup> century media practices of representing motorsport (Boyle & Hayes, 2009). Indeed, and considering this Ph.D. entails a variety of UK media as its base of study, this chapter focusses on how BBC as the UK's first (public) television broadcasting channel struggled to represent motorsport during the post-war period (i.e. 1946 to 1970) and just before motorsport's commercial successes through selling broadcasting rights. As such, the study underlying this chapter makes use of an archival approach to ascertain how and to what extent the BBC was able to represent motorsport as televisual, i.e. real, and indicates that the BBC was directly responsible for not just the modification of existing racing series such as hill climbs but was even directly involved in the creation of the, at that time, completely new motorsport series Rallycross.

Following these empirical chapters, a final discussion and conclusion aims to bring together the comprehensive collection of findings and compare, contrast and discuss these and subsequent implications for the theoretical fields this Ph.D. has drawn on. With the exception of chapter seven, the order of the chapters accurately follows the actual development chronology of this Ph.D. More so, the chronology also reflects a logical flow towards answering the main research question. Namely, insights into Formula E's self-representational identity provide a starting point and a base of comparison for following media coverage analyses. Such analyses follow a historical chronology

ranging from a content-based interest from more 'traditional' printed press and television broadcasting and ending with an interest in both content and reception of a wide range of online media sources.

Prior to these chapters though, this Ph.D. aims to contextualise itself by drawing from larger theoretical frameworks of cultural studies, communication studies, marketing, history and environmental studies in academia. More concretely, the first chapter following this introduction includes three theoretical sections that aid this theoretical contextualization.

A first section defines motorsport and contextualises the sport through a concise historical overview with a particular view to electric motorsport followed by an introduction to the novel racing series Formula E. The second section shows the link between ES and motorsport. As such, it defines and conceptualises ES and relates it to notions of motorsport, marketing, such as Corporate Social Responsibility, greenwashing, societal engagement and celebrity activism. In the third section, the relation between the media and motorsport is conceptualised, first, by means of representation theory and, second, by means of an overview of existing representations of (ES in) motorsport. This is then followed by a methodological framework in chapter two which the different approaches and methods that this Ph.D. uses are discussed and motivated in detail. Following this, each of the five chapters presents the empirical studies.

Lastly, a general discussion and conclusion will summarise the most relevant findings and present these in function of the main research question as well as draw some final implications.

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# CHAPTER 1

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### **Conceptualizing Motorsport**

At the heart of this Ph.D. is the concept of motorsport. Therefore, this Ph.D. first narrows down the meaning of motorsport and provides a working definition. Second, it presents a concise history of motorsport covering its initial conception and relevant developments up to the contemporary situation.

### ***Towards A Definition***

Any study looking to approach motorsport as an area of research benefits from a clear understanding of what motorsport means. Interestingly, an initial search to define motorsport provides varying possibilities. For example, the Merriam-Webster dictionary (motorsport, 2018a) defines motorsport as ‘any of several sports involving the racing or competitive driving of motor vehicles’ whereas the Oxford Learners Dictionaries (motorsport, 2018b) defines it as ‘the sport of racing fast cars or motorcycles on a special track’ and the Cambridge Dictionary (motor racing, 2018) as ‘the sport of racing extremely fast and powerful cars around a track’. Even though these definitions agree on the inherent sporting characteristic of competition that is racing, they also point towards an incongruence in narrowing down which sport(s) are meant, but also where these sports take place. Indeed, and regarding the former, the first definition suggests a multitude of sports apply. As such, sports such as auto racing, motorbike racing, truck racing, power boat racing, air[plane] racing, snowmobile racing etc. can all be categorised as motorsports. As Matthews and Pike (2016, p. 1534) state: ‘motorsport is an umbrella term for many different types of motor-vehicle racing (including motorcycles, aero planes and motorboats) but is commonly associated with the motor car’. Considering the sporting emphasis of this Ph.D. lies with the competitive racing of cars and despite the generic nature of the term motorsport, in this Ph.D., motorsport is



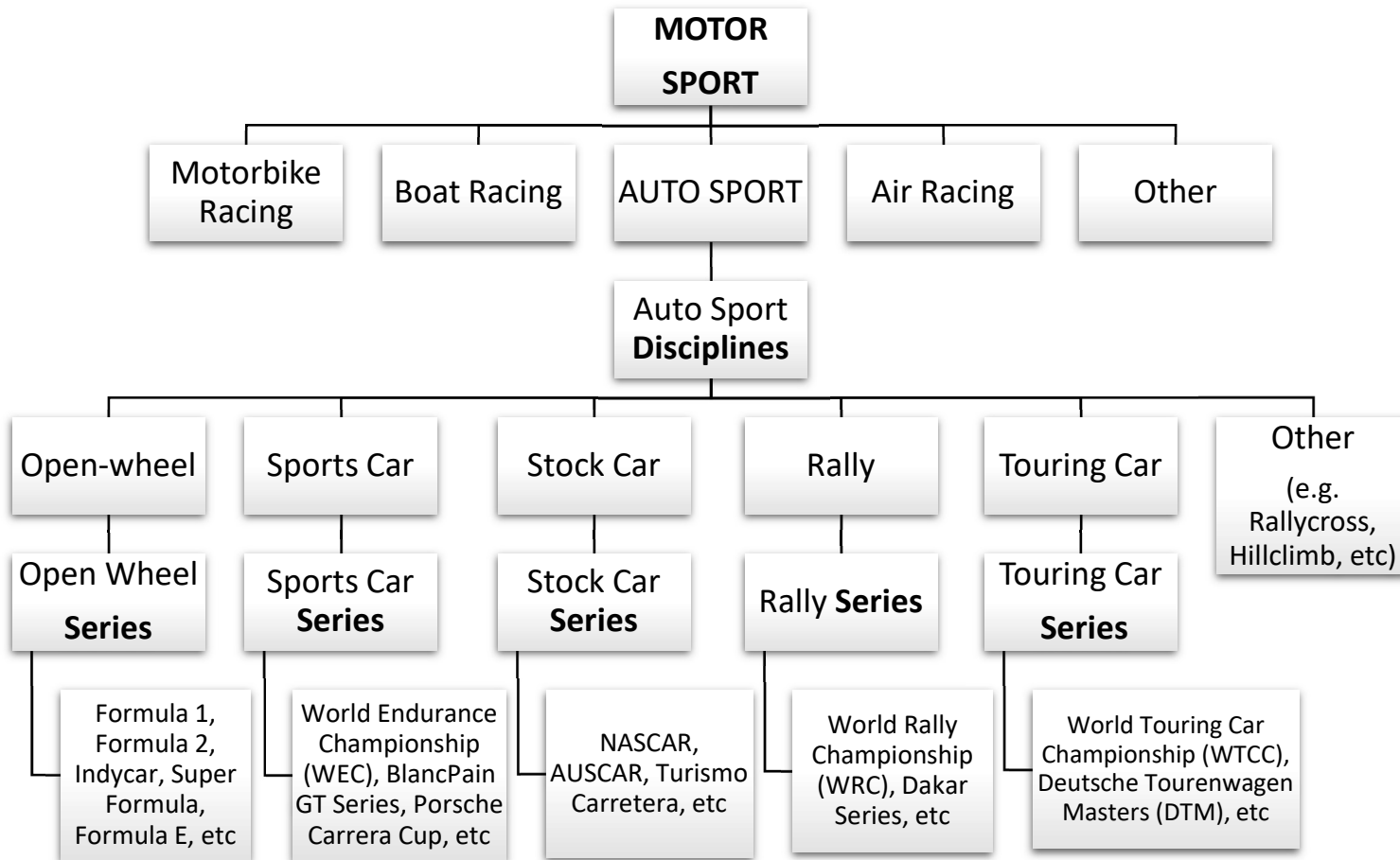
limited to auto sport. Indeed, as much as motorsport is a generic term, auto sport too can be deemed a generic term in its own right. On the basis of a top-down approach, and as figure 1 (see below) indicates, this Ph.D. suggests that auto sport constitutes varying auto sport disciplines such as open-wheel racing, sports-car racing, stock car racing and rallying. These disciplines, in turn, all contain a wide range of auto sport series that cover both grassroots and professional levels and take place nationally and internationally (Matthews and Pike, 2016).

For example, the discipline of open-wheel racing combines series such as Formula One (international), Formula 2 (international), Super Formula (national: Japan) and IndyCar (national: USA) whereas sports-car racing combines series such as the World Endurance Championship (hereafter: WEC) (international), the WeatherTech Sports Car Championship (national: USA) or the Porsche Carrera Cup (international). Second, regarding the location of where races take place, both the second and third definition restrict motorsport to race tracks, which indeed holds true for series such as Formula One, IndyCar, WEC and NASCAR but effectively cancel out rallying, for example World Rally Championship (hereafter: WRC) or the Dakar Rally, in particular, which take part on (special) stages within and across countries.

### ***General Historical Overview***

The history of motorsport is very dense due to a high frequency of competitions having taken place globally for more than 125 years. As such, a detailed overview of motorsport history would not only require a great deal of time and space to describe but is also beyond the scope of this Ph.D. Therefore, in what follows, this Ph.D. provides a concise history of motorsport in general and as relevant to further understanding the idea of electric motorsport.

Figure 1: Generic Model of Motorsport - Disciplines and Series



The history of motorsport is inherently linked to the history of the automobile as even the early automotive inventors and designers wanted to prove to their fellow man and competitors that their product was the most efficient, i.e. reliable and durable, at that moment in time (Walz, 2017). Although often forgotten due to a mere single competitor, the first motor (sport) event was organised by the chief editor of the Paris magazine *Le Vélocipède* on 20 April 1887, only two years after Gottlieb Daimler invented the first combustion engine using petroleum spirit, and ran for 20 miles between Neuilly and Versailles in France (Flower, 1975). However, after some more fledgling events that took place in the following years, the first official motorsport competition started in Paris on 22 July 1894. Two key elements arise from this, namely the fact that motorsport competition in its early years manifested itself through reliability races or trials that took place between major cities such as, for example, from Paris to Bordeaux and back (1895 - 1175 kilometers), from Paris to Amsterdam and back (1898 - 1431 kilometers) and from Paris to Madrid (1903 - 1313 kilometers). Second, the media organizing and sponsoring so many of the first automotive and motorsport events indicates the close relation media and motorsport shared from the onset and which led to motorsport becoming a national sport before the turn of the century (Flower, 1975). This culminated in 1908 when *Le Matin* and *The New York Times* both co-sponsored the Peking-to-Paris race (1908 - 19509 kilometers). As such, it accounts for the huge popularity the sport experienced almost immediately with three million spectators lining the course for the Paris to Madrid race of 1903 (Flower, 1975) and 10000 spectators flocking to the first closed racetrack competition in Vienna in 1899 (Walz, 2017). It was also at the latter event where the technological performance of electric race cars became apparent. More so, from 1899 until 1902, all land speed records were set by electric vehicles, whose low noise was hailed as an advantage for taxi services (Walz, 2017). Indeed, in 1899, the Belgian Camille Jenatzy, nicknamed the Red Devil, was the first person to break the 100 km/h barrier and did so in an electric car called 'La Jamais Contenté' [The Never Appeased] (Walz, 2017). Alongside other famous automotive pioneers including a young Ferdinand Porsche, who

greatly appreciated the homogenous power output of the electric drive that made the complicated and laborious clutch and gearbox systems of the time redundant, Jenatzy continued to develop other electric and hybrid (gasoline-electric) vehicle technology (Walz, 2017). However, due to a limited battery autonomy of 40 to 60 kilometers, a problem that would last until one century later, electric race cars were not suited to the popular city-to-city races of the time. As internal combustion engine technology and the network of petrol stations improved (Ikuta, 1988), electric race cars all but vanished from the motor racing scene of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Again backed by ‘traditional’ media<sup>3</sup>, the Paris-to-Rouen Motor Trial was sponsored by *Le Petit Journal* and attracted 21 entrants in steam, petrol, compressed air, gas as well as electric vehicles of which 17 reached the finish line after 127 kilometers (Walz, 2017).

With the new century, motorsport further expanded both in terms of going beyond Europe and in terms of the number of disciplines and technology (Flower, 1975). Indeed, the First World War’s war-time developments (for example metallurgical) directly led to enhancements in automotive design and construction (Walz, 2017). As such, the interbellum became a period during which motorsport could thrive with true international races such as the Indianapolis 500, the 24 hours of Le Mans as well as the emergence of Grand Prix racing, the predecessor to Formula One. Besides key countries such as France, Germany and Italy, Belgium proved a main player in the development and organization of motorsport during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (largely) due to its pioneering culture of daredevil aviation and motor cycle racing as well as its access to valuable resources such as rubber from the Congo (Ameye et al., 2011). During the 1930s, the emergence of radio further contributed to the spread and popularity of the sport (Walker, 2002). Most motor racing was halted during the Second World War years which reshuffled the motorsport

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<sup>2</sup> Although electric race cars largely disappeared from the racing scene during the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, manufacturing and sales of electric cars continued until the end of the late 1910s. Some of the most successful brands were Baker Electrics, Waverly Electric, Rauch and Lang Electrics as well as Willys Knight (Ikuta, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Drawing from Dart (2014), this Ph.D. avoids operating the artificial dichotomy between old and new media and instead opts for traditional versus new media.

landscape as many motor racing infrastructure on the European mainland was damaged, unlike in Great Britain where plentiful airfields were converted into flat race tracks (Aston and Williams, 1996). The latter subsequently instigated the rise of Great Britain as the country with the largest motorsport industry (House of Commons, 2010).

With the arrival of the 'romantic fifties' came not only the first decade of Formula One and legendary performances in open road and sports car racing such as the Mille Miglia, Targa Floria and Le Mans, but also tragic accidents. Disasters like the one at Le Mans in 1955, which left 81 dead, and the 1957 Mille Miglia, which left 11 dead, signaled the end of motorsport as it was known before (Flower, 1975, p. 144). France and Italy forbade open road racing and Switzerland banned racing altogether for seven decades (Sturm, 2018). The Suez crisis in 1957, for the first time, brought to light the issue of limited fossil fuel resources (Walz, 2017). This materialised in the rise of smaller and lighter, i.e. more efficient, race car developments, in particular by British manufacturers such as Lotus (Colin Chapman), Cooper (Charles Cooper and John Cooper) and BMC Mini (Sir Alec Issigonis) that dominated disciplines from Formula One and Formula Two to rallying and touring car racing (Aston and Williams, 1996). This technological evolution manifested itself further through the 1960s and along with advancements in camera and broadcasting technologies, motorsport continued its emergence, albeit still limited, into the world's living rooms (Haynes, 2016). With the energy crisis of the 1970s, the efficiency debate emerged again during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the need for more economical vehicles and solutions really took hold (Walz, 2017). Despite this, the commercialization of motorsport also started in 1974 and further materialised throughout the 1980s (Grant-Braham, 1996). This turned Formula One not only into the pinnacle of motor racing that it still is today, but also into a global spectacle (Sturm, 2014). During the 1990s diesel technology was adopted to further increase efficiency which saw huge successes in endurance sports car racing such at Le Mans.

However, with the turn of the century and pressured by environmental and political groups as well as the media (Dingle, 2009; Jarvie, 2018), 'the

debate on how to lower CO2 emissions along with the resulting objectives for modern automotive engineering, alternative drive concepts and environmental factors start playing major roles in racing' significantly impact the direction of the sport' (Walz, 2017, p. 195). For example, Formula One swapped its V10 engines for V8's in 2005 and switched to turbo hybrid V6's in 2014 whereas in 2004, the World Endurance Championship (hereafter: WEC) forced manufacturers of its 'premiere league' LMP1 category to adopt hybrid technology. More so, for the first time since its conception more than one century ago, private motorsport entrepreneurs, manufacturers and governing bodies started to experiment with electric drivetrains. Some of the most important are:

- In 2010, the French Venturi Automobiles in cooperation with Ohio State University broke the electric vehicle speed record with 'La Jamais Contente', resonating Belgium's Camille Jenatzy's electric speed breaking car from 1899, on the Bonneville Salt Flats, USA (Walz, 2017).
- Although originally conceived in 1998, Formula Student was revised for 2012. This series' focus lies on the designing and construction of single seater cars by international university students that can be powered by fuel or electricity. This series has recently enjoyed a tremendous popularity with 3600 students attending the 2016 event in Germany.
- Although done away with as a 'milk float' by some sports broadcasting media such as Eurosport (Kurby, 2016), Acciona entered a fully electric rally car in the grueling 2015 Dakar rally. At its third attempt in 2017, it managed to successfully finish the two week race.
- Both Jaguar (2017) and Tesla (2018) have been given the green light for a one-make international racing series using production based race cars, the I-PACE (I-PACE eThrophy) and the Model S (Tesla GT series).

- In 2020, the World Rally Cross (WRX) championship will be the first long-standing championship to convert from a fossil fuelled internal combustion engine to a fully electric drivetrain.

It is important to emphasise that all these initiatives and early achievements can thus be framed as direct consequences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century public's shift towards a more sustainable electro-mobility paradigm which will only manifest itself further in the coming decades (Winkelhake, 2017). However, the most significant game-changer for the move towards electric motorsport can be found with the motorsport governing body, namely the FIA. Indeed, and for a while now, the FIA committed itself to monitor and improve the environmental and socio-economic of motorsport and motoring in general (Dingle, 2009) by cooperating with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and by means of its environmental campaigns such as the 'FIA Action for Environment' and the 'Make Cars Green Campaign' (FIA, 2007). As such, in 2013 the FIA announced the creation of a new motor racing series: Formula E.

### *Pioneering 'Sustainable' Motorsport: The FIA Formula E Championship*

Formula E is the world's premier electric-power motorsport series that uses energy from sustainable sources (e.g. glycerin based generators, solar and wind power). Being an open-wheel racing series, the first generation cars esthetically resemble the more well-known Formula One cars, yet the series is not simply an environmentally friendly version of Formula One but rather a new code of racing (Matthews, 2016). From the onset, Formula E has proven to be very polarizing with many from within and outside of the motorsport industry criticizing its necessity, legitimacy, and longevity (Walz, 2017). Indeed, one of the biggest concerns besides an outright lack of speed compared to Formula One, was its limited battery autonomy and the same reason electric motorsport disappeared after 1902 (Ikuta, 1988). Formula E 'solved' this during the first four seasons by switching cars during a pit stop halfway through the race. The fifth season, i.e. 2018-2019, will see many of these early criticisms addressed through the arrival of the generation two Formula E car which is not only able

to complete a race on a single battery charge whilst competing at higher speeds but is also visually different from any other Formula race car (Werth, 2018).

Due to the electric nature of the race cars, noise levels are much reduced, allowing races to take place nearly exclusively in major city-centres, something no other series has been able to achieve. This is due to big cities being most likely to take pioneering roles in the implementation of the electric mobility revolution (Bär, 2016). Because of the additional component of difficulty associated with city race tracks, Formula E has been able to deliver on competitive racing during its first seasons (Matthews, 2016). Further, Formula E and the FIA aim to raise awareness by bringing the sport to urban and potentially previously uninterested audiences and enabling them to showcase a wide variety of electric mobility technologies and solutions (Chauhan, 2015):

‘As the world’s first fully-electric racing series we aim to represent a vision for the future of the motor industry, serving as a framework for research and development around the electric vehicle. We hope to accelerate general interest in electric cars and in turn promote clean energy and sustainability’ (Formula E Sustainability Report, 2016)

An independent report by EY (formerly Ernst & Young) on the impact of Formula E and its contribution to the viability of electric mobility and battery technology conservatively calculated that Formula E could raise the profile of electric vehicles (hereafter: EV) and contribute to additional sales of 77 million EV’s by 2040, a drop of 900 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and generate savings of more than 25 million dollars on health-care costs related to respiratory and cardiological conditions (Jarvie, 2018). Of course, prognoses do not necessarily equate reality. However, so far, after four seasons, Formula E has received numerous awards for its pioneering environmental role and has official support from organizations such as the United Nations, RE100 and Greenpeace, the latter being one of the most prominent grass-roots NGO’s to denounce harmful activities to the environment (Jarvie, 2018). Only a handful of automotive manufacturers, including Renault, Citroen and Venturi, joined Formula E from



the start. A great deal more decided to join Formula E since. For example, for the sixth season, i.e. 2019-2020, confirmed manufacturers include Audi Sport, BMW AG, Citroen DS Automobiles, Jaguar Land Rover, Mahindra Racing, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche AG, Nissan, NextEV NIO and Venturi Automobiles, amongst others. This move towards Formula E by manufacturers is largely sped up by the 2015 Volkswagen Diesel scandal (Dieselgate) that saw subsidiaries Audi and Porsche pull out of leading motorsport series such as the WEC. For these, and other, manufacturers, Formula E has therefore realised one of its main goals, namely to become 'a development center and test lab for electromobility' (Walz, 2017, p. 209).

It seems clear then that Formula E is a new, yet key player in the contemporary motorsport landscape that aims to disrupt through innovation. However, with this arises the question how the media, with which motorsport enjoyed such a strong and positive relationship during its early years, responds to Formula E and its supposedly sustainability ethos. This is a key point this Ph.D. addresses.

### **Motorsport And The Environment**

The next step in this Ph.D. is to combine the notions of motorsport and the environment. Traditionally and commonly, these are considered to be mutually exclusive rather than compatible. Major (motor) sporting events can generate beneficial environmental and societal impacts such as enjoyment, community development, encouraging healthy athletic lifestyles as well as foster academic interest in sciences (Winston, 2011). However, throughout its existence motorsport has been blamed for its 'wasteful' tradition of consuming resources and water along with emitting greenhouse gasses for the sake of mere pleasure and entertainment, subsequently causing harm to both society and the environment (Hickson, 2014; Winston, 2011, Miller, 2016). By far the greatest criticisms of motorsport are those that relate to its wider negative effects on the wellbeing of both the public and the environment (Goldenberg, 2011).

These criticisms have increased as a result of a global recognition of the relationship between health (inequalities) and the environment to the extent that 'in order to promote good levels of health and to reduce health inequalities, there is also an overwhelming responsibility to promote a healthy environment' (Philpott and Seymour, 2011, p. 72). Indeed, the effects of motor racing on public health are worth noting and can range from affecting fan driver behavior (Tranter & Warn, 2008) to affecting air quality through carbon emissions and contributing to pulmonary and coronary health problems (Tranter & Lowes, 2005; Lowes, 2018). Further, motorsport disciplines and series that take place outside of designated race tracks such as rallying have been criticised for their destructive impact on their natural surroundings, ranging from forests to the delicate desert eco-systems (Hassan & O'Kane, 2011). Additionally, motorsport's suggested wasteful tradition of consuming resources and subsequent endorsement of harmful practices to gain access to those resources (Hickson, 2014) has become the most significant criticism against the sport. Bearing in mind the long history of the sport, one of many examples in relation to this would be the boycott of the Shell Formula One Belgium Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps race track in 2013. Here, Greenpeace activists used the live-television broadcast of the post-race podium ceremony to protest Shell's drilling activities in the Arctic.

However, motorsport organizations increasingly have been working towards reducing and offsetting their environmental impact and as a result, the 'sport is increasingly becoming part of the solution rather than part of the problem, even though a lot more needs to be done' (Oben, 2011, p. 26, 31).

Adopting a macro-perspective, what these continuing criticisms imply is that the practice of motorsport, as it has been conducted traditionally, increasingly clashes with what is considered to be acceptable practices in contemporary society. As such, it seems that the larger generic criticism of motorsport is one of (environmental) sustainability and directly impacts on the success of the sport over time.

## ***Conceptualizing (Environmental) Sustainability***

### *Definition*

When looking at environmental considerations in general, and as Savery and Gilbert (2011) indicate, a first important aspect to consider is that ES forms part of the much larger holistic concept that is sustainability. The concept of sustainability originates from the forestry industry, where it denotes the idea to not harvest more than what the forest can provide in terms of new growth (Wiersum, 1995; Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Further, the concept of sustainability constitutes three pillars or dimensions, i.e. environmental, societal and economic (Gibson, 2001). Indeed, the Our Common Future report (United Nations, 1988) suggests that the environment does not merely exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions and needs. What proved to become a decisive foundation for the conceptualization and global acknowledgement of (environmental) sustainability in 1988, the World Commissions on Environment and Development drafted and submitted the report, also commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report, to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the general Assembly of the United Nations (Savery & Gilbert, 2011). This outlined and repeatedly called for global environmental concerns and associated developmental challenges whilst noting the specific interrelation between the environment and poverty (Savery & Gilbert, 2011). According to the Brundtland Report (United Nations, 1988) then, the concept of sustainable development or sustainability can be defined along the lines of developments that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. However, the report also acknowledges the existence of inherent limits, i.e. 'not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities' (United Nations, 1988, p. 24).

Although the Brundtland Report has been pivotal in setting out the concept of sustainability, varying definitions and new meanings of sustainability have come about since its conception (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). For

example, the Cambridge Dictionary (sustain, 2018) defines the verb to sustain as ‘to cause or allow something to continue for a period of time’ and the Chambers Concise Dictionary (sustain, 2000) adds to this ‘to hold up; to bear; [...]; to support the life of; to prolong’. Based on the idea of incorporating a society that enables people to enrich their lives into the future, Savery and Gilbert (2011) consider the previous definitions as a limitation in their own right as, according to them, the aim should not be to maintain or prolong a positive status quo of the human, i.e. societal, environmental and economical condition but rather to improve over time, leaving future generations with more opportunities. Another definition relevant for conceptualizing the concept of (environmental) sustainability and that applies specifically to sport is that of David Chernushenko (2011), namely ‘Sport is sustainable when it meets the needs of today’s community while contributing to the improvement of future sport opportunities for all and the improvement of the integrity of the natural and social environment on which it depends’ (Chernushenko, 2011, p. 21).

### *From Concern to Engagement*

The prominence of sustainability generated by the United Nation’s Brundtland Report increased throughout the 1990s with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change being signed in 1992 and which culminated in the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in Kyoto (Japan) in 1997 (De Heer & Bochatay, 2011). The latter in particular would be the first significant political and global acknowledgement of the effect that humans have on the climate and provided global exposure for the importance of environmental sustainability. In the years following this treaty and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this political acknowledgement of ES not only increased, but also started to pressure businesses and (sporting) organizations alike to adopt more (environmentally) sustainable practices (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012).

### Corporate Social Responsibility, Commodification and Greenwashing

In addition to the institutional pressure, i.e. referring to government policies and regulation, pressure from media and share- and stakeholders also manifested itself further into a growing emphasis on ES (Orlitzky et al., 2011). As such, ES is fast becoming an integral part and even a central focus of corporate social responsibility (hereafter: CSR) (Mohr et al, 2001). In a sense, the emergence of CSR is directly related to the emergence of philanthropy. According to Sheth and Babiak (2010), the concept of CSR can be traced back to the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when business tycoons such as Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford started to donate funds to improve societal conditions. However, more contemporary interpretations of CSR seemed to have emerged from the 1960s onwards, when corporations started to question their role in society and societal issues (Clark, 2000).

As a means of defining CSR, the World Business Council of Sustainable Development, suggests it refers to ‘the commitment of a business to contribute to economic development, working with employees, their families, and the local community to improve quality of life’ (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013, p.1046). In this sense, social aspects relate to areas such as the environment and the community, whereas on the other hand, treatment of employees would classify under the focus of stakeholders (Amanda et al., 2016; Servaes & Tamayo, 2013; Dahlsrud, 2008). Definitions of CSR remain highly debated and a consensus still remains absent (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). This Ph.D. considers CSR as it is most generally seen, i.e. as the initiative to minimise or eliminate harmful effects on society with the aim to create long term sustainability in businesses and communities (Mohr et al, 2001). Besides the institutional incentives, i.e. government policies and regulations, CSR is also driven by the possibility of either creating new or tapping into existing markets through ES (Trendafilova et al., 2013).

Considering the fact that (motor) sport affects societies and the environment in various ways across the entire globe, it presents a unique platform for sporting organizations to address their environmental impact and

promote environmental awareness and actions (Dolf, 2011; Oben, 2011). Despite a long tradition of academic research into CSR, the study of CSR in sport has only picked up in the last decade (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). The result of this is that CSR has been found to perform differently in the sporting industry compared to the way it functions in other industries (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). For example, Smith and Westerbeek (2007) indicated that sport in general has the unique ability to affect (1) the nature and scope of CSR efforts, (2) its distribution via mass media and (3) public awareness of sustainability (Smith and Westerbeek in Sheth & Babiak (2010)). Babiak and Wolfe (2009; 2010) show that sport executives use CSR first as a means to further the strategic position of the sport organizations and which subsequently indicates that their primary aim, much like other businesses, is to generate profits and second, to positively impact the environments in which they operate.

From a marketing perspective, it is important to note that this double intent of profit and societal impact is achieved through the implementation of cause-related marketing and cause branding. Indeed, 'categorised as sponsorships, cause-related marketing involves profit-motivated giving and enables firms to contribute to nonprofit organizations while also increasing their bottom line<sup>4</sup>, which by tying those contributions to sales'. This has two important consequences. First, criticisms can arise which suggest sporting organizations are not able to either live up to their CSR goals, or that they are simply inadequate to compensate for the 'damage' by the organization's activities. This more critical approach suggests a certain reduction of ES to a public relations exercise referred to as 'greenwashing' (Barnfield, 2011). More specifically, greenwashing entails a form of misleading information released by an organization with the aim of presenting itself as having an environmentally sustainable public image and constitutes the major limit of green communications (Cox, 2012, p. 286; Platel, 2010; Miller, 2018). For example, the Dakar Rally's contributions to offset its participation have been criticised

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<sup>4</sup> The bottom line refers to the triple bottom which highlights non-market and non-financial areas of corporate performance and responsibility with a specific emphasis on economic, environment, and social impact (Fairley et al., 2010).

for just this and rendered its CSR efforts as a 'smokescreen', meant to divert criticism of possible dangers or lack of ES away from the rally (Hassan & O'Kane, 2011). Second, such greenwashing has been shown in wider contexts to be related to commodification, a process by which goods and services with high use value are transformed into marketable products as commodities (Mosco, 2009, p. 127-9, 156). Professional sport has long since been producing commodities such as live events in order to generate revenue (Dart, 2014, p. 530), which, in the case of motorsport, is exemplified through Formula One as both the pinnacle of motor racing and a global commodity spectacle (Sturm, 2014). As suggested by Sturm (2014) and Cox (2012), this occurs with a view to mass reproduction and consumption and through the usage of commodified objects or factors, for example advertisements, games, glamorous lifestyles and celebrities. In this regard, a celebrity can be considered a hyper-commodity in the sense that he/she functions as (a) a platform for presentation of commodities and (b) as a tradable commodity him/herself (Rojek, 2006). Further, such commodification also applies to the environment, to environmental sustainability and derivatives such as ecotourism and, indeed, professional sport (Dorsey et al, 2004). More so, the promotion of commodity consumption as environmentally sustainable is known to be associated with greenwashing (Cox & Pezzullo, 2015).

### *Celebrity Activism and Endorsement*

Most, if not all, sporting organizations now use philanthropy as part of their CSR activities to not only improve societal and environmental issues but also as strategic image enhancement (Babiak & Wolfe, 2007; Sheth & Babiak, 2010). For example, through a number of Gala dinners, Formula E supports charities and foundations such as the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which aims to improve air quality, and One Drop, which aims to improve water and sanitation (FIAFormula E, n.d.). Another way to achieve image enhancement, i.e. raise the visibility, credibility and legitimacy of an issue (Cashmore, 2006), and increase the environmental profiling of sporting organizations' activities with media and audiences, is through becoming the subject of celebrity

endorsement (Lester, 2010; Tsaliki et al., 2011). Especially during the last two decades, celebrities increasingly take up the role of endorsers of social and environmental causes, so much so that it has now become part of a celebrity's job description (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012; Panis & Van den Bulck, 2014; Van den Bulck, 2018). Most importantly, this celebrity engagement extends to issues regarding the environment, from celebrities driving eco-friendly cars such as John Travolta (Toyota Prius), Lance Armstrong (Nissan Leaf) and George Clooney (Tesla Roadster) (Wheelsforwomen, 2012) to celebrity activists such as actor and race car driver Patrick Dempsey campaigning for road safety (FIA, 2018) or actor Leonardo DiCaprio addressing politicians at environmental world summits (Palotta, 2014), marching with environmental protesters (Prince, 2014) and becoming Chairman of the Sustainability Committee of Formula E (Price, 2015). With regards to ES, Brockington (2009, p. 24) contends that celebrity endorsement functions as 'a means by which environmental narratives appear as more truthful' to audiences, indicating ES efforts can become more effective when endorsed by celebrities'. Logically, a celebrity activist's commitment can also boost his/her public visibility and, when kept up over time, build authenticity (Samman et al., 2009; Meyer & Gamson, 1995). However, when media and/or audiences discover a discrepancy between a celebrity's behaviour and a sporting organization's ethos, for example Formula One champion and road safety ambassador Lewis Hamilton taking a selfie when riding a motorbike, or on revealing additional motives for the celebrity's support such as financial gain, celebrity endorsement can prove counterproductive to both the organization's and the celebrity's image (McCracken, 1989; Van den Bulck, 2018).

As with all celebrity endorsement, DiCaprio's involvement can help raise much needed visibility and goodwill with media and audiences (Tsaliki et al. 2011) for a new organisation's brand (Formula E) that is working towards an image (ES) that is different from that of its wider context (motorsport). Indeed, as a new concept, what Formula E brings in innovation, it also brings in uncertainty as ES has not been part of the values that fans traditionally associate with motor racing with its long tradition of focusing on speed, danger



and glamour (Roy et al. 2010), while being criticised for its disregard for the environment (Smith & Westerbeek 2004).

## **The Media And Motorsport**

### ***Conceptualizing Representation***

Having conceptualised both motorsport and ES, a third important concept underlying this Ph.D. is the way motorsport and ES are presented in the media, i.e. media representation. As both verb and noun, the Chambers Concise Dictionary (represent, 2000; representation, 2000) provides the following descriptions of representation:

- (a) To represent: ‘to use, or serve, as a symbol for; to stand for; to exhibit, depict, personate or show an image if, by imitative art’
- (b) Representation: ‘the act, state or fact of representing or being represented; an image; picture; dramatic performance; a presentation of a view of facts or arguments’

What these definitions indicate is that the act of representing that makes up representation is in fact centered around the production of meaning through words and images used and stories told. As Stuart Hall et al. (2013, p. 45) suggests: ‘representation is the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs) to produce meaning’. Indeed, as Du Gay’s ‘circuit of culture’ (1997) reveals, meaning is constantly being produced and exchanged through interaction, albeit personal, social or, in fact, mediated. In relation to the latter, meaning is currently produced in a wide range of different media, i.e. local and global, traditional and digital that circulate meanings between cultures rapidly and globally (Hall et al., 2013). However, as a result of these cross-cultural pathways and because cultures inherently differ from one another, different meanings can arise from one media text which points towards an inherent polysemic character of media texts (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). As such, Hall et al. (2013) suggests this inherently requires an acceptance of at least a degree of cultural relativism between

cultures as well as a lack of equivalence and the subsequent need for translation during the act of navigating between cultures. Codes, as social conventions rather than fixed 'rules' due to the changing nature of meanings over time, allow for such translation. Indeed, and considering culture functions as a process as can be deduced from Du Gay's circuit of culture (1997), a constructivist approach to representation involves social actors using a conceptual, linguistic and representational system to represent concepts to communicate about the world in a meaningful way to others (Hall et al., 2013, p. 11).

The successful production of meaning, however, is correlated to, and dependent on, the process of interpretation. Indeed, Hall's (1980) model of media communication suggests an active understanding and usage of codes for the processes of encoding and decoding. In doing so, it positions the media to be the result of a negotiation between on the one hand institutional producers of meaning and the other hand audiences as producers of meaning (Kennedy & Hills, 2009). In other words, rather than simply absorbing a message, audiences as active social actors can generate meaning through different readings of media texts. This subsequently lays bare the importance of power in the process of media representation. On the other hand, it implies that when the process of encoding and decoding occurs in different regions, countries or cultures, the efficiency in terms of the production of meaning can be affected. For example, a media message outlining the need to get more women involved in motorsport and encoded by BBC World might not be decoded by British audiences in the same way as by Middle-Eastern audiences. As such, media representations of national and international (motor) sport can be seen as the product of a number of production practices that are framed by (professional) ideologies set within a context of institutional structures, i.e. are positioned within historical, economic and political settings, which all simultaneously embody hegemonic relations that constitute societies (Whannel, 2002; Hetsroni, 2004; Boyle & Monteiro, 2005). Bearing all this in mind, two key points concerning media representations need further attention, namely (1) that media representations are dependent on the media landscape from which

they originate and (2) that media representations can apply to a wide range of things including identity and various other issues. Regarding the first, the manner in which media ownership is concentrated and the wider political economy of the media directly affects economic competition and representation of content (Carvalho, 2005). Indeed, media industries are meant to be part of a democratic process in which the public can objectively become informed about daily national and international (sporting) issues yet have long since sparked significant concerns about how television, radio, newspapers, and online/social media are owned and how this affects public access to reasoned debate (Abercrombie, 1996). Often with a view to increasing brand awareness through communication and corporate strategies, media corporations buy (parts of) sports clubs, teams and organizations to control both distribution and content, a process called vertical integration, and which can directly affect objective standards for representation (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Although a more extreme example, the Atlanta Braves (Major League Baseball, USA) were first owned by Ted Turner, the media magnate who at that time also owned television stations *WTBS*, *CNN* and *TNT* after which they became part of Time Warner (Wenner, 2002). Another factor that affects representation is state/media censorship. According to *The Economist*, China's 'authoritarian' internet censorship apparatus continuously blocks 'undesirable' foreign websites and mobilises 'an army of cyber-police ... and paid online propagandists to watch, filter, censor and guide Chinese internet users' (Yang, 2014). As Yang (2014) indicates, one of the cultural responses by Chinese netizens is to adopt the practice of recoding, i.e. the use of codes (words and images) to (re) circulate information that is deemed sensitive by the state. Despite the effort to keep alive topics and issues through recoding, state, i.e. political, censorship greatly affects representation.

