

“Women's sport has very little chance of achieving anything” : perception & resistances among Swiss Sports Journalists towards the mediatization of women’s football

Introduction

Overall underrepresentation of women’s sport in the media

Sport newsroom norms, routines and professional practices are firmly established, and mainly expressed by (1) **the male-dominated sports newsroom**, (2) **ingrained assumptions about readership**, and (3) **the systematic, repetitive nature of sports news** (Sherwood & al., 2017)

Scientific studies leave open the question of **how certain male-dominated practices have gained a relatively recent degree of interest and how is it perceived on the sports newsrooms.**

A focus on the broadcasting of the 2020-2021 Swiss Women’s Championship season on **Swiss French-Speaking TV** (1st time)

This investigation aims to understand, through **interviews with journalists**, what **logic underlies this change.**

Research question

Perception of Swiss sports journalists on media coverage of women’s football : main actor of change or adapting to a more general social change ?

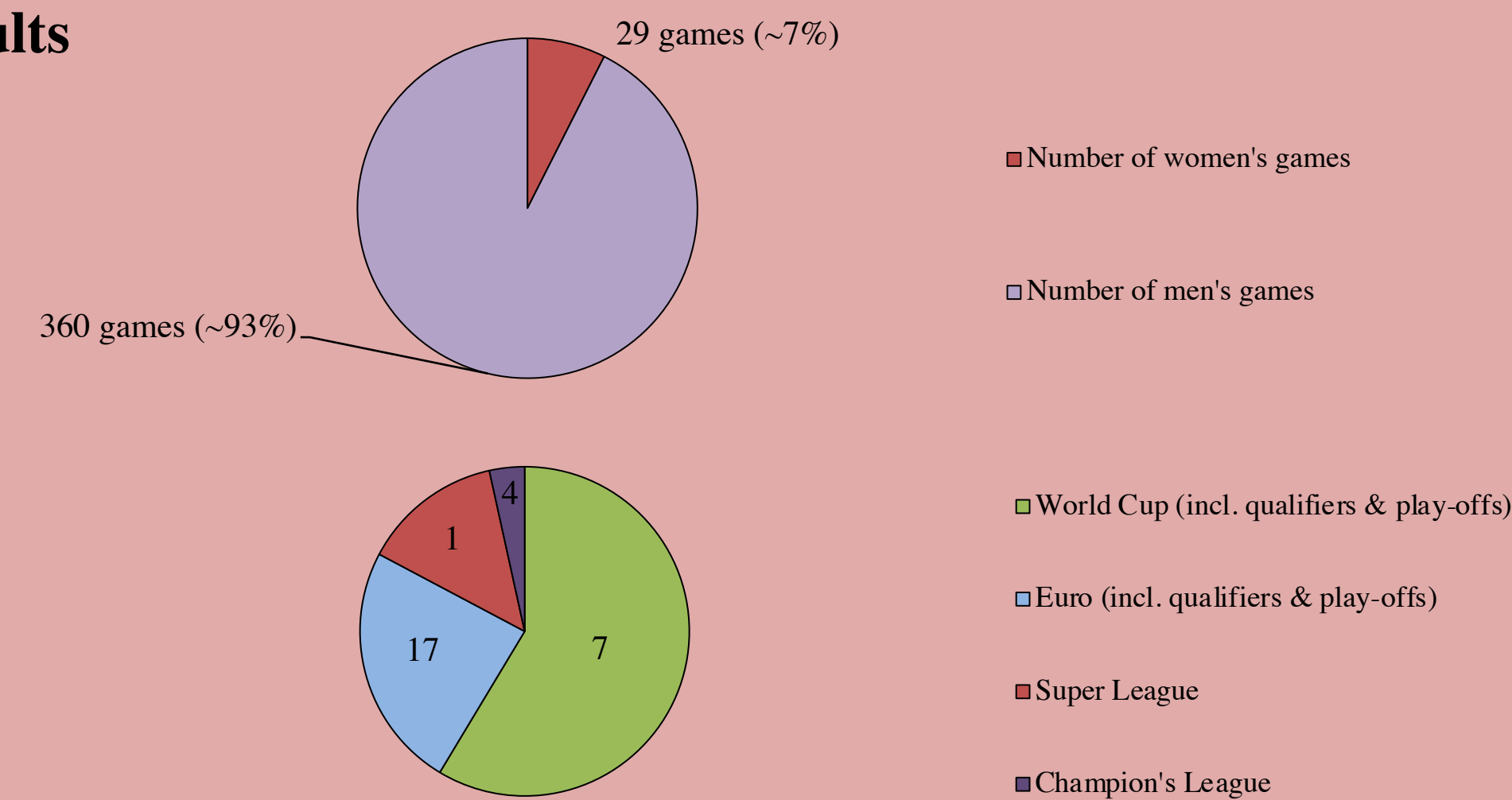
Theoretical Framework



Methodology

10 semi-structured interviews conducted with women’s and men’s journalists, editors-in-chief, marketing and Sales Director and producer working in **Public and Private Swiss French-Speaking Televisions** between April 2021 and November 2021.

Results



- **Firm skepticism** towards the women’s football championship among male and female journalists
- **A homogeneous professional socialization in sports newsrooms**
- The most commonly cited factor of change is the **economic constraint** :
 - **Sponsors**
 - **Audience measure**
- **Preconception** about TV audience figures : internalized and historically and socially constructed beliefs
- Sports newsrooms are driven by a **hegemonic masculinity** :
 - **Social connotation of football**
 - **Male-dominated journalistic specialism and male professional culture**
- These aspects reconsider the role of sports newsrooms in the mediatization of women’s football, showing that **the media does not drive the changes but adapt their programme selection to social change.**

Implications and limitations

- Our study helps us to better understand the way in which production logic are (re-)inscribed in sports newsrooms
- Recent evolution :
 - *on the field* – more serious integration of female journalists in the decision-making process, different sensitivity
 - *off the field* – sports department at the *Association Suisse de Football*, good performances, economic growth
- Sport newsroom norms, routines and professional practices are firmly established and slow to change
- Resistance to women's football in sports journalism is still strong
- **Future studies** are needed :
 - a longitudinal study about the media coverage of women’s football,
 - an analysis of other media – like social media, or
 - an ethnographic study to better compare individual dimensions and interindividual interactions.

References

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