

FRAMING IN THE COVERAGE OF EVIJA VĒBERE IN THE LATVIAN INTERNET MEDIA

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Summary

Frame building, frame setting and framing analysis form an established theoretical and methodological approach in communication and journalism research (Entman 1993; D'Angelo 2002, 2017, 2019). The concept is based on the idea of "frame" – a mental model or scheme that includes certain recognisable elements and provides an order to the representation of reality that helps to construct meaning. In news research, "frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic" (Vreese 2005: 53) – the role of media is to structure the representation in media texts and images with the help of selected elements that are related to previously constructed mental models. Frame theory explains how media culture and organisational routines as well as sociocultural context influence the way frames are built and operate in people's minds.

This approach is also used in the study of cultural and music journalism (Berkers and Eeckelaer 2014; McClain 2016, 2018; McClain and Lascity 2020; Baker and Williams 2019). Music journalism is a specialist type of journalism (Hearsum 2013) that has an important role in developing the ideas and concepts about what is going on in the field of music but also in forming musical literacy and influencing the general public's taste in music. It is also important for musicians and the music industry itself, because media-made frames are responsible for the way audiences treat, understand, love, adore, buy and use music and performances by musicians. Today, when music journalism has been relegated to a secondary role in many media outlets and/or moved from the culture department to the entertainment department, an increasing amount of the coverage of musical life and personalities is done by journalists who do not specialise in music and by comments from the audiences themselves. This explains why the frames used for the processes, works, events and personalities in the field of music are partially deformed – elements other than those important for developing the understanding and taste of audiences are constructing frames. This is especially so in the reporting and criticism of popular music.

The case of Evija Vēbere was used for the analysis of framing in the journalistic coverage of a young musician. After studying jazz at the Prince Claus Conservatoire and being part of several international performing and recording projects, Vēbere entered the Latvian music market in 2018 with the release of her solo album *Sirdsbūt* in Latvian.

The album as well as her concert performances were for the most part warmly received by critics; her musical style and image were described as magic in the sense that her experiments with sound and perception are extraordinary, interesting, unusually technically complicated and require an attentive listener. However, this frame changed dramatically with the scandal-seeking clickbait headlines that appeared following the *Love: 18+* concert on November 19, 2018, in Riga, in which Vēbere performed a cover version of a popular song by composer Imants Kalniņš. After the concert, a scandal broke out based on critical comments in social media, including some by well-known Latvian composers. This paper analyses the media-made frames in order to understand 1) what are the frames used in the representation of Vēbere's work in the Latvian internet media, 2) what elements in publications help to create those frames, and 3) what specific aspects and rules of media organisation and the cultural and media environment in Latvia could have influenced those frames.

Using discourse analysis and content analysis, 52 publications were analysed over a period of two years (1/05/2018–1/05/2020). The five frames constructed by the media are based on contradiction and include 1) a young musician with an original, elaborated style; 2) a scandalous entertainer; 3) an intelligent, educated, simple and friendly personality; 4) a frame created by the characteristics of her music – experimental, eccentric, technical sophistication, fairy tale, magical environment; 5) a frame based on an evaluation of her music – an extraordinary but controversial personality. Most of the publications focused on events and were relatively neutral, but they were mostly reproductions of press releases and materials from the LETA news agency as well as other media, including social media. Editorial changes in these materials often created and referred back to the frame of scandalous entertainer. This shows a lack of quality in journalism covering cultural life. In addition, only a limited number of the materials named authors – mainly interviews and (four short) reviews. The length of the texts allowed a (often metaphorical) description of the music but did not suffice for the development of serious argumentation and analysis.