Besides censorship, political inclination or affiliation of media also play a part in the process of representation. For example, studies conducted with a focus on American media reveal that conservative media such as *Fox News* and the *Wall Street Journal* are much more counteracting claims of climate change per se or as a direct result of human action on the environment in comparison

to less conservative television media such as *MSNBC* or *CNN* or print media such as *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (Dunlap and McCright, 2011; Nisbet, 2011; Feldman et al., 2012; Feldman et al., 2015). Similarly, a study of the British elite press revealed clear ideological perspectives that were underlying and embedded in representations of scientific claims about climate change and the environment (Carvalho, 2007; Feldman et al., 2015). As such, it is important to bear in mind that the media can play an important role in the sustenance but also contestation of political choices (Carvalho, 2005).

Turning to the second key point, representation by the media applies to a wide range of issues centered around power relations, such as for example identity. One particular example is national identity, i.e. the cohesive force that holds a nation state together and shapes the relationship it has with other nations (Billig, 2002). As such, national identity is one pattern of orientation set within a larger set of multiple social identities that become relevant depending on varying contexts (Billig, 2002). More importantly, an individual's sense of national identity and characteristic stereotypical images of other nations can be traced back to the way in which the media represent sport (Whannel, 2002). Such representations are inherently polysemic in nature whereby national media continuously contribute to a marking and remarking of difference depending on issues and frames of national socio-economic and political interest (Billig, 2002). Another notion regarding media representation of identity concerns gender identity or, more specifically, the representation of biological difference between male and female which has long been central to perceptions of sport and/in society (Kennedy and Hills, 2009; Boyle and Haynes, 2009). Indeed, and despite a considerable rise of women media professionals in print, online and broadcast media and which acts as a normalizing factor, the media is still a key site for maintaining and reinforcing dominant ideologies and subsequent values, ideas and notions regarding gender inequality in media sport (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). One study by Messner (2007) revealed that despite growing efforts and a growing participation rate of women athletes in sport, this increase has not been reflected in subsequent media coverage.

This indicates that representation works as much through what is not shown as through what is (Hall et al., 2013).

*From Identity and Image ...*

Considering the near omnipresence of media representation in contemporary and capitalist society, the construction of identity, and image for that matter, also plays an important part in the success of businesses and organizations alike. Indeed, the construction of organizational identity, i.e. 'a self-categorization process in which organizational members internalise their perceptions and express their beliefs about their organization' by answering the question 'who are we' (Wan et al., 2015, p. 209), represents the internal perceptions of an organization and the way that organization wants to be seen by the outside world. In a digital world, the use of a website as an external communication tool presents one of the easiest ways for an organization to choose its own organizational identity and to market itself (Haase-Reed et al., 2007; Wan et al., 2015). The use of such a 'digital storefront' also helps to circumvent, at least initially, potential scrutiny and gatekeeping functions of the media (Haase-Reed et al., 2007). Although closely related to organizational identity, the organizational image on the other hand, indicates how outsiders see and appraise an organization (Dhalla, 2007). According to Wan et al. (2015), the organizational image comes about through the process of self-(re)presentation whereby it emerges as the result of the communication process between the organization and outsiders, i.e. the media, the public or others. In doing so, the media and the audience are considered to be 'active' in the sense that the process of decoding for them occurs as a choice of three readings, i.e. hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional (Hall, 1980; Hall et al., 2013).

*... to Environmental Issues/ Sustainability*

Representation does not only relate to issues of (organizational) identity but also to issues such as ES, either as a separate entity or as a part of an organization's identity. Particularly the way in which discursive practices contribute to the construction and evolution of environmental meanings in the media are important both for public understanding and for political debates, judgements, and resolutions (Carvalho, 2005). Since the early 2000s, there has been a surge of academic interest in representations of the environment relating to sustainability, climate change and a range of other issues, in both the media and its subsequent discourses (Carvalho, 2005; Lester, 2010). Studies such as Boykoff and Mansfield (2008), Carvalho and Pereira (2008) and Smith and Joffe (2009) have looked at media representations of the environment in a variety of temporal and geographical contexts. In their study on social representations of climate change in British media from 1988, Jaspal and Nerlich's (2012, p. 135-6) analysis shows that the British broadsheet press encourages subsequent representation as 'a multi-faceted threat with various supporting peripheral elements' (see also Abric, 2001; Boykoff, 2008) which implicitly activate a collective action frame of mitigation (see also Olausson, 2009). The representations of environmental issues such as climate change as a threat (Abric, 2001) and ES as a solution (Cox, 2012) appear most often.

Despite a continued media attention over time, media coverage of environmental issues such as ES are rarely granted priority as a dominant topic due to an inherent limitation in terms of newsworthiness, i.e. its limited ability to attract readers (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012). Consequently, the frequent 'invisibility' of environmental issues and sustainability mean audiences are largely dependent on the media, which have been shown to be neither 'innocent' nor neutral in their representations, and their stories to 'hear' or 'read' about the climate and sustainability (Cox, 2012). The 'making visible' of this invisibility of environmental issues requires a great deal of communicative work as, inherently, environmental/ ES news 'is largely event focused and event driven' which impacts 'which environmental issues get coverage and which

don't' (Lester, 2010; Hansen 2010, p. 95-6) which, in turn, impacts how the environment and related issues such as ES are represented. Here, too, representation works as much through what is shown as through what is not shown (Messner, 2007; Hall et al., 2013).

Based on the above, this Ph.D. examines first in what way and to what extent an issue such as ES is represented as a part of a sporting organization's organizational identity. Second, it examines how and to what extent these media representations of ES impact the media representations of the sporting organization itself. In doing so, this Ph.D. hopes to uncover any subsequent hegemonic relations underlying such representations.

### ***Representation and The (Motor) Sports-Media Complex***

Through the emergence of the sporting press, sports pages, sports movies, television sport and sports on social media, both the media and subsequent media texts have been, and still are, instrumental in constantly reformulating and shaping our understanding of the meaning of sport (Horne, et al., 1999), and subsequently of motorsport, within cultural and societal contexts. This process is commonly referred to as the mediatization of sport and can be said to be largely shaped by processes such as globalization, individualization and commercialization (Livingstone, 2009; Hepp, 2011; Frandsen (2014)). According to Jarvie (2018), such a constant reformulation of our understanding of the meaning of sport is made possible through a flexibility, elasticity and interactivity of the sports-media texts which provide the sports-media space with a limitless capacity to exchange information, to integrate and to exclude as well as influence the boundaries of what constitutes sport and how sport and related issues are represented through the sports-media complex. Helland (2007, p. 105-6), too, suggests that the relationship between sport and the media has led to the development of the 'sports-media complex'. Jhally (1989) is the first to have referred to the notion of the sports-media complex as the result of the commercialization of both the sporting and media industries, not in the least television and social media, through new technologies and enhanced social developments. They have become entangled to the point that

they hardly can be separated from one another. This is largely due to the symbiotic nature of the relationship which Wenner (2002, p. 9) describes as a 'dance' between sporting organizations and media organizations, i.e. the owners of broadcast networks, satellite super channels (e.g. Sky), local radio and television stations and newspapers, magazines and other forms of printed press. A recent example is the recent buy-out of Formula One, which was previously owned by the Formula One Group led by Bernie Ecclestone, by the American mass media and Fortune 500 company Liberty Media Corporation. Yet, Frandsen (2014) points out that although individual case studies from the sports-media complex perspective illustrate both hegemonic (quantitative) and explicit (qualitative) aspects of media culture, they are often extrapolated as general social and cultural trends. She therefore suggests to not exclusively adhere to a media-centric perspective, but to make use of a more interdisciplinary approach, through for example the inclusion of historical perspectives, that could further our understanding of how the media affects and contributes to society and culture alike (Frandsen, 2014; Billings and Wenner, 2017).

Although Formula One, and early motorsport in general, was not the highly sponsored and media-rich business that it has been for some time now, it has always been commercialised (Nye, 1994; Grant-Braham, 1996). From its early beginnings, the connection between the sport and the automobile industry has been obvious: not only has there been a transfer from motorsport technology into road car manufacturing (for Formula One this is much less so now than what it used to be) but also to the marketing, i.e. advertising and promotion, of automotive manufacturers (Foxall & Johnston, 1991; Grant-Braham, 1996) based on the 'race on Sunday, sell on Monday' principle (Miller, 2018). More specifically, this sports-media symbiosis entails that media coverage of sporting events provides a vast amount of content for the media itself. Indeed, from a self-promotion point of view, the media can apply strategic measures to draw in audiences for their advertisers, something which has proven vital for (traditional) media as they have been repositioning their appeals in an attempt to attract new audiences in a time of increased online



media activity (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). This, in turn, helps to raise the sport's appeal and value through sponsorship and advertising (Helland 2007; Kidd, 2013). However, Helland (2007) also posits a paradox, namely that the media constitute great potential for exposure but are also weak at safeguarding journalistic ideals because of political (e.g. vertical integration) and economic (e.g. advertising and sponsorship) obligations. In Formula E's case, free access to its broadcasting rights will most likely (cf. Chauhan 2015) generate increased exposure, but considering broadcasters' predefined time and content restraints which limit the selection of relevant stories (Lewis & Weaver 2013), it remains to be seen if this will indeed positively impact exposure of Formula E's ES efforts.

### *Representations of Motorsport*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen an increase in attention to the area of motorsport in sociology, culture studies and beyond, resulting in a number of contributions that have studied representations of motorsport.

In a comparative study on the Formula One Monaco Grand Prix and the Indianapolis 500, Sturm (2017) found that both events make use of informative and entertaining production techniques that underlay the way they are represented in the media as spectacles of speed. These events validate their status by reinforcing unique traditions, prestige and histories which, in turn, are re-codified for audiences through mediated processes (Sturm, 2017). Lowes (2018, p. 215) looked at Formula One and local cosmopolitan discourse and concluded that Formula One motorsport and its role in urban place-marketing strategies is best understood as the result of a complex interplay of image, spectacle, sport, and capitalism which make the sporting event into an example of the complexities and paradoxes of the lived experience of local cosmopolitanism and whereby the landscape of the cosmopolitan world-class city constitutes a form of representation for Formula One.

### *Representing Environmental Sustainability in Motorsport*

A considerable amount of academic literature focuses on citizens' growing awareness of ES as a means to reduce harmful practices on society and its implementation in the world of sport (Sheth & Babiak 2010). In the case of motorsport, Lowes (2004) investigated the media representation of the impact of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix on the local environment, showing how media pay attention to motorsport as disruptive, paying attention to the Save the Albert Park protest Group opposition that emphasised the effects on the ecosystem, i.e. disruption to wild life and public life as well as detracting from public use of a green space (Sturm, 2018). Another study by Haase-Reed et al. (2007) found that, as a result of a socially responsible sport starting to acknowledge its own ecological footprint and developing appropriate policies, media increasingly focus on ES in sports despite it suffering from a limited newsworthiness, i.e. a limited ability to attract readers (Cox 2012). Still, a media focus on ES can pressure sporting businesses (e.g. Formula One, Formula E) and organizations (e.g. FIA) by monitoring and scrutinizing their (ES) efforts, or by means of positively communicating corporations' ES efforts along with commitments to stakeholders (Trendafilova et al. 2013). Hassan and O'Kane (2011) looked into (the media coverage of) the Dakar Rally and its impact on the development of environmental Corporate Social Responsibility within motorsports. They show that the organisers of the Dakar Rally implemented CSR by means of the 'Actions Dakar Project' which was scrutinised by the media and environmental organizations as a smokescreen to reduce criticism. As such, the question arises to what extent media representations in Formula E consider ES to be a smokescreen.

## Summarizing the Research Questions

Based on the literature set out in this chapter, we formulate a number of research questions. The Ph.D.'s main aim is to understand:

*how and to what extent do the media represent ES in Formula E?*

and

*how and to what extent do media representations of ES affect the overall representation of Formula E?*

These two main research questions are broad in scope and require a set of secondary, more specific research questions:

First, and with a view to the use of CSR and ES as a means for an organization such as Formula E to manage its own organizational identity and image,

*how does Formula E choose to represent itself in relation to ES?*

Second, and by means of media type comparison, this Ph.D. also aims to ascertain

*how and to what extent media representations of (ES in) Formula E differ depending on different media types?*

Third, based on the symbiotic interplay of integrating celebrity activists in corporate and organizational environments, we ask

*how and to what extent does the involvement of a major celebrity activist impact media representations of ES in Formula E?*

Fourth, and final, we aim to contextualize the previous research questions and their subsequent findings:

*How and to what extent is the current situation of media representations of (ES in) Formula E similar to earlier representations of motorsport?*

In the following chapter, these core and secondary research questions are operationalized on the basis of sampling and choice of methods.

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# CHAPTER 2

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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### **Methodological Setup**

#### ***A Mixture of Methods***

In this Ph.D., a combination of methods is adopted as a means to obtain a deeper understanding of how and to what extent ES in Formula E is represented in a range of media and, additionally, how Formula E is represented during the same process. As this Ph.D. is built around a number of case studies, each makes use of the most appropriate approach and research method in relation to the research question. This requires a number of clarifications. First, this Ph.D. crosses the boundaries of specific paradigms (e.g. cultural studies, social sciences and even humanities) and combines the best-suited methods for each research topic and question. Second, the research strategies adopted in this research are primarily inductive, i.e. starting from the data to develop conceptual insights, yet in some instances also deductive, i.e. testing theory-derived hypotheses by means of data (Bryman, 2012). Third, this Ph.D. makes use of an interplay between qualitative research (e.g. framing analysis and thematic analysis) and quantitative research (e.g. content analysis). As Bryman (2012) indicates, this not only allows for improved sampling and potential triangulation but also for more comprehensive research questions to be posited within one study, such as for example in chapter two where the research question is not only how ES is represented in newspaper coverage of the UK and Flanders, but also how much coverage of ES exists in these media. Indeed, the added value of the interplay between qualitative and quantitative methods is that it provides a more elaborate understanding of the research topic as it offers ‘different types of intelligence’ (Ritchie, 2003, p. 38).

This chapter sets out the different methods by means of their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, and how they are applied in this Ph.D.

### *Methodologies for the Study of Representation*

The study of (media) representation has various ways of approaching it. For example, considering the (omnidirectional) power-knowledge relations that permeate all levels of society and which are inherent to representation (Hall, 2013). Foucault (1977; 1980) suggests the route of looking at representation through the study of discourse. However, up to today, there is no agreement among cultural studies researchers what discourse truly means and, subsequently, how to analytically approach it (Bryman, 2012) to the extent that discourse analysis 'sometimes comes close to standing for everything, and thus nothing' (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000, p. 1128). Another and more suitable approach for the Ph.D.'s goals of textual analysis is that of framing analysis which takes into consideration not only the importance of language and themes but is also constituted through frames as powerful units of discourse (D'Angelo, 2002). More so, framing is near-inherent to society as public life is nearly impossible to conceive of without frames and framing practices (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005). Thus, adopting a framing approach, as this Ph.D. does, allows to understand how occurrences of a given narrative form, i.e. hard or soft stories that break or continue in various (media) formats, construct meanings of what appear to be isolated issues and events (D'Angelo, 2010).

### *From Theory to Practice: Framing Analysis*

Framing has become an increasingly popular approach for media communication research (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Although initially used predominantly for research in political communication (De Vreese, 2005), it has now established itself as a successful research method that is grounded in firm theoretical understandings and balanced trends of empirical findings (D'Angelo, 2010) for various domains, including those adhering to both ES and sports-media studies. To this extent, framing analysis by now enjoys a deep-rooted tradition in mediated sports research and has been used by many researchers analysing sports (media) companies on the basis of frames rendered (Turner, 2014). Interestingly, Van Gorp (2010) states that many

framing studies choose to adopt a deductive analysis approach over an inductive analysis approach. The former uses a predefined and limited set of frames and is combined with the empirical aim to decide to what extent these existing frames are applied in news, on websites, in TV series etc, yet do not provide answers to the origins of such frames or on what level and by which techniques they are to be observed (Van Gorp, 2010). An inductive analysis, although more complicated in its execution, is able to provide more 'rich' data to answer such questions compared to the more popular deductive analysis approach and, as such, provides the main motivation for its selection by this Ph.D.

Since its emergence as a widely applicable research method, framing has drawn in an array of scholars (see Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974; Iyengar, 1991; Benford & Snow, 2000; Scheufele, 2004; Van Gorp, 2010) that have focused on its theoretical characteristics and as such, slightly varying definitions of framing exist. However, Entman's (1993, p. 52) definition is widely considered among scholars to be the most accurate in depicting framing, namely as 'a process whereby a frame suggests which aspects of reality are selected, rejected, emphasised, or modified in the production of a media text and, at the same time, provides the audience with context and suggested meaning'. Subsequently, by selecting what to emphasise and what to exclude, the media effectively influences the messages the audience receives by providing them with a suggested meaning which is the consequence of the effect of power relations (Cheek 2004; Van Gorp 2004). Of course, the process of framing renders frames. These can be defined as 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual' (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Further, according to Entman (1993, p. 52), 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described'. The latter four elements make up the defining functions of frames and, as reasoning

devices, constitute the core logical flow that may come about when an issue is linked to a specific frame (Van Gorp, 2010) and act as the guiding principles in the framing analyses of this Ph.D. Reasoning devices are accompanied by framing devices or manifest elements within a text that function as indicators of a (re)constructed frame (Van Gorp, 2010). Such framing devices consist of lexicon/ word choice, metaphors, stereotypes, depictions and catchphrases and can also include visual imagery. Although other framing devices exist, these are most commonly referred to (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Importantly, word and image numbers, text layout, article on page placement and the editing of audiovisual production fall under the category of formatting devices, rather than under framing devices (Van Gorp, 2010). The most important difference between the two sorts of devices lies with the fact that reasoning devices can be implicit in a mediated message whereas framing devices cannot (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Together, reasoning and framing devices form the integrated structure that indicates how any given frame functions to represent a certain issue and that makes up the frame package (Van Gorp, 2010).

As with many methodological approaches, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with the adoption of a framing approach. A first advantage for the use of a framing analysis is that it allows for the analysis of both media and audience frames. As such, it deals with providing insight in both production and reception of frames that have come about through the process of encoding and decoding (Hall, 2013). A second advantage is that a qualitative framing approach tends to allow for a greater emphasis to both the political and cultural content of news frames as specific and explicit agents of ideological processes that are more general and encompass news themes, topics and issues (Reese, 2010). Considering then that framing connects media production and content and that frames are embedded in society, framing is also widely considered to provide insight in the underlying norms and values of a society (Van Gorp, 2007; Reese, 2008; Reese, 2010). Third, a framing analysis provides a productive approach for comparative and longitudinal research. In particular, it allows insight into how certain frames tend to (re)appear over time and from which media sources, e.g. news articles, broadcast commentary and online

news and gossip media. A fourth advantage is that a framing analysis allows for an immediate understanding of the essential elements of a given mediated message through the use of reasoning devices that are inherently linked to the four functions of framing (i.e. problem, cause, moral evaluation and treatment/solution recommendation) (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2010). Subsequently, this provides a holistic approach to both media and audience texts and more so than simply counting the number of times a word appears, it allows for an inductive research approach (i.e. reconstructing frames based on the sample data) especially in qualitative framing analyses (Claessens, 2013).

A first, main disadvantage of an inductive framing analysis is that it is less suitable for larger datasets. As a means to overcome this disadvantage, Van Gorp (2010) suggests the validity of inductively generated results can be increased significantly by applying a subsequent, deductive, analysis of the same sample (Van Gorp, 2010). A second disadvantage associated with a framing analysis more generally is that the quality of results is highly dependent on the quality of the selected data (Claessens, 2013). To overcome this issue, the sample data for the framing analyses in each of the Ph.D.'s case studies have been selected according to a set of stringent rules. For example, for the framing analysis of chapter three, the sample consisted of three television broadcasts of Formula E whereby each broadcast constituted the first race of Formula E's first, second and third seasons and which all could be broken into the macro-sections pre-race, race and post-race (Evans, 2013) (see below for a more detailed overview of the framing analyses in chapters two to four). Third, to some, framing oversimplifies media texts by assigning a single frame to a text when there may, in effect, be many different frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). This Ph.D. has solved this by not taking a full (text) article or broadcast as its unit of analysis. Rather it uses a set of sentences that created a meaningful segment. When visual material was analysed (as part of the case study in chapter one), the smallest unit of analysis was a single image. However, when a webpage consisted of a large compilation of image-only material such as, for example, webpages under the section 'gallery', images were analysed in groups. Fourth, (qualitative) framing analyses of media texts, of course, cannot

say anything about the reception of these frames, i.e. the decoding thereof (cf. Hall, 2013). To somewhat rectify this, the framing analysis in chapter three incorporates not just a sample of online media articles but also audience reactions to some of these articles. While the analysis of audience reactions only covers a limited group in society (Van Zoonen, 2007), and is therefore not representative of the wider population, I consider this as less of a problem considering this Ph.D.'s focus on the production side of media messages and the additional fact that generalization of results is not a primary objective.

For this Ph.D., a framing analysis is used in three chapters, namely chapters four, five and six. Chapter four looks at the representation of ES and Formula E in UK and Flemish newspaper coverage of Formula E and plays into the advantage of applying framing analysis for comparative and longitudinal research both within and between the UK and Flanders. For each country, the two bestselling quality and popular newspapers based on national circulation were chosen and accessed by means of online databases LexisNexis (UK) and GoPress Academic (Flanders). In the case of the United Kingdom, newspaper selection includes *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun*, and *The Daily Mail*. For Flanders, this includes coverage from *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, and *Het Nieuwsblad*. Further, articles were selected by means of a keyword search (search terms: 'Formula E' for UK coverage and 'Formula E' and 'Formule E' for Flemish coverage) and during the period 12 January 2012 – the date the first article on Formula E appeared in the corpus - to 11 November 2016, the first date of the corpus compilation. The qualitative analysis is also added to by means of quantitative results obtained through a content analysis. This study effectively combines quantitative and qualitative work, with an emphasis laying on the latter. The quantitative content analysis comprised of seven variables and their subcategories, found in the literature (Rowe, 2007; Tang, 2012; Gan et al., 2005; Horkey & Nieland, 2013). The subsequent categories include date of publication, dominant sport, article topics, article type, sources, article valence, and title valence. These categories were tested on a subsample of 60 of all 249 articles (24%) to evaluate not only the usefulness of selected, but also the need for additional, (sub) categories.

For the qualitative framing analysis, all articles that made explicit mention of ES are selected which renders a sample of 66 ES related articles (UK: 60 and Flanders: 6). Inductive analysis of the data in each article is based on the identification of framing devices (cf. Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) and reasoning devices (Entman, 1993) and entered into a framing matrix to reveal similarities and patterns so as to eventually provide an overview of the different frame packages and their subsequent frames.

Chapter five exclusively uses a qualitative and inductive framing analysis to gain further insight into the representation of ES by live television broadcasting of Formula E. Considering a framing analysis allows for comparative and longitudinal research to be conducted, three live-broadcasts of Formula E are selected. Further selection criteria that rendered these broadcasts for the sample are fourfold. First, broadcasts share a similarity in terms of format (i.e. season opening races) yet allow for a more specific longitudinal view than a random selection of races during the same period would provide. Second, the sample includes races exclusively held in South-East Asia (Beijing and Hong Kong) which still has the highest level of deaths due to air pollution on the planet (World Health Organization, 2018) and consequently might instigate ES commentary. Third, broadcasts are produced from a UK perspective, grounded in the country's world-leading motorsport industry (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skill Committee 2010). Lastly, and despite stringent sampling rules such as the ones used here, the sample still contains a level of pragmatism as other broadcasts not included in this sample might indeed yield deviating results which, subsequently, affects generalizability. With this in mind, a final sampling requirement was that only Formula E season opening race broadcasts, which are most likely to include new information regarding the racing series (i.e. technology, rules and regulations and thus, possibly, ES), were included. The final sample thus consists of the 2014 ITV4<sup>5</sup> Beijing Formula ePrix, the 2015 ITV4 Beijing Formula EPrix and the

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<sup>5</sup> ITV4 is part of the ITV broadcasting company which is the main free-to-air company in the UK.

2016 Channel 5<sup>6</sup> Hong Kong Formula EPrix. Primary data were sampled from both television and online platforms. In conformity with Gamson & Modigliani (1989), D'Angelo & Kuypers (2010) and Van Gorp (2010), the sample was coded inductively with the aim of extracting the reasoning and framing devices and positioning them in a frame matrix with the aim of unearthing similarities and patterns and rendering the frames themselves.

Chapter six provides insights into the (mutual) impact of Leonardo DiCaprio association with Formula E through ES advocacy on online media sources and subsequent audience comment sections. Much in the same way as the previous chapter, this chapter is exclusively qualitative in character and looks at both the media production of messages (encoding) and reception/production of these messages by audiences (decoding) (Hall, 2013). The sample of the fourth framing analysis was selected on the basis of three main occurrences relating to Leonardo DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E for which each occurrence functioned as the initiator of a two-month sample window, (09/12/2013 - 09/02/2014; 22/10/2015 - 22/01/2016; 14/07/2017 - 14/09/2017). In addition to these parameters, a subsequent Internet search (using the search engine Google) also included the keywords 'Leonardo DiCaprio' and 'Formula E' with the aim of generating results from as wide a range of online media as possible (e.g. ranging from online news media and gossip media to environmental media and automotive media). This results in an preliminary total of 186 articles which is further reduced to 118 articles because articles with a mere mention of DiCaprio's name are removed. For the remaining 118 articles, all accompanying comments, 632 in total, are retrieved. Articles and reactions are then coded for type of source (celebrity gossip, automotive, general news) and news event after which an inductive framing analysis (Van Gorp, 2010) is then applied, first to all media articles, and afterwards to all audience comments. The inductively reconstructed frames not

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<sup>6</sup> Channel 5 is a British commercial broadcaster which took over from ITV4 after it dropped broadcasting Formula E for the third Formula E season (2016-2017).



only provide valuable insights in the representation of Leonardo DiCaprio, but also in terms of the representations of both ES and Formula E.

#### *Complementary Approaches: From A Political Economy to an Archival Approach*

Where chapters four, five and six adopt a qualitative framing analysis, chapters three and seven do not. Still adhering to the realm of qualitative research traditions, the relevance of both chapters lies in providing further contextualization of the varying framing analysis results from on the one hand a socio-economic and political perspective and on the other hand from a historical perspective. More importantly, both approaches are directly relevant for the analysis of media representations.

Bearing in mind Boyle and Haynes's (2009, p. 13) argument that any attempt to understand fully the relationship between mediated sport and forms of representations inherently requires insight into underlying economic and political structures of a sporting organization, chapter one aims to provide some preliminary results to benefit, i.e. contextualise, the initial starting position of the framing analyses. While ES and CSR are in marketing terms considered as potentially contributing positively to a company's or organization's image (Dingle, 2009; Fairley et al., 2009) such as, in this case Formula E, it is important to understand how these marketing strategies relating to motorsport are positioned within a wider political economy of communication, i.e. 'the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources, including communication resources' (Mosco, 2009, p. 2, 24). Mosco (2009) states that since the 1940s, a political economy approach has grown into a major and globally adopted perspective in communication research and has by now successfully transitioned from a focus on older, traditional media to new (online) media, and most specifically the internet. He goes on that an inherent characteristic of this approach is that communication practices and technologies, not least new media, both contribute to the commodification process by which goods and services with a high use value are transformed into marketable products as commodities

(Mosco, 2009). Logically speaking then, a political economy of communication approach can play an important part in the quest for online (self-)representations of an organization's image.

This is especially the case considering that commodification extends to professional sport, i.e. the socio-economic process of transforming a sport into a business (Sturm, 2011), and ES (Dorsey et al., 2004) whereby the promotion of commodity consumption through factors of commodification (glamour, celebrity aspect, advertising and gamification) as environmentally sustainable is also commonly associated with the practice of greenwashing (Cox & Pezzullo, 2015). As a means of operationalization, chapter three uses a quantitative content analysis to analyse Formula E's website as means for self-representational control. As such, and after a scraping of the website by means of FireShot software which revealed a total of 201 webpages, the eventual codebook is based on both relevant literature and a preliminary pass of a sample of Formula E's webpages and comprised of webpage identification information, general information and factors of commodification (see codebook for more details) and was applied to each webpage. In addition, and considering this Ph.D.'s emphasis on qualitative research, this quantitative content analysis was followed by a secondary qualitative thematic analysis. The reasoning behind adopting this qualitative method is twofold. First, a thematic analysis is considered to be one of the most common of qualitative approaches and as such works well as an initial and exploratory method (Bryman, 2012). Second, the identification of themes forms an important component to the process of framing, i.e. frames encompass themes, alongside topics and issues (cf. Reese, 2010). Drawing from Ryan and Bernard (2003) and Bryman (2012), the practical operationalization of the thematic analysis involved analyzing each webpage on the basis of theory-related material, metaphors and analogies, transitions of topics, missing data and, most importantly, repetitions. The inclusion of all of these criteria warrants a higher validity of the results as repetitions in themselves are insufficient to warrant being labelled a theme (Bryman, 2012). Indeed, the identification of themes on Formula E's website requires taking into consideration the continuities and linkages between all of

the initial codes assigned on the basis of the abovementioned criteria (Bryman, 2012). Subsequently, by providing both quantitative and qualitative results, chapter three is able to, first, expose important socio-economic and political links and foundations that underly the self-presentation of Formula E and ES in Formula E and, second, provide a valuable starting ground for the media framing analyses as well as for drawing following comparisons.

Where chapter three provides insights into the political economy of Formula E, chapter seven examines the origins of early representations of televised motorsport in the UK. In doing so, it answers Boyle and Haynes's (2009) claim that contemporary research into media-sport recognises the importance and added value of a historical perspective as 'it can offer a sense of long- and short-term trends that are not always visible to present centered disciplinary approaches (Polley, 1998 in Boyle & Haynes, 2009). As a means of operationalization, chapter seven adopts an archival approach to achieve his. Heng et al. (2018) provide four arguments for adopting such an approach. First, archival studies allow for a diachronic examination of phenomena within (mediated) society. Second, such an approach allows for the notion of 'realism which increases external validity by ensuring that predicated relationships hold true in real-life circumstances' (Heng et al., 2018, p. 18). Third, it tends to analyse sample data that were stored for reasons other than purely academic. Fourth, an archival analysis encourages the use of a variety of archival data sources, for example data from professionals, books, television archives etc., and subsequent datasets constituting one larger sample which 'increases confidence in the generalizability of the research findings to the larger population' (Heng et al., 2018, p. 17). Therefore, this study opts to combine a more general archival analysis with a more specific biographical analysis. Although also a form of archival analysis, such a biographical, i.e. qualitative, analysis's emphasis lies specifically with the construction of stories describing a human's perceived social reality alongside historical and culturally grounded components in social and other contexts (Fillis, 2015; Downing, 2005; Fisher, 1987). Such a biographical analysis thus often provides valuable insights in terms of individual or organizational behaviour, motives, identity and

conditions (Jones, 1998). Further, it assists in interpreting data, both longitudinal and historic in character, that is contextualised by literature (theory) (Fillis, 2015). Based on these, this study makes use of two datasets, i.e. one based on the BBC Genome – Radio Times online archive is selected (BBC Genome, 2018) where six keywords derived from literature review (scrambling, rallycross, hill climb, Formula One, grand prix and motor racing) and five five-year time periods (1946-1950; 1951-1955; 1956-1960; 1961-1965; 1966-1970) generate 632 results. For the second dataset, both primary and secondary data is used to help reduce the risk of hagiography associated with just one dataset, i.e. the possible introduction of bias by an interviewee or author presenting an idealised version of the truth (Fillis, 2015). One comprises of a semi-structured interview with retired BBC motorsport commentator Murray Walker and the second comprises of both additional material to the semi-structured interview such as relevant published autobiographies, newspaper articles and a collection of opinion pieces by industry professionals.

In a first stage of coding, irrelevant material and sections are filtered out (Boyatzis 1998). Then, the remaining material is coded deductively and thematically (Bryman, 2012). Finally, findings are contextualised with relevant theoretical constructs (Heng et al., 2018). Although the sheer size and diversity of archival studies benefits generalizability of results (Heng et al., 2018), the public accessibility of records (the BBC Genome – Radio Times dataset and the books are readily available and a transcript of the semi-structured interview can be obtained from the author on request) generates a high level of data transparency and enhances validity of findings.

### **Contribution of The Ph.D.**

In conclusion, I want to point out a number of gaps in existing knowledge regarding (motor)sports media and ES studies that are addressed in this Ph.D.

First, considering the severity and frequency with which criticisms of sustainability have been uttered in relation to motorsport (Hickson, 2014), it is surprising how few studies have looked at ES in motorsport (e.g. Dingle, 2009).

With regards to motorsport, in her media analysis of Formula One as a live spectacle, Evans (2013) limited her focus to the ITV television broadcasts. Although such an approach allows for a profound understanding of the concept from this media source, it does not provide insight in a wide range of media sources. Considering the increasing importance of examining mediated representations not only of the media-sport relationship (Boyle & Haynes, 2009) but also in relation to ES, this Ph.D. constructs a multi-media analysis to ascertain which representations of ES in Formula E exist but also how Formula E is represented in the process: one case study analyses newspaper coverage, a further case study analyses sports television broadcasting and another case study analyses a combination of online media sources including, for example, news media, gossip media, automotive media, environmental media etc.

Second, and by conducting a media analysis, this Ph.D. contributes to a growing body of social sciences literature on motorsport studies (e.g. Evans, 2013; Evans, 2014; Naess, 2014; Sturm, 2011; Sturm, 2014; Sturm, 2017; Howard & Miller, 2014). The reason that this subfield is still in its infancy is the fact that sport was long seen as 'unworthy of serious or sustained investigation' and, as such, was one of the last significant areas of human activity to be subjected to academic examination by scholars of social sciences (Boyle & Haynes, 2009, p. 3). Indeed, academic interest started from the 1980s onwards yet only garnered a systematic approach during the 1990s (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). As such, studies of sport and the media are still relatively 'new'. On top of this, more traditional popular ball and track and field sports have since received initial and sustained academic interest (Horky & Nieland, 2013). Motorsport, on the other hand, has long been reduced to the sideline despite its considerable global and societal popularity as well as economic successes (Hassan, 2011).

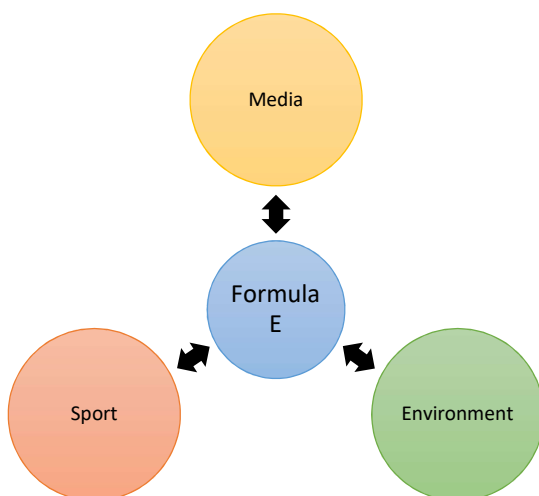
Third, and continuing on from Boyle and Haynes (2009), too often studies neglect to include an analysis of underlying economic and political structures that have intertwined environmental, sporting and media forms to understand the relationship between sport (and ES) and subsequent media representations thereof. As such, a further case study adopts a political economy approach to

gain a deeper understanding of the workings of Formula E through their website.

Fourth, a popular trend of the last decade has been to acknowledge and complement sports-media analyses with a historical perspective to add further depth to results (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). For example, Helland (2007) adds a historical backdrop to the study of the commercialization of modern media sport which helped contextualise the study's findings. Staying true to this trend, this Ph.D. incorporates a case study which investigates the historical development of the broadcasting of motorsport during the post-war years, a time in which ES was not considered a relevant narrative, in what is still considered the world's leading motorsport country, namely Great Britain. In doing so, this Ph.D. not only addresses an existing gap in sports media history, this also provides added contextualization for this Ph.D.'s findings.

Finally, and in doing so, this Ph.D. aims to contribute to, as well as strengthen, the multidisciplinary character of both media and (motor) sport studies by combining principles and concepts from cultural studies, communication studies and marketing studies with methods and concepts from framing research first and foremost, and additionally from political economy and archival research.

In all, this Ph.D. addresses three areas of study:



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# CHAPTER 3

## THE WEBSITE AS A DIGITAL STOREFRONT: AN ANALYSIS OF (COMMODIFICATION IN) FORMULA E'S SELF-ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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### **Preface**

Discussing the first of four empirical case studies in this Ph.D., this chapter provides a systematic insight in Formula E's organizational self-representation in general and, more specifically, in relation to ES. It provides a starting position and a base of reference and comparison for subsequent empirical media analyses (in particular the case studies in chapters four, five and six) as it illustrates how Formula E presents itself to the world in relationship to ES (as compared to how the media frame this, the topic of subsequent chapters). It achieves this mainly by adopting a political economy approach. This approach is rooted in (political) communication (Mosco, 2009) and is considered invaluable to any in-depth sports-media analysis (Boyle & Haynes, 2009) as it reveals stakeholder information and factors of commodification (Mosco, 2009; Cox, 2012). As such, this study focusses exclusively on the production of text by Formula E on its 2015 website, applying a systematic, i.e. mixed method, analysis. It applies a quantitative content analysis followed by a more qualitative thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012). Important concepts for this study are primarily ES, (factors of) commodification and representations as well as, to a lesser extent, celebrity and gamification.

## **Abstract**

The electric racing series of Formula E is the motorsport's governing body's latest initiative to promote and generate more sustainable transport. The question remains however if its attempt to go 'green' is simply a smokescreen for yet another commodity spectacle. By means of a mixed method approach, this study investigates the self-representation of Formula E in relation to environmental sustainability and factors of commodification. Results suggest that Formula E makes use of marketing and educational advantages that come with adopting an environmentally sustainable approach to motorsport. Although this means Formula E does not escape the grasp of commodification, much like Formula One, it also implies that, probably for the first time ever, motorsport has taken a significant initiative to become more environmentally and socially sustainable.

## **Keywords**

Formula E, Environmental Sustainability, Political Economy, Representation, Commodification, Mixed Method Analysis

## **Formula E: Motorsport Meets Environmental Sustainability**

Environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES), described in the United Nations' (1988) Brundtland report as developments that meet the needs of the present whilst ensuring future generations meet theirs (United Nations, 1988), for several decades has been high on the agenda of governments, international and social-profit organizations and industries alike, including those related to the motoring industry. As such, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), which functions as motorsport's governing body, puts great emphasis on its efforts to monitor and improve the environmental, socio-economic and safety aspects of motorsport and motoring in general (Dingle, 2009). Besides actively participating in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda and in the ongoing global debate on climate change, where it cooperates with the Global Fuel Economy Initiative, the FIA makes use of its connections with

motorsport to help promote its environmental campaigns. Examples include the 'FIA Action for Environment' and the 'Make Cars Green Campaign' whereby Formula One drivers endorsed the latter campaign generating worldwide exposure (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, 2016). This can be considered a significant development in the attitude of motorsport regarding its relationship with the natural environment. It acknowledges motorsport's need to manage and market itself as sustainable, in line with the wider acceptance of changed environmental circumstances globally (Dingle, 2009).

A key step in this regard is the FIA's part in developing Formula E, a fully electric racing series which is meant to serve as a platform for research and development, education and promotion of more environmentally and socially sustainable modes of transport (Formula E, 2015). Formula E is an annual, single seater racing series taking place in various cities around the world, involving big name drivers and teams. The electric nature of the cars means lower noise levels and carbon dioxide emissions, allowing races to take place on temporary city centre circuits and audiences of all ages to attend races and (potentially) learn about the future and benefits of electric cars. However, as a new concept, what Formula E brings in innovation, it also brings in uncertainty. Indeed, ES has not been part of fan values traditionally associated with motor racing (Roy et al., 2010). This creates considerable challenges for Formula E to establish itself both as a relevant and (commercially and otherwise) successful motorsport series and as an example of ES in motorsport. This paper aims to understand how the organization of Formula E has chosen to represent itself in relation to ES by means of an analysis of its self-representation on its official website. To this end, it first establishes a theoretical framework, combining insights from both a marketing and a political economy approach to corporate social responsibility (hereafter: CSR) and ES in general and in motorsport in particular. It further develops a framework to understand self-representation. Next, it operationalises the main and sub-research questions by determining the sample for which a mixed method approach is designed, after which the findings are presented and discussed.

## **Environmental Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Environmental sustainability (ES) has become an integral part of corporate social responsibility (hereafter: CSR), yet due to the significant academic interest and the variety of theories, for example the triple bottom line approach and stakeholder theory, on the topic, no exclusive definition exists. The European Commission (2011) defines it as:

‘the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society [...] enterprises should [...] have a process in place to integrate social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close cooperation with their stakeholders’.

Another definition by Mohr et al. (2001) considers ES to be the initiative to minimise or eliminate harmful effects on society with the aim to create long term sustainability in businesses and communities (Mohr et al., 2001). In a study on CSR practices by multinational corporations, research has revealed that almost all companies provide an environmental policy and around 80% provides environmental reporting (Karlsen, 2011). Particularly the latter entails a relatively easily exercise and allows corporations to enhance their image (Karlsen, 2011).

This growing emphasis on ES is driven both by the possibility of creating new markets through ES and, institutionally, by government policies and regulation (Trendafilova et al., 2013). The growing relevance of ES extends to sport that, according to Smith and Westerbeek (2004), is becoming increasingly ‘green’ by adopting ES in CSR strategies. They identify two main reasons: first, motor- and other types of sport are responsible for environmental damage and are therefore unavoidably ‘being called to ransom by the community at large’ (Smith & Westerbeek, 2004, p. 138). Second, it is clear that ‘industries and governments have come to understand the marketing and education potential of green sport’ (Smith & Westerbeek, 2004, p. 138). Adopting ES in CSR provides sport with certain advantages. Not only does it satisfy stakeholders, it can generate brand and image enhancement, and (thus) bring in new fans. More

so, it reduces the carbon footprint of the sport and its associated activities, and helps raise environmental awareness with a broad audience. Such associations that accompany the adoption of ES in CSR are representative of what is known as 'green marketing' (Cox, 2012, p. 286).

Today, marketing motorsport involves considering how to make the sport genuinely sustainable in terms of the environment and, in some cases, to make ES the core ethos (Dingle, 2009). As such, ways in which motorsport organizations embrace and enact environmental CSR range from rather limited activities such as planting trees or encouraging public transportation to more substantial initiatives such as engaging in long term partnerships with environmentally minded businesses or opting for solar and/or wind power (Trendafilova et al., 2013, p. 299). Yet, in the case of Formula One, research (Karlsen, 2011) has shown that the brand has become so popular and well established that it has no need to take CSR and ES very seriously. Another study by Fairley et al. (2009) looked into ES as part of the 2008 Australian Formula One Grand Prix's triple bottom line, the latter referring to organizations and their need to consider socio-economic and environmental impact of their business practices. Yet, the study did not include to what extent the organization of Formula One undertook (marketing) measures to improve sustainability and enhance its image. Such a lack of academic focus on ES within the sport as a whole exists, at least in part, because efforts to improve sustainability in motorsport are rare. Yet, one other example of a motorsport series worth mentioning is the WEC (World Endurance Championship) which includes the 24 hours of Le Mans race and encourages the development and use of hybrid technology for endurance racing. Regarding Formula E, however, the relationship to ES in CSR seems more self-evident, given that it is presented as a platform for understanding and promotion of electric motoring as a more environmentally and socially sustainable mode of transport (cf. supra). Consequently, this paper aims to provide an answer to the question *how and to what extent Formula E presents itself first and foremost as an example of ES in motorsport.*



## **A More Critical View on Environmental Sustainability Marketing Strategies**

ES and wider CSR are part of the marketing of motorsport, yet it has also attracted interest from a political economy perspective that positions these strategies and their relationship to motorsport within 'power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources' (Mosco, 2009, p. 25). An earlier study into motorsport and ES is Hassan and O'Kane's (2011) analysis of the Paris to Dakar Rally and its impact on the development of ES as part of CSR within auto sport. They found that the Rally's environmental CSR project, aimed at supporting local African communities in the countries the rally visited was depicted by some as a smokescreen and meant to divert criticism of possible dangers or lack of ES away from the Rally. This more critical approach suggests a certain practice of 'greenwashing', a form of misleading information released by an organization with the aim of presenting itself as having an environmentally sustainable public image (Cox, 2012, p. 286). Like the Paris Dakar Rally and Formula One, corporations invoke ideals to describe themselves as morally legitimate, when mainly pursuing economic self-interest. As such, greenwashing is not just a form of misleading information released by an organization with the aim of presenting itself as having an environmentally sustainable public image (Cox, 2012, p. 286). As Miller (2016) reveals in his study on greenwashing practices in Formula One and FIFA, greenwashing can be a sporting organization's way of combining a set of goals, namely a quest for profit unhampered by regulation, the aim to be morally legitimate and an urge to meddle in everyday life. Based on this, this paper aims to provide an answer to the question *if and to what extent ES as part of CSR of Formula E can be considered a form of greenwashing.*

Such greenwashing has been shown in wider contexts to be related to commercialization or the socio-economic process of transforming a sport into a business (Sturm, 2011) as well as commodification or process by which goods and services with high use value are transformed into marketable products as commodities (Mosco, 2009). With respect to the latter, in motorsport this ranges from clothes ware to larger paraphernalia and even drivers as consumer

objects (Sturm, 2011). Indeed, commodification is also known to extend to the environment, to environmental sustainability and derivatives such as ecotourism and, indeed, professional sport (Dorsey et al., 2004). Furthermore, the promotion of commodity consumption as environmentally sustainable is known to be associated with greenwashing (Cox & Pezzullo, 2015). Another question this paper aims to provide an answer to is *how and to what extent Formula E contributes to the commodification of ES*.

### **Factors of Commodification in Motorsport**

Professional sport has a long history of producing commodities such as live events in order to generate revenue (Dart, 2014). As such, Formula One - as the pinnacle of motor racing – has been shown to function as a well-oiled homogenous global commodity spectacle (see e.g. Sturm, 2014). It does so, according to Sturm (2014) by using commodified objects or factors such as celebrities and glamorous lifestyles that are aimed specifically at mass consumption and that can be easily reproduced. Cox (2012) suggests two more factors of commodification, i.e. games and advertisements.

The newly established Formula E and its relationship to ES becomes of particular interest as it begs the next question this paper will aim to answer, namely *how the commodified factors often associated with motorsport in general relate to (i.e. shape and affect and/or are affected and shaped by) ES in Formula E*. We therefore address each of the factors, namely glamour, celebrities, gamification and advertisements and their relation to ES in motorsport.

#### *Glamour*

This commodified factor in motorsport has been traced back to key components such as ‘fast cars, expensive kit, global jet-setting and beautiful women with spray-on smiles’ that function as trophies and adornments (Turner, 2004, p. 205; Sturm, 2014). Despite being firmly rooted in top end motorsport series such as Formula One, commodification through glamour and

its subsequent components is not in itself associated with an ES approach, as the latter has long been seen to restrict motorsport values such as speed of racing and the reputation of the series (Roy et al., 2010). This begs the following question this paper aims to provide an answer to which is *if and how Formula E bridges the seemingly opposing values of glamour in motorsport with those of ES, and whether it thus contributes to the commodification of ES.*

### *Celebrities*

Celebrities are considered as hyper-commodities: at the same time vehicles for the presentation of commodities and a tradable commodity themselves (Rojek, 2006). Yet, since the turn of the century, they increasingly perform functions as endorsers of social and environmental causes, so much so that it has now become part of a celebrity's job description (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012; Panis & Van den Bulck, 2014). This celebrity engagement extends to issues regarding the environment, from celebrities such as Keira Knightley driving ES cars to celebrity activists such as Leonardo DiCaprio addressing politicians at environmental world summits. Consequently companies have integrated celebrities in their media strategy for the implementation of environmental CSR as a means to strengthen and mobilise support (Lester, 2010). Consequently, this paper aims to provide an answer to the question *how and to what extent Formula E employs celebrities in the promotion of its ES project.*

### *Gamification*

Gamification uses existing elements such as a website or other non-game context, and introduces game design elements with an aim to motivate participation and engagement, thus adding value to an organization (Deterding et al., 2011). Robert Cox (2012) reveals that, although the technique was initially used exclusively for commercial marketing purposes, gamification is increasingly used in environmental interests with the concept being ideally suited for people to join in environmental actions to the extent that it now even carries value as a commodity. He further says that the internet and social media

are the tools used most often in environmental gamifying, such as for example Carbonrally.com, a challenge where users team up, compete and interact via twitter to save the most energy and reduce the impact of climate change (Cox, 2012). In the case of Carbonrally.com, the commodification of ES consequently brings with it an educational effect on users. This raises another question this paper will aim to answer, namely *if the gamification of ES in Formula E leads to the commodification of ES or whether it also serves an educational purpose.*

### *Advertising*

A final factor often associated with the commodification of ES is advertising (Van Couvering, 2004). Particularly advertisements featuring ES elements, known as 'green advertising', have become part and parcel of the communication strategy related to CSR and can be seen in advertising for a wide range of consumer goods and services. Car manufacturer GM, for example, advertised a new truck set against a forest with sunlight gleaming through accompanied by the caption 'our respect for nature goes beyond just giving you an excellent view of it' and mentioned that it had made a 'sizeable contribution to The Nature Conservancy' (Switzer, 1997, p. 130; Cox, 2012, p. 287). Such green advertising has also permeated the world of sports, including motorsport, and is often accompanied by so-called 'eco' or 'green' labels, display advertisements, listings, corporate logos and partner/sponsorship information denoting the ES characteristics, thus revealing the process of commodification (Corbett, 2006; Cox, 2012, p. 287). As a result, this paper aims to provide an answer to the *question if and to what extent advertisements, corporate logos, and sponsorship contribute to the commodification of ES in Formula E.*

### **(Self-)Representation**

Mass media and new media play an important role in the process of commodification throughout the economy because they represent ideal sites of commodity production (Mosco, 2009). The Internet, in particular, as a

channel for communication is a primary source of credible information on sustainability in general (Russo et al., 2012). In relation to (self-) representation and sporting organizations, Haase-Reed, et al. (2007) state that control over the former by the latter occurs most often by means of a website as this presents one of the easiest tools for an organization to choose its own organizational identity and to market itself. Such a digital storefront further helps to circumvent potential gatekeeping functions of the media (Haase-Reed et al., 2007). What is more, websites contain both textual and visual information, including advertisements, logos and labels, and this information is crucial to understand the daily workings of an organization (Jakubowska, 2011). This is of particular importance considering that representation, as a key component of the process through which meaning is created, involves 'the use of language, of signs and images' (Hall et al., 2013, p. 1). As such, websites provide an excellent basis to study the self-representation of an organization and the role of certain key factors such as ES in this self-representation. As such, this paper aims to *understand the self-representation of Formula E, the position of ES in this and the potential commodification of ES as a result hereof, by means of a (self-) representational analysis of the official website of Formula E.*

### **Research Set-Up**

To answer these research questions, we analysed the website of Formula E (Formula E, 2015) during its inaugural season of 2014-15, in particular as it appeared online on 10 May 2015, the day after the Monaco Erix. This particular moment was chosen because it is the only Formula E race that takes place on a track also used by Formula One, increasing potential influences from Formula One. It was assumed that in the inaugural season, the self-representation by Formula E on its website would have been carefully considered and implemented, while the inclusion of race results allowed for an insight into the nature of 'regular' updates. We used NCapture to scrape all pages of the website, which also allows for text to be accessible to perform keyword searches. This sampling method resulted in a total of 201 webpages and documents.

## ***Quantitative Content Analysis***

To obtain a broad but systematic insight into the various aspects of the self-representation and representation of ES offered through the website, the first step of the empirical study involved a quantitative analysis. To this end, we developed a set of categories and subcategories. Inspired by ethnographic-like approaches (Gläser & Laudel, 2013; see also Altheide, 1996), we combined the original development of categories based on insights from the literature with an adjustment and elaboration of the instrument based on insights gained during coding of a first set of research materials. As a result, we aimed for a more systematic and analytic quantitative approach while avoiding the rigidity of a codebook developed solely on categories derived from literature (Bryman, 2012). Table 1 provides an overview of the main categories and subcategories as used for the process of coding and indicates whether a (sub-) category was based on literature theory or data.

The smallest unit of analysis for text was a set of sentences that created a meaningful segment, which usually included a number of sentences but in some instances just one or two. For visual material, the smallest unit of analysis was a single image. However, when a webpage consisted of a large compilation of image-only material such as the webpages under the section 'gallery', images were analysed in group. Advertisements were analysed both for textual- and visual elements.

After all webpages were coded, the data were entered in a matrix database to look for emerging patterns (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). To ensure the validity of the coding results, 5% of the data were coded by a second coder, a random Ph.D. student unprejudiced because unfamiliar with the research questions but briefed about and familiarised with the coding instructions and schedule. Krippendorff's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) came down to 0,811 suggesting good intercoder reliability (Krippendorff, 2004).

Table 1: Categories and subcategories

CATEGORIES FOR ANALYSIS	SUBCATEGORIES FOR ANALYSIS		
		THEORY BASED	DATA BASED
Document ID	Number Title Location on site Type (e.g. editorial)	X X X X	
Banners	Top (website navigation: home, news, etc) Middle -Vertical (FE partnerships) Bottom – Horizontal (race teams)	X	X X
Advertisements	Name/ description Obvious link with Formula E Notion of ES presence Audience engagement	X X	X X
Celebrities	Presence Identification Name Gender Nationality Industry Celebrity talk	X X X X X X X	
Gam(e)ification	Name of game Intended audience Competitive character of game Medium used Sort of game Game Goals Game Feedback Corporate backing Formula E link ES link	X X X X X X X	X X X
Goals and objectives	ES goals Non-ES goals Specific Environmental concerns Specific Environmental objectives	X X X	X
Images and body of text	Presence of Video graphic images Presence of Editorial image as advert Main image theme Text main theme Similarity main image theme - text main theme Similarity main image theme -webpage title	X	X X X X X
Other remarks	/		

### ***The Qualitative Connection: Thematic Analysis***

To complement the quantitative content analysis, we applied a more qualitative, critical thematic analysis of the data, following the idea of Hall et al. (2013, p. 158) that groups of statements are combined to create a useable language to talk about things. This allowed for a more in-depth analysis of representations, thus contributing to a better understanding of power relations (Hall et al., 2013). To this end, we returned to the primary material, i.e. the webpages, noting themes as they emerged. We identified up to three main themes for each webpage. Based on this detailed analysis, we were able to combine themes 'into wider thematic categories that would represent overall segments' on the website as well as make out inter-theme relations (Bryman, 2012, p. 581). After completing each of the two research steps, the results were compared and contrasted to create a deeper understanding of the representation of ES and the wider self-representation of Formula E on its website.

### **Findings**

In what follows, we first describe the general layout of the webpages on the Formula E website, after which we address the result of the textual analysis and its implications, followed by a more in-depth qualitative and thematic analysis.

### ***Webpage Layout***

Figure 2 provides a generic example of a webpage on the Formula E website. The top of the webpage features a navigational banner (a) with buttons for access to the different website sections (e.g. news, results, sustainability) with the main webpage image (b) just below. Below the main image we find a text box (c) which contains the main textual content on the webpage. In addition, the section designated for textual content can also contain images and varies between webpages. On the right side of this is a section for advertisements (d) which are vertically positioned and function as links to the associated companies. These precede another vertical listing of Formula E partnered



companies, (e) followed by a final, horizontal banner containing all Formula E teams (f).

Figure 1: Formula E webpage example



Source: Formula E website, May 2015

**Environmental Sustainability: Goals, Concerns and Objectives**

We first looked at three elements that are often associated with environmental advocacy, namely goals, objectives and concerns. Robert Cox (2012, p. 217) describes goals as ‘long term visions or values’ and distinguishes them from objectives which are more detailed, immediate actions. The relevance of concerns then lies with the fact that private and individual concerns are usually translated into more public matters on a wide range of forums and, as such, are key in shaping the environmental public sphere (Cox, 2012).

As table 2 shows, 45 out of the 201 webpages contained a total of 90 hits, covering 20 different environmental goals. The top three hereof consisted of ‘promoting clean energy and sustainability’ (14), ‘education into feasibility of electric mobility’ (10), and ‘increase the use of sustainable mobility’ (9), with fourth position being shared by three more goals, namely ‘initiate changing the

existing image of motorsport as a polluting sport' (7), 'improve image of electric vehicles' (7) and 'reduce carbon footprint' (7).

Table 2: (Non-) Environmental Goals, Concerns and Objectives

ES Goals	Website hits	ES Concerns	Website hits
Promoting clean energy and sustainability	14	Carbon footprint	9
Education into feasibility of electric mobility	10	Energy conservation	7
Increase the use of sustainable mobility	9	Sustainable communities	4
Initiate changing the existing image of motorsport as a polluting sport	7	ES Objectives	
Improve image of electric vehicles	7	Electric propulsion	8
Reduce carbon footprint	7	Battery improvements	7
		Awareness campaigns	4
Non-ES Goals		Non-ES Subcategories	
Maintaining traditional motorsport values	171	Skilled drivers	44
		Motorsport heritage	38
Continuation of the Formula One jet-set lifestyle	99	Exotic and global locations	40
		VIP guests	19
Provide information on the proceedings of the sport	93	/	/
Promote affiliated companies	50	Tire manufacturers	13
		Car manufacturers	10

To fully grasp the scope to which ES is presented on the website, we also looked at references of environmental concerns (35 hits) and suggested solutions or objectives (35 hits). The major concerns were 'carbon footprint' (9), 'energy conservation' (7) and 'sustainable communities' (4), while the main suggested solutions included 'electric propulsion' (8), 'battery improvements' (7) and 'awareness campaigns' (4).

In line with environmental reporting as part of CSR by multinationals (Karlsen, 2011), these data thus suggest a fairly elaborate spread of these environmental parameters across the website. On the one hand, this could indicate a more genuine and profound environmental and social concern on behalf of the organization and the FIA than what has been the case in motorsport up until now. Indeed, many of the items raised are very much in

line with larger contemporary efforts in sustainable development by multinationals (UNCTAD, 2010) and assists in limiting criticisms of greenwashing (Simon, 1995). Of course, a more critical interpretation of these data could read such practices of significantly applying these parameters as a means for image enhancement. Karlsen's (2011) claim that the use of environmental CSR by corporations is meant to be a win-win for business and society but is mostly still profit driven applies here to a certain extent as well. Indeed, as Formula E's CEO revealed:

'[...] it makes sense for everybody in their own space to do something related to sustainability and to the environment. My space is motor-racing, so that comes first and, as a consequence, I want to do motor-racing in a cleaner way' (Swithinbank, 2014).

Karlsen's (2011) claim is given further credit by means of the two most common non-ES goals, namely maintaining traditional motorsport values and continuation of the Formula One jet set lifestyle.

### ***From ES, Other Initiatives, the Future and Technical Developments to Gamification***

As part of Formula E's sustainability effort, we found initiatives such as Solar IMPULSE (flying a solar powered plane around the world to promote clean technologies), Earth Day (an annual, global event emphasizing environmental protection), R100 (companies that agree to strive using 100% renewable energy), and eKarting (electric karting which expels no carbon dioxide or noise). In opting for these themes, Formula E associates its own sustainability efforts with those of others, thus legitimizing its efforts as part of a wider, contemporary and global trend. According to Corporate Watch (2006), this is often seen as corporate philanthropy because, as at least a part of this will be stakeholder money, there needs to be a return on investment. Notwithstanding, this legitimization on the website is further linked to the theme of the future, suggesting Formula E is acting as a tool to positively add to a greener future by means of pushing the development of relevant and

sustainable technologies as well as working with charities such as One Drop and Greenpower. Based on Corporate Watch's claims (2006), organizations such as, in this case, Formula E can create links with charities and causes with the aim of providing it with more market access as well as a more powerful message. More so Formula E's CSR aims strengthen its not yet full established brand identity, i.e. awareness and loyalty by appealing to customer's consciences and desires (Corporate Watch, 2006, p. 12). For example, Formula E's cooperation with Greenpower involves stimulating future generations to get involved with sustainable engineering by erecting the Formula E school series where students build and race their electric race cars prior to Formula E races. This FE school series was also identified in the game analysis as one of five games including 'Fanboost' (drivers selected by fans receive a power boost during the race), 'Auction' (bidding on items for charity), 'Prize Competition' (the best fan photograph wins) and 'Simulator competition' (on site Formula E race game for fans). Of these, only two games revealed to have corporate backing: 'FE school series' was powered by Michelin tyres and Greenpower, a UK trust aiming to advance education in sustainable education, and the 'Simulator competition' was backed by VISA. The remaining games were created and supported by Formula E itself. Importantly, only 'FE school series' and 'Auction' made a clear reference to ES, the former by promoting sustainable engineering and Greenpower (and the kit it provided), the latter by making reference to charitable institutions such as the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation which is 'dedicated to the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development' (Formula E, 2015). The educational range of Formula E is thus significantly aimed at children.

Further analysis revealed that social goals (e.g. promote sustainable technology, support charities) and social rewards (e.g. recognition as best school team) were by far the most common and also appeared in relation to the webpage's most prominent game, Fanboost. The latter could be used exclusively online while all other games were designed for use in the real world. Only the 'Prize Competition' could be 'played' trans-medially, i.e. combining online usage with real world usage. The Fanboost section of the website

revealed no relationship to ES and was characterised by a distinctive lack of advertisements or partner logos. This indicates an exclusive emphasis on promoting motor racing and on increasing fan involvement and, consequently, hints at commodification of audiences and labour (Mosco, 2009). This is because the use of voting results affects the actual race and fan data obtained through the Fanboost login might be used for further marketing purposes. In this sense, gamification in Formula E seems to primarily carry value as a commodity, despite a (limited) educational effect in terms of ES.

### ***Celebrities and Glamour***

Celebrities are significantly represented across the website. We identified 35 ( $n=35$ ) different celebrities featured on 25 webpages. Most prominently so were US actor Leonardo DiCaprio (8), prince Albert II of Monaco (6), US actors Adrian Brody (4) and Cuba Gooding Jr (4), Russian model Irina Shayk (4), UK socialite Lady Victoria Hervey (4) and UK sport celebrity Louise Hazel (4). The celebrities mainly originate from the domains of film, royalty, sport and business and are predominantly American (12) and British (5). This apparent Anglo-Saxon dominance corresponds to a wider tendency throughout celebrity culture (Panis and Van den Bulck, 2014), yet can also be explained due to the fact that the website was scraped at a time when it focused on the (then most recent) races in the United States and Monaco. The latter also suggests the connection with Prince Albert II of Monaco.

Celebrities talked primarily about Formula E and to a lesser extent about supporting ES and their own achievements in that respect. Although each issue was raised only once, celebrities specifically pointed to climate change, green technologies and Formula E's sustainability efforts. Celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Sir Richard Branson, both stakeholders of Formula E race teams, advocated the necessity to create more sustainable motorsport. This suggests that Formula E attributes value to celebrities and uses them as a platform to further exposure of ES in Formula E:

‘Celebs love [electric vehicles]: George Clooney, Scarlett Johansson, Tom Hanks and Leonardo DiCaprio all own electric vehicles, just like famous car fanatic Jay Leno. [...]. The World health Organization estimates that each year more than 70 million people die due to air pollution – electric vehicles do not produce emissions’ (Formula E, 2015).

The characteristics of celebrities as commodities affect their subsequent environmental activism and as such influences the notion of ES (Van den Bulck, 2018). The presence of celebrities further fits within the second most prominent non-ES goal, namely the ‘Continuation of the Formula One jet-set lifestyle’:

[...] the After-Party has delighted guests with sky bars, rooftop pools and incredible seafront villas. Featuring renowned sponsors such as Mumm, Diageo and Amura Capital together with celebrity guests such as supermodel Valeria Mazza, superstar DJ Erick Morillo [...]’ (Formula E, 2015).

Clearly, the emphasis on glamour goes hand in hand with the presence of celebrities in Formula E’s self-organizational representation.

### ***Promotion through Sport: Advertisements, Partners and Sponsors***

A final factor in relation to commodification is that of advertising. In total we found 910 display advertisements, made up of 12 different advertisements. Table 3 presents an overview of the different advertisements and their links. Each webpage featured up to five advertisements. Out of those 12 advertisements, eight advertisements were identified as originating from commercial partners with varying degrees of affiliation with Formula E and only one advertisement that referred to sustainability, i.e. DHL. The remaining four advertisements were identified as editorial advertisements of which two revealed an exclusive link to ES (Green Tips and Tip of the Day).

The category of editorial advertisements featured predominantly ‘Green Tips’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘Tip of the Week’ and ‘Change your Light’, which invited the public to consult Formula E’s designated sustainability webpage

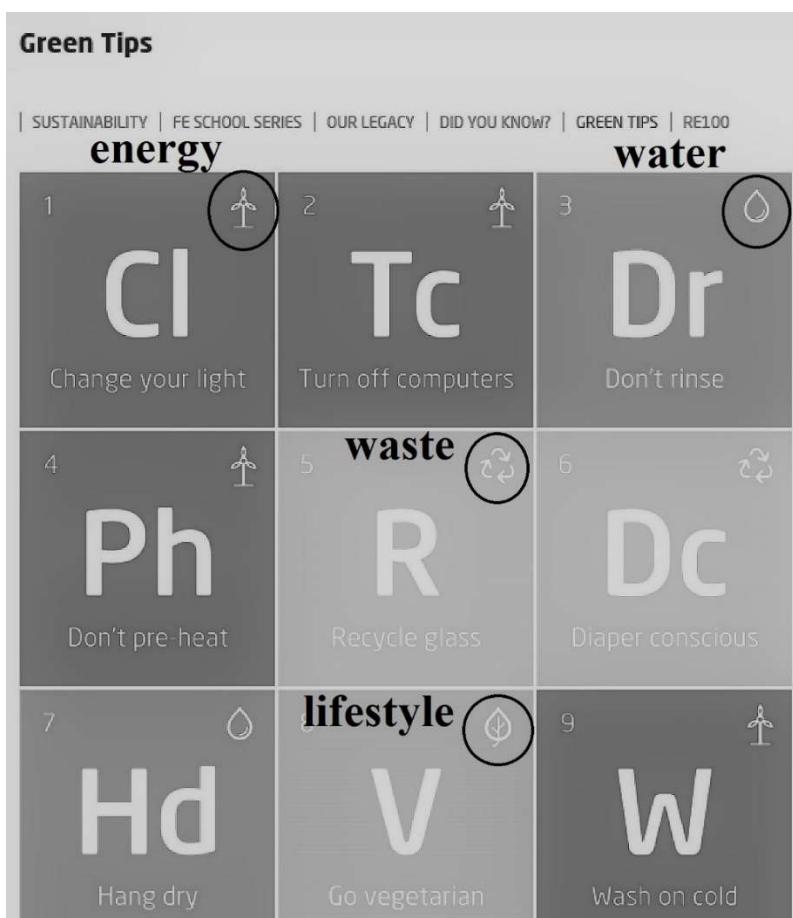
containing simple and everyday efficiency- and sustainability enhancing tips and tricks. The remainder of this category involved a word cloud advertisement with the purpose of enhancing navigating the website.

Table 3: Advertisements

	Adverts	Web-pages	ES link	Partner link	Auto-motive link	Motor-sport/ FE link	Safety Link
COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS (TOTAL: 825)	FIA Golden Rules	194		X	X		X
	Michelin Golden Rule 4	191		X	X		X
	TAG Heuer	86		X			
	Renault ZE	78		X	X		
	Michelin R&D	73		X	X		
	BMW i	70		X	X		
	Qual-comm	69		X	X	X	
	DHL	64	X	X		X	
EDITORIAL ADVERTISEMENTS (85)	Green Tips	69	X				
	Word cloud	13	X	X	X	X	X
	Tip of the Week	2	X				
	Change your Light	1	X				
TOTAL	12	910	5	9	7	3	3
MICHELIN ADVERT COMBINATION	2	264	/	X	X	/	X

Out of all 12 advertisements, two commercial (Qualcomm and DHL) and one editorial (Word Cloud) advertisement showed an obvious link with Formula E. Five advertisements make a link with ES but only one (DHL) of these is commercial. The editorial advertisements 'Green Tips', 'Tip of the Week' and 'Change your Light' function as links to the sustainability webpages and exclusively featured eco labels such as 'Energy', 'Water', 'Lifestyle' and 'Waste' which were not part of any other editorial or commercial advertisements. Figure 3 shows some 'Green Tips' with accompanying eco-labels.

Figure 2: Partial view of the 'Green Tips' webpage with accompanying eco logos (Energy, Water, Waste and Lifestyle). Source: FIA Formula E website.



Source: Formula E website, May 2015



The editorial advertisements featured in the same location, though less frequently, as the commercial advertisements. This dominance of commercial advertising space over ES allocated advertising space is in accordance with a main pattern of sport in general becoming an 'adjunct of the advertisement industry' (Boyle & Haynes, 2009, p. 45). The omnipresence of display advertisements, team logos and corporate/ partner logos on a vast majority of webpages further exposes the commodification of Formula E.

'Partners' operated frequently in conjunction with the theme of ES. Companies from the car industry (Renault, Dallara, BMW) to banking (Visa, Julius Bär) and green technologies (SMEG, GreenPower) appear keen to be associated with Formula E and its efforts in terms of ES, education and charity. In this sense, Formula E provides a means to communicate an organization's environmental CSR aspirations and activities to website visitors as well as its commitment to stakeholders (Trendafilova et al., 2013). Political support for the actions and efforts of Formula E was mostly related to the presence of a local politician or royalty such as, for example, Prince Albert II of Monaco, who showed his support for Formula E by stating that Monaco was proud to welcome the first Formula E race in Europe (Formula E, 2015).

Of particular interest were also the efforts by Julius Bär and TAG Heuer to convince the Swiss government to soften the ban on racing following the 1958 tragedy at Le Mans by means of the advantages associated with Formula E ('Law change opens door', 2015). This reflects a key element in power relations as permission is given by governments on the basis of ES and safety which, undoubtedly, holds significant promotional advantages for Switzerland as much as for Formula E.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Formula E seems, at least in part, to have succeeded in presenting itself as an organization that has combined a relatively profound ES approach without compromising on values and traditions commonly associated with motorsport. It needs to be said that the emphasis does rest with the latter. This reveals that

Formula E has picked up on the need for motorsport to become more sustainable whilst at the same time making use of the marketing and educational advantages that come with it, as suggested by Smith and Westerbeek (2004). In accordance with Lester's (2010) claim that environmental support from celebrities is commonly used by companies, celebrity support for Formula E's ES efforts form part of a larger marketing strategy that aims to mobilise existing support (cf. Lester, 2010) as well as attract new audiences. Further, Formula E uses celebrities to fulfill the more traditional role associated with motorsport, namely contributing to the aspect of glamour. Yet, although Formula E associates itself with glamour, it does not manage to do so to the same extent as Formula One (Sturm, 2014), which could be down to two reasons. First, as an emerging series, Formula E does not yet enjoy the same level of stability, heritage or well-knownness as Formula One. Second, this might be an intentional result by Formula E to avoid criticisms or stigmas commonly associated with Formula One, such as for example 'circus' or 'glamour spectacle' (Evans, 2013; Sturm, 2014). In any case, and as shown, the fact that Formula E links its own popularity to the sort of celebrities it attracts, reveals that it values exclusivity greatly. Consequently, this association with celebrities and glamour stimulates the commodification value of ES and is further extended by means of commercial and 'green' advertising that incorporates eco labels, display advertisements and corporate logos. As we revealed, Formula E accommodated a substantial presence of commercial or corporate advertising. The reason for this is that Formula E has sacrificed its media rights revenue by making Formula E accessible free-of-charge to all broadcasters with the aim of achieving the highest level of public exposure possible (Chauhan, 2015). Much as is the case for other sports that do so, and as can be witnessed from our analysis, this means that Formula E is largely driven by corporate revenue through advertising (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). By adding editorial (ES) advertisements, Formula E creates two advantages. First, advertising companies are associated with ES, even if their advertisement does not incorporate an ES reference. Second, Formula E is able to 'advertise' its own ES beyond the designated 'sustainability' section on the website and, as such,

present itself as a motorsport series that substantially integrates ES as a core ethos (Dingle, 2009).

On the basis of our analysis we can conclude that Formula E's self-representation in terms of ES, to a certain extent, can be considered to be a form of greenwashing by not being able to realise fully what it sets out to do in the first place (Platell, 2010; Miller, 2016). For one, the Formula E website does not properly indicate whether the much reduced carbon footprint from race cars outweighs the extra emissions from building temporary race tracks in cities as opposed to using existing race tracks. As such, and similar to Miller's (2016) findings in relation to greenwashing in Formula One and FIFA, the total ecological impact of Formula E was not fully considered. Where it is normally easier for businesses to spin stories rather than to significantly change - resulting in environmental CSR being nothing more than a PR exercise or even a smokescreen (Karlsen, 2011) - it seems that Formula E aims to bring across its case more profoundly and attempts to present an image of being a catalysator for more environmentally sustainable vehicles. It does so by means of external audits and action plans. In that respect, and from a macro perspective on motorsport as a whole, Formula E can be seen as a first step in profound change in motorsport governing behaviour.

Similarly, we need to acknowledge that ES in Formula E does not escape the grasp of commodification, considering Formula E is first and foremost a professional business aimed at making profit to which elements such as celebrities, glamour and gamification contribute, be it in different ways and measures. At the same time, we see efforts to raise awareness in terms of ES. As our analysis revealed, the use of certain games on the website fit an educational purpose. However, Formula E's most significant contribution in this respect remains that, possibly for the first time ever in motorsport history, it embraces ES as a major topic in its organizational identity.

As the first of its kind, this study looked specifically at the notion of ES in the self-representation of motorsport during a time in which ES has reached unseen levels of global acknowledgement and action, both public and political

in nature. We acknowledge the limitations in terms of generalization and exclusiveness of this particular case study, which was restricted to just a single website at one specific moment in time. Yet, we do believe this study's findings raises relevant empirical insights that allow to further the understanding of concepts such as the commodification of ES and greenwashing, especially so in motorsport. The unicity of Formula E as a field where commercial motorsport and ES crucially come together further contributes, if only for the highly likelihood that more such seemingly 'unusual' collaborations might arise.

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# CHAPTER 4

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FRAMING OF FORMULA E MOTOR RACING IN UK AND FLEMISH NEWSPAPERS

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Timothy Robeers

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### **Preface**

As chapter three indicated, ES is significantly represented on Formula E's website and assists in furthering educational purposes. It is however affected by commodification and criticisms of green marketing and greenwashing. Chapter four contains the first of three case studies that focus specifically on the media and how they produce representations of ES in Formula E. As such, they bridge the domains of communication studies, environmental studies and (motor)sport studies.

This chapter provides more in-depth insight in daily newspaper coverage in various years and from two different regions, namely the UK and Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium). As such, it not only aims to establish how and to what extent ES in Formula E is represented at a singular moment and place in time but rather bring to light existing tendencies and differences in the media representations of (ES in) Formula E (Boyle & Monteiro; Gan et al., 2005). To this end, all newspapers were subjected to a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative framing-based analysis, two methods often used in sports-media studies as they allow for generating, comparing and interpreting complex and diachronic results (Cox, 2012). In doing so, this case study demonstrates that newspapers frame Formula E largely positively. Although ES does not constitute a dominant frame itself, it is part of some dominant and counter frames. Furthermore, this study reveals regional differences between

UK media framing and Flemish media framing of (ES in) Formula E, amongst other things.

## **Abstract**

Developed in cooperation with motorsport's governing body, the Fédération Internationale d'Automobile (FIA), the fully electric racing series Formula E represents itself as a driving force in making the motorsport and automotive industries more environmentally sustainable (hereafter: ES). However, the question remains whether such ES efforts are picked up on by the media and, more specifically, by newspapers that are still considered a benchmark for in-depth and reflective journalism, despite a dramatic rise of online and social media coverage of sport. Combining a quantitative content analysis with a qualitative framing analysis, this article identifies, compares and contrasts frames, and the significance of ES herein, in a range of UK and Flemish quality and popular newspaper articles. Results indicate that, although ES did not constitute a frame in itself, it was significantly part of other frames that represented Formula E both positively and negatively. Additionally, results uncover distinct differences in reporting on (ES in) Formula E between UK and Flemish newspapers. This article suggests such differences are related to reasons of a historical and regional nature and subsequently affect the representation of ES in Formula E.

## **Keywords**

Environmental sustainability, UK and Flemish newspapers, mixed-method, framing approach, Formula E

## Introduction

By means of a quantitative content and qualitative framing analysis, this contribution studies how the notion of environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES) is represented in the coverage of Formula E in UK and Flemish newspapers. To this end, it combines insights from environmental communication, media studies and motorsport studies.

ES implies the ability to steer developments in such a way that present needs are met without compromising the needs of future generations (United Nations, 1988). As such, ES is increasingly important to the public, governments and businesses alike. Sport related organizations and businesses too have started paying attention to ES, either on their own initiative or as a result of external pressures (Dingle, 2009). In recent years, motorsport's governing body Fédération d'Automobile Internationale (hereafter: FIA) has stepped up its efforts to monitor and improve the environmental and socio-economic aspects of motorsport and the mobility sector in general, i.e. private cars, public transportation, taxi industry and freight, as well as to promote environmental campaigns (Fédération International d'Automobile, n.d.). This intention to manage and market motorsport as sustainable has led the FIA to introduce Formula E, a fully electric racing series that promotes itself as the future of motorsport by aiming to attract urban audiences and by embracing ES (Formula E, 2018). To achieve this, Formula E requires maximum exposure of its ES efforts. One way to achieve this has been to promote and manage its ES identity through its own website (see chapter three). However, it is first and foremost legacy and social media that provide effective means for sporting organizations to access audiences worldwide. For example, a majority of people that follow motorsport do so primarily through media, i.e. TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and/or social media coverage of the sports and its wider points of interest (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Aware of this, Formula E has provided media organizations with information and access free of charge (Chauhan, 2015). However, despite communicating its image and identity through its website and information provided to the media, the latter control the amount and

nature of coverage and, thus, visibility of Formula E and, more importantly, of its ES efforts. This is the main topic of this study that analyses the coverage of Formula E by means of a quantitative content and qualitative framing analysis of a sample of British and Flemish newspapers.

To this end, first, we set out how motorsport and ES are brought together through Formula E and explore the media's role in communicating this. Second, in the methodological section, we elaborate on the corpus of source material, on the instruments developed for the quantitative content analysis and for a more in-depth qualitative framing analysis. Third, we compare and contrast the results of both analyses to understand how ES in Formula E is presented in media coverage. Finally, the wider implications of these findings are discussed.

### **Where Environmental Sustainability and Motorsport Meet**

During the first decade of the 21st century awareness pertaining ES grew, as did the pressure for businesses to adopt more environmentally sustainable *modi operandi*. Subsequently, academic research has focused on the effects of ES in a wide range of areas of business and society (Lester, 2010; Orlitzky et al., 2011). ES in professional sport, too, has received considerable attention, due to professional sport's close relationship to consumerism that is seen to create much of the environmental problems faced by contemporary society (Dingle, 2009). Research has focused mainly on football (e.g. Death, 2011) and the Olympic Games (e.g. Paquette et al., 2011). Yet, despite the motorsport industry having endured criticisms on account of its negative impact on, for example, delicate eco-systems that arise as a result of staging major (motor) sporting events, the issue of ES in motorsport has received little attention (Hassan, 2011). Still, a few notable exceptions apply.

For one, a study by Hassan and O'Kane (2011), focusing on the Paris to Dakar Rally and the impact of ES as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter: CSR) within motorsport, noted that ES efforts of the Dakar Rally organisers were seen by some media and environmental groups as insufficiently offsetting the event's environmental impact. This led to a

depiction of ES efforts as a smokescreen to divert criticism regarding the (un)sustainability of the event (Hassan and O’Kane, 2011). Earlier, Dingle (2009) found that there has been doubt about whether motorsport credibly manages and markets itself as sustainable. For one, in professional sport, such sustainability efforts often clash with the goal to sell an authentic or nostalgic experience to fans, hence organizations’ measures can only be implemented up to a certain level before it affects fan experiences (Crabbe and Brown, 2004). This is exacerbated, still according to Dingle (2009), by motorsport’s dependence on natural resources and indicative of motorsport’s relationship with unsustainable patterns of consumption that are linked to global environmental change. Therefore, for motorsport to maintain relevance, it should be directed and managed ‘in such a way as to drive technology for the betterment of mankind’ (Turner & Pearson, 2008). The motorsport industry, in response, has started implementing environmental and social sustainability measures. For example, the FIA is now an active participant in the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Agenda where it participates in the global debate on climate change. In addition it uses motorsport to help promote its environmental campaigns such as the ‘Make Cars Green Campaign’ whereby Formula One drivers endorsed the latter campaign, generating worldwide exposure (Fédération Internationale d’Automobile, 2007).

The FIA’s most recent effort in this regard is Formula E, an annual racing formula that builds on a global tradition of professional motorsport series such as Formula One and IndyCar aiming to establish itself as a global entertainment brand. It is distinct in that it features fully electric race cars powered by green electricity which results in significantly reduced noise and carbon dioxides emissions (Formula E, 2018). This ‘green selling card’ allows Formula E to target city audiences, enabling them to experience motorsport within city limits and (potentially) to learn about electric mobility (Chauhan, 2015). As a result, environmental groups such as Greenpeace have commented positively on Formula E’s ES efforts (Jarvie, 2018).

Analysis of the self-representation of Formula E in relationship to ES on its website (see chapter three) reveals that the series identifies with ES in a number of ways, while maintaining pre-existing motorsport values and associations with glamour and celebrities, resulting in a level of commodification. However, so far, no study has looked into the extent and ways in which the identification of Formula E as a motorsport committed to ES is picked up by the media. Therefore this study aims to analyse *if and how Formula E's ES efforts are represented in mainstream media's coverage of the sport*.

## **The Role of the Media**

### ***Setting the Agenda on Formula E***

A key reason for ES becoming a topic of global and public debate is its omnipresent, if rather subdued, position in people's everyday life through continued media attention. Lester (2010) claims that news coverage of ES-related issues is rarely granted priority as a dominant topic. Cox (2012) relates this to ES's limited newsworthiness, i.e. its limited ability to attract readers. ES-related news is primarily event or novelty driven, at which point it obtains considerable coverage, yet this tends to be followed by a dying down of media attention as the novelty wanes (Lester, 2010). As a product of their own environment, media pick up on novel items that evoke general interest such as the emergence of an environmental issue or of a new sport and can contribute to a further growth in popularity. Furthermore, media monitoring and scrutiny can pressure organizations to speed up or reinforce adoption and development of environmental practices (Trendafilova et al., 2013). In the case of (motor) sport, media engage in an ethical necessity to 'expose the reluctance which some sports governing bodies appear to display in either acknowledging or dealing with any problem they may have' (Boyle and Haynes, 2009, p. 120).

These examples refer to the wider studied agenda setting power of media, a process of news selection through which media can influence public opinion and public policy priorities by telling people *what* to think about

(Jensen, 2012). There are a considerable amount of studies dealing with media agenda-setting of environmental issues (e.g. Carroll, 2010; Liu et al., 2009) and of sport (e.g. Frederick et al., 2015; Scheerder and Snoeck, 2009), yet studies of the way in which media help set the agenda with regards to sport and environment are rare. Therefore, this study *analyses if media pick up on Formula E's images efforts, in other words if ES in motorsport make news reporting on Formula E more newsworthy?*

### ***Framing Formula E***

Scheufele (1999) and Lester (2010) point out that it is not enough to understand that media push what people think about, but also how they should think about it, i.e. how an issue that is selected to become news is presented to audiences. One way of looking at this is through the lens of framing: how do media frame a particular news item? The notion of frames refers to 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual' (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Framing, then, is the process of attributing meaning to events or occurrences and in doing so 'function to organise, experience and guide action' for audiences through selection, emphasis, exclusion or modification (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). Van Gorp (2010) distinguishes between dominant frames (occurs most frequent), counter frames (opposing the dominant one) and neglected or marginal frames.

Framing has not only proven a popular approach to analyse media coverage of the environment and of sport but also a productive approach for comparative research, which consequently, provides fertile ground to use a framing approach in the analysis of the representation of ES in Formula E coverage, the focus of this study. For example, Good (2008) analysed how American, Canadian and other international newspapers framed the notion of climate change and Dirickx and Gelders (2009) used framing in relationship to global warming in Dutch and French newspapers. Similarly, in sports media research, Daigle et al. (2014) used framing to analyse street racing coverage in Canadian newspapers. While Formule E is a sport with a global outreach, such

global sports and sporting events are made sense of through a local (i.e. national) media lens (Boyle & Monteiro, 2005), making international comparison highly relevant to a better understanding of how Formula E and ES is covered. While the choice of cases for international comparison often is (semi-)pragmatic, a predetermined set of similarities and/or differences between national media regarding a certain research topic can contribute to an interesting data set. For example, the United Kingdom prides itself at featuring a world leading motorsport and aeronautic industry (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skill Committee, 2010). In their study on the development of motorsport during the 'Belle Epoque', Ameye et al. (2011) attribute this to longstanding tradition of motorsport, aviation and engineering that developed in a post-colonial and industrializing world nation. Belgium found itself in a similar position during the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but, unlike the UK, was unable to maintain or further develop this pioneering role (Ameye et al., 2011). Thus, the UK and Belgium share a similar motorsport heritage but have evolved in different directions, both as an industry and as a culture, which, in our case, means it is likely to generate different frames regarding ES in Formula E. Finally, the framing studies confirm the continued relevance of studying newspaper coverage. Indeed, despite the ongoing crisis in (the business model) of press, sports reporting in newspapers remains strong as newspapers use sport coverage to generate new audiences (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Therefore, this study analyses *how UK and Belgian newspapers from the UK frame ES in Formula E*.

## **Methodology**

### ***Constructing the Sample***

Analysis focuses on two regions, i.e. the UK and Flanders (the northern, Dutch speaking part of Belgium). For each case, we constructed a corpus of articles from the two bestselling quality and popular newspapers based on national circulation (Turvill, 2015; Ponsford, 2016; Snoeys, 2016; 'De Standaard Versus de Morgen', n.d.). For Flanders, this includes coverage from *De Morgen*,



*De Standaard, Het Laatste Nieuws, and Het Nieuwsblad.* In the case of the United Kingdom, newspaper selection includes *The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Sun, and The Daily Mail.* Newspaper articles were accessed by means of GoPress Academic, the online database containing all Flemish newspapers and magazines, and LexisNexis, a similar database containing UK newspaper articles. Articles were selected by means of a search of keyword 'Formula E' for UK coverage and of keywords 'Formula E' and 'Formule E' (Dutch language) for Flanders for the period 12 January 2012 – the date the first article on Formula E appeared in the corpus – until 11 November 2016. All editorial content including hard news, features, editorials and opinion pieces - included on the basis that the editor's decision to include them in the newspaper reflects the editorial line of the newspaper ideology - that contained the key words were selected (Gan et al., 2005). The eventual sample therefore consisted of 259 articles, i.e. 106 Flemish and 153 UK newspaper articles.

### ***The Coding Process: From a Quantitative Analysis ...***

To analyse the data, we opt for a mixed approach combining a quantitative content analysis – allowing for a general overview of occurrences - with a more in-depth, qualitative framing analysis. Although qualitative and quantitative data are known to vary in character they do share a common area of meaning in terms of the object (Van den Bulck et al., 2008), in this case: of how Formula E and ES are portrayed in the selected newspaper content.

For the quantitative content analysis, we started with a list of seven variables and their subcategories, found in the literature (e.g. Rowe, 2007; Tang, 2012; Gan et al., 2005, Horky & Nieland, 2013). The categories include date of publication, dominant sport, article topics (with a maximum of 5 per article), article type, sources, article valence, and title valence. These categories were tested on a subsample of 60 of all 249 articles (24%) to evaluate the usefulness of selected, and the need for additional, (sub) categories.

The unit of analysis was a paragraph, which usually included a number of sentences but in some instances just one or two sentences. When a paragraph

was found to be too lengthy, containing various ideas, it was carved up into smaller, meaningful segments.

Reliability of results was controlled by means of a second coder who, after being briefed and familiarised with the coding instructions, coded 5% of the material. Using Cohen's K we calculated the intercoder reliability which is high with an average of 0.81.

### ***... to a Qualitative Method: Framing Analysis***

To obtain a more detailed, in-depth understanding of how ES is being dealt with in relationship to Formula E in the Flemish and British newspaper coverage, we selected all articles that made explicit mention of ES. This resulted in a sample of 66 ES related articles (UK: 60 and Flanders: 6) that were subjected to a qualitative framing analysis. Analysis is based on the identification in each article of framing devices and reasoning devices as developed by Gamson & Modigliani (1989) and Entman (1993). The latter refers to the definition of the issue, the causal interpretation, the consequence, the moral evaluation and the treatment recommendation. The former involves analysis of word choice, stereotypes/metaphors, catchphrases and depictions.

Findings were translated into frame packages in a signature matrix (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) which can be obtained on request. As a means of validation, first, each frame had to provide a clear definition of what is meant by the integration of ES as well as what the causal and treatment recommendations were. Second, frames had to be mutually exclusive and provide a clear insight of the roles attributed to Formula E and ES.

### **Formula E and ES in the UK and Flemish press**

In what follows, we will first set out results based on the quantitative data. Following this, results of the qualitative framing analysis are presented.

### ***Quantitative Analysis: the Prominence of Formula E in the UK and Flemish Press***

Of all articles analysed ( $n = 259$ ), 48,05% features Formula E as the dominant sport, with 58% of all UK articles ( $n = 153$ ) and 33,96% of all Flemish articles ( $n = 106$ ) focusing foremost on Formula E, a first indication of the difference in attention to the sport in Flanders and the UK. In 10,55% of all 259 cases, Formula E was mentioned in articles dominated by Formula One and this was significantly more the case in the UK coverage (16,67%) than in the Flemish coverage (just 1,89%). Interestingly, 33,20% of all articles dealt with a mixture of sports (i.e. a single dominant sport could not be determined). Yet, here too, a considerable difference between Flanders and the UK could be observed, as 60,38 % of all Flemish articles fitted the subcategory of mixed sports compared to only 14% in UK articles. These results suggest a more dominant interest in Formula racing in the UK press compared to its Flemish counterpart where it mostly appears as part of mixed sports coverage.

The results regarding article topics provide further elaboration on the situation. Flemish articles focus predominantly on results/match reports (27,30%) and other sport-related content such as motorsport news (31,58%), preview of competition (9,54%) and sporting/performance aspects (8,55%). Similarly, UK articles focus on motorsport news (26,94%) and performance/sporting aspects (10,68%). Yet, unlike in Flanders, UK articles also focus on technology and development (12,62%), environmental sustainability (10,44%) and marketing (7,28%). This indicates UK reporting on Formula E combines a more engineering-based and business-like angle with actual sports topics whereas Flemish articles tend to focus more on what the sport generates in terms of entertainment.

This tendency is confirmed by analysis of sources mentioned in the articles. 328 sources ( $n = 328$ ; either mentioned or quoted) were found in 132 Flemish and UK articles. Sources in Flemish articles ( $n = 30$ ) are made up almost exclusively by athletes (60%), predominantly Jerome D'Ambrosio, Belgium's only Formula E driver at that time. This confirms that notions of banal

nationalism and 'bringing it home' in sports reporting (Billig, 2002) extend to (the in Flanders relatively unknown sport of) Formula E. Similarly, sources in UK articles (UK:  $n = 298$ ) focus on British athletes (5,70%, ex: Sam Bird). Yet, emphasis was put on other sources such as a corporate executive (26,17%, ex: Sir Richard Branson), a representative of a sporting organization (12,08%, e.g. Jean Todt), a politician (9,06%, e.g. David Cameron), thus emphasizing the business and political side of the sporting world.

Some interesting observations arose from an analysis of the date of publication. Figure 4a shows a number of significant peaks in articles on Formula E in the sample of the UK press. The first peak in the period of March 2013 coincides with the notification of the press by the FIA that the Formula E championship would start in the autumn of 2014. The peak periods November 2013-January 2014, and the same period in 2014-15 and 2015-16 are related to the organisers and teams releasing information on their cars and drivers. The growing number of peaks in press coverage suggests an increase in attention for Formula E over time, probably as it became better known. This media attention was further helped by the deliberate decision to schedule the Formula E championship during a period (winter) when most professional racing series do not run, encouraging media exposure. What then explains the peaks in interest in the spring and summer months? The period of July 2014 coincided with the lead-up to the start of the (then new) Formula E series in September 2014, while the peak in May – July 2015 represents (the lead-up to) the season's finale in London. The limited attention in the same period in 2016 may be related to the fact that criticism after the first London finale meant that 2016 would be the last year that Formula E would visit that location in London.

Some interesting differences with the Flemish coverage, shown in Figure 4b, can be noted. Not only does the first Flemish article appear one year later than its British counterpart, Flemish coverage overall is less frequent and less substantial than UK articles, showing a lack of interest in the introduction of the sport. Yet, the most significant periods roughly appear for the same reason as and correspond to the situation in the UK: September 2014 - January 2015 and

May – July 2015. Only the period of March – May 2016 sees a larger volume of publication than the UK at that time.

Looking especially at the mention of ES, figure 4b shows that it generates an original focus of attention (January 2014 – March 2014) in the Flemish press, when the highest peak can be noted, after which attention for ES dwindles. This seems to confirm Cox’s (2012) observation that focus on ES wanes as the novelty wears off (Cox, 2012). However, as figure 4a shows, this does not apply to UK articles where a level of attention to ES is maintained over time. More so, a tendency was noted for ES-related articles to proportionally follow article publications on Formula E in general, indicating a level of reflection on the theme.

Figure 4a: Number of Formula E articles (on ES) published based on date of publication in the UK.

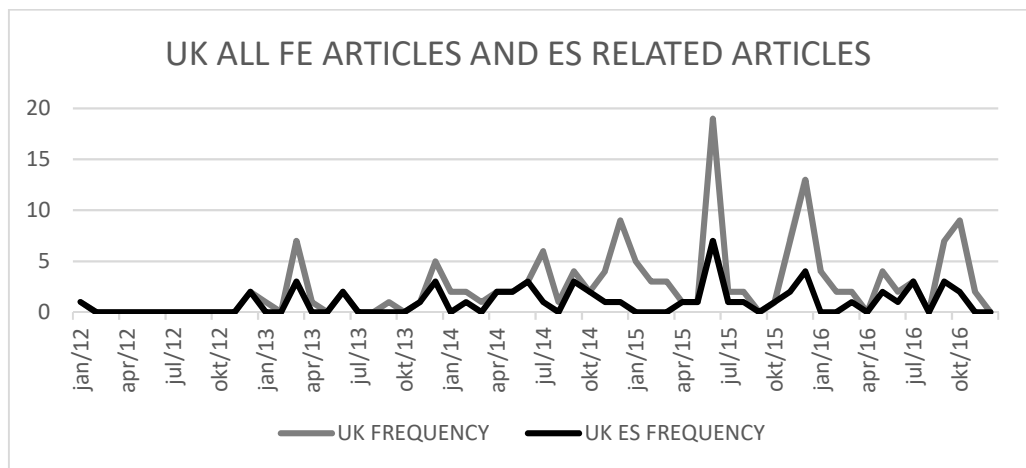
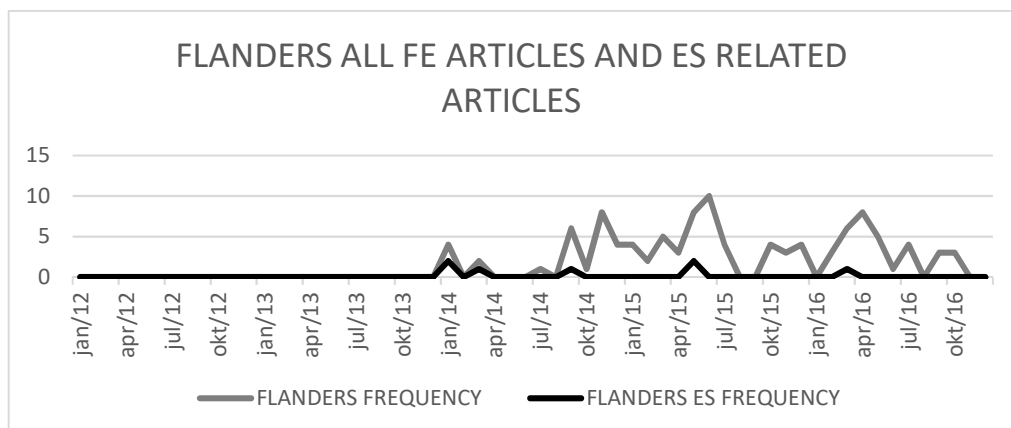


Figure 4b: Number of Formula E articles (on ES) published based on date of publication in Flanders.



### Qualitative Analysis: ES in Formula E Coverage in UK and Flemish Press

Of all coded articles ( $n = 259$ ), 25,48% ( $n = 66$  articles) revealed a textual reference to ES, a majority of which 60 articles were from the UK and just 6 articles from the Flemish press. Further analysis showed, furthermore, that mostly the coverage of ES is limited to a mention of just a few lines, particularly so in Flemish articles (5 out of 6 as opposed to 33 out of 60 in UK articles). More extensive emphasis on ES appeared only in UK articles (23 out of 60). Particularly in UK articles, the focus on ES often includes the dominant topic of efficiency and/or technology (28 out of 60 articles):

‘No motor racing could ever be described as environmental [...] but Formula E racers use a lot less fossil fuel than their petrol powered counterparts’ (Bennett, 2015)

Looking at the occurrence and nature of sources in ES related articles, Flemish articles featured very few sources and focused almost exclusively on athletes, which corresponds with the source results for all Formula E articles in the Flemish press. Similarly, sources in UK articles on ES come mostly from the business side of sport as well as from politics, although researchers from the natural sciences and social sciences appear to a lesser extent as well. At closer inspection, these scientists mostly are brought in to create a narrative of

scrutiny against ES. As a result, these sources appear mostly in articles with a less positive valence. In the latter regard, we found that ‘article valence’ in Flemish articles on ES was predominantly positive (4 out of 6 articles). Similarly, UK articles on ES were predominantly positive (37 out of 60 articles) or neutral (15 out of 60 articles).

### **Framing (ES) in Formula E**

Complementary to this, a qualitative frame analysis resulted in two dominant frames, i.e. Formula E as a ‘Potential Threat to Formula One’ and ‘(Promoting the) EV Revolution’, two counter-frames, i.e. ‘Child’s Play’ and ‘Green Farce’ as well as one secondary frame, i.e. ‘EV Image Problems’. Importantly, before analyzing each frame in greater detail, we need to point out that, ES does not constitute a frame in itself, neither in the UK nor in the Flemish coverage. However, ES is of significant importance in some of the frames we found, as the analysis below shows.

#### *The Dominant Frame of Formula E as ‘A Potential Threat to Formula One’*

This frame features predominantly in UK articles and revolves around the issue of Formula E as having found a green gap in motorsport, even though it needs to develop further in order to pass by Formula One, ‘They [Formula E cars] should look more like the communications of tomorrow [...] and less like those of the Seventies.’ (Bennett, 2015). The rise of Formula E is attributed not just to its own strengths but to the fact that Formula One has been faltering as a sport for some time: ‘Formula One is dysfunctional, conservative and traditionally averse to major changes in sustainable technology’ (Briggs, 2014). In presenting Formula One in this way, the frame puts Formula One and Formula E in antagonistic positions: ‘stuttered on a querulous path’ (Eason, 2014a) versus ‘powering ahead’ (Johnson, 2014) or ‘mired in gloom and uncertainty’ (Johnson, 2015) versus ‘exudes quiet confidence’ (Eason, 2015a). This reverberates the imminence of the threat posed by Formula E, depicting Formula E as a ‘rebel without a decibel’ (Plets, 2014) and as ‘Formula One’s Waterloo, and not the train station’ (Eason, 2013). Consequently, Formula E is

positioned as a serious contender in motorsport, combining well-known engineers, manufacturers, drivers, celebrities and politicians: ‘People, celebrities, sponsors and city councils are flocking to the idea’ (Eason, 2012). Mention of ES was found to contribute to the frame only in relationship to Formula One’s lack of embracing ES compared to Formula E.

### *The Counter-frame of Formula E as ‘Child’s Play’*

A counter-frame to the previous frame and a sub frame to the secondary ‘EV Image Problems’, this frame presents Formula E as no match for traditional racing series and is present in Flemish and UK articles. It starts from the idea that Formula E is difficult to be taken serious as ‘it is simply too slow’ (Johnson, 2014) to watch. This is attributed to the fact that it is doubtful whether the series will manage to bring the same sporting factor for (young) adult fans associated with other autosport series: ‘[...] don’t think of it as autosport. Rather as a show in which the audience participates’ (Bossuyt, 2014). This notion of not being a serious sport, is reinforced by means of framing devices that compare Formula E to forms of ‘silly’ pseudo-sport entertainment such as ‘lawnmower racing’ (Eason, 2015b) or a ‘scalextric’ toy race track (Burrows, 2014). To the extent that a solution for Formula E out of this bad situation and image is presented, reference is made to – particularly battery-related - technological advancements that provide greater speeds and autonomy: ‘the cars don't even last the whole of a race yet, which is where research and development should be concentrated (Bennett, 2015). The notion of ES, finally, is entirely absent from this frame.

### *The Dominant Frame of Formula E as ‘(Promoting the) EV Revolution’*

This second dominant frame was found in UK articles and presents Formula E as an inherent part of an electric revolution. The issue at hand is that a necessity to legislation is pushing manufacturers to correspond to low emission norms subsequently making them ‘enter the electric arena’. An implied cause is that (an increased acknowledgement of) ES has provided politics and mass



audiences with a significant incentive and made ‘screaming, petrol fueled cars seem at odds with the aspirations of both carmakers and buyers’ (Eason, 2012). As a result of this, development of alternative, i.e. zero-emission, energy sources and EV technology is improving, yet is still suffering from a negative aura. In other words, a racing series such as Formula E is presented as a solution that can help mainstream and boost the image of EV’s by showing urban audiences it does not need to be boring, slow, ugly costly and impractical.: ‘[Formula E can] jump-start the stalling electric car revolution’ (Robert, 2013). In doing so, the series is presented as legitimizing itself further by providing a cause to the spectacle in motor racing: ‘ [Boris] Johnson and his ilk, who want the spectacle but need a cause (Eason, 2013) and the frame acknowledges the need for motorsport to adjust to the trend for communities and businesses to become more sustainable: ‘recognition that the world is changing fast and that motorsport has to change with it’ (Eason, 2014b). What is more, Formula E is presented as playing into this necessity for motorsport to become more relevant to ensure its survival for the future: i.e. ‘a motor-racing revolution’ (Eason, 2014a). Underlining the potential of Formula E by not just promoting ES but also in the survival of motorsport, Formula E is presented as combining the ES notions of a lack of carbon emissions and significantly reduced noise level with the entertainment and speed factor of traditional motor racing series: ‘have fun and go fast, but without the penalty of exhaust fumes or noise that would keep babies awake in a 50-mile radius’ (Eason, 2013). A further observation is that promotion and marketing, i.e. capitalist tools, are implicitly presented as inherent necessities for the EV revolution and are as such free of criticism in articles.

### *The Counter-frame of Formula E as a ‘Green Farce’*

Both a sub frame of ‘EV Image Problems’ and counter frame to ‘(Promoting the) EV Revolution’ in Flemish and UK articles, this frame presents the series as falling short of its own goals due to significant negative consequences: ‘Formula E cannot live up to its eco credentials and the positive consequences do not compensate for the negative consequences’ (Ekins, 2015). As such, ES efforts

are depicted as cancelled out. The cause of this issue is placed with the 'unrelenting noise [and the] damage and disruption to natural areas and traffic' (Fernandez & Strick, 2016). In this sense, Formula E's goal of using its 'green card' is presented as similar to what Hassan and O'Kane (2011) referred to as a smokescreen in relation to the Paris Dakar rally. For example, Formula E is presented as an example of 'how marketing and hype can create delusion' (Bossuyt, 2014) and how 'everything is about attracting big business and commercial sponsorship at the expense of quiet enjoyment' (Fernandez & Strick, 2016). Further, this frame is strengthened by the use of a negative vocabulary that functions as a framing device: 'destructive forces [...] ruin' (Ekins, 2015), and 'terrible idea' (Elliot & Eason, 2014). The suggested solution to this problem is that no form of motor racing should be allowed in urban spaces and that, in order to truly make an impact in reduction of carbon emissions, motorsport 'should stick to the dedicated race tracks and leave our streets for ordinary Londoners to enjoy' (Elliot and Eason, 2014). In this sense, the intrusive essence of Formula E is presented as no different from other motor racing series.

### *The Secondary Frame of 'EV Image Problems'*

This frame is present in both Flemish and UK articles and contains the sub frame 'Child's Play'. In this secondary frame, the issue presented is that EV's suffer from skepticism arising from an aura of negativity caused by what are considered to be significant downsides: 'geen betere manier om aan te geven dat de beperkte autonomie het grote probleem van elektrische auto's blijft [no better way to indicate that limited autonomy remains EV's most significant problem]' (Bossuyt, 2014), 'electric cars are expensive [...] but by the biggest barrier is the range of electric cars' (Stansfield, 2015) and consequently, mass adoption of EV's remains difficult: 'Sales in the UK of pure electric vehicles [...] still a pitifully small number in an overall market that has grown' (Stansfield, 2015). The solution here is that EV's will need to equal or better characteristics of fossil fueled cars to become practically viable 'cutting battery costs and increasing their range will give electric vehicles a new spark of life' (Stansfield,

2015). The moral evaluation remains carefully critical to avoid making evaluations that can be proved false in the near future: '[...] it'll take some seriously bright sparks to convince Irish motorists to ditch their oil-burners' (Lennox, 2016).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to add to existing work on the representation of ES in motorsport by gaining a deeper insight into the media's appraisal of Formula E's ES efforts. By combining results from a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative framing analysis we were able to provide a clearer picture of the function as well as the importance that ES holds in newspaper reporting on Formula E, showing that both Formula E and its relationship to ES have received attention in the British and Flemish press, be it in different ways.

The results suggest a number of meaningful implications. First, ES does not take up a leading position in news reporting on Formula E. This confirms wider observations by Lester (2010) and Cox (2012) regarding the limited newsworthiness ES usually generates. However, attention for ES was maintained over time and was proportionally associated with the amount of Formula E articles in general, particularly in the UK press coverage. It seems that attention to ES in Formula E remains significant over a longer period of time while usually it diminishes as the novelty factor wears off. Even in Flemish articles, and despite less interest in ES in Formula E, the topic does not wane completely. This indicates, to a certain extent, that ES has, at least in newspapers, become associated with Formula E and that their symbiotic relationship has positively affected the newsworthiness of each other.

Second, it seems that the 'Potential Threat to Formula One' and the '(Promoting the) EV Revolution' frame hail the adoption of ES as part of motor racing. The frames assist in reinforcing Formula E's efforts to adopt ES rather than scrutinizing the series for the lack of it (Cox, 2012). The revolution frame in particular hints at the advantages that Formula E represents and functions as an acknowledgement that Formula E is driving technology to benefit future

societies. As Turner and Pearson (2008) have indicated, this is a necessary requirement for motorsport to be at the cutting edge of automotive engineering. In a sense, this also applies to the 'Potential Threat to Formula One' frame. This presents Formula One, for a long time considered as the pinnacle of motor racing (Sturm, 2014), as at risk of being overtaken by Formula E which has exploited Formula One's recent neglect at being technologically relevant.

At the other side of the spectrum, it has become clear that ES and Formula E are subject to criticism. As part of its marketing strategy, ES is considered to help Formula E aim for and enable city audiences to learn about developments and benefits of electric cars and about wider electric mobility through motorsport (Chauhan, 2015). However, the 'Green Farce' frame gives voice to a smaller, alternative view on the negative environmental impact of motor racing in delicate eco-systems, or, in this instance, delicate urban societies (Hassan, 2011). Similar to what Hassan and O'Kane (2011) noted in their study on the Paris Dakar Rally, this counterframe implied ES in Formula E to be little more than a smokescreen. This dismisses Formula E's technological and ES efforts, rendering them inadequate to offset the series' impact on its surroundings following the racing in city centres.

Third, the promotion and marketing of EV's and EV racing in itself, both indicative of capitalism (Carvalho, 2005), did not constitute a negative reaction in articles. This could imply articles either do not pick up on this, or rather, implicitly, deem such commercialization a prerequisite to EV's success. In the case of the latter, in effect, promoting EV's as consumer products commodifies ES.

Fourth, it is worth considering the differences in news reporting on Formula E between the UK and Flemish press. While Flemish articles focused rather exclusively on the sport itself, i.e. results and race reports, UK articles combined this with more technological and businesslike angles. Moreover, ES features much more in the UK than the Flemish press coverage. These findings can be explained looking at wider regional differences. First, the UK has a

cultural and historical association with motorsport dating back to the early 1900's (Ameye et al., 2011). Second, at the time of writing, the UK is considered to have the largest motorsport industry in the world (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skill Committee, 2010). Flanders, and Belgium for that matter, shares a similar historical interest during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ameye et al., 2011). Yet, this trend did not extend into the 21<sup>st</sup> century the way it did in the UK. In addition to this, Flanders does not house a technological/engineering industry the way the UK does. Of course, these reasons may just be part of why Flemish press pays less attention to Formula E and even less so to it in relation to ES. Yet, these differences seem to result from each region making sense of Formula E and ES through a national (i.e. regional) media lens (Boyle & Monteiro, 2005).

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# CHAPTER 5

## 'WE GO GREEN IN BEIJING': SITUATING LIVE TELEVISION, URBAN MOTORSPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BY MEANS OF A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF TV BROADCASTS OF FORMULA E

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Timothy Robeers and Hilde Van den Bulck

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### **Preface**

The third case study of this Ph.D. continues the media content scope of the previous chapter and provides insight into a second, 'traditional', form of media, namely television. In particular, it looks at live television broadcasting of Formula E. This is motivated by the fact that television coverage is inherent to the sports experience as it allows for sport, and in this case motorsport, to be used as a platform for showcasing new products and initiatives (Evans 2014; Noble and Hughes 2004), including ES. Therefore, and considering the novelty character of Formula E, this fifth chapter considers the season's opening television broadcasts of the first three seasons of Formula E to which it applies a qualitative framing-based analysis.

This case study demonstrates that, during the initial part of the first broadcast, ES was represented to a certain extent, yet functioned very much as a neglected frame during the latter parts and the following broadcasts. This chapter further suggests this absence of ES is due to broadcasters prioritizing stakeholder commitments and audience's motorsport expectations. As such, it seems that ES serves more as part of a marketing strategy for broadcasters than an opportunity to scrutinise, monitor or commend Formula E for its ES efforts.

## **Abstract**

In 2014, the fully electric racing series Formula E, aimed at promoting clean energy and sustainability, was launched in Beijing (China), at that time the world's most polluted city. Despite Formula E's sustainability credentials, the question remains whether one of its core values, i.e. environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES), is picked up on by sports television broadcasters. Using a qualitative framing analysis, this contribution identified, compared and contrasted frames, and the significance of ES herein, in three UK broadcasts of Formula E's first three season opening races. Results indicate that, although the narrative of ES was introduced minimally during the inaugural broadcast, ES was neglected as a frame during consecutive broadcasts. Results suggest that this is because sports broadcasters prefer audiences to align Formula E according to more traditional values and ideas associated with broadcasting of motorsport, and, as such, to avoid affecting, i.e. reducing, audience confidence and ratings.

**Keywords:** Formula E, Live-TV broadcasting, Environmental Sustainability, framing approach, agenda-setting

## **Introduction**

Race commentator Jack Nichols's 'We go green in Beijing' signified the start of the FIA Formula E championship race in Beijing in 2014. Formula E, fully electric and visually similar to Formula One, is the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile's (hereafter: FIA) latest sustainability incentive to accommodate a changing environmental and political climate by 'provid[e]ing a framework for research and development centered around the electric vehicle to promote clean energy and [environmental] sustainability' (hereafter: ES) (Formula E, 2015). In that light, Nichols' 'going green' statement reveals a potential ambiguity. It denotes both the starting grid lights turning green and, bearing in mind Formula E's much (self-)proclaimed eco- credentials (see chapter three), or an increase in ES. Indeed, motorsport has long suffered from negative

criticisms because of its unsustainable patterns of consumption contributing to global environmental change which, more recently, emission scandals like Dieselgate have highlighted (Dingle 2009). This has increased scrutiny of the industry and has left a profound mark on the motor racing landscape with manufacturers such as Volkswagen and subsidiary brands Audi and Porsche having pulled out of major motorsport commitments such as, for example, their exit from the World Endurance Championship series-leading LMP1-class (Le Mans Prototype 1). Instead, they enter Formula E as a means to redirect operations (and legitimacy) as a function of electric vehicle (hereafter: EV) development. Thus, for motorsport to survive as a competitive platform for automotive design and innovation, it has had to increase efforts to resolve its environmental problems. Consequently, the motorsport governing body FIA's Institute for Motorsport Safety (hereafter: FIAIMSS) expanded its activity continuously from 2007 onwards to include ES and stimulate

'research into sustainability, disseminate[ing] the results of that research and provide[ing] information on the best environmental procedures, practices and technologies that can be applied to motorsport. [...] cover areas such as vehicle design and technology [...] emissions monitoring and control [...] energy optimization and storage [...]' (Fédération International de l'Automobile Institute for Motorsport Safety 2009).

ES has gained in popularity on a global scale due to its symbiotic relationship with the media, i.e. the media sustain themselves by picking novel issues which in turn provides those issues (e.g. ES-related topics such as deforestation, climate change, etc.) with exposure (Cox 2012). For a novel sport such as Formula E, media exposure is key for generating awareness through the media, as a majority of people that watch sports do so first and foremost through (a combination of) media, i.e. radio, newspapers, magazines, social media and television coverage of the sports and its wider points of interest (Boyle and Haynes 2009). Television coverage in particular is very much part of the sports experience as it allows for top motorsport series to be used as platforms for sponsors to showcase their brands and products (Evans 2014; Noble and Hughes 2004). Well aware of the fact that 'sports rights in themselves influence



sports news coverage' (Helland 2007, 106), Formula E has provided broadcasters with free access to broadcasting rights, hoping this will expose the series to global audiences (Chauhan 2015). In trying to communicate this message, some level of control over what is being shown during the main race broadcast is effectively taken away from broadcasters as the visual feed and any replay are provided by the series' own broadcasting director (Evans 2014), in this case from Formula E. However, ultimately, it is the media that control the amount and kind of coverage and, thus, the visibility of Formula E and its ES-related efforts, by providing live race commentating and supplemental pre- and post-race footage (either studio based or on-track based). Therefore, and by means of a case study and framing approach, this paper wants to, (1) ascertain *if ES features in the live broadcast of Formula E*, (2) study *how the motor racing series Formula E and ES are represented (i.e. framed) in the coverage of 3 live television broadcasts in the UK* as well as (3) provide a conceptually and theoretically based interpretation of why the resulting frames have emerged as they have. In doing so, it draws and combines insights from environmental communication, media studies and (motor) sport studies.

## **Literature Review**

In what follows, we will first discuss the current position ES holds in British society, followed by an elaboration on motorsport and ES in the sports-media complex.

### ***Public Consciousness of ES in the UK***

The United Nations Brundtland report (1988, 3) defines ES as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In 1998, the Kyoto Protocol indicated a turnaround moment as 'in order to take appropriate adaptive measures, [...] one must [first] recognise that one is at risk' (Taylor, Dessai, and Bruine de Bruine 2014, 3). Following this global acknowledgement of ES, the UK government was the first to adopt appropriate legislation and are expected by

the UK public to deal with environmental issues on their behalf (Taylor, Dessai, and Bruine de Bruine 2014; Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, and Whitmarsh 2007). According to Taylor, Dessai, and Bruine de Bruin (2014), this is due to the UK public showing greater psychological distance to these issues due to limited immediate implications. Indeed, most UK 'laypeople' consider environmental implications applicable to the more 'vulnerable' in the world and future generations (Lorenzoni and Pidgeon 2006, 87). Another study by Parkhill et al. (2013, 33) for the UKERC (UK Energy Research Centre) confirms both the awareness of ES as well as the lack of general individual engagement by the UK public but, additionally, reveals a core aspiration to move away from a total reliance on fossil fuels to more sustainable alternatives. As such, Parkhill et al. (2013, 15) found the UK public to closely associate EV's with being green and environmentally 'good' with 54% of respondents willing to switch to EV's and 75% should EV performance equal or better current models. Subsequently, this indicates that environmental concerns 'are not key determinants in the public's choice of transport technologies' (O'Garra, Mourato, and Pearson 2004, 651) and that despite a widespread awareness of ES, relevant UK public engagement remains scarce.

### ***ES Media Coverage in the UK***

Cox (2012) states that due to the limited experiences of the UK public and the 'invisibility' of environmental issues and sustainability, the public is largely dependent on stories about the climate and sustainability by media sources, which have been shown to be neither innocent nor neutral in their representations. The 'visualization' of this invisibility of issues requires much communicative work as, inherently, news (i.e. including ES) 'is largely event focused and event driven' which impacts 'which environmental issues get coverage and which don't' (Hansen 2010, 95-6). Indeed, Boykoff (2011) identified a fivefold quantitative increase in (UK broadsheet newspaper) coverage of event-based environmental issues (e.g. climate change) occurring across four periods between 2000 and 2010, despite a decline in circulation (Cox, 2012). These were initiated by, among others, (1) the COP6 in The Hague in November 2000, (2) the G8 Gleneagles (Scotland) summit in

July 2005, (3) the release of *An Inconvenient truth* (Al Gore) in September 2006, the COP12 in November 2006 and (4) the COP15 in Copenhagen (Denmark) as well as the UAE CRU email scandal (Climate Gate) both at the end of 2009. This is of significant importance for ES as Boykoff (2011, 20) directly links these events to 'ongoing stories of [...] sustainability [...] and the like'. He further identifies two associated problems, namely (1) a lack of story context creating 'missed critical opportunities to advance the climate story' (Boykoff, 2011, 96) and (2) a framing in terms of socio-political and economic concerns regarding the implementation of environmental policies. The latter also corresponds to Carvalho's (2005, 21) implications that UK quality newspaper coverage 'remains within the broad ideological parameters of free-market capitalism and neo-liberalism, avoiding a sustained critique of the possibility of constant economic growth and increasing consumption [...]'.

Despite a significant number of studies have looked at UK media coverage of a range of environmental issues, the focus has so far bypassed (sports) television coverage and ES, a gap this study aims to address.

### ***The (Motor) Sports-Media Complex***

Knut Helland (2007, 105-6) claims that the relationship between sports and the media has led to the development of the 'sports/media complex', a term conceived by Jhally (1989), and is the result of a commercialization of television through new technologies and enhanced social developments. As such, 'television has generated the proverbial pot of gold' (Kidd 2013, 443) for sporting events such as Formula One and the Olympics. The sports/media complex, furthermore, is symbiotic: media coverage of sporting events are first and foremost important from a self-promotion point of view in the sense that broadcasters apply strategic measures to draw in audiences for their advertisers - thus safeguarding time, pecuniary and resource investments. This, in turn, helps to raise the sport's appeal and value (Helland 2007; Kidd 2013). Crabbe and Brown (2004) confirm that it is of vital importance to maintain the ability to sell sports as an authentic or nostalgic (viewing) experience for

audiences. In their research on stock car racing, Roy, Goss, and Jubenville (2010) found that motor racing values such as action (drama on the track), the speed of the race and the reputation of a series are crucial for audiences' interest. For this symbiotic relationship to be successful, it must be balanced. However, Helland (2007) posits a paradox: the media constitute great potential for exposure but are also weak at safeguarding journalistic ideals, e.g. variety of topics, because broadcasting rights (and accompanying sponsorship requirements) still serve to frame what ought to be covered. In Formula E's case, free access to its broadcasting rights will most likely (cf. Chauhan 2015) generate increased exposure, but considering broadcasters' predefined time and content restraints which limit the selection of relevant stories (Lewis and Weaver 2013), it remains to be seen if this will indeed positively impact exposure of Formula E's ES efforts. Therefore, this article will look at *where the focus of the live broadcast of Formula E lies*.

### ***Environmental Sustainability in the (Motor) Sports-Media Complex***

A considerable amount of academic literature focuses on citizens' growing awareness of ES as a means to reduce harmful practices on society and its implementation in the world of sport (Sheth and Babiak 2010). In the case of motorsport, Haase-Reed, Kushin, and Koeppel (2007) found that, as a result of a socially responsible sport starting to acknowledge its own ecological footprint and developing appropriate policies, media increasingly focus on ES in sports despite it suffering from a limited newsworthiness, i.e. a limited ability to attract readers (Cox 2012). In general, ES can make it into the media as a novelty and event-driven entity but loses significance as exposure decreases (Lester 2010; Cox 2012). Still, by focusing more on ES in sport, the media can pressure sporting businesses and organizations (e.g. FIA and Formula E) by monitoring and scrutinizing their (ES) efforts, or by means of positively communicating corporations' ES efforts along with commitments to stakeholders (Trendafilova, Babiak, and Heinze 2013). Hassan and O'Kane (2011) looked into (the media coverage of) the Dakar Rally and its impact on the development of environmental Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter: CSR) within

motorsports. They show that the organisers of the Dakar Rally implemented CSR by means of the 'Actions Dakar Project' which was scrutinised by the media and environmental organizations as a smokescreen to reduce criticism. This paper aims to examine *to what extent live television broadcasting picks up on and monitors Formula E's ES efforts, i.e. to what extent television broadcasting of Formula E considers ES as newsworthy, and to what extent it monitors the sports' ES efforts?*

### ***Theoretical Framework: Sports-Media Framing***

An important factor of sports-media research is analysing how audiences are encouraged to think about what the media suggest or, in other words, how a topic which is selected by the media to become news is presented to audiences (Scheufele 1999; Lester 2010). As such, a framing paradigm provides an ideal option for two reasons. First, framing theory has a deep-rooted tradition in mediated sports research and has been used by many researchers analysing sports (media) companies on the basis of rendered frames (Turner 2014). Second, it provides a productive approach for comparative and longitudinal research. Framing, then, can be understood as 'selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality in order to make them more salient and, in doing so, promote a problem definition, a causal interpretation, a moral evaluation and a treatment recommendation' (Entman 1993, 52), whereby the latter four function as reasoning devices (Entman 1993; Van Gorp 2010) alongside framing devices (lexicon, catchphrases, depictions and stereotypes) (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp 2010) to make up frames. As an inherent part of framing, frames refer to 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual' (Gitlin 1980, 7). Furthermore, by selecting what to emphasise and what to exclude, the media can influence the messages the audience receives by providing them with a suggested meaning which is the consequence of the effect of power relations (Cheek 2004; Van Gorp 2004).

Recently, sports journalism has been evolving into a hybrid model that combines traditional reporting styles with social media which, subsequently, allows for (1) more opportunities for journalists to draft stories in a way that uses different frames as information about athletes, teams and the sport itself become more readily available and (2) an increasingly dominant overlap of sports coverage, entertainment and celebrity (Shultz and Scheffer 2010; Lewis and Weaver 2013). Indeed, a study by Lewis and Weaver (2013) states that sports media stories are traditionally grounded in an overarching performance frame. Despite this move to a hybrid model, and although media producers most often do not intentionally choose certain frames over others (Van Gorp 2010), they are still limited by time and/or content restraints and can only select a limited number of relevant stories (cf. Lewis and Weaver 2013). Another study (see chapter four) analysed the representation of Formula E's ES efforts in British and Flemish newspapers and reveals that ES did not constitute a dominant frame but appeared as part of other frames of Formula E. Yet it did constitute one counter-frame, namely Formula E as 'a green farce' whereby, as a solution, ES rather necessitates a celebratory and critical approach. This bears some implications for the representation of ES during broadcasts of Formula E as, on the one hand, the increased potential for new frames as a result of the hybrid model could allow for the inclusion of ES. Yet, on the other hand, the time (i.e. allocated timeslot) and content restraints (cf. traditional motor racing values) set out by the producers could still hamper inclusion. Based on these notions, this study analyses if and *how and to what extent journalists incorporate ES frames in reporting and or continue to use more traditional frames.*

## **Methodology**

Although sometimes criticised for its 'wider academic relevance which is hampered by its own idiosyncrasies' (Flyvbjerg 2006), there exists some compelling reasoning to adopt a case study approach. First, and as defined by Yin (2014), the distinctive need for utilizing a case study approach emerges from a desire to comprehend one or more complex, social and contemporary

phenomenon, e.g. it enables a more in-depth analysis of relationships between the media and sport with respect to the debate on the environment (Flyvbjerg 2006). As such, it is perfectly suited to answer questions that deal with operational links needing to be viewed diachronically (Yin, 2017) and, additionally, allows for an exhaustive overview of frames present in a sample of media texts (Van den Bulck and Claessens, 2013). As such, a longitudinal and single-case study design was selected that allowed for the same single case, i.e. the Formula E season opening race broadcast<sup>7</sup>, to be examined at three one-year intervals (Yin 2014; Yin 2017). The selection criteria are fourfold. (1) All broadcasts are identical in format (i.e. season opening races) and allow for a more specific longitudinal view than a random selection of races during the same period would provide, (2) the first race of each new season is most likely to carry the most magnitude as it includes new information regarding the racing series (technology, rules and regulations and possibly ES), (3) the sample includes races in South-East Asia (Beijing and Hong Kong) which still has the highest level of deaths due to air pollution on the planet (World health Organisation, 2018) and might instigate ES commentary, and (4) all broadcasts are produced from a UK perspective, grounded in the country's world-leading motorsport industry (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skill Committee 2010). An important consideration is that, despite the abovementioned motivations, the sample still maintains some level of pragmatism and other broadcasts not included here might indeed yield deviating results.

The sample consists of the 2014 ITV4<sup>8</sup> Beijing Formula ePrix, the 2015 ITV4 Beijing Formula EPrix and the 2016 Channel 5<sup>9</sup> Hong Kong Formula EPrix. Primary data were sampled from both television and online platforms. The first ITV4 as well the Channel 5 broadcasts were accessed by means of a live

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<sup>7</sup> A broadcast can be considered to be a system of signs made up of qualifying- and/or race/studio commentary and pre-recorded verbal material such as interviews (Smith 2014).

<sup>8</sup> ITV4 is part of the ITV broadcasting company which is the main free-to-air company in the UK.

<sup>9</sup> Channel 5 is a British commercial broadcaster which took over from ITV4 after it dropped broadcasting Formula E for the third Formula E season (2016-2017).

recording on 13 September 2014 and 09 October 2016, respectively. The second ITV4 broadcast was accessed through Youtube on 24 October 2016. During a first part, the sample was coded inductively and comprised of all three stages of coding as set out by Van Gorp (2010). During open coding, all data were assigned codes with the smallest unit of analysis for coding being a set of sentences that created a meaningful segment, which usually included a number of sentences but were, in some instances, just one or two. Next, axial coding required data comparison and contrasting with the aim of unearthing similarities and patterns. During the stage of selective coding, overall consistencies were combined into frame packages and assigned a frame name (Gamson and Modigliani 1989).

Frame salience was operationalised in frequency of occurrence and frame relationships, i.e. dominant, secondary, counter (Zhou and Moy 2007). As a means of reflection (Shenton 2004), the second, i.e. deductive, part of the analysis featured revisiting the sampled data with the frames generated to ensure a high level of applicability (Van Gorp 2010).

Finally, a note on the author's position indicates previous involvement in motorsport, both as a fan and driver. Although not a British national, the author has spent a considerable amount of time in the UK, participating in and studying British automotive and (motor) sport culture. Such practical understanding undoubtedly helps provide additional context against which to generate and interpret this study's findings.

### ***Formatting the Race Broadcasts***

A preliminary analysis of the live broadcasts gave a clear insight into the returning structure of the broadcasts. Each consisted of three macro-sections often associated with live broadcasting of motorsport (Evans 2013), i.e. a pre-race section that included free practice, qualifying and pre-race pit walk and grid walk; a race section featuring commentary accompanied by the actual race footage; and a post-race section in which the race is analysed. Each macro-



section constituted a sub-unit of analysis for the identification of frames which allowed for a more thorough comparison of the broadcasts.

## Findings and Discussion

The qualitative framing analysis resulted in eight frames, which functioned as dominant, secondary, counter-frames or sub-frames or a combination of these depending on the individual broadcast. It also generated some quantitative results.

*Table 4: Overview of frame occurrence found per macro-section of each broadcast*

	2014 ITV4			2015 ITV4			2016 Channel 5		
	Pre-	Race	Post-	Pre-	Race	Post-	Pre-	Race	Post-
<b>Challenge</b>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Facing the Unknown</b>	✓			✓			✓	✓	
<b>Novelty</b>	✓			✓			✓	✓	
<b>Audience Involvement</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
<b>Generating Conflict</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Generating Safety</b>			✓				✓	✓	
<b>Proper Motorsport</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Strong ecological message</b>	✓								
<b>Total Number of Frames</b>	7	4	3	5	4	3	7	7	2

Table 4 shows that the pre-race sections of all three broadcasts contain the largest variety of frames. Similarly, the race sections of the first two broadcasts featured an identical set and number of frames (four in both 2014 and 2015)

with the 2016 race section featuring additional frames (seven in 2016). The post-race section shows a more equal spread of frames across all broadcasts (three frames in 2014, 2015 and 2016). Last, two frames (i.e. 'Generating Safety' and 'A Strong Ecological Message') are not present in every broadcast, while three other frames (i.e. 'Audience Involvement', 'Generating Conflict' and 'Proper Motorsport') feature in the same macro-sections of each broadcast with the latter two being present in all broadcasts.

On the basis of the overall group of frames reconstructed from the data (see Table 4), three important divisions can be made. A first division relates to the single ES frame 'Strong Ecological Message' present in the pre-race section of the 2014 ITV broadcast and functions as a secondary frame and as a sub-frame to the 'Novelty' frame, which will be discussed later. Considering the unique status of the 'Strong Ecological Message' frame within the larger set of frames, a closer look at this frame seems necessary. The dominant issue presented in this frame is that Formula E carries a message of ES for the future which is attributed to a greater relevance for people as awareness of ES is increasingly part of people's lives (Lester 2010): 'Everyone's looking at hybrid technologies and sustainability for the future and this is a series which brings it to the forefront of everyone's mind' and 'We bring a strong ecological message' (ITV 2014). The suggested consequence of this is that Formula E has gained traction globally, regardless of standing and as confirmation that ES is relevant to Formula E, motorsport as a whole as well as to mankind's future. It 'has invited a lot of big players with the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio saying he wanted to be involved' (ITV 2014). ES achieves this because it can successfully attract and deploy celebrities which, as commodities, strengthen and mobilise new and existing support and, as such, facilitate environmental profiling for Formula E (Lester 2010). The moral evaluation is significantly positive, both in terms of commentator discourse as in interviewee discourses, which becomes apparent through word choice, for example: '[ES] is massively important', 'it's good that motorsport is leading the way' (ITV 2014). Important to note is that the level of detail in terms of context surrounding this suggested importance of ES is limited

and as such corresponds to Boykoff's (2011) first problem, i.e. a missed opportunity to significantly advance the climate story.

In addition, and despite this rather positive framing of Formula E in terms of a 'Strong Ecological Message', this frame appears only in the pre-race section of the 2014 ITV broadcast, effectively drawing emphasis away from ES throughout all other macro-sections of all three broadcasts (Entman 1993; Misener 2012). As such the frame functions as a neglected frame whereby the already significant invisibility of ES in general is continued here too (Cox 2012; Hansen 2010). This subsequently suggests ES's use during the pre-race section of the 2014 ITV broadcast as a green selling card, primarily intended to be attractive and interesting (McComas and Shanahan 1999) for previously uninitiated motorsport audiences during Formula E's first televised exposure and implies that broadcasters do not engage much in terms of environmental surveillance of Formula E.

Table 5: Signature matrix with frames, and the related framing and reasoning devices

Reasoning devices A				
Frame	Issue/ problem	Cause	Solution	Moral evaluation
- <i>Cultural Theme</i>				
<b>Challenge</b> - <i>Hardship brings out the best</i>	It is difficult to set up and participate in a new series	Time constraints and outsider cynicism	The need to persevere	Positive – Everyone involved has done their best
<b>Facing the unknown</b> - <i>Uncertainty makes people uneasy</i>	Organisers/ participants have no frame of reference	Formula E is untried and untested	Practical experience diminishes the unknown	Positive – time will tell
<b>Novelty</b> - <i>Change</i>	Stimulating change in technology through sport	The need to look at new technology for the future'	Pushing technology through competition	Positive –the perfect way to develop these technologies
<b>Audience involvement –</b> <i>Anyone can help</i>	Help TV audiences get involved with motorsport	TV audiences lacked the means to engage with motorsport	Audiences should use online and social media platforms	Positive – the great process of FanBoost

Framing devices A				
<b>Frame</b> - <i>Cultural Theme</i>	Words	Stereotypes/ metaphors	Catchphrases	Depictions ...
<b>Challenge</b> - <i>Hardship brings out the best</i>	Tough, challenging, pressure to perform	Hurdles to overcome	/	Managing the strategy as the race goes on must be challenging
<b>Facing the unknown</b> - <i>Uncertainty makes people uneasy</i>	the start of the season, a real unknown	[drivers need to] read the waves	expect the unexpected	... the land of the unknown
<b>Novelty</b> - <i>Change</i>	New, future	the race car of today is the street car of tomorrow	a new and different way of going about motorsport	... a framework for R&D around the electric vehicle
<b>Audience involvement –</b> <i>Anyone can help</i>	join, involvement, #FanBoost'	/	Get involved	... sometimes fans make the difference
Reasoning devices B				
<b>Frame</b> - <i>Cultural Theme</i>	Issue/ problem	Cause	Solution	Moral evaluation
<b>Generating conflict</b> - <i>Drama</i>	People will get upset	Sport is a symbolic arena where drama unfolds	Deal with it - winning/ losing as inherent to sport	Positive – no feeling sorry
<b>Generating safety</b> - <i>The well-being of athletes</i>	Accidents on track (will) happen	The inherent dangers of motorsport	Quick/ correct decision making saves lives	Largely positive - based on the handling of each incident
<b>Proper motorsport</b> - <i>Motor racing values/ entertainment</i>	Motorsport audiences bring high expectations to Formula E	Formula E aims to be at the pinnacle of its field	Formula E will need to deliver on these expectations	Confirming the quality of the series
<b>Strong ecological message</b> <i>Protecting the environment</i>	Development of sustainable technologies creates relevance	Audiences increasingly care about ES in society	Formula E must continue raising ES technology awareness	Very positive – approving of Formula E's ES efforts

Framing devices B				
Frame	Words	Stereotypes/ metaphors	Catchphrases	Depictions ...
- <i>Cultural Theme</i>				
<b>Generating conflict</b> - <i>Drama</i>	Battling, pulled the trigger, pole position shootout	The track as a battlefield	highs and lows of motor racing	... friends now, but [...] for how much longer?
<b>Generating safety</b> - <i>The well-being of athletes</i>	Dangerous, serious safety issue	motorsport is dangerous it's at every ticket	/	... now we just see how safe the cars are
<b>Proper motorsport</b> - <i>Motor racing values/ entertainment</i>	very professional, cracking move	close[ness] great for racing	one of the toughest grids in the world	... how breathless Formula E racing is, sportsmanship is a part of this series
<b>Strong ecological message</b> - <i>Protecting the environment</i>	ecological, environment, sustainability	Formula E brings it [ES] to the forefront of everyone's mind	motorsport is leading the way	... Formula E as a platform for environmentally sustainable messages

In addition to the frame itself, commentator discourse just prior to the beginning of the race section (i.e. after the studio part) provides an alternative insight, even though it does not consist of enough data to provide a true counter-frame:

[Race commentator]: 'the great thing about this is that the people that brought this together are motorsport people. [...] It's really people with a love of motorsport that have put this together rather than necessarily from the environmental side' (ITV 2014).

[Co-commentator]: Absolutely. Jean Todt [President of the FIA] has given a lot of backing from day one and there's not many people with a motorsport history as his from being a co-driver to being Ferrari F1 team boss' (ITV 2014)

These comments do not reject ES but do imply that ‘people from the environmental side’ may not succeed where ‘motorsport people’, i.e. industry professionals that understand the requirements inherent to quality motorsport (entertainment), would in establishing Formula E as an authentic motor racing product. Here, Boykoff’s (2011) second problem applies as the framing of ES occurs in terms of socio-political and potential economic concerns regarding ES in Formula E, i.e. remaining firm within the boundaries of neo-liberalism and free-market capitalism (Carvalho 2005). More so, broadcasters reporting on Formula E’s embracing of ES may lead viewers to fear that Formula E’s entertainment value as authentic motorsport will be affected by it (Crabbe and Brown, 2004). Indeed, this focus on maintaining traditional values associated with motorsport by audiences becomes apparent when looking at some of the remaining and more dominant frames that broadcasters use to help raise the sport’s profile (Helland 2007; Kidd 2003).

A first frame in that respect is that of Formula E as a ‘Challenge’ which represents the issue of significant difficulty associated with conceptualizing and competing in Formula E and was complemented by criticism from within the motorsport industry itself: ‘They had a lot of hurdles to overcome. A lot of scepticism of motorsport fans [...]’ (ITV4 2014). This second frame was complemented by its sub-frame ‘Facing the Unknown’ which functioned as a dominant frame in the 2015 ITV4 and the 2016 Channel 5 broadcasts, but as a secondary frame in the 2014 ITV4 broadcast. This issue of the unknown implies a level of uncertainty, i.e. not knowing what to expect due to Formula E’s untried and untested character, on behalf of the organisers and participants. Interestingly, these frames were complemented by a third, i.e. ‘Proper Motorsport’, frame which functions as a secondary frame throughout all three broadcasts and suggests that Formula E constitutes solid (motor) sport/entertainment values and credentials and, subsequently, validates audiences’ time. This frame also functions as a counter-frame to the ‘Novelty’ frame which will be discussed later. A fourth frame, i.e. ‘Generating Conflict’, functions as a secondary frame and embodies the common ‘Conflict’ frame in sports reporting. As such, it depicts Formula E as a symbolic arena where drama

unfolds (Kennedy and Hills 2009). This frame is closely related to its sub-frame 'Generating Safety' as the latter often arises as a result of the former. As such, this secondary frame only appeared when incidents unfolded during on-track activity whereby the issue is that motorsport is inherently dangerous: 'We always hear motorsport is dangerous, it's at every ticket' (ITV4 2014). All five frames described above can be grouped together as a sub-division on the basis of (1) constructing a motorsport series with recognizable elements which stays faithful to values associated with attracting motorsport (broadcasting) audiences (Roy, Goss, and Jubenville 2010) and (2) the overarching performance frame (Lewis and Weaver 2013). In doing so, this new TV sport effectively frames its own representation in the context of values that generate 'good television' by providing the pleasure points on offer as well as points of identification for audiences (Whannel 1992, 112). Indeed with respect to the latter, and as Crabbe and Brown (2004) indicate, it is very important for broadcasters and organisers to provide a nostalgic experience for motorsport fans. More so, ES is considered by the UK public to not constitute key determinants in the daily decision-making process even though EV's are generally being seen as green and environmentally legitimate (Parkhill et al. 2013; O'Garra, Mourato, and Pearson 2004). As such, this group falls under the denominator 'traditional motorsport'.

Interestingly, the two remaining frames cannot be categorised under the aforementioned group. The first is the 'Novelty' frame which depicts Formula E as a new and different way of going about motorsport and is, as such, constructed around stimulating change in technology, and subsequently relevance, through sport. The presence of this frame is perhaps unsurprising as it has been used often in sport broadcasting to introduce British audiences to unfamiliar sports and has led to broadcasters being able to generate sustainable audience numbers (Whannel 1992). In particular, Formula E is presented as 'a framework for R&D around the electric vehicle' (ITV4 2014) which 'takes technology to the edge' (Channel 5 2016) and results in development of 'the race car of today [which] is the street car of tomorrow' (Channel 5 2016). This frame is especially prevalent from the second season

onwards (see Table 4), when Formula E first introduced ‘new powertrains in the back of the cars’ (ITV4 2015). In a number of instances, the notion of driving (hybrid) technologies is linked to driving, i.e. promoting sustainability: ‘Looking at hybrid technologies and [environmental] sustainability for the future’ (ITV4 2014). Last, the ‘audience involvement’ frame is constructed around the idea that whilst TV audiences have long lacked the means to engage with top-level motorsport ‘you can [now] help’ (ITV4 2014) and functions first and foremost as a counter-frame to the ‘challenge’ as well as a sub-frame to the ‘Novelty’ frame. The fact that both ‘Novelty’ and ‘Audience Involvement’ appear in all three broadcasts, and predominantly during the pre-race broadcasts (see Table 4), suggests that broadcasters believe Formula E can be brought to audiences additionally by introducing something non-traditional like novelty EV technology and enhanced audience engagement and interaction through social media. This is in accordance with the strategy to generate a global audience (Menzies and Nguyen 2012) for Formula E and to draw in fans from other motorsport series and people previously uninterested in motorsport (Chauhan, 2015).

### **The Way Forward**

Clearly, there are some significant barriers for media broadcasters to include the ES frame diachronically in Formula E broadcasting. However, as the long-term health of the sports-media culture has always depended on its ability to engage and tailor to different and emerging communities (Boyle 2010), the question regarding what it would take for such an ES perspective to be ‘naturalised’ into broadcasts of Formula E emerges? Although the aim of television broadcasting representation is largely to articulate ‘various elements into a coherent, yet complex, unity’ (Whannel 1992, 115), the ‘complex political and social problems are usually unresponsive to simplistic solutions’ (Sugden 2006, 238). Bearing this in mind and although perhaps speculative in nature, some final considerations could prove useful. A first consideration entails the integration of a (short) dedicated section as part of each broadcast that covers both recent and relevant sustainability content, i.e. not only ES but also



economic and social sustainability, of Formula E in relation to each venue visited. This content would then be gradually integrated in the (motorsport) broadcast structure and disseminated to audiences. Not only would such a dedicated section not compromise traditional motorsport fans' expectations in terms of the race coverage itself, it would also accommodate new audiences that would appreciate this initial, yet consistent, alignment of motorsport and sustainability. This could have considerable potential considering Formula E aims to attract younger audiences that are growing up amidst the societal importance of sustainability as well as digital technologies (Chauhan, 2015). Further, such a dedicated section could incorporate audience involvement/input through online and social media with content (e.g. questions, advice, debates) to which drivers and staff can also contribute.

Of course, it would be narrow-minded to consider any successful effort to 'naturalise' ES, or sustainability in general, in TV broadcasts of Formula E to be achieved only by broadcasters themselves. Formula E could develop beyond #FanBoost to include a platform that encourages and invites audiences to engage with sustainability related efforts, technologies and other content. Also, from a rules and regulations perspective, additional sustainability challenges could be incorporated for teams and drivers, e.g. the driver that finishes the race with the most energy left in the batteries is rewarded. As such, these final considerations would find further validation in the fact that 'the sports-media relationship has always been characterised by change, shot through with strong patterns of continuity' (Boyle 2010, 1311).

## **Conclusion**

The primary aim of this study was to build on and contribute to the body of existing research on the representation of ES in motorsport by looking at how different broadcasts deal with Formula E diachronically. Drawing on a framing approach as developed by Gamson and Modigliani (1989) and Entman (1993), we performed a qualitative analysis to obtain a better understanding of the function and importance of ES in live television broadcasts of Formula E.

We found that the frames used to represent Formula E revealed a predominantly traditional focus in favour of maintaining at least some beliefs and values associated with motorsport. Broadcasters picked up on ES exclusively during the earlier stages of the first live broadcast with the premise of Formula E sending a strong ecological message. Afterwards, this focus faded, suggesting that ES worked as an initial novelty and selling card. More so, and much like ES does not constitute a highly salient concept to the average British citizen, coverage of ES in Formula E constitutes a limited level of newsworthiness and is not considered as valuable as to other, non-traditional to reach the strategic objective of generating an audience for the new motorsport series. Although broadcasters help raise the sport's profile from a sporting character, it seems that a more societally aware sports coverage in which ES is monitored longitudinally still remains absent. As such, this article has presented a couple of considerations that might prove valuable for 'naturalizing' ES in broadcasting of Formula E. While Formula E's aim to achieve long-term and global public awareness and recognition as an ES motorsport series continues, future studies will need to follow up on when, how and to what extent broadcasters will eventually carry through this 'naturalisation of ES'.

This study suggests some key emerging issues in what will continue to be a growing area of interest and research as motorsport studies and ES become increasingly relevant in a world aiming at improving sustainability in sports and beyond. For now though, at least as far as the commentator is concerned, 'going green' in Formula E broadcasting still only denotes the colour of the lights.

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# CHAPTER 6

## 'HYPOCRITICAL INVESTOR' OR HOLLYWOOD 'DO-GOODER'? A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF MEDIA AND AUDIENCES NEGOTIATING LEONARDO DICAPRIO'S 'GREEN' PERSONA THROUGH HIS INVOLVEMENT IN FORMULA E

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Timothy Robeers and Hilde Van den Bulck

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### **Preface**

The fourth case study in this Ph.D. combines the elements of textual production and reception in the context of celebrity activism and motorsport and focusses specifically on mediating a celebrity's endorsement of (ES in) Formula E. This is due to two main reasons. First, the A-list celebrity actor Leonardo DiCaprio (re)appeared in results from all previous empirical analyses in this Ph.D. Second, celebrities as (hyper-)commodities and endorsers can play an important part in affecting media representations (Van den Bulck, 2018) of the environment and related issues (Brockington, 2009).

As such, this chapter provides more in-depth insight in the everyday online media coverage from three periods in time across a four year period whilst taking into consideration accompanying audience reactions. The online media coverage and audience reactions to DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E are subjected to a qualitative framing-based analysis, an approach often adopted for media analyses of celebrity (Van den Bulck and Claessens, 2013).

This fourth chapter thus bridges the domains of communication, celebrity and motorsport studies. In doing so, this case study demonstrates that DiCaprio's celebrity involvement indeed helps to attract wider media reporting on current affairs focusing either on the issue of environment, electric vehicles,



motorsport and on the celebrity's political and private personae. From a reception point of view, audience readings of the media produced frames goes in varying directions by rendering DiCaprio, for example, as both a hero and a hypocrite to be involved with Formula E. As such, this chapter finds commenters' arguments and views are affected by personal experiences and their parasocial relationship with DiCaprio.

### **Abstract**

Leonardo DiCaprio has a considerable track-record as a fervent campaigner to save the environment and combat climate change. Drawing from his more recent activist engagements to endorse Formula E, the world's first fully electric racing series, this contribution aims to analyse how and in what ways this generates additional exposure and appreciation for the series, the environment and DiCaprio. To this end, a qualitative and inductive framing approach is used to examine a sample of online media articles and accompanying audience comments from 2013, 2015 and 2017, resulting in a range of frames found in media coverage and audience reactions. It shows how framing of Leonardo DiCaprio is influenced by both his life story as an actor, activist and party boy, the appreciation he receives from audiences as well as by audiences' own personal experiences with health related issues and their conversations with peers. Finally, this contribution discusses varying tendencies by media articles and audiences to frame Leonardo DiCaprio as both hero and hypocrite as well as its wider implications.

### **Key words**

Celebrity activism, Formula E, environmental sustainability, framing analysis, online media content, reception, parasocial relationships, Leonardo DiCaprio

## **Celebrity Activism: Green Is the New Black**

In an era when endorsement of social and political issues and good causes has become an intrinsic part of a celebrity persona (Van den Bulck 2018), ever more stars can be seen (and are covered in celebrity media) as devoting themselves to environmental issues (Brockington 2009; Lester 2010). Unsurprisingly, this coincides with a growing (if debated) concern for the health of the planet, expressed by media, citizens and politicians (Cox 2012). This has accelerated public and political acknowledgement that fighting climate change and global warming requires a focus on environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES), i.e. the ability to steer developments in such a way that present needs are met without compromising the needs of future generations (United Nations 1988). Celebrity environmental activists help to advocate and to create awareness for ES by using their visibility through media presence and their accessibility to widespread audiences (Boykoff and Goodman 2009). One of the most famous environmental figure heads is Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio. Much covered aspects of his activist strategy include speaking out at climate summits such as Cop21 and Paris 2015, committing himself to environmental organizations, commissioning pro-environmental movies and making personal investments in organisations and businesses that further the cause (Furgang and Furgang 2009).

Acknowledging the fact that the automotive industry plays a significant role in the production of greenhouse gasses, DiCaprio directed his green activism towards the support of Formula E, a fully electric motor racing series that promotes itself as the future of motorsport by aiming to drive forward and promote new technological advancements (Formula E, 2018). Supposedly, the novelty of Formula E lies in combining the core notions of motorsport and ES, resulting in, for example, the use of green energy to charge cars, much reduced noise levels and no carbon dioxide emitted by race cars during (city-centre) racing (Formula E, 2018). By means of a qualitative framing analysis, this contribution studies online media coverage and audience reactions to Leonardo DiCaprio's endorsement of Formula E as an inroad to unravel the

complex relationship between a celebrity's activism, his persona, and the mediated communication about this: to what extent and how do media and audiences pick up on DiCaprio's endorsement of Formula E and its ES message as part of his environmental agenda? How are discussions about Formula E and ES affected by DiCaprio's persona, the type of media involved and the audience views of both the actor and the issue?

This introduction is followed by a theoretical framework that deals with key concepts and ideas from the literature on celebrity activism as it relates to the characteristics of the celebrity construct and apparatus, and on ES as it relates to automotive and motorsport initiatives, subsequently focusing on Leonardo DiCaprio, his persona, ES activism and relationship to Formula E. Next, we discuss the set-up of the empirical case, including sampling and the application of framing analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the frames found, comparing and contrasting media and audience in their framing of DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E and ES. We end with a discussion of the wider implications of this case study. Indeed, wider relevance to our understanding of celebrity activism by means of a single case (DiCaprio's endorsement of Formula E) may be limited due to its idiosyncrasies. However, we argue that it is precisely this limitation that gives meaning to a case study, as it allows us to understand very specific processes and functions through detailed de- and re-construction (Flyvbjerg 2006; Van den Bulck and Claessens 2012). As such, our findings can have relevance beyond understanding the particulars of media and audience responses to DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E. Our study's relevance is twofold. First, it draws attention to the fact that many cases of social-profit endorsement, even by iconic celebrity activists as DiCaprio, do not generate the desired amount and type of media and audience attention that it generally anticipated. Second, it provides a more in-depth understanding of the interplay between various aspects of a celebrity persona and their impact on the way in which the activism is perceived, thus furthering both empirical and conceptual insights in the sub-field of celebrity activism studies.

## **Celebrity Activism, Environmental Sustainability and Formula E**

### ***Celebrity Activism and the Celebrity Construct***

Celebrity activism refers to various efforts by celebrities to affect social, political, economic or environmental change through fundraising, advocacy and/or awareness creation (Van den Bulck 2018; Huddart 2005). We follow Panis (2012) in his definition of celebrity activists as (1) individuals who enjoy public recognition, (2) known primarily from areas other than that of their societal engagement, (3) who use their fame (4) to volunteer, advocate or lobby, create awareness of, and/or help raise funds (5) for a socio-political cause or non-profit organisation, (6) targeted media, (members of) non-profit organisations, entrepreneurs, policy makers and/or the general public (see Van den Bulck 2018). Efforts can range from one-off (joining a rally, putting something up for auction, performing at an event), over longer term (as spokesperson or figure head), to life-long engagement.

With the celebrity-without-a-cause a thing of the past, celebrity's social-political engagement has become part and parcel of the celebrity construct, an interplay between the person be(com)ing famous, media and audiences, that critically revolves around various aspects of the celebrity persona (Evans and Hesmondalgh 2005; Van den Bulck 2018). Traditionally, the celebrity persona is seen to consist of the public image generated by professional activities and commodity endorsements; the private images as constructed around family, friends, love and loss; and notions of the real person behind the image as provided by paparazzi (Rojek 2001; Holmes 2005). A celebrity's activism helps to create a, fourth, socio-political persona: an image of the celebrity as someone moving beyond his/her fame and existence as a hyper-commodity to take on important societal problems. At some level, this can be considered as part of the public persona as it is open and demonstrable. However, following Huddart (2005, p. 40), we consider it a persona in its own right that interacts with the public and private image of a celebrity, connecting private views and emotions with the celebrity's public performances. For some celebrities, like protest singer Neil Young, their socio-political and public persona almost

completely overlap, as their public performances make out their societal engagement. Others may incorporate it entirely into their private lives, as the case of celebrity transnational adoptions by celebrity activists such as Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie and pop icon Madonna illustrate (Van den Bulck 2009). At the other end of the spectre are glamorous models, blockbuster actors or seemingly superficial reality stars for whom a societal engagement suggests a caring person behind the wealth or 'pretty face' (Van den Bulck 2018).

Celebrity endorsement of an issue or cause can help to raise the visibility, credibility and legitimacy of a cause (Cashmore 2006). With regards to ES, Brockington (2009, p. 24) contends that celebrity endorsement functions as 'a means by which environmental narratives appear as more truthful' to audiences, indicating ES efforts can become more effective when endorsed by celebrities. In turn, a celebrity's activism affects his/her visibility and overall image. Samman *et al.* (2009) found that long-term celebrity commitment to a cause, results in audiences considering the celebrity as more authentic, especially when (s)he appears knowledgeable about the cause and keeps a low profile about the engagement. Crucially, the strength of a celebrity's societal engagement is determined by the extent to which (s)he manages to obtain a legitimate standing (Meyer and Gamson 1995, p. 189). When media and/or audiences pick up on a celebrity not behaving in accordance with an issue or an organisation's ethos or on showing secondary motives for his support, e.g. financial gain, such endorsement can be counterproductive to both the cause and the celebrity's image (McCracken 1989; Van den Bulck 2018). Earlier work (e.g. Van den Bulck *et al.* 2016; Panis and Van den Bulck 2014) suggests that media attention to and interpretation of celebrity activism varies according to the type of media outlet, while other research (Van den Bulck 2017; Van den Bulck and Claessens 2013) suggests that audience's reactions to media coverage of celebrity activism is mediated by personal experiences, discussion with peers and para-social relationships with the celebrity. The latter refers to 'the illusion of a long-term friendship encompassing an emotional connection

like social relationships, yet mediated and one-sided' (Giles 2002, see also Claessens and Van den Bulck 2015).

### ***Anatomy of a Celebrity Activist: Leonardo DiCaprio's Green Persona***

Leonardo DiCaprio's (°1974) acting career spans several decades. He started out in television series (most famously in 'Growing Pains' (1985-89)), before embarking on a Hollywood career, in the 1990s as a heart throb in movies such as 'Romeo and Juliet' (1996) and 'Titanic' (1997) that established him as a Hollywood blockbuster star, allowing him to work with top directors. He shows great talent and versatility, playing a diverse range of characters, both historical and contemporary, mostly typified by a refusal to conform or by skirting the law as in 'Catch Me if You Can' (2002), 'Gangs of New York' (2002), 'Django Unchained' (2012), 'The Great Gatsby' (2013) and 'Wolf of Wall Street' (2013). This is alternated with roles in thrillers like 'Inception' (2010) and political movies like 'Blood Diamonds' (2006). In 2016 he won the Oscar for best actor for his performance in 'The Revenant' (2015). In this regard, his public persona resembles that of Hollywood star George Clooney (Van den Bulck 2018), playing both heartthrob, cheeky criminal and serious, political inspired issue roles.

DiCaprio, like Clooney, complements this, on the one hand, with a private persona of a 'man's man' (Van den Bulck 2018, p. 120). Media and fans consider DiCaprio as quite the 'player' and 'party boy', regularly changing girlfriends and partying on yachts and in nightclubs across the globe with his self-proclaimed 'Pussy Posse' companions (Ovenden 2017). On the other hand, he has developed a political persona as an environmentalist. From the beginning, this green activism has been permeated with political underpinnings through public associations with politicians like Al Gore, Ban-Ki Moon and Barack Obama, appearances at rallies and protests (e.g. Climate Change 29 April 2017) and addressing the world's economic and political elites at major conferences including at the United Nations (e.g. Cop21, Paris, 2015) which appointed him as United Nations Messenger of Peace. Bridging the public and the political, DiCaprio has produced and featured in environmental documentaries like 'The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour' (2007) and 'Before the Flood' (2016). These suggest that DiCaprio

has developed a legitimate standing in green issues. However, while a similar trajectory helped Clooney to transition from ‘a heartthrob to a heavyweight’ (Gulam 2014, p. 231, see Van den Bulck 2018), DiCaprio’s case appears more complicated. On the one hand, the relationship between his green activism and some of his filmic work has given his image a sense of authenticity with certain media and audiences considering him an ‘environmental champion’ (Furgang and Furgang 2009). On the other hand, DiCaprio’s private ‘party boy’ persona has led to criticism from media and audiences, suggesting a level of hypocrisy (e.g. ‘Leonardo DiCaprio’s Carbon Footprint is much higher than he thinks’ (Rapier 2016)) and, in one instance, instigating a call to resign from his climate role for the United Nations (e.g. ‘Leonardo DiCaprio urged to resign from UN climate change role’ (The Independent 2016)), compromising DiCaprio’s authenticity as an activist. This results in the research question *if and how the success of DiCaprio’s green efforts depends on media and audience perceptions of the relationship between DiCaprio’s political persona and other aspects of his public and private image.*

### ***Leonardo DiCaprio, the Environment and Motorsport***

Recently, DiCaprio has pointed his green activism towards endorsing the fully electric racing series Formula E, an annual, single seater racing series taking place in various cities around the world, involving big name drivers, teams and celebrities. Set up in 2013, Formula E initially promoted itself by claiming to ‘provide a framework for research and development centered around the electric vehicle [hereafter: EV] to promote clean energy and [environmental] sustainability’ (Formula E, 2015). Electric race cars generate lower noise levels and carbon dioxide emissions, allowing races to take place on temporary city centre circuits and for audiences of all ages to attend races and (potentially) learn about the future and benefits of EV’s. The link between automotive/motorsport and environment may appear controversial, yet it is not DiCaprio’s first endorsement of environmentally sustainable automotive products. For example, in 2012, he endorsed Fisker Automotive, a company producing luxury hybrid cars from recycled materials. This endorsement was

criticised in 2014 when the company went out of business (however, relaunched in 2016 as Fisker Inc.). DiCaprio's association with Formula E is his most significant automotive endorsement yet. Indeed, while celebrities like US actors Matt Damon, George Clooney and Josh Hartnett, amongst others, have promoted energy saving cars. DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E is more far-reaching. First, as a founder in 2013 and owner, he endorses the Venturi racing team because, in his words: 'the future of our planet depends on fuel efficient vehicles. Venturi has shown tremendous insight in their decision to create an environmentally friendly racing team, and I am happy to be a part of this effort' (Jalopnik, 2013). Second, in 2015, DiCaprio became Chairman of the Sustainability Committee of Formula E, increasing his potential influence on the management of the series. DiCaprio's choice of connecting environmental issues with motorsport is an unusual one, given motorsports overall negative image with regards to ES (Lowes 2004; Miller 2016) and given that celebrities tend to prefer supporting an already established cause to avoid damaging their image (Van den Bulck 2018). This results in the research question *how does Leonardo DiCaprio endorsement of Formula E as ES-friendly affects his political image with media and audiences and how this relates to the other aspects of his celebrity persona.*

As with all celebrity endorsement, DiCaprio's involvement can help raise much needed visibility and goodwill with media and audiences (Tsaliki *et al.* 2011) for a new organisation's brand (Formula E) that is working towards an image (ES) that is different from that of its wider context (motorsport). Indeed, as a new concept, what Formula E brings in innovation, it also brings in uncertainty as ES has not been part of the values that fans traditionally associate with motor racing with its long tradition of focusing on speed, danger and glamour (Roy *et al.* 2010), while being criticised for its disregard for the environment (Miller 2016). As indicated in chapter four, the representation of ES in Formula E race coverage on British television suggests that, after an original attention to the ecological message of the series, interest in ES faded in subsequent voice-over commentary. This reflects the limited interest and total disinterest in ES in print coverage of Formula E in UK and Flemish



newspapers respectively. However, strong endorsement by a celebrity known for his green activism may affect attention in this regard. This leads to the research question: *how and to what extent does media reporting on Leonardo DiCaprio and Formula E feature ES?*

## **Analysing DiCaprio and Formula E**

### ***A Framing Approach***

To understand the (mutual) impact of Leonardo DiCaprio association with Formula E through ES advocacy, we subject a sample of online media coverage and audiences' reactions hereof to a framing analysis. Framing is the process of 'selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality in order to make them more salient' (Entman 1993, p. 52). Frames constitute meta-communicative messages, i.e. 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse, whether verbal or visual' (Gitlin 1980, p. 7). Frames display themselves in texts through reasoning devices that relate to a frame's four functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation (Entman 1993, p. 52). To this end, frames employ framing devices like word choice, catchphrases, depictions and stereotypes (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp 2010) while frame sponsors are used to endorse the frame (Van Gorp 2006).

Framing analysis allows to apply the same framework to the analysis of media coverage and of audience reactions (see, e.g. Van den Bulck and Claessens 2013; Van den Bulck 2017). Inspired by Hall et al (2013), we analyse to what extent audiences take over the frame provided in the coverage or to what extent they reject it, providing counter frames, or negotiate it, bringing in personal experiences, discussion with other online commentators (peers) and their parasocial relationship with the celebrity.

## ***Steps in the Analysis***

### *Sampling*

To analyse media coverage of and audience reactions to DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E, we opted for an analysis of a wide range of online news sources, first, because they have been recognised as constituting rich resources for the study of environmental (and celebrity) activism (Lester and Hutchins 2009; Sima 2011) and, second, their comments section allows for an analysis of audience reactions. An initial Internet search revealed a number of instances when DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E was reported on. We selected the three main occurrences, spread across the time period (09/12/2013 - 09/02/2014; 22/10/2015 - 22/12/2015; 14/07/2017 - 14/09/2017): DiCaprio's announcement of co-founding the Venturi Racing Formula E team in December 2013; his appointment as Chairman of the Sustainability Committee for Formula E in October 2015; and his appearance at the inaugural New York Formula E race weekend in July 2017. A subsequent Internet search for each occurrence covered a two-month period from the day the news was released. The keywords 'Leonardo DiCaprio' and 'Formula E' were entered into search engine Google, resulting in a total of 186 articles. After removing articles with a mere mention of DiCaprio's name, the final sample contained 118 articles. For these, all accompanying comments were retrieved. Unfortunately, only 6 articles featured audience reactions, and these were limited to online articles from 2013 and 2017 only while no audience reactions for news regarding DiCaprio's chairman appointment were found. Still, a sample of 632 audience reactions was collected.

### *Coding the Sample*

Articles and reactions were coded for type of source (celebrity gossip, automotive, general news) and news event, before being submitted to an inductive framing analysis. Following Van Gorp (2010), we performed a three step coding, i.e. open, axial and selective coding, whereby data were compared and contrasted, looking for similarities and patterns, after which overall

consistencies were combined into frame packages (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Frame salience was operationalised in frequency of occurrence and relationships between frames (dominant, secondary, counter and neglected) (Zhou and Moy 2007). The frame matrix can be obtained from the authors on request.

### Framing Leonardo DiCaprio’s Formula E Involvement

To discuss our findings, first, table 6 lists all nine frames found across all online articles and subsequent audience reactions for the periods 2013, 2015 and 2017, with media articles featuring six out of nine frames and audience reactions featuring all frames. Second, all frames can be subdivided into two categories, namely non-celebrity related frames and celebrity related frames. Frames adhering to the former category dealt predominantly with EV’s and (Formula E) motor racing rather than elaborate specifics concerning DiCaprio’s role. Interestingly, their occurrence in articles from non-automotive and non-motorsport media ( $n=69$ ) indicates that DiCaprio’s presence positively affects attention to Formula E and EV’s. As DiCaprio did not feature elaborately in these frames, the following section focuses on the celebrity-related frames that were identified.

Table 6: Frames as found in Online Articles and Audience Reactions

FRAME CATEGORY	FRAME NAME	ONLINE ARTICLES			AUDIENCE REACTIONS		
		2013	2015	2017	2013	2015	2017
<b>Motorsport related</b>	Electric Vehicles Are the Future	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
	Electric Vehicles Are Problematic	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
	Motorsport Improves Electric Vehicles	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
	Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport	-	-	-	✓	-	✓
<b>Celebrity related</b>	Saving the Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
	Hollywood Hero	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
	Celebrity Hypocrisy	-	-	-	✓	-	✓
	Celebrity Health	-	-	✓	-	-	✓

## **Motorsport Related Frames**

### *Frame: 'Electric Vehicles Are the Future'*

This frame acts as a secondary frame in online articles from 2013, 2015 and 2017 and a dominant frame in audience reactions from 2013. The issue at hand is that EV's provide increasing future prowess: 'With motor companies getting behind the new models and improving technology, the EV is back and better than ever.' (Kootenaybiz 2013). The reasons ascribed are the lack of detrimental effects ICE's have on the environment and the higher efficiency rate: 'An EV [...] will be 3x more efficient.' (Itsallicanafford) (PistonHeads 2013). The suggested solution is that breakthrough roadgoing EV development (ESPN 2013) and promotion needs to continue to increase: '[...] promoting mass use of EV's, focusing particularly on urban mobility' (Motorsport 2015) and 'targets laid out for future improvements' (FIAIMSSS 2015). The moral evaluation is positive and sometimes suggestive: '[...] study the implications of EV's and it's clear that the future IS electric' (Galileo) (PistonHeads 2013) and 'I'm not convinced they are the future, but like you said they are part of the future.' (binnerboy) (PistonHeads 2013).

### *Frame 'Electric Vehicles Are Problematic'*

Both a dominant and counter frame to 'Electric Vehicles Are The Future' in both online articles and audiences reactions across all periods, this frame points towards a serious image problem: 'Electric cars are hardly cutting edge science and technology, but they have an image problem.' (Noetic-sciences, 2013). The causes suggested are numerous and imply a profound concern. For example, EV's are uncool: 'DiCaprio takes up titanic challenge to make electric car racing cool' (The Times 2013), and 'EV sales are well below expectations, the technology is expensive, immature and inflexible [...]' (RemarkLima) (PistonHeads 2013). The suggested solution is that resources and focus should be directed elsewhere: 'The sooner people realise there will be no significant

advances in battery development (Li-ion) in the next 10+ years, the more the EV debate will move [...] to a much more pragmatic viewpoint.’ (TheInternet) (PistonHeads 2013). As such, the moral evaluation is rather negative.

*Frame ‘Motorsport Improves Electric Vehicles’*

This frame functions as a counter frame to the ‘Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport’ and appears in media articles from 2015 and audience reactions of 2013. The issue at hand is that Formula E can benefit the development of EV’s: ‘As the tech designed for F1 make it into normal cars FE will help advance electric car innovation.’ (PlainNiceOne) (The Verge 2013) and provide a new and exciting form of motorsport: ‘Certainly looking forward to them racing [...] scope to make the racing interesting [...]’ (GranCab) (PistonHeads 2013). The cause attributed to this is a historical one, namely history has shown that motorsport has been an instigator for technological development: for example ‘racing has been a tremendous driver of technology in the internal combustion world, and there is no reason it shouldn't do the same for electric vehicles’ (dc2rr07) (PistonHeads 2013). The suggested improvement to better the issue is that Formula E needs the freedom to develop itself and allow for the trickle-down effect of EV technology to take effect: ‘The trickling down of technological developments to consumer level and mass adoption will make a huge difference.’ (Electricautosport 2015) and ‘Race series like this are often a good platform for technological development and innovation which can only be a good thing.’ (Andy ap) (PistonHeads 2013). Similarly, the moral evaluation is that Formula E (and other EV motorsport series) needs to be given the opportunity to prove its worth over time, for example ‘I for one am looking forward to it, and will give it a chance before making an informed opinion.’ (GranCab) (PistonHeads 2013). Additionally, it should be kept in mind that Formula E is not meant for everyone: ‘It [Formula E] is for the masses, those that enjoyed the Olympics but will never go and watch a regional diving competition.’ (BoRED S2upid) (PistonHeads 2013).

### *Frame: 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport'*

This frame functions both as a sub frame to EV issues and a dominant frame in audience reactions of 2013 and a secondary frame in 2017. The problem posited here is that Formula E only highlights EV's negative aspects which compromise Formula E's ability to provide exciting motorsport: 'EV engineering is bland and uninteresting. Everything that makes it great for domestic day to day driving, makes it uninteresting in a race. Race cars should be living, fire breathing, smelly, oily machines....not washing machines.' (SteveStevesson) (PistonHeads 2013). The cause attributed for this is twofold. On the one hand, it is suggested that Formula E markets EV's in the wrong way as it claims to be sustainable, yet wastes valuable resources: 'I'm sure the electric cars all get to the track on an electric semi-truck, with the crew all being flown there on electric planes... you get the idea, it's farcical, this is lala land.' (Bravo0351) (DailyMailOnline 2017). On the other hand, EV shortcomings are extrapolated in a stereotypical racing environment where speed and noise contribute to the excitement of motorsport: 'Open wheel cars don't really do that [make contact] and coupled with the relatively slow straight-line speed and high weight, I think a lot of the spectacle will be lost' (azxdc) (The Verge 2013). As a solution, then, it is suggested that Formula E should stop promoting itself as sustainable and address it's EV racing shortcomings. Indeed, as Formula E stands now, the moral evaluation confirms this as '[I] can't see many motorsport fans watching this' (BoRED S2upid) (PistonHeads 2013).

### **Celebrity Related Frames**

#### *Frame: 'Saving the Environment'*

A first, dominant, frame was identified as 'Saving the Environment' and features in online articles (news media, environmental media, business media, automotive media and sport media) from 2013, 2015 and 2017 and in audience reactions from 2013. The frame is based in the suggestion of a global concern for sustainability as definition of the problem, i.e. that climate change is posing one of the biggest challenges for current generations. This is attributed to a

global trend and industry of emitting carbon dioxides whereby cities and larger urban areas are presented as 'environmental time bombs' (Roadandtrack.com 2015) that are covered by 'blankets of smog' (Cleantechnica 2013). Mostly, DiCaprio is used by journalists as a framing sponsor to introduce this issue and its cause(s) by proxy and to legitimise his involvement with Formula E. In both online articles and audience reactions, DiCaprio is presented as one of the good guys who is out to save the environment and whose credibility or legitimate standing rest upon the longevity of his campaign. DiCaprio is also used in online articles to express the solution. For instance, DiCaprio is quoted as saying that 'the future of the planet depends on embracing fuel efficient clean vehicles' (BBC 2015). Mostly, the solution is further made explicit by DiCaprio stating that sustainable measures, i.e. clean urban mobility including EV's, need to be promoted: 'to promote the mass take-up of electric vehicles [and] discuss how to promote the mass use of electric vehicles, particularly in urban environments' (Businessgreen 2013), as 'the future of our planet depends on [it]' (BBC 2015). DiCaprio's involvement is mostly given a positive evaluation as he is considered a trusted ambassador: 'what better way to promote [...] than involving [...] an environmental campaigner and one of the world's most famous celebrities?' (Bleacherreport 2013) and 'DiCaprio has more than delivered [on his environmental promise]' (Mother Nature Network 2013). Overall, the articles that introduce this frame by means of DiCaprio's endorsement of EV's through Formula E implicitly acknowledge the need for capitalist economies to achieve smog-free cities and a sustainable future. DiCaprio, again, is used as a framing sponsor to endorse this idea, for instance, when he is quoted in a 2015 online article saying that EV's 'are a moral and business imperative' (Businessgreen 2013).

#### *Frame: 'Hollywood Hero'*

Analysis revealed a sub frame to 'Saving the Environment' that sends out the same broad message regarding Formula E and ES, but that focuses primarily on the role of DiCaprio and that is overtly positive in tone: the 'Hollywood Hero' frame. It is present in both online articles from 2013 and 2015 and audience

reactions from 2013 and 2017. The focus is on how DiCaprio brings Hollywood flair to identifying what needs to be done to protect the environment: 'DiCaprio isn't just an AH-mazing actor, he is also a huge champion for mother nature. He's always doing some sort of venture to try and make the world a better place [...] (Perezhilton 2013). As such he is also depicted as an 'award-winning actor and environmental activist' (The Green Living Guy 2013) and generally 'one of hollywood's good guys' (Technomatt) (PistonHeads 2013) but often reference is made to movies he acted in: 'Ever since the titanic split in two and sank in the freezing waters of the Atlantic Ocean, DiCaprio started getting involved in climate change [...]' (Autoevolution 2015). This entails the cause, namely that DiCaprio is a highly successful A-list Hollywood actor who has been actively campaigning for changes that benefit the environment for over two decades: 'He has walked this line for over a decade. He is a good boy as you put it. Raises 100's of millions for worthy causes' (The Jimi) (PistonHeads 2013). The implicit solution is that initiatives such as Formula E and its sustainability committee provide DiCaprio with the option to further his campaign for greener cities: '[DiCaprio took] another step to help promote sustainable cars and green driving.' (The News Wheel 2015) The moral evaluation is supportive regarding his influencing the environment and motorsport: 'How a celebrity can choose to finance a racing team with his own cash and be derided for it is somewhat baffling.' (Max Torque) (PistonHeads 2013).

*Frame: 'Celebrity Hypocrisy'*

A frame that was absent from the articles but featured regularly in audience reactions from 2013 and 2017 was that of 'Celebrity Hypocrisy'. This frame has a dual function: as a counter frame to the 'Hollywood Hero' frame and as a sub-frame of the larger 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins the Breed' frame. The issue at hand is that 'the likes of DiCaprio [...] advocating this cause [the environment] does more harm than good' (Haz0687) (DailyMailOnline 2017). As such, it depicts DiCaprio and other celebrities such as Virgin boss Sir Richard Branson as hypocrites: 'Dicaprio [sic] travels everywhere by private jet and Branson owns an airline, talk about a couple of hypocrites' (Salubrious1)



(DailyMailOnline 2017) and 'Both of these guys have the carbon footprint of a city, yet lecture us on climate change? Hypocrites' (John Galt) (DailyMailOnline 2017). Audiences do not consider these celebrities to have the correct credibility and legitimacy to inform and activate people to become more sustainable through Formula E and EV's. In addition, DiCaprio's hypocrisy extends, in some cases, to his ulterior marketing motives: 'So, given that DiCaprio is probably onboard for free or for payment to help promote the race series do we think it will help put bums in seats to watch it?' (TransverseTight) (PistonHeads 2013). As such, some audiences recognise DiCaprio's involvement as a profit-generating incentive/ bonus rather than an exclusively genuine effort to increase sustainability: '[...] INVESTING in "green" start ups and taking advantage of huge tax write offs while their (sic) at it' (Ruby77) (DailyMailOnline 2017) and 'One makes his fortune polluting the air and one makes his fortune polluting young minds' (KennyB2708) (DailyMailOnline 2017). The former is ascribed to the fact that both celebrities' personal lifestyle and, more importantly, the carbon footprint these generate, contradict their activist messages. The suggested solution by audiences is straightforward and implies giving up on carbon emitting transport: 'yes lets (sic) fight climate change, leo. but first will you give up flying in your dirty jets' (hoopy) (DailyMailOnline 2017) and 'Practice what you cry!' (SUMSITUP) (DailyMailOnline 2017).

*Frame: 'Celebrity Health'*

This frame appears as a secondary frame in online articles from 2017 and as both a dominant and a secondary frame in audience reactions from 2017. The frame is built around DiCaprio's private image and perceived lifestyle, suggesting as a main problem that DiCaprio could be suffering from health problems. This is related, first and more generally, to DiCaprio's lifelong partying lifestyle, taking up health defining habits: 'Leo being smoking, drinking and partying for over twenty years.' (Guess) (JustJared 2017). Second, during the 2017 New York Formula E Prix, DiCaprio was spotted with a 'device' (Zzzzz) (JustJared 2017) holstered around his chest whilst walking the streets of New York. This raised concerns with audiences and speculation as to what the device

and any underlying problems could be: 'What's with people talking about a pacemaker? [...] Could there be a less serious explanation? It's got me a bit worried (Fancypants) (JustJared 2017). The suggested, though embedded, solution is that DiCaprio should start to take better care of his body. As such, Formula E is used mainly as an inroad to discuss DiCaprio's personal life. The overall tone is one of concern yet careful optimism, indicating that DiCaprio is someone these audiences care about: 'I hope that's what it is, and if so good for him. Quitting smoking is hard!' (Fancypants) (JustJared 2017).

### **Do Different Media and Audiences Produce Different Frames?**

Frame occurrences differ between different types of media and between media and audience reactions. Motorsport related frames such as the 'Electric Vehicles Are The Future' frame, the 'Electric Vehicles Are Problematic' frame, and the 'Saving The Environment' frame consistently appeared throughout the online media categories automotive, technology, general news, environment, sport and business. Similarly, this indicates that the latter frame is indeed used beyond its logical category (i.e. environment) and proves to be an important frame for contextualizing DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E. Further, the 'Motorsport Improves Electric Vehicles' frame appeared only in the automotive category, whereas the 'Celebrity Health' frame appeared exclusively in the celebrity/ lifestyle category.

Focusing on the celebrity related frames, it becomes clear that media articles are positive towards DiCaprio, as the frames 'Hollywood Hero' and 'Saving the Environment' dominated the coverage throughout. Importantly, the frames occurred not just in celebrity gossip media but in automotive, technology, general news, environment, sport and business media. This suggests the success of the celebrity in helping to raise awareness for Formula E and ES. The 'Celebrity Health' frame appeared exclusively in the celebrity/ lifestyle media, suggesting that the context of Formula E served simply as a means to spot a celebrity and gossip about their private issues. The tone of media coverage of DiCaprio overall remains positive, though, illustrated by the fact that the 'Celebrity Hypocrisy' frame does not occur.

Audience reactions, on the other hand, paint a more diverse picture. They take over all media article frames to some extent, As such, the 'Electric Vehicles Are Problematic' frame and the 'Hollywood Hero' frame appear most significantly (2013 and 2017) with the former appearing mostly in automotive e.g. PistonHeads (2013), Jalopnik (2013)) and technology (e.g. the Verge (2013)) related media sources. The 'Saving the Environment frame' although only features in audience comments from 2013. Instead, audience reactions focus more on the 'Hollywood Hero' frame, indicating that, while audiences do not ignore the ES topic, they focus more heavily on the celebrity aspect of DiCaprio's endorsement. The frame, more-over, appears most significantly (2013 and 2017) in comments to celebrity gossip (e.g. JustJared (2017)) and to a lesser extent on technology (e.g. the Verge) related media content. The 'Celebrity Health' frame appeared was a dominant frame in audience reactions but exclusively in relation to the media coverage on celebrity gossip site JustJared that introduced the frame. Beyond this, audience reactions generated some additional and alternative frames (see table 6). The most dominant frames were the 'Celebrity Hypocrisy' frame as well as its overarching 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport' frame. Both frames occur in comments from 2013 and 2017 and across various types of media, including automotive, technology, celebrity news and general news. This suggests audiences more than journalist verge towards an oppositional reading of DiCaprio's activism and involvement with Formula E.

### **Audience Reaction Moderators: Personal Experiences, Peers and Parasocial Relationships**

To get a better understanding of audience reactions to (the framing of) the online news, we analysed if and how comments were moderated by personal experiences, communication with peers and parasocial relationships with DiCaprio (see above). In the 2013 comments, audience commenters predominantly put forward personal experiences to counter or further a number of frames. A first frame concerns 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport':

‘We all know that oil burning cars are on the way out: I know it, and everybody here knows it. I am racing a petrol burner because I can. So what? It does not make me a hypocrite because I support new ways of trying to preserve the planet’ (MX7) (PistonHeads 2013).

Another frame is the ‘Electric Vehicles Are The Future’ frame where commenters help validate the potential of EV’s based on relevant work experience: ‘I’ve been in engineering for most of my adult life, and I can see no downsides to an electric drive train.’ (98elise) (PistonHeads 2013). The importance of personal experience becomes even more profound when commenters, in validating this frame, pressure other commenters defending a counter frame such as the ‘Electric Vehicles Are Problematic’ frame in providing evidence of personal experience: ‘If you make statements like "EV's are a complete failure and will never be practical mass transport" then it helps to have a position of authority from which to say such a thing if you want people to listen (MaxTorque) (PistonHeads 2013).

Personal experiences featured to some extent in discussions of ES (in Formula E), serving as a frame sponsor, but, with regard to DiCaprio, personal experiences were mentioned only in 2017 comments, all confirming the article’s health frame. Commenters said ‘My grandma had one [quit smoking device] and this one definitely looks bigger imo [in my opinion] and I would hope that he would stay home and rest [...]’ (Fancypants) (JustJared 2017) and ‘I talked to my mother and she had one after surgery for medicine.’ (Guess) (JustJared 2017). This suggest that issues pertaining to the private life of a celebrity trigger audiences’ personal experiences more than their public appearance or actual activism, confirming earlier research (e.g. Van den Bulck 2017). The private life of DiCaprio also triggered most debate amongst the online community (peers). While the 2013 commenters engaged in elaborate discussions concerning EV’s and Formula E, they did not do so regarding DiCaprio’s involvement. However, commenters on the 2017 ‘Celebrity Heath’ framed coverage, engaged elaborately in debate regarding DiCaprio’s health, further suggesting that the celebrity presence serves as a distraction rather than create attention to the environmental issue:

'It's definitely to [sic] big to be a patch. I'm sure it's nothing serious but it's got me worried' (Fancypants)

'Yes, probably nothing serious. I just googled "stop smoking devices," and saw one that is round in shape and bigger than a typical smoking patch. Looks like it can be attached to any part of the upper body. Maybe this is what he has' (leoandtheblondes)

'Hmm just posted a new picture and there you can see it again. I don't think it's anything serious if it were he would make sure no one sees it since he values his privacy' (JanaHelen) (JustJared 2017)

An important mediator of audience reactions proved the parasocial relationship they maintain with DiCaprio. As a result, while media coverage frames are all positive towards DiCaprio, commenters have differing opinions regarding DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E as the 'Hollywood Hero' and the 'Celebrity Hypocrisy' frames suggest. Some commenters showed support for DiCaprio's efforts 'Good for Leonardo!..... #ParisAccord' (Millenial Caseyyy) (DailyMailOnline 2017) as well as respect: 'Good on him I say, he strikes me as one of Hollywood's good guys' (Technomatt) (PistonHeads 2013) and affection: 'What's with people talking about a pacemaker? [...] It's got me a bit worried.' (Fancypants) (DailyMailOnline 2017). Some also emphasised DiCaprio's legitimate standing: 'Agenda? He has walked this line for over a decade. He is a good boy as you put it. Raises 100's of millions for worthy causes.' (burwoodman) (PistonHeads 2013). This positive attitude towards DiCaprio's involvement, interestingly, extended beyond celebrity gossip commenters ('I'm not afraid to admit that Leo's one of my most favorite actors of all time so...I support this.' (Travis Okulski) (Jalopnik 2013)) to motorsport fans: 'I'm not shocked that DiCaprio is the Hollywood A-lister involved with one of the teams. As an F1 fan, I think this could be interesting' (Post Modern Human) (The Verge 2013). Conversely, sometimes, commentators explicitly dismissed Formula E: 'Don't care about this [Formula E]. What I want to know is, where in the fuck are this guys [sic] Oscars?!?! He deserves so much more praise than he gets. Great actor.' (SlimShadyMJDroid) (The Verge 2013) and 'Will reserve

judgement on Formula E until I see the racing. Fair play to Leonardo putting his money into motorsport though.' (A Scotsman) (PistonHeads 2013). Then there were those who approved of Formula E but not of DiCaprio: 'Would have been better to stick Patrick Dempsey in there, at least the guy can peddle and is infinitely more likeable than [sic] DiCaprio! It's [sic] worth taking 10 minutes of a lunch break to read about the Formula E format, I [sic] think it has potential' (SteveStevenson) (PistonHeads 2013). Some explicitly criticised DiCaprio's persona: 'Leo thinks his Gulfstream 5 is solar powered. He is not too bright' (Snake Plissken) (DailyMailOnline), 'bloated alcoholic. Sad.' (Jan Smiths) (HollywoodReporter 2013), 'Oh Leo, just join [Patrick] Dempsey and maybe you two can pool enough money (aka you pay for everything, Leo, you filthy [sic] rich SOB) for an all-electric Drayson Lola' (daenderTravis Okulski) (Jalopnik 2013) and blatant hypocrisy: 'Boo, this stinks of hidden agenda's [sic] and look at me goody two shoe's I'd [sic] almost hazard a guess that in the wake of Paul Walker [sic] DiCaprio [sic] is trying to garnish some look at me I'm [sic] a good boy' (Andy) (PistonHeads 2013). Others, extended the criticism to all celebrity endorsers: 'I can't take crap like this seriously when hypocrites like DiCaprio are involved. The likes of DiCaprio and Al Gore advocating this cause does more harm than good' (Haz0687) (DailyMailOnline 2017). Finally, in a number of cases, different feelings towards DiCaprio resulted in a discussion amongst peers. For instance, some commenters on automotive/motorsport websites countered the criticism of DiCaprio: 'Wow. Some butthurt people. Celebrity invests into motorsports but it's somehow almost criminal. Not true petrolhead [sic]. Get over yourselves. He isn't taking anything from you' (Max Torque) (PistonHeads 2013). Most importantly, and what the above reveals, is that parasocial relationships influenced some audience members' take on media frames.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Trying to understand how the involvement of Hollywood actor and green activist Leonardo DiCaprio affected the coverage and audience reactions to Formula E across a range of online media, provides some interesting insights

into the impact of mediated communication about a celebrity's endorsement on the issue at hand.

First, media articles tend to report on the topics of DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E in different ways. On the one hand, our analysis confirms that celebrity involvement indeed helps to attract media attention, in this case for Formula E. DiCaprio's affiliation with the sport incites wider reporting on current affairs focusing either on the issue of environment (e.g. 'Saving the Environment' frame), EV's (e.g. 'Electric Vehicles are the Future' and 'Electric Vehicles Are Problematic' ), motorsport (e.g. 'Motorsport Improves Electric Vehicles') or on the celebrity's involvement in the issue (e.g. 'Hollywood Hero' frame). Not surprisingly, the focus of a website's content (sports, automotive, celebrity, general news, ...) is often indicative of the frame and focus of the articles with the 'Hollywood Hero' and 'Celebrity Health' frames dominating celebrity and lifestyle-oriented media content, automotive oriented websites framing DiCaprio's involvement in Formula E more in terms of EV's and motorsport, and environmentally oriented websites in terms of EV's in relationship to the environment.

Second, the results confirm that audiences' reading of the media produced frame can go in various directions, with the adoption by audiences of the media frames 'Hollywood Hero' and 'Celebrity Health' indicating audiences in some instances follow preferred readings but the audience frame 'Celebrity Hypocrisy' (and the 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport' frame) indicating that, at other times, audiences negotiate, i.e. bypass and/or oppose, media frames by devising new ones. Commenters' views, unsurprisingly, are affected by their parasocial relationship with DiCaprio and they draw from personal experiences to further their arguments as part of discussions with fellow commenters. Importantly, when negotiating the media frames, audiences search for input from both the public and private characteristics and images of the celebrity, as in the case of the 'Celebrity Health' frame. The discrepancy between the 'Hollywood Hero' and the Celebrity Hypocrisy frame further illustrates this intricate relationship between aspects of a celebrity persona and the players in the celebrity construct (Van den Bulck 2017). Both journalists and

audiences draw from the range of characteristics that make up a celebrity's public, private and political persona to emphasise certain aspects of others in various framing packages (Van den Bulck 2017).

Third, looking at the data from a diachronic perspective reveals some interesting evolutions. Audiences reactions occurred only in 2013 and 2017, indicating that news about DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E as a co-team owner in 2013 and his visit to the NY race in 2017 sparked interest with audiences, while his 2015 appointment as a chairman of the sustainability committee did not. One plausible explanation is that after the initial 'breaking news' in 2013, the limited newsworthiness comes into play as the novelty effect – certainly of Formula E and, to some extent, of DiCaprio's involvement - wears off over time (Lester 2010; Cox 2012, Panis and Van den Bulck 2014). This is most often the case for ES-related frames and, as such, the 'Saving the Environment' frame does no longer occur in 2017 audience comments. The 'Hollywood Hero' frame occurs throughout the period, showing that celebrities do help to maintain the attention to some extent. However, the 'Celebrity Health' frame that dominates the 2017 coverage and reactions, suggest that the private life of the celebrity has stronger attention pulling power than his political persona. According to Boykoff (2011), this is a frequent occurrence which prevents sufficient context to further the debate on the environment. So, the emergence of the celebrity health frame in media articles and audience comments in 2017 confirms that when newsworthiness of ES wanes, other novelty items fill its place to continue the story (Lester 2010). That said, the presence of non-celebrity related frames in online articles from 2013, 2015 and 2017 and audience comments in 2013 and 2017 suggest that DiCaprio's succeeded, at least to some extent, in his self-proclaimed incentive of raising the debate on EV's.

The study suffers from a number of shortcomings. First, the compiled corpus is not exhaustive and, as such, does not allow for strong generalisations. Second, while a high number of audience comments were found, these all came from just 9 articles. This limits the extent to which we can generalise findings with regards to what comes into play when audiences deal with media frames.



If nothing else, though, it shows that not all celebrity coverage seem to create enough buzz for audiences to want to respond to it. Despite these limitations, we believe that this study reveals the usefulness of an inductive framing analysis to obtain an understanding of the complexities of the relationship between celebrity activism, the issue involved and the product or organisation endorsed. As such, this study provides valuable insights for celebrity studies, sports-media studies and environmental studies.

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# CHAPTER 7

## THE NEED FOR SPEED? A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BBC'S POST-WAR BROADCASTING OF MOTORSPORT

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Richard Haynes and Timothy Robeers

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### **Preface**

Although still with a view to media representations of motorsport, this fifth and final case study within this Ph.D. distinguishes from the previous four studies in that it does not take Formula E and ES as its main scope of reference. Instead, it focusses on motorsport more broadly and follows Boyle and Haynes' (2009) suggestion to consider a historical perspective when analysing the sports-media representations. As such, it sets out to determine to what extent mid-20<sup>th</sup> century television made then contemporary motorsport televisual, i.e. showing motorsport as the real thing as it is being played (Briggs, 1979). Still within the realm of qualitative research traditions, this study analyses a diachronical sample of biographical and historical media texts by means of an archival and biographical approach, an approach often associated with historical studies of sport and the media (Haynes, 2016).

This seventh chapter thus draws from the domains of history, communication and motorsport studies. In doing so, this case study demonstrates that due to a sharp rise in grassroots popularity of motorsport and due to the significant technical and logistical difficulties associated with televising motorsport, the post-war British television experimented with a number of motorsport formats to (bene)fit television's possibilities and requirements more appropriately. This resulted in (1) some adjusted motorsport series and (2) eventually the development of a completely new

motorsport series that was able to represent motorsport as competitive and dramatic.

## **Abstract**

Although many media and cultural histories have looked at the emergence of particular popular sports, few have done so from a detailed perspective with respect to motorsport. Indeed, ever since its conceptualisation, motorsport has shared an intricate relationship with the media. However, despite advancements in camera and broadcasting equipment, significant technical and logistical difficulties to represent early (motor) sport as televisual, i.e. realistic, persevered. This article explores the emergence of motorsport on BBC television during the post-war period to determine if, and to what extent, early motorsport on television was (not) televised. To this end, a qualitative archival approach is used to examine a sample of archival and biographical media texts from the post-war period. Findings suggest the BBC experimented with the format of the hill climb, a motorsport series, by shaping it to fit the possibilities and requirements of television more appropriately. This resulted in the creation of the Television Trophy Trial, the adoption of scrambling and the rise of Rallycross. This means that the BBC was, in effect, not only using motorsport to its own benefit from the early 1950s onwards, but actively developing and representing motorsport as competitive and dramatic.

## **Introduction**

This article traces the formative history of British television's coverage of motorsport from 1946 to 1970. In doing so, it aims to fill a gap in academic media and sport histories of motorsport, which have largely focused on Formula 1 grand prix racing from the mid-1970's onward. Based on archival research in the BBC Written Archives, interviews with broadcasters and biographical research, the article opens up a discussion on the early organizational, technical, spatial and temporal challenges faced by television in its attempt to bring coverage of motorsport on to the small screen.

As Britain's first public service broadcaster, the BBC experimented with, and effectively pioneered, broadcasting sport on television from 1936 onwards.<sup>10</sup> In the first two decades of the BBC's Television Service, from 1936 to 1939, and 1946 in to the mid-1950's television grew in the shadow of its sister services in radio, often viewed as the 'peep show boys at Alexandra Palace'.<sup>11</sup> In spite of the fact BBC radio had built strong relationships with sport through the 1920's and 30's, television frequently faced stiffer opposition from sport administrators due to the fear that live moving images from sport would impact on attendances at spectator sports.<sup>12</sup> However, when televised sport first began in the 1930's, the medium had a much more benign influence on sport.<sup>13</sup> Sport governing bodies ruled, and certain sport administrators held the power in the relationship with the BBC.<sup>14</sup> Many administrators were convinced by the argument put forward by the Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport, that sport had a copyright in their performance much like musicians, which led to dispute and boycott from transmissions by some major sports.<sup>15</sup>

Television was also constrained by its technology. Pre-war outside broadcasts were initially constrained by the length of the cabling from Alexandra Palace to the cameras. Microwave links enabled the BBC to cover the (Oxford/ Cambridge) Boat Race for the first time in 1937, but the logistics of doing so were expensive for a new medium working on limited resources.<sup>16</sup> As Whannel has argued, televising sport, i.e. showing a sport as 'the real thing' or as it is being played, historically correlates to the level of technological capabilities of television broadcasting of each period, and as such, is dependent on the level of control that television exerts on both sport and the sporting

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> John Corner, *Television Form and Public Address* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995); Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 4 of *Sound and Vision*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Steven Barnett, *Games and Sets: The Changing Face of Sport and Television* (United Kingdom: British Film Inst, 1990); Gary Whannel, *Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Barnett, *Games and Sets*.

<sup>16</sup> Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*.

environment.<sup>17</sup> These processes echo the idea from critical television studies that suggest the medium both ingests from, and projects into, culture and society.<sup>18</sup> Firstly, the BBC's approach to sport from early on was characterized by a desire for the 'cultural ingestion' of sport - drawing the 'world of sport' towards itself to incorporate and transform sport for its own needs and ends. What is 'on' television, therefore, can be recognized as part of institutional structures, practices and relationships television develops with sport, which in time have changed and become increasingly intertwined and interdependent as sport has adapted itself to the needs of being televised. Secondly, the BBC also projected its images and commentaries into the culture of sport and beyond, permeating popular culture with its iconic moments and distinctive voices in order, consciously or not, to produce collective memories of sport which first and foremost are moments of television culture. For example, the BBC motor racing commentator Murray Walker became synonymous with Formula 1 from the 1970's onwards, in particular for what became known as his Murrayisms.<sup>19</sup> Through this ingestion and projection processes television has shaped its relationship with sport, influencing its social and cultural resonance.

A range of media and cultural histories have looked at the emergence of particular popular sports such as football, cricket, boxing and snooker on post-war television, but interestingly none have focused on motorsport.<sup>20</sup> More general histories certainly include some information about early coverage of motorsport, but not in any extensive detail.<sup>21</sup> This is perhaps surprising

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<sup>17</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*; Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, 855.

<sup>18</sup> Corner, *Television Form and Public Address*.

<sup>19</sup> Murray Walker, *Unless I'm Very Much Mistaken*, (London: HarperCollins, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Haynes, 'A Pageant of Sound and Vision: Football's Relationship with Television, 1936-60', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 15, no 1, (1998): 211-26; Williams, *Jack Cricket and Broadcasting* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2011); Kasia Boddy, *The Culture of Boxing* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009); Clive Everton, *Black Farce and Cue Ball Wizards: The inside Story of the Snooker World* (Edinburgh: Random House, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Martin Kelner, *Sit Down and Cheer: A History of Sport on TV* (London: Bloomsbury publishing, 2012); Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*.

considering both the economic scale and cultural importance of motorsport, which in the case of Formula 1 is a global, high profile, media sport.

Henry et al define motorsport as 'competitive racing by equivalent machines on an equivalent basis'.<sup>22</sup> Although diverse in terms of both machines and competitive events, in the post-war period, the popularity of motorsport has largely been synonymous with Formula 1 grand prix racing. Such narrow popular perceptions of Formula 1 as the 'jewel' or 'pinnacle of motorsport', elides Henry et al's broader definition indicating the generic nature of motorsport comprising both 'disciplines' (for example, open-wheel, sportscar, rally and others) and 'series' (for example, Formula 1, Formula 2, Formula 3, Formula E).<sup>23</sup> Considering Formula 1 only gained consistent significance on British television from 1974 onwards with the symbiotic relationship between superstar names (James Hunt) and commercial sponsorship of cars, particularly by the tobacco companies (Marlboro) gaining regular television coverage on the BBC.<sup>24</sup> Because of the lack of historic visibility on television before the mid-1970's, the period prior to this has largely been left aside by academic historians. On the other hand, and until recently, academic research on motorsport in general has long remained scarce and fragmented at best.<sup>25</sup> This is surprising considering motorsport provides many mediatized global events which sustains a combined audience of over 1 billion people and generates a £50 billion plus annual industry turnover.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Nick Henry, Tim Angus, Mark Jenkins and Chris Aylett, *Motorsport Going Global: The Challenges Facing the World's Motorsport Industry* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> David Hassan, 'Epilogue: The Evolution of Motorsport Research', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 2 (2011), 322; Damion Sturm, 'A Glamorous and High-tech Global Spectacle of Speed: Formula One Motor Racing as Mediated, Global and Corporate Spectacle', in *Sports Events, Society and Culture*, eds. Katherine Dashper, Thomas Fletcher and Nicola McCullough (London: Routledge, 2014), 68; Henry et al., *Motorsport Going Global*, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce Grant-Braham, 'Formula One, Sponsorship and Television: An Historical Perspective', in *Explorations in Motoring History*, ed. Bryan J. H. Brown (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997), 81-108.

<sup>25</sup> Ehren Pflugfelder, 'Something Less than a Driver: Toward an Understanding of Gendered Bodies in Motorsport', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 33, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>26</sup> David Hassan, 'Prologue: The Cultural Significance and Global Importance of Motorsport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 2 (2011), 187.

Adopting an archival approach, this article explores the emergence of motorsport series on BBC television during the immediate post-war period in order to determine the extent to which motorsport was televised between the late-1940's and 1970. In doing so, it will first provide a historical backdrop of the motorsport scene during this period and set out a number of theoretical concepts that are key to understanding the representation of (motor) sport on television and wider implications for society. The article elaborates on the use of archives to inform the history of televised motorsport, exploring the empirical and theoretical challenges of writing such a history. We then analyse the evidence to suggest that in the formative history of motorsport on television there were early attempts to create competitive events which suited the needs of their television service. The motivation for doing so largely came from constraints in technology and a desire to broaden the range of sports being broadcast.

### **From WWII onwards: the Emergence of Motorsport in Britain**

Few studies have adopted a historical approach to analyze the motorsport – television relationship. According to Eastoe, television acted as a major force behind the development of a global motorsport industry.<sup>27</sup> From the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s television increasingly brought the excitement and danger of racing into people's living rooms. Grant-Braham has focused on how broadcasting furthered, though not created, sponsorship in motorsport during the period of 1979 to 1996 and revealed the importance of commercialization for the survival and growth of Formula 1.<sup>28</sup> Originating in the BBC's commitment to broadcasting rights for Formula 1, and popularized by Murray Walker's commentary alongside former racing driver James Hunt, the evolution of television's high-scale investment in live coverage began in this period, making household names of drivers like Niki Lauda, Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna. and Damon Hill. The international glamour evoked by Formula 1 and brought to the screen by the BBC made the sport attractive to a particular male

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<sup>27</sup> Bill Eastoe, (1994). 'Still in With a Sporting Chance', *Accountancy* 1215 (1994): 34-37.

<sup>28</sup> Grant-Braham, 'Formula One, Sponsorship and Television'.

middle-class audience, which became a key motivation for the BBC's rival ITV to poach the broadcasting rights from 1996.<sup>29</sup> The spectacle of Formula 1, produced a heady mix of star drivers, leading car manufacturers, global brand sponsors and television advertisers all neatly packaged for a three-hour programme format on live television.<sup>30</sup> A further study by Sturm also determined Formula 1 as a modern glamour spectacle on the basis of certain characteristics including the importance of mass communications and social media.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, what exists of academic research in terms of motorsport is limited and tends to focus largely on the period of when Formula 1 developed itself into its contemporary global mega-sport form (e.g. studies by Grant-Braham, Henry et al, Sturm and Evans).<sup>32</sup>

Bearing this in mind, the emergence of motorsport in BBC programming needs to be understood in relation to a number of developments regarding both the increased popularity of motorsport in Britain and the emergence of early television broadcasting technologies. The rise in popularity of motorsport during the immediate post-war years and which extended throughout the 1950's is correlated to both a high demand for cheap personal mobility and a low-barrier accessibility for the general public.<sup>33</sup> In spite of nationwide shortages of basic raw materials and rationing, British motorsport flourished on the back of the many surplus WWII airfields that scattered the British countryside. Motorsports such as the 500cc Club (1947-1953) and the 750 Motor Club (1939 – present), were founded on the grass-roots popularity of

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<sup>29</sup> Steve Rider, *My Chequered Career: Thirty-five Years of Televising Motorsport* (United Kingdom: J H Haynes & Company Limited, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Claire Evans, 'The Discursive Representation of Host Locations in a Sports Media Event: Locating the 'Real Site' of Formula One', *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture* 5, no. 2, (2014): 231-245.

<sup>31</sup> Sturm, 'A Glamourous High-tech Spectacle of Speed'.

<sup>32</sup> Hassan, 'Prologue', 187; Grant-Braham, 'Formula One, Sponsorship and Television'; Henry et al., *Motorsport Going Global*; Sturm, 'A Glamourous High-tech Spectacle of Speed'; Claire Evans, (2013). 'The Media Representation of Formula One as 'Spectacle': Constructing Sport as a Live Mediatized Event' (PhD diss., Cardiff University, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> Beverly Aston and Mark Williams, *Playing to Win: The Success of UK Motorsport Engineering* (London: Emphasis, 1996), 9.

racing as do-it-yourself and self-help networks.<sup>34</sup> This easy-access club environment gave rise to increased cheap public personal mobility as well as competition and commercial opportunities that saw the erection of the Cooper Car Company, Lola, Cosworth and Colin Chapman's Lotus. Additionally, a number of catastrophic accidents that occurred on the continent during the second half of the 1950s (Le Mans 1955, 83 dead; Monza 1955, lead Lancia driver Alberto Ascari dies; Mille Miglia 1957, 11 dead) led to many of the dominant manufacturers, such as Mercedes, Lancia and Maserati, which had so long outperformed their British competitors, pulling out of racing and effectively opening up the way for British high-profile racing teams such as Jaguar, Aston Martin, Cooper and Lotus to become successful.<sup>35</sup> Further, this specific post-war era in Britain allowed for British drivers such as Stirling Moss, Mike Hawthorn and Jim Clark to emerge into sporting heroes supported by the sporting press and cinema newsreel, which not only sparked a sense of national identity, but also increasingly drew in more audiences to British motorsport.<sup>36</sup>

### **Representing (Motor) Sport through Television**

The relationship between sport and the mass media has a long history, with cricket being reported in London newspapers as early as the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Broadcasting, first with radio and subsequently with television, has transformed both the economics and cultural significance of sport contributing to a global media-sport nexus which for many people is their main point of contact with the world of sport.<sup>38</sup> As Crawford points out, television has become a major and global part of the way in which different sports represent themselves and continues to contribute to the popularity and growth of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 14; Jörg Walz, *The History of Motorsport* (Germany: Delius Klasing Verlag, 2017), 97.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Flower, *Motorsports : A Pictorial History* (Glasgow and London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, 1975), 144, 150; Walker, *Unless I'm Very Much Mistaken*.

<sup>37</sup> David Rowe, *Sport, Culture and Media: The Unruly Trinity* (United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill Education, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).



modern sports to the extent that, for a while now, 'sport is television sport'.<sup>39</sup> With regards to Formula 1, former Renault team principle Flavio Briatore famously said that 'if Formula 1 has no television, it is not Formula 1, or it is at a much lower level'.<sup>40</sup> Whannel suggests that television sport is very much identifiable as 'infotainment', which emerges as the result of a combination of two contrasting and perhaps at first glance seemingly irreconcilable elements: the production ideologies of realism and entertainment.<sup>41</sup> The realism of sports coverage on television is firmly rooted within conventions of journalistic reporting.<sup>42</sup> As such, and drawing from Nichols's categorization system,<sup>43</sup> this non-fictional (documentary) material that contributes to making up television sport is organized largely from combining an expository approach, i.e. addressing viewers directly through running commentary narration effectively making claims and assertions which frame the action, for example safety or competition in motorsport (see chapter four), to help audiences make sense of what is being shown on screen. This function of the commentator is to place the audience at the event, a participatory and explanatory approach, which maintains the non-fictional character of the production.<sup>44</sup> However, televising sport is also shaped by conventions inherent to entertainment, for example regarding the structure of programmes, scheduling, modes of representation and of addressing, winning over and maintaining certain types of audiences.<sup>45</sup> Throughout television sport, both principles can be found but the specific relation is more often than not dependent on which exact sport is covered.<sup>46</sup> For example, in 2018, Formula 1's new owners Liberty Media have set out their goals to make the sport even more 'realistic' or 'televsual', bringing audiences

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<sup>39</sup> Gary Crawford, 'Consuming sport: Fans, Sport and Culture.' *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship* 6, no. 2 (2004): 47-62; Gary Whannel, *Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1-3.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Benson, 'Man with the Midas Touch', *Autosport*, February 1996, 30-33.

<sup>41</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*, 92.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon, eds., *Representation* (London: Sage Publications, 2013).

<sup>45</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

closer to the action through an increased number of on-board cameras, including 360 degrees, and virtual reality technology.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the preamble to races and analysis focus on the cast of characters and ongoing storylines of competition, building tension and suspense to intensify the narrative pleasures of the event, which is partly staged for the television cameras. Such contemporary mediatization in contemporary culture can be better understood in relation to its position within a double movement of ingestion and projection.<sup>48</sup> According to Corner, centripetal interplay can be understood as a metaphor for television as the little finger that changes things to its own benefit (commentary, edited highlights, action replays, slow motion etc.), i.e. television 'has a powerful capacity to draw towards itself and incorporate wider elements of society and culture'.<sup>49</sup> A complimentary action, according to Corner, is the centrifugal interplay typology which is inherent to the process of outside broadcasting.<sup>50</sup> As such, it refers to the idea of television bringing the world into people's homes and wider culture whereby television projects onto the existing world its captured characters, images and latest creations and is very much reflective of the time of early sports broadcasting.<sup>51</sup>

Still, the realism – entertainment principle is but a first of five principles of transformation that Whannel suggests in relation to negotiating the representation of television sport.<sup>52</sup> A second principle is that the process of constructing television sport does not remain unaffected by the 'real', implying not so much that a sport determines the exact form of its representation on television but rather that it puts forward significant constraints in terms of

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<sup>47</sup> Kunal Talgeri, 'How Liberty Media is Making Formula One Relevant to Digital Audiences', *The Economic Times*, November 26, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/media/how-liberty-media-is-making-formula-one-relevant-to-digital-audiences/articleshow/61798892.cms> (accessed 20 August 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Corner, *Popular Television in Britain*.

<sup>49</sup> Corner, *Popular Television in Britain*; Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, The Media and Popular Culture*, 77.

<sup>50</sup> Corner, *Popular Television in Britain*.

<sup>51</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

different representations.<sup>53</sup> Third, television sport is a matter of selecting what to show audiences and inherently implies an exclusion that can range from a social, political, historical or environmental context. For example, when Greenpeace activists boycotted the live podium ceremony of the 2013 Shell Belgian Formula 1 Grand Prix in condemnation of Shell's Arctic drilling activities, broadcasting directors attempted to exclude such scenes from the broadcast.<sup>54</sup> A fourth principle concerns the transformation of time as a result of the processes of constructing edited highlights, adding action replays and (super) slow motion and freeze framing. In the case of motorsport, it also applies as early broadcasting on the BBC often only allowed for coverage accounts of a few minutes and thus requiring the task of condensing a 'highly complex and protracted struggle' that could last for hours for presentation on television.<sup>55</sup> The fifth and final principle is of particular importance to the case of this article. The principle of maximum action in minimum space indicates a transformation of space in television sport by suggesting that some sports require more visual and verbal work by television than others.<sup>56</sup> Applying this to motorsport in particular, 'spatial fragmentation' affects a race much more so than it does, for example, a boxing match where one or two ideal camera positions suffice.<sup>57</sup> In order to cover the motorsport however, and considering races take place on long race tracks which most often feature a range of bends, undulations and other visual obstructions, this requires a far greater number of cameras and a great deal more editing to create both spatial and temporal overview and match-on-action continuity. In addition, and as Raymond Baxter as the BBC's principal motor racing commentator during the post-war period suggested, constraints such as a maximum cable length of 300 yards from control van to each camera and the scale effect of telescopic lenses which 'reduce the apparent speed of a race car from 160 mph to a sedate crawl' further

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 94-6.

<sup>54</sup> *Formula 1: The Belgian Grand Prix*. TV broadcast. BBC 2: BBC, August 25 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond Baxter, 'Motor Racing', in *Sports in View*, ed. Peter Dimmock (London, Faber and Faber, 1963), 123.

<sup>56</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 97.

contributed to the 'major problem for those [of us] concerned with its [motorsport] presentation on the television screen'.<sup>58</sup>

Considering the need for the manipulation of sport to make sport more televisual, Klatell and Marcus as well as Whannel conclude that the many changes that have been made to sport were caused by television in the quest for televisual representation and that sport over time had adapted well to this.<sup>59</sup> Further, Whannel suggest that earlier post-war sports broadcasting was significantly less televisual than later sports broadcasting.<sup>60</sup> Drawing from the above, this contribution will look at how the many technical difficulties of broadcasting from motorsport provide evidence of early movements in the 1950's towards the televisual, whereby events were organized to suit the needs of the BBC cameras and its transmission.

## Framework and Methodology

As a means of operationalization, this article will adopt an archival approach to answer the research question. Drawing from Heng et al, the advantage of adopting such an approach is fivefold.<sup>61</sup> First, archival studies tend to analyse sample data that were stored for reasons other than purely academic. Second, they also allow for longitudinal examination of phenomena in (mediated) society. A third advantage associated with an archival analysis is the notion of 'realism which increases external validity by ensuring that predicated relationships hold true in real-life circumstances'.<sup>62</sup> Fourth, an archival analysis encourages the use of a variety of archival data sources, for example data from professionals, books, television archives etc., and subsequent datasets constituting one larger sample which 'increases confidence in the

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<sup>58</sup> Baxter, 'Motor Racing', 123.

<sup>59</sup> David Klatell, David and Norman Marcus, *Sports for Sale: Television, Money, and the Fans*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

<sup>60</sup> Gary Whannel, 'The Unholy Alliance: Notes on Television and the Remaking of British Sport 1965–85', *Leisure Studies* 5, no 2, (1986), 129-145.

<sup>61</sup> Yu Tse Heng, David T. Wagner, Christopher M. Barnes and Cristiano L. Guarana, 'Archival Research: Expanding the Methodological Toolkit in Social Psychology', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 78 (2018): 14-22.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

generalizability of the research findings to the larger population'.<sup>63</sup> As a result, this study complements a more general archival analysis with a biographical analysis. Although a form of archival analysis, such a biographical, i.e. qualitative, analysis's main focus lies specifically with the construction of stories describing a human's perceived social reality alongside historical and culturally grounded components in social and other contexts.<sup>64</sup> As such, a biographical analysis often provides both valuable insights in terms of individual or organizational behaviour, motives, identity and conditions as well as assists in interpreting longitudinal and historic data, especially so when contextualized by academic literature.<sup>65</sup> Lastly, opting for an archival analysis approach adds to more 'traditional' research methods adopted by both authors in their work on the BBC's history of sport and media representations of motorsport.<sup>66</sup>

Bearing these advantages in mind, the sample for this study was compiled of two separate datasets. First, and with respect to a more traditional archival analysis, the BBC Written Archives (hereafter: WAC) in Caversham (UK) were accessed to come up with a sample of BBC (television) production notes from the post-war years. Containing a huge collection of information on the BBC, the BBC WAC has significant value for historical research, not only regarding BBC production practices and the organizing and structuring of the BBC but also in terms of the relationship with (motor) sporting organizations.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ian Fillis, 'Biographical Research as a Methodology for Understanding Entrepreneurial Marketing', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research* 21, no 3, (2015): 429-447; Stephen Downing, 'The Social Construction of Entrepreneurship: Narrative and Dramatic Processes in the Coproduction of Organizations and Identities', *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice* 29, no. 2 (2005): 185-204; Walter R. Fisher, (1987). *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1987).

<sup>65</sup> Fillis, 'Biographical Research as a Methodology for Understanding Entrepreneurial Marketing'; Richard Haynes, 'Voices behind the Mic: Sports Broadcasters, Autobiography and Competing Narratives of the Past', in *Tapestry of Memory: Evidence and Testimony in Life Story Narratives*, eds. Nancy Adler and Selma Leydesdorff (New York: Transaction, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*.

<sup>67</sup> Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*, 10.

Second, the BBC Genome – Radio Times online archive was selected. The website’s advanced keyword search tool was used and six keywords derived through a previous literature review were entered (scrambling, rallycross, hill climb, Formula 1, grand prix and motor racing) for five five-year time periods (1946-1950; 1951-1955; 1956-1960; 1961-1965; 1966-1970) spanning a total of 25 years and covering the immediate and end of the post-war period.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, and in view of this study’s focus, the search was limited to television related documents only. Regarding the second dataset, both primary and secondary data were used. The use of both sorts of data aids in reducing the risk of hagiography associated with just one dataset, i.e. the possible introduction of bias by an interviewee or author presenting an idealized version of the truth.<sup>69</sup> The former comprised of a semi-structured interview with retired BBC motorsport commentator Murray Walker. The latter comprised both of additional material to the semi-structured interview such as published autobiographies, i.e. an autobiography by motorsport commentator Murray Walker and an autobiography by the late BBC motorsport commentator Raymond Baxter, newspaper articles and a collection of opinion pieces by the late Peter Dimmock, former BBC head of production as well as BBC production notes.<sup>70</sup>

During a first stage of coding, irrelevant material and sections were filtered out after which the remaining material was coded deductively and thematically.<sup>71</sup> Finally, findings were contextualized with relevant theoretical constructs.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> BBC Genome, ‘Genome Beta Radio Times’ <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/> (accessed August 2, 2018).

<sup>69</sup> Fillis, ‘Biographical Research as a Methodology for Understanding Entrepreneurial Marketing’.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, *Unless I’m Very Much Mistaken*; Raymond Baxter and Tony Dron, *Tales of My Time* (London: Grub Street, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Richard E. Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Heng et al., ‘Archival Research: Expanding the Methodological Toolkit in Social Psychology’.

Although the sheer size and diversity of archival studies benefits generalizability of both qualitative and quantitative results, a means to enhance validity of the datasets and their subsequent findings, the public accessibility of these records (the BBC Genome – Radio Times dataset and the books are readily available whereas a partial transcript of the semi-structured interview can be obtained from the authors on request) subsequently also generates a high level of data transparency.<sup>73</sup>

One limitation to note is that the programming schedules published did not always correspond to what was broadcast by the BBC in reality. As such, the authors acknowledge the possibility for an eventual variation in the keyword entries found.

## Results and Discussion

One benefit of conducting an archival keyword search for qualitative purposes is the emergence of some quantitative data. As such, and in total, the six keywords across the five time periods rendered  $n=908$  entries which, after preliminary coding, was reduced to  $n=653$  entries as some entries did not apply. For example, the keyword search for grand prix constituted a significant amount of entries relating exclusively to horse racing or the Eurovision song contest. In other instances, entries were limited to a simple title name with no further description, for example Grandstand for motor racing. As table 7 substantiates (specifically for the keyword entries Formula 1, Grand Prix and motor racing), the 1950s was a period in which television coverage of motorsport rose significantly for two reasons. First, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953 induced a massive demand for television sets across Britain with an estimated 8 million sold and which subsequently created a large television audience platform for sport as well.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, soon after in July 1953, the BBC broadcasted its first British Grand Prix: ‘Motor racing at Silverstone: the 500 c.c. Race - The fifth R.A.C. British Grand Prix Meeting [...]’.<sup>75</sup> Second, the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>75</sup> *Motor Racing at Silverstone: The 500cc Race*, Radio Times, 18 July, 1953.

Television Act in 1954 ended the BBC’s monopoly of television broadcasting and allowed for the emergence of ITV, which subsequently instigated a ratings war. One of the BBC’s solutions to this sudden competition from commercial television was by broadening its appeal to a wider audience through, for one, extending coverage of sport and provided the opportunity for motorsport to gain exposure.<sup>76</sup> Some major additions to the BBC portfolio were Sportsview, the BBC’s first regular sports programme, in 1954 and Grandstand, the BBC’s sports-flagship programme, in 1958 both regularly covered motorsport.<sup>77</sup> In the immediate years following this, Sportsview would broadcast motorsport including coverage of the BBC’s first continental motor race, the Monaco Grand Prix, in May 1955.

Table 7: Number of keyword entries per time period

<b>Keyword</b>	1946-1950	1951-1955	1956-1960	1961-1965	1966-1970	<b>Total</b>
Scrambling	0	1	2	4	2	<b>9</b>
Rallycross	0	0	0	0	15	<b>15</b>
Hill Climb	2	4	4	5	0	<b>15</b>
Formula One	0	1	24	30	19	<b>74</b>
Grand Prix	1	8	30	54	83	<b>176</b>
Motor Racing	6	43	107	71	137	<b>364</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>653</b>

<sup>76</sup> Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, The Media and Popular Culture*.

<sup>77</sup> Briggs, *Sound and Vision: The History of Broadcasting*; Haynes, *BBC Sport in Black and White*.



### ***First Contact? The BBC's Adoption of Hill Climbs and Scrambling for Television***

Unlike BBC radio coverage of motorsport such as, for example, the Isle-of-Man TT race which gained huge popularity during the 1930s, television coverage during the immediate post-war years proved far more expensive and technically challenging. Indeed, with television coverage of sport in particular still being in its infancy, transmitting television signals outside the immediate radius of Greater London proved troublesome and 'cameras were the size of a shed' and were restricted by cable length up to 100 yards, which rendered coverage of spatially expansive race tracks impossible.<sup>78</sup> Also, the cost of overcoming these constraints meant coverage of motorsport was simply not as attractive to the BBC as other sports were. In 1947, the BBC tentatively experimented with coverage of motorcycling from Brands Hatch in the Kentish countryside by integrating a series of after-race interviews with competitors. In a production review, then BBC producer Peter Dimmock noted his disappointment with the content of the programme due to boring racing.<sup>79</sup> A subsequent conversion from grass track to permanent road circuit in 1950 then led to BBC a management policy which opposed sports coverage on Sundays, on which most motor racing took place.

During the early 1950s, Raymond Baxter persuaded BBC management of the possibility to include in its television schedules a series of 30-minute motoring non-live programmes called 'Driving Club' which came under the wing of the Outside Broadcast Department.<sup>80</sup> Further, and following a recent commentary by Baxter on the Royal Automobile Club's (RAC) first international rally, i.e. '[...] the speed hill climb from the famous ' Rest-and-be-Thankful' hill in the Highlands of Scotland', BBC producer Bill Duncalf wrote Baxter asking: 'I

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<sup>78</sup> Walker, *Unless I'm Very Much Mistaken*, 111; Baxter and Dron, *Tales of My Time*.

<sup>79</sup> Production notes, Brands Hatch, 31 August 1947, BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter WAC), T14/168.

<sup>80</sup> Baxter and Dron, *Tales of My Time*, 167.

believe you have ideas for staging a car trial or exciting hill climb or what not?'.<sup>81</sup> This led to Baxter and Duncalf devising a motor racing series in 1952 specifically for television called the 'Television Trophy Trial':

'The idea was to tailor the long-established format of trials driving, which is to see who can complete a series of off-road sections, to the requirements of TV broadcasting. We decided to have a series of hill climbs, each divided by five-and ten-point markers, roughly halfway up and at the top'.<sup>82</sup>

Either as a group of successive trials under the denominator of 'international trials', e.g. or as individual events, hill climbs have been a popular part of motor racing from as early as 1897 (1899 in Britain) and have, due to the delicate ability to race up corkscrew-like courses against the clock, attracted vast numbers of followers from the onset (Flower, 1975).<sup>83</sup>

As such, the hill climb can be defined along the following parameters:

'[Cars can tackle] an uphill course one-by-one, with the quickest time dictating the winner'.<sup>84</sup>

'[Here] race strategy is clear-cut – a 'maximum attack' approach is required from the very first to the last centimeter of the route, as for an athlete running the 100 metres'.<sup>85</sup>

Bearing in mind the maximum action in minimum space requirements for television broadcasting as first used by Harry Carpenter and set out by Whannel, this maximum attack approach inherent to hill climbs redeems the first requirement of this broadcasting principle.<sup>86</sup> Yet most, if not all, existing

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<sup>81</sup> *Radio Times*, 'RAC First International Rally', 5 June, 1951; Duncalf to Baxter, Sept. 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.

<sup>82</sup> Baxter and Dron, *Tales of My Time*, 207.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Harding, ed., *The Guinness Book of Car Facts and Feats* (Middlesex: Guinness Superlatives Limited, 1985).

<sup>84</sup> Motorsport Association United Kingdom, 'Hill Climb', <https://www.msauk.org/The-Sport/Types-of-Motor-Sport/Hill-Climb> (accessed August 2, 2018).

<sup>85</sup> Fédération Internationale d'Automobile, 'FIA European Rallycross Championship', <https://www.fia.com/events/european-rallycross-championship/season-2018/fia-european-rallycross-championship> (accessed August 2, 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*

hill climbs were still considered too long and unwieldy for television to cover adequately.<sup>87</sup> As such, Baxter was assisted by Goff Imhoff from the London Motor Club to recce various hills and select the most suitable course for the trial.<sup>88</sup> The hill climb course chosen by Baxter and Imhoff successfully alleviated many of the technological constraints associated with traditional racetrack coverage including strategic camera placement which allowed for a better overview of the track and a reduction in the number of cameras required as well as more spectacular tracking shots of race cars.<sup>89</sup> Subsequently, by means of a tailored-for-television motor racing event, the BBC was able to more effectively 'control' the (motor) sporting environment of operation to suit its own abilities, and limitations, accordingly.<sup>90</sup> Producer Bill Duncalf made arrangements for a new BBC trophy to be designed, which used a silver model of an Image Orthocon three turret camera, a design that was later adopted by the BBC Sport Personality of the Year award from 1954. As a result, the Television Trophy Trial, first broadcast on 15 November 1952, constitutes one of the first attempts by the BBC to effectively instigate a sporting event and indicates motorsport on television increasingly wanted to become televisual. The televised nature of Trials following on from this becomes further evident via the memorandum 'Some thoughts on recent OB programmes' from the BBC's Director of Outside Broadcasts, Seymour 'Lobby' Joly de Lotbinière,<sup>91</sup> who besides noting the initial Television Trophy broadcast went well, makes some suggestions for improving the scoring system, adding further suspense and adding more technical information to the running commentary when possible. More so, in a further memo he noted the success of the BBC

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<sup>87</sup> Details of Programme Requirements, 5 Nov. 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.

<sup>88</sup> Baxter to Haseman, 14 Oct. 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.

<sup>89</sup> Details of Programme Requirements, 5 Nov 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.

<sup>90</sup> Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, The Media and Popular Culture*.

<sup>91</sup> de Lotbinière to Edgar, Burrell-Davis, Singer and Buchan, 19 Nov. 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.; Seymour 'Lobby' Joly de Lotbinière was the BBC's Director of Outside Broadcasts from 1935 to 1939 (Radio and Television) and 1946 to 1952 (Radio and Television). From 1952 until 1955 he concentrated exclusively on outside broadcasting for television and is widely credited with transforming the codes and conventions of radio running commentary for BBC sport during those periods; Richard Haynes, "'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sports Commentary, 1935–1952', *Sport in History* 29, no 1, (2009): 25-48

promotion writing, 'I think we should explore the possibilities of more BBC promotions of this sort. Not only do we thereby bypass promoters who may be worried about television, but we can get the events streamlined to suit television purposes'.<sup>92</sup>

In view of this, and the larger competition with ITV, and parallel to its endeavors with hill climbs, the BBC had also been experimenting with scrambling, i.e. 'a race in which the fastest [motorcycle] rider is the winner [on] a circuit of one or two of the roughest possible country [...]', which saw a huge boost from BBC's television coverage. Much like hill climbs for motorcycles, Baxter describes it as '[...] ideal for the box: exciting, cheap and cheerful, there was lots of it readily available and it was eager to promote itself'.<sup>93</sup> Despite the BBC's adoption of scrambling, e.g. 'The Television Motor-cycle Scramble' and 'Motorsport: Autocross and Motorcycle Scramble', it was ITV that set up scrambling in the same way that the BBC had created and built up the Television Trophy Trial with an event at Bentley Springs in Yorkshire.<sup>94</sup>

From 1952 onwards, the BBC further expanded its television experience with hill climbs, both as individual events, e.g. the 'Bo'ness Speed Hill Climb: Scotland v. England' and the 'Prescott Hill Climb', but the big televised events remained the Television Trophy Trials, e.g. the 'Television Trophy: Car Hill Climb Trial'.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, and despite efforts from Baxter,<sup>96</sup> the 1956 edition was eventually cancelled in 'the national interest' as at that time, the British

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<sup>92</sup> de Lotbinière to Television Controller, 24 Nov 1952, BBC WAC T14/229/1.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Hewitt, 'Steeplechasing on Wheels', *Picture Post*, May 10, 1947, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/29/newsid\\_3247000/3247805.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/29/newsid_3247000/3247805.stm) (accessed August 20, 2018); Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*; Baxter and Dron, *Tales of My Time*, 144.

<sup>94</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Television Motor-Cycle Scramble', 4 December, 1954; *Radio Times*, 'Motorsport: Autocross and Motorcycle Scramble', 1 February, 1958; Baxter and Dron, *Tales of My Time*.

<sup>95</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Bo'ness Speed Hill Climb: Scotland v. England', 29 June, 1953; *Radio Times*, 'Prescott Hill Climb', 9 April, 1955; *Radio Times*, 'Television Trophy: Car Hill Climb Trial', 1 October, 1955.

<sup>96</sup> Baxter to Dimmock, 21 November 1956, BBC WAC T14/229/2.

Ministry of Fuel and Power had asked the BBC not to broadcast any motorsport due to petrol rationing as a result of the ongoing Suez fuel crisis<sup>97</sup>.

The 'BBC Television Trophy Car Hill Climb Trial' returned in 1957 with the BBC mainly struggling with bad lighting and weather conditions as well as broadcast scheduling issues.<sup>98</sup> Similarly in 1958, the BBC furthered the televised nature of the Trophy by experimenting with a small radio camera as an onboard camera.<sup>99</sup> Although it was not used during the actual race due to unavailability, it does indicate the BBC's continued intent to raise the level of television motorsport to televised motorsport. However, in the same edition, the issue of broadcast scheduling reappeared in view of Sportsview handing over to the newly formed Grandstand regarding Saturday scheduling. More so, then BBC 1 controller Paul Fox was instigating a policy of dipping in and out of various sporting events during each episode which, according to him, would considerably increase audience numbers.<sup>100</sup> This reduced the traditional 60 minute Television Trophy Trial broadcast to 20 minutes, something Duncalf strongly disapproved of and which, according to Duncalf, took too much organizing for the BBC as a co-promoter of the event.<sup>101</sup> As a result of the mounting issues, the Television Trophy Trial struggled to conform to the latest requirements of television broadcasting. Much like other television sport, it would not be until the technological advancements of the 1960s before sport's fixed position on television would materialize fully.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> BBC, 26 November 1956, 'Motorists Panic as Petrol Rations Loom'. Available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/29/newsid\\_3247000/3247805.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/29/newsid_3247000/3247805.stm)

<sup>98</sup> *Radio Times*, 'BBC Television Trophy Car Hill Climb Trial', 23 November, 1957; Imhoff, 23 November 1957, BBC WAC T14/229/4.

<sup>99</sup> Duncalf to Goff, 5 August 1958, BBC WAC T14/229/4.

<sup>100</sup> Fox to Duncalf, 24 September 1958, BBC WAC T14/229/4.

<sup>101</sup> Duncalf to Fox, 23 September 1958, BBC WAC T14/229/4; Fox to Duncalf, 24 September 1958, BBC WAC T14/229/4.

<sup>102</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

### ***Overcoming Obstacles: From Hill Climbs to Rallycross***

With the beginning of the 1960s, the BBC continued to broadcast varying motor races including Formula 1 Grand Prix's and sports car races e.g. 'Motor Racing: Le Mans – Raymond Baxter reports direct from the circuit on the latest positions in the International Twenty-Four-Hour-Race'.<sup>103</sup> In spite of this continuation, the aforementioned technological constraints and issues from the 1950s continued to limit televising motorsport by the BBC.<sup>104</sup> For example, and as table 1 indicates, broadcasting of hill climbs by the BBC during the second half of the 1960s dwindled. The absence of hill climbs on the BBC during the second half of the 1960s is, at least in part, due to the creation, of a new winter series, namely Rallycross.<sup>105</sup> Officially recognized by the Fédération Internationale d'Automobile (FIA) in 1967, Rallycross is a motorsport series in which 'five [originally four] cars line-abreast at the start for short and sharp races of 4 to 6 [short] laps on mixed surfaces, alternating between asphalt and gravel'.<sup>106</sup> Effectively combining the spectacle of rally driving with track racing, the series was first devised by 'pioneering' television producer Robert Reed in 1966, with the specific intent of overcoming many of the existing constraints and issues for televising motorsport, i.e. scheduling, lighting and bad-weather (cancellations):

'I got the idea while working on a wet hill climb event in November 1966. [...] There was no point booking another hill climb because it could be cancelled again, so we needed to come up with another event that could fill the gap when other sports were stopped by the weather [...] and leave holes in the TV schedule when cancelled'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Motor Racing: Le Mans', 10 June, 1961.

<sup>104</sup> Dan Wright, (2017, 10 February). 'Rallycross 50th anniversary: TV Producer Robert Reed Recalls Sport's History at Lydden Hill', Kent Online, February 10, 2017, <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/sport/rallycross--how-it-all-120348/> (accessed August 20, 2018).

<sup>105</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Grandstand', 31 October 1970

<sup>106</sup> Fédération Internationale d'Automobile, 'FIA European Hill Climb Championship'.

<sup>107</sup> Kent Online, 10 February 2017, 'Rallycross at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary'.

For this, Reed adjusted the Lydden Hill (England) track that was visually unobstructed for spectators and which required only four cameras to capture the action,<sup>108</sup> thus also reducing the issue of temporal fragmentation (cf. Whannel)<sup>109</sup>. This further enabled commentators to see all competitors on the track at all times and provide a continuous flow of information on all competitors, even after a crash. Created entirely by and for television, Rallycross thus adhered better to the maximum action in minimum space principle than any previous series and as such provided more '[...] exciting and spectacular motorsport.'<sup>110</sup> Although having been picked up by ABC TV and ITV earlier, Rallycross was covered as a 'popular winter series' from 1968 onwards as part of the BBC's Grandstand programme.<sup>111</sup> Grandstands' exposure subsequently contributed to the series huge rise in popularity through to the rest of the decade as well as the century.<sup>112</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Post-war Years and Beyond**

By means of an archival approach, this article has shown that due to the significant technical and logistical difficulties associated with televising motorsport, the BBC experimented with the format of the hill climb by moulding it to fit television's requirements more appropriately which resulted in the creation of the Television Trophy Trial, the adoption of scrambling and eventually in the rise of Rallycross. In view of Whannel's suggestion that early televised sport was not televisual,<sup>113</sup> it would seem that the BBC was not only using motorsport to its own benefit early on, i.e. from the early 1950s onwards, but actively creating and representing motorsport as competitive and dramatic. This, in effect, is in line with Crisell's suggestion that 'television graduated from the modest onlooker to a mighty arbiter whom the world cannot oppose and

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.

<sup>110</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Grandstand', 17 October, 1970.

<sup>111</sup> *Radio Times*, 'Grandstand', 31 October 1970; Kent Online, 10 February 2017, 'Rallycross at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary'.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Gary Whannel, 'The Unholy Alliance: Notes on Television and the Remaking of British Sport 1965–85'.

whose gaze it often courts'.<sup>114</sup> In addition, the BBC's creative intent regarding motorsport was largely a reaction to a sharply increasing popularity for the sport that enjoyed a strong grassroots or club foundation during the immediate post-war period. Subsequently, the adoption of Rallycross by the BBC after ITV and ABC earlier during the late sixties further suggests the BBC felt it needed to cater to a continually expanding fanbase with further automotive and motorsport oriented programmes such as, for example, *Wheelbase*, which ran from 1964 to 1975. As such, this also indicates that with time, BBC broadcasting of motorsport fell increasingly within Whannel's concept of 'infotainment' as increasingly documentary style reporting was combined with sporting entertainment.<sup>115</sup> Of course, the logistical struggle of broadcasting motorsport live might have been overcome from the 1970s onwards, the struggle of representing the sport and its proceedings during races lasts until the present day. Even to this day, with digital technology now exploring the realm of virtual reality and augmented reality to complement the many cameras on track, onboard the race cars and in helicopters and drones, the struggle to make motorsport real for viewers remains, in essence, 'real'.

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<sup>114</sup> Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 174.

<sup>115</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision*.



# FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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The final part of this Ph.D. summarises the main findings of the five empirical chapters in two ways. First, it combines and relates the results of the various studies to the main research question(s) as formulated in the introduction, namely how and to what extent does the media represent, i.e. frame, the presence of ES in Formula E and how and to what extent does this affect the overall representation of Formula E. This is followed, second, by providing an indication on how these studies have addressed gaps in the current body of research.

## **Addressing The Research Question(s)**

As previously formulated in the introduction of this Ph.D., the main research question consists of two parts and reads:

*How and to what extent do the media represent ES in Formula E*

and

*How and to what extent does the framing of ES in Formula E affect the overall representation of Formula E?*

This Ph.D.'s five empirical chapters have addressed this question by adopting a wide-angle approach. Indeed, chapters three through six all started by means of conceptualizing ES and Formula E and their relationship with the media prior to applying a textual analysis. Chapter three differentiated itself through a political economy take on the self-representation of Formula E and ES where the chapters four and five focused exclusively on representation by the media for which they adopted a framing approach. Only chapter six included an analysis that provided insight into both media production and audience reception. Chapter seven used an archival and biographical approach to, first, study the influence of the media on motorsport through broadcasting, and second, as a means to provide further historical contextualization.

In what follows, this Ph.D.'s research question will be addressed in two parts, namely: first by summarizing the findings on the representation of ES by the media and, second, by looking at the media (-ted relationship between the representations of ES and) representations of Formula E.

### ***Conceptualizing Representations of ES in Formula E***

Throughout this Ph.D., the definition of environmental sustainability, or ES, in sport has been described in the theoretical frameworks of chapter one to four, namely that 'sport is sustainable when it meets the needs of today's sporting community while contributing to the improvement of future sport opportunities for all and the improvement of the integrity of the natural and social environment on which it depends' (Chernushenko, 2011) has been the starting point for the conceptualization in the empirical studies. Interestingly enough, empirical findings indicate only one frame comes close to embodying this definition, i.e. the '**Strong Ecological Message**' frame found exclusively in the pre-race section of the inaugural Formula E broadcast. Constructed with a positive moral evaluation and emerging from a contemporary context in which ES plays an increasing part of people's lives (Lester, 2010), the issue of this secondary frame presents a message of ES for a more sustainable future in relation to Formula E. However, a limited level of further detail and media context to the frame hampered advancement of the story of ES, meaning the frame functions mostly as a neglected frame throughout the sample of broadcasts (chapter five) as well as throughout the entire media sample analysed in this Ph.D. According to Boykoff (2013) this is the first of two often recurring problems in relation to ES and other environment related topics. However, the 'Saving the Environment' frame (chapter six) found in online articles from 2013, 2015 and 2017 suggests differently, namely that the story of ES 'enjoyed' sufficient context to be able to advance, or at least be maintained, over time (although this was not the case for audience comments). Much in line with previous findings on representations of environmental issues, the 'Saving the Environment' frame's emergence rests on the suggestion of an urgent global necessity for sustainability (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012), i.e. that

climate change is posing one of the biggest challenges for current generations (Abric, 2001). The main reason for this frame's longevity is due to the significant involvement of an A-list celebrity, namely Leonardo DiCaprio. Media messages surrounding (1) co-foundership of a Formula E race team, (2) his appointment as Chairman of the Sustainability Committee and (3) his appearance as the 2016 New York Formula E ePrix clearly provided a sustained base to (re)use this frame. Indeed, DiCaprio functioned as a frame sponsor supporting and elongating the diachronical relevance of the frame as well as exposure for Formula E. Findings subsequently revealed a positively evaluated subframe that focussed in particular on DiCaprio's role as a 'Hollywood Hero', effectively approving of DiCaprio's achievement of combining Hollywood flair with authentic intent to protect the environment (e.g. 'award-winning actor and environmental activist' (The Green Living Guy, 2013)). Interestingly though, audience comments revealed that both the 'Saving the Environment' and the 'Hollywood Hero' frame were not sustained throughout all three sample periods, i.e. 2013 for the former and 2013 and 2017 for the latter, which leads to suggest that the interpretation process associated with decoding the media produced messages and frames allows audiences to read these frames in various ways. The fact that the 'Saving the Environment' frame was not sustained diachronically by audiences can be ascribed to two reasons. A first plausible explanation is that after the initial 'breaking news' of DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E in 2013, the limited newsworthiness often associated with media reporting of ES comes into play as the novelty effect – certainly of Formula E and, to some extent, of DiCaprio's involvement - wears off over time (Lester 2010; Cox 2012, Panis & Van den Bulck, 2014). A second, and additional, explanation is that the private life of the celebrity, i.e. DiCaprio, which in this case consists of his Hollywood career and his personal health (see Celebrity Health) frame, has a stronger attention-pulling power than his political persona does (see chapter four: 'Hollywood Hero' and 'Celebrity Health' frames). It needs to be said then that, when it comes to audiences, celebrities and celebrity endorsement can help to raise and maintain attention by making environmental narratives appear more truthful (Brockington, 2009),

yet only to a certain extent. This is also directly dependent on the authenticity of (Van den Bulck, 2018) DiCaprio, who is a hero to some but a hypocrite to others (see frames 'Hollywood Hero' and 'Celebrity Hypocrisy'). As such, Boykoff's (2013) first problem of a lack of context surrounding ES prohibits the story from advancing diachronically, and thus successfully among these audiences.

The presence of celebrity has further implications regarding the representation of ES in Formula E. Although Formula E's website as a tool for controlling their own organizational identity revealed extensive efforts to advance the story of embracing as well as of the necessity for ES (for example through ES adverts, logos spread beyond the designated sustainability pages and on two out of three webpages ( $n=201$ ) of the website) in Formula E, the website analysis (chapter three) also revealed that celebrities were significantly represented. Indeed, along with other factors of commodification including glamour, gamification and (ES) advertising, the celebrity factor, which also included many textual and visual references to Leonardo DiCaprio, contributed significantly to represent (ES in) Formula E as commodified. Although less problematic than on Formula E's own website, the commodification of ES in newspaper articles and live-television broadcasts of Formula E remains firmly within the boundaries of neo-liberalism and free-market capitalism (Carvalho, 2005). Indeed, the quantitative analysis of newspaper articles (chapter four) revealed that topics such as research and development and politics were mostly used in relation to ES. Similarly, the live-broadcast analysis (chapter five) uncovered a clear intention by broadcasters to not integrate ES (see the aforementioned and largely neglected 'Strong Ecological' frame). They did so as to direct focus on building, which includes attracting existing, motorsport audiences by means of maintaining values traditionally associated with motorsport by audiences, such as speed, action and drama on track (Roy et al., 2010). Indeed, the historical analysis of the BBC representation of motorsport (chapter seven) indicated that, at least for television, broadcasters' emphasis remained firmly on trying to convey such values to audiences as realistically as possible. With media technologies growing increasingly intricate, technological

permutations have brought along new possibilities for the representation of sport (Hutchins and Rowe, 2012; Sturm, 2017), which over time have further reinforced such traditional motorsport values. Further, reconstructed frames found in the live-broadcast analysis such as 'Challenge, 'Proper Motorsport' and 'Generating Conflict' are some of the more dominant frames that broadcasters use to help raise the sport's profile (Helland 2007; Kidd 2003). The concerns by broadcasters are thus largely cultural, economic and political as they are directly linked to audience expectations, profit-making and stakeholder/advertising commitments. As such, the concerns subsequently highlight 'an interdependence of sport, media, culture, commerce and politics' which is inherent to the notion of mediatization (Sturm, 2017, p. 175; Billings and Wenner, 2017). This subsequently brings us to the application of Boykoff's (2013) second problem: framing of ES, whether secondary or neglected, occurs in terms of socio-political and potential economic concerns. However, the use of the secondary frame 'Strong Ecological Message' by broadcasters in the pre-race section of the inaugural Formula E ePrix and its change to a neglected frame from then onwards implies the use of ES as a green selling card and furthers the argument towards capitalist profit-making .

As much as ES either constitutes a frame per se ('Strong Ecological Message'), or whereby ES is very much a part of the construction of a frame ('Saving the Environment') or where it only plays a limited part (e.g. 'Hollywood Hero' and 'EV Revolution'), these frames all share a positive moral evaluation. Yet, factors of commodification such as celebrity presence and/ or involvement present either in Formula E's self-representational online identity, in online media articles or socio-economic and political concerns by broadcasters to generate audiences which quickly reduce ES to the side-line also contribute to more critical, i.e. negative, moral evaluations. Media framing in newspapers (chapter four) generated the secondary frame, i.e. 'Green Farce'. Functioning as a direct counter frame to the (Formula E as an) 'EV Revolution' frame and indirectly to 'FE Improves Motorsport' (chapter six), this frame dismisses Formula E's technological and ES efforts, rendering them inadequate to offset the series' impact on its delicate urban surroundings following the racing in city

centres. In this way, this frame links up with the previous representation of motorsport, more specifically Formula One, as disruptive to the local public and natural environment (Lowes, 2004; Sturm, 2018). Similarly, the 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport' frame claims Formula E only highlights EV's negative aspects by not being able to be sustainable itself. Bearing in mind the concept of greenwashing as a limit of green communication which occurs as a result of growing scepticism among the public when a company is not able to live up to its environmental claims and/or promises (Platel, 2010; Barnfield, 2011, Cox, 2012; Cox & Pezzullo, 2015; Miller, 2016), these frames effectively represent ES as a greenwashing tool for Formula E. Although the frame was found in only a small minority of articles, the critical perspective in the self-representational analysis of Formula E's website (chapter three) raised the issue of greenwashing, albeit less incriminating than those that the 'Green Farce' frame raise. Indeed, much like Miller (2016) found in relation to Formula One, Formula E's website did not provide the fullest transparency regarding data concerning international travel and as such, the total ecological impact of Formula E could not be fully established in relation to the series' offset.

### ***Conceptualizing Representations of Formula E***

With regards to the second research question and conceptualizing media representations of Formula E, this Ph.D. identifies a number of patterns in terms of media frame (re)occurrence.

When combining the findings from all studies, a first pattern of frames emerges. Chapter four reveals newspaper articles largely framed Formula E in terms of an 'EV Revolution'. Herein, Formula E is presented as a solution that can help mainstream and boost the lingering negative image of EV's. More so, the 'Motorsport Improves EV's' frame found in online media articles (chapter six) suggests both the media and audience commenters, albeit limited, also consider that developments in motorsport directly and positively affect the development of road-going EV's. Taking a macro view of all findings, this presentation of Formula E as a forward-looking motorsport series links up with the 'EV's are the Future' frame (chapter six) and the 'Novelty' frame (chapter

five). These media frames are constructed on the basis of positive moral evaluations. However, they, and in particular the 'EV Revolution' and 'EV's are the Future' frames, come about based on the underlying problem associated with EV's; namely that of significant negative characteristics compared to ICE cars. Indeed, characteristics commonly associated with EV's including boring, slow, ugly, costly or impractical are inherent to two counter frames; 'EV Image Problems', found in newspaper articles from both the UK and Flanders (chapter four), and 'EV's are Problematic', found in online media messages (chapter six). The moral evaluation of the former frame suggests it could prove difficult for the public to change their consuming behavior based on the negative characteristics of EV's. Indeed, as the online media article analysis (chapter six) reveals, audience commenters followed a dominant reading of the frame suggested by media throughout the three year period. According to Scheufele (1999) and Van Gorp (2010), the construction of frames such as 'EV Image problems' and 'EV's are Problematic' by the media reveals they frame events not just by applying journalistic values but also by being sensitive to contemporary and social and cultural themes (Scheufele, 1999; Van Gorp, 2010). Considering the positive and negative EV frames set out above as well as further drawing on Van Gorp (2010), it seems plausible to conclude that the framing of Formula E, at least partially, occurs by means of an overarching and culturally embedded **EV frame**.

A second pattern of frames emerges in relation to Formula E's (motor) sporting implications. The dominant '(Potential) Threat to Formula One' frame found in newspaper articles draws from the compromised 'health' state that Formula One was considered to be in and suggests Formula E can capitalise on this situation if it manages to further develop and improve on deficiencies that emerge from adopting EV's for racing purposes. These deficiencies are subsequently what also led the media to construct the counter frame 'Child's Play', which also functions as a sub frame to the 'EV Image Problems' frame set out prior. By means of this counter frame, the representation of Formula E is to not be taken seriously in motor racing terms as it resembles, for example, a Scalextric set. Subsequently, the representation of Formula E as a children's

game would imply an intricate break away from values, norms and expectations associated with motorsport. Media frames that represent 'Formula E as a Challenge', 'Facing the Unknown' and 'Generating Conflict' (and its subframe 'Generating Safety') and as 'Proper Motorsport' in the live broadcasts indeed seem to confirm the requirement of traditional values, norms and expectations. Broadcasters construct these frames in order to be able to provide audiences with a nostalgic experience based on motorsport as a symbolic arena where plentiful drama can unfold (Crabbe & Brown, 2004; Kennedy & Hills 2009). The significance of such traditional values for audiences cannot be underestimated as the 'Formula E Ruins Motorsport' frame (chapter six) suggests. Exclusively constructed by audience commenters, this frame posits that Formula E's EV shortcomings are extrapolated in a stereotypical racing environment where traditional motorsport values are expected to contribute to the excitement of motorsport rather than compromise it. Of course, and in line with sports marketing strategies, additional frames by broadcasters are added carefully to not only 'enhance' the fan experience but also position itself as a niche sport and in doing so appeal to a truly global audience (Menzies & Nguyen 2012). One such frame concerns the 'Novelty' frame which, according to Whannel (1992), is commonly applied with the aim of generating additional and sustainable audience numbers. Bearing in mind the above, this Ph.D. groups together most of the frames included in this sub-section '(Potential) Threat to Formula One', 'Challenge', 'Facing the Unknown', 'Proper Motorsport', 'Generating Conflict', 'Generating Safety' on the basis of a motorsport series that aims to perform against rival series such as Formula One as well as for audiences as an entertaining product (Roy et al., 2010). As such, these frames fall under an overarching **Performance frame** (Lewis and Weaver 2013).

A third and final pattern which this Ph.D. addresses concerns the counter frames 'Child's Play', 'Green Farce', 'Celebrity Hypocrisy' and 'Formula E Hypocrisy Ruins Motorsport'. In their criticisms of Formula E, these four frames share some of the following common traits, namely (1) inappropriate actions and behavior, (2) two-faced characterizations and (3) a level of absurdity. These traits also form part of what makes up the definition of a 'farce'. Indeed, the



English Oxford Dictionary (farce, 2018) defines a farce as ‘A comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterization and ludicrously improbable situations’ and ‘An event or situation that is absurd or disorganised’. As a result, this Ph.D. makes a case to combine these frames constructed by on the one hand, newspaper media, and on the other hand online media and subsequent audiences, and group them under the common denominator, i.e. overarching, **Farce frame**.

### **Addressing Theoretical Gaps, Limitations and the Way Forward**

By means of its five empirical studies, this Ph.D. makes an important contribution to the current body of research in a variety of academic domains, addressing a number of shortcomings.

The first gap this Ph.D. addresses relates to motorsport studies. More than other sports, academic research into motorsport has been lagging behind (e.g. Pflugfelder, 2009; Hassan, 2011a; Howell & Miller, 2014; Matthews and Pike, 2016). However, a solid base of explorational studies have started to reduce the fragmented nature of the field of study (Pflugfelder, 2009). Indeed, there is now a significant body of literature focussing on American motorsport and other global series, most notably Formula One (e.g. Grant-Braham, 1996, Lowes, 2004; Tranter & Lowes, 2005; Tranter & Warn, 2008; Sturm, 2011; Evans, 2013; Evans, 2014; Sturm, 2014; Miller, 2016; Naess, 2017; Sturm, 2017; Lowes, 2018). Yet, as Howell and Miller (2014) indicate, the motor racing scene is volatile and changes occur rapidly, requiring continued academic reassessment. In addition, and speaking about CSR in Formula One, Naess (2017) suggests a need for more research when it comes to a motor racing organization’s relationship to larger societal issues. Considering the dramatic rise of public and political acknowledgment of environmental issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lester, 2010; Cox, 2012) and the impact this has on the workings of all industries including (motor) sport, there exists a significant need to look at how this manifests itself in the fast-changing field of motorsport. As such, this Ph.D. veers away from traditionally researched motorsport series such as Formula One or NASCAR to look at Formula E, the FIA’s most significant initiative

towards more sustainable motorsport through EV's. As academic contributions regarding Formula E start to emerge (e.g. Kalinauckas, 2016; Standaert & Jarvenpaa, 2016; Standaert & Jarvenpaa, 2017; Sturm, 2018), this Ph.D.'s main contribution in this respect lies with the scope of its systematic and diachronic analysis, covering the first generation of Formula E since its initial launch in Beijing in 2014.

Following this initial gap, some scholars have studied motorsport in relation to the environment (e.g. Dingle, 2009; Miller, 2016; Sturm, 2018) and the media (Evans, 2013; Evans, 2014), yet the Ph.D. is the first effort to date to combine both. This is very timely considering (1) the significance of the media in raising the global profile of ES (e.g. Lester, 2010; Savery & Gilbert, 2011; Cox, 2012), and sport (e.g. Wenner, 2002; Rowe, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009) as well as (2) the importance of sport as a platform to further ES awareness and advocacy (e.g. Savery & Gilbert, 2011; Jarvie, 2018) and (3) that motorsport is considered wasteful and environmentally damaging (Hickson, 2014; Miller, 2016). Regarding the latter, this Ph.D. takes the lead in understanding empirically how a variety of media represents motorsport in relation to ES. Indeed, this Ph.D. contains a number of empirically based chapters that investigate representations of ES in Formula E by newspapers, broadcasters and various online media from a production point of view. More so, it looks at how ES in Formula E is received by audiences from aforementioned online media and in relation to a social construct that is the celebrity activist. Another empirically based chapter specifically looks at the self-representation of ES in Formula E on their website, thus answering the specific need for more research on motorsport organization's CSR efforts in relation to larger societal, i.e. including environmental, issues (Naess, 2017). As such, all of these chapters shed valuable light onto the conceptualization of ES in Formula E as both a commodified and, to a lesser extent, educational element which fulfills social and economic functions in contemporary (sporting) society.

Third, Howell and Miller's (2014, p. viii) suggest that (American) motorsport fans value technical and innovative advancements, even if they know only little about them. However, due to their exclusive focus on American

motorsport, claims beyond the USA are difficult to make. Indeed, going beyond the situation in the USA, the newspaper analysis in chapter four of this Ph.D., in part, reveals the importance of technology and business in printed media representing Formula E in the UK, a country which shares an elaborate motorsport culture (House of Commons, 2010) with the USA. Yet, it also indicates that this does not apply to Flanders, the Dutch speaking region in Belgium, where reporting on (ES in) Formula E was minimal and predominantly focused on sporting results. Adding a European perspective, albeit limited in scope, these findings further corroborate Howell and Miller's (2014, p. ix) claim that motorsports are generally related to their historical eras and in relation to regional locations.

Fourth, this Ph.D. combines a wide range of academic domains which contribute to the multidisciplinary character of sport-media studies. Indeed, and as Rowe (2003) suggests, the steep rise of academic interest in sport from cultural studies, sociology, leisure and communication studies is due to its connection as a socio-cultural institution with the politics and economics of everyday global life. This consequently means it is perfectly suited for multi-disciplinary research (Rowe, 2003). However, considering the extent of contemporary research on sport, a vast majority of studies remain anchored within a single academic discipline. This is even more so the case with motorsport<sup>116</sup>. To address this and to bridge the gap between social sciences and humanities, this Ph.D. constructs a multi-disciplinary character and incorporates concepts and insights from differing academic domains relevant for the study of sport and the media. In particular, the chapters in this Ph.D. combine the disciplines (political) communication studies, cultural studies, (sport) sociology and history. Indeed, the third chapter combines concepts from political (economy) communication studies (e.g. commodification) and cultural studies (e.g. representation) and mixes a quantitative content analysis with a qualitative thematic analysis to gain insight into underlying socio-economic and political workings of Formula E and the impact on ES. This combination of

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<sup>116</sup> An exception in this instance is Howell and Miller (2014) which combines cultural studies with gender studies, media studies, sociology and aesthetic theory.

quantitative and qualitative research provides not only broader insights, it also sets up a bridging model for media research in chapter four, namely framing (Reese, 2001; 2010). Functioning as a multi-paradigmatic research programme, framing provides the best way to unearth more complex and latent structures of meaning produced by the (newspaper) media (D'Angelo, 2002; D'Angelo, 2010). As such, this chapter effectively combines communication studies with cultural studies to understand how ES in Formula E is represented in two different regions. Similarly, chapter five combines elements from communication studies, cultural studies and sociology. It uses a qualitative-only framing analysis and indicates how ES's presence and absence in broadcasts of Formula E is rooted in society. Following this, chapter six employs a framing analysis to examine the role of a celebrity in affecting representations of (ES in) Formula E. As such, it combines communication studies with cultural studies and provides a comparison between encoding and decoding (i.e. media and audience) processes. Finally, chapter seven changes a framing analysis for an archival analysis as it combines cultural and historical studies, or social sciences and humanities. This enables this chapter to gain a detailed insight into the role of television media in shaping motorsport.

Fifth, the historical focus on the BBC's early broadcasting of motorsport provides novel empirical evidence of the implications for the representation of motorsport during the early years of television broadcasting as, here too, motorsport of this era is largely bypassed. This is of specific interest considering that, according to Whannel (1992), early sport in general was not televised. However, the findings from chapter seven indicate that UK broadcasters during the post-WWII period actively shaped and created motorsport to fit the technological possibilities of representing motorsport as televisual, i.e. real (Briggs, 1979).

### ***Issues for Future Research***

As set out above, this Ph.D. addresses some potential shortcomings in the current areas of media and (motor) sport studies, yet it also has a number of limitations worth taking into consideration, especially with a view to future research.

Considering the main research question focused on the media production side of representation, audience reception was largely excluded from this Ph.D.'s empirical studies. The aspect of media reception was included as an area of study in chapter six as insights into the mediated relationship between a celebrity, in this case Leonardo DiCaprio, and audiences often provides additional and valuable information (Claessens, 2013; Van den Bulck, 2018). More work on how audiences respond to coverage of Formula E in general and its relationship to ES in particular is required.

Second, the Ph.D. has made a partly conceptual, partly pragmatic choice to focus on traditional forms of media such as newspaper articles and television broadcasts along with 'newer' online media sources. Contemporary studies on media-sport representations are starting to focus on social media. In this sense, future research could focus on representations of Formula E and ES in the context of social media.

A third area for future research revolves around the international scope for analysis. Considering the inclusion of UK and Flemish newspapers in chapter two provided a rich basis for comparative analysis and subsequently revealed interesting differences, it might prove worthwhile to include other countries, including those which the Formula E championship visits. Although beyond the scope of a single Ph.D., such a study could draw, for example, from large-scale media studies such as *The International Sports Press Survey* (Horky & Nieland, 2013) which includes newspaper analyses from 22 countries from around the world. Indeed, this would benefit a more comprehensive view and could, potentially, include systematic as well as case studies.

Finally, at the time of its initial conceptualization, this Ph.D. chose to focus on Formula E as it represented the most significant electric motorsport

series that openly stated to embrace ES and drive EV technology and awareness. However, since then, electric motorsport participation has increased, e.g. Jaguar I-Pace Trophy, Pikes Peak Hill climb, Isle of Man TT, Dakar Rally, and more series have been announced for the near future, e.g. World Rallycross (WRX), Electric GT, ECTR (electric touring car) and MotoE. Formula E has been able to establish itself as the go-to series for professional electric motorsport, yet future studies should (1) continue to monitor Formula E's progression in terms of both self-representation and subsequent media representations as well as (2) branch out and determine how other electric motorsport series represent themselves and how the media represents them. In doing so, future studies of motorsport will be able to engage with what Hassan (2011b, p. 322) called the 'fascinating future' of motorsport, or, in this particular case, the electrifying future of 21<sup>st</sup> century motorsport, a sport in transition.

### **Reaching the Chequered Flag: A Final Summary**

Addressing the main research question, the five empirical studies in this Ph.D. have demonstrated that media represent ES in Formula E in a variety of ways. Indeed, ES was significantly represented on many of Formula E's webpages, and although it experienced a level of commodification, it did contribute to the sporting organizations' identity of aiming to create more sustainable motorsport and modes of transport. A number of multi-media analyses however suggest a more complicated situation of representing ES in Formula E.

This Ph.D. indicated ES is never represented as a frame itself, but rather as part of other frames. Primarily newspaper articles and a variety of online news media along with subsequent audience commenters do so in a limited number of frames. Such framing represents ES either as a necessary solution to a variety of environmental issues and helps to validate Formula E's intentions, or as a basis for criticizing Formula E and accompanying celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio in misusing ES for profit making, i.e. greenwashing, purposes. More, DiCaprio's involvement with Formula E was framed positively and diachronically, indicating the celebrity's ability to raise the issue of ES more

so than just Formula E can achieve. Audiences to these articles however framed his involvement as hypocritical and as a result negatively impact Formula E's organizational image. Further, this Ph.D. also indicated that broadcasters of Formula E only represented ES as part of a frame only used as an initial green selling card, after which it was neglected throughout the rest of all broadcasts. This deliberate neglect was due to the nature of the sports-media complex and the need for broadcasting media to comply with advertising and stakeholder commitments by creating nostalgic motorsport experiences based on traditional motorsport values. Indeed, as this Ph.D. established, some early broadcasters focused primarily on representing motorsport as televisual, i.e. as realistic as possible. This firmly established and reinforced such 'traditional values' in a period in which ES did not enjoy relevant public or media significance. As such, this intent was further evident through a number of frames underlying a performance frame used to represent Formula E across all media. This Ph.D. further identified two more overarching frames relevant for representing ES in Formula E, namely the 'EV' frame and the 'Farce' frame, whereby the latter represented Formula E, and ES in Formula E, as considerable negative.

Finally, this Ph.D. concludes by stating that media and subsequent media texts prove instrumental in shaping our understanding of the meaning of both Formula E and ES in relation to Formula E. Clearly, varying national media lenses and the sort of media affect how and to what extent ES is represented. By means of a multi-disciplinary and framing approach this Ph.D. has aimed to compensate for a lack of media production research on (ES in) motorsport and a need to combine insights from different academic fields including media, (motor) sport, and environmental studies. These original shortcomings as well as the findings of this Ph.D. should be monitored and developed further in future research – both with regard to the conceptualization of ES in Formula E and in other motorsport series as well as its meaning for audiences – as to a certain extent audiences read media texts on ES in Formula E in different ways.

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# SUMMARY

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## Abstract in English

Media representations of environmental sustainability (hereafter: ES) in motorsport, to date, have received little academic attention. This is surprising, considering that recent events such as the Volkswagen scandal (Dieselgate) have reinvigorated the debate about the sustainability and societal relevance of the automotive industry. This, in turn, significantly compromised the existing motorsport landscape by forcing manufacturers to pursue more sustainable forms of motorsport such as the electric racing series Formula E. Embedded in this lies an ideological debate on environmentally sustainable (motor)sport and mobility. Existing studies point out the significance of mainstream media in generating salience for issues such as ES. Research also shows that the media scrutinize fossil fueled motorsport for its unsustainable practices. That said, academic work on whether the media applies the same scrutiny to more recent non-fossil fueled motorsport such as Formula E remains scarce. This Ph.D. aims to address this void by providing more substantial research, combining the areas of media, ES and motorsport.

To this end, a theoretical and analytical framework is developed. Following an initial theoretical conceptualization of both ES and motorsport, a constructivist perspective to representation is rendered, complemented by secondary political economy and historical approaches. The main analytical framework is based in a framing approach, a popular process in sports-media communication studies that unearths how the media influence the messages that audiences receive. Unlike previous research, this study takes a broader overview of the sports-media relationships with respect to the environmental debate. Therefore, a case-study design is followed and includes analyses of the FIA Formula E website, newspaper articles, live television broadcasts, online

news media and audience comments on celebrity involvement along with bibliographical and archival materials on early BBC broadcasting of motorsport.

Results show diverse representations of ES in Formula E, differing according to varying national media lenses and types of media. Although commodified, ES contributes to a sporting identity of increased sustainability on Formula E's website. However, other media analyses indicate that ES takes a secondary role in coverage, mostly represented as part of other frames. The 'strong ecological message' and 'electric vehicle' frames represent ES as a necessary solution to environmental issues, effectively endorsing Formula E's intentions whereas a less frequent 'farce' frame represents it as hypocritical and greenwashing practices. In effect, ES functions predominantly as a 'neglected' frame for two reasons. First, a 'performance' frame highlights the symbiotic nature of the sports-media complex which requires broadcasting media to comply with advertising and stakeholder commitments by generating traditional motorsport value content. Second, in news media, ES still suffers from a limited newsworthiness compared to other daily news.

The doctoral thesis concludes with addressing the theoretical gaps it aimed to fill and a number of suggestions for future research into media representations of ES in motorsport.

# Abstract in Dutch

## *Racen naar een Duurzamere Toekomst? Mediarepresentaties van Milieuduurzaamheid in Motorsport: De Elektrische Formule E*

Tot op het heden hebben mediarepresentaties van milieuduurzaamheid nauwelijks het onderwerp van academisch onderzoek uitgemaakt. Dit is merkwaardig in het licht van recente gebeurtenissen zoals het Volkswagen-Dieselschandaal die het ideologische discours omtrent duurzaamheid in de auto-industrie aanwakkeren. Dit heeft constructeurs in de motorsportindustrie gedwongen om op duurzamere alternatieven zoals de elektrische Formule E over te schakelen. Eerder academisch onderzoek toonde enerzijds de rol van de media om problematische onderwerpen zoals milieu prominenter te profileren. Anderzijds toont onderzoek dat de media erg kritisch omgaan met de op fossiele brandstoffen aangewezen motorsport. Evenwel is nog nauwelijks onderzocht hoe de media berichten over de elektrische motorsport weergeeft. Deze doctoraatsthesis beoogt een antwoord te formuleren op deze vraag door middel van een substantieel onderzoek dat inzichten rond milieuduurzaamheid en motorsport combineert met communicatiewetenschappen.

Op basis hiervan wordt zowel een theoretisch als een analytisch kader ontwikkeld dat representatietheorie vanuit een constructivistisch perspectief benadert. Het analytisch kader is voornamelijk gebaseerd op een 'framing' aanpak die vaker terugkomt in onderzoek naar de sport-media communicatie en die aantoont hoe de media informatie op een bepaalde manier aan het publiek presenteert. In tegenstelling tot voorgaande studies opteert deze doctoraatsthesis voor een breed overzicht van de sport-media relaties in functie van het milieudiscours. Om dit te verwezenlijken wordt een case study ontwerp gevolgd, wat een combinatie van analyses van websites, krantenartikelen, live televisie uitzendingen alsook archiefmateriaal mogelijk maakt.



De resultaten tonen aan dat er, afhankelijk van de nationale media focus en mediatypes, diverse representaties van milieuduurzaamheid in de Formule E voorkomen. Zo levert milieuduurzaamheid, weliswaar gecommuniceerd, een bijdrage aan de identiteit van de Formule E als sport op haar website. Andere resultaten tonen echter aan dat milieuduurzaamheid een secundaire rol in de mediaberichtgeving opneemt als deel van andere 'frames'. Zo geven het 'sterk ecologische signaal' frame en het 'elektrisch voertuig' frame milieuduurzaamheid weer als een noodzakelijke oplossing voor milieuproblemen en bevestigen zij de vooropgestelde intenties van de Formule E. Het minder voorkomende 'farce' frame weerlegt dit op basis van referenties naar hypocrisie- en groenwaspraktijken. In het algemeen functioneert milieuduurzaamheid grotendeels als een 'verwaarloosd' frame omwille van twee redenen. Ten eerste belicht een 'prestatie' frame het symbiotische karakter van het sport-media complex wat voorschrijft dat mediabedrijven hun verplichtingen naar adverteerders en aandeelhouders toe moeten nakomen, in dit geval door inhoud op basis van traditionele motorsportwaarden te genereren. Ten tweede, milieuduurzaamheid wordt nog steeds gehinderd door een beperkte mate van nieuwswaardigheid in vergelijking met dagdagelijkse nieuwsonderwerpen. De doctoraatsthesis eindigt met een bespreking van de vooropgestelde theoretische doelen alsook enkele suggesties voor verder onderzoek naar mediarepresentaties van milieuduurzaamheid.



Due to an increased global public and political awareness of environmental sustainability generated largely by global digital media, automotive manufacturers and motorsport organizations have been increasingly scrutinized for their unsustainable and 'harmful' fossil-fueled practices. But where does this leave electric motor racing series such as Formula E? And does a shift to more 'sustainable' motorsport generate more positive media exposure or is motorsport inherently unsustainable and destined for continued scrutiny? Is there a noticeable difference between various types of media in their representations of environmental sustainability in Formula E?

This doctoral thesis develops both a theoretical and systematic framework for analysing how a variety of media represent, and frame, the presence of environmental sustainability in Formula E. This framework is applied empirically to a range of different media for the period of 2012 to 2017. Overall, it seems that the nature of the sports-media complex, celebrity involvement, and the national media lens are highly influential in shaping how environmental sustainability and Formula E are represented.

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Department of Communication Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hilde Van den Bulck