

# Between consumers and fans: Writing fan reports as a multifunctional evaluation practice

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## ABSTRACT

Based on a corpus of approx. 360,000 “fan reports”, that is online concert reviews written by customers of a ticket agency, this paper analyses lexical and stylistic features of evaluative language and their social functions as means for (self-)positioning. The analysis shows that the reviews are oriented towards different and competing orders of value and their writers take different roles. While some writers act as enthusiastic fans that use the platform for building communities of shared feelings, other writers appear as consumers who judge primarily according to economic criteria. On the basis of concrete patterns of language use it is shown how the heterarchic plurality of evaluative standards is used as a resource for social demarcations.

## 1. Introduction

On the website of the leading German ticket agency Eventim, concert reviews written by customers can be found under the heading “Fan-Reports: Bewertungen und Rezensionen” (fan reports: ratings and reviews). A prototypical “fan report”, in this case on a Justin Bieber concert, goes like this:

**Der Hammer !!!** Köln, LANXESS arena, 18.09.2016 \*\*\*\*\*

Das Konzert war einfach so toll! Ich war schon am 17.9 morgens da um auch wirklich sicher zu stellen das ich in die erste Reihe komme und es hat geklappt! Die Atmosphäre war einfach so krass und ich würde alles dafür geben diesen Tag nochmal zu wiederholen! Justin war so Hammer und die fans haben auch richtig Stimmung gemacht. Alles in allem : Perfekt !

**Awesome !!!**

*The concert was just so great! I was already there on 17.9. in the morning to make sure that I got into the first row and it worked! The atmosphere was just so unreal and I would give anything to repeat this day! Justin was so awesome and the fans really set the mood, all in all: Perfect!<sup>1</sup>*

The person who wrote this review is obviously a big Justin Bieber fan. She spares no effort to get as close as possible to her beloved star, and she even identifies herself as a fan in her report. Looking back on the concert, she is overtly expressing her enthusiasm, albeit in a rather clichéd way by phrases like *would give anything to repeat this day*, but also through repeated use of the intensity marker *so* (*so great, so unreal, so awesome*).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, she positions herself within the group of fans who share the same experience of – as she puts it – ‘having set the mood’ and who have played their part in the constitution of this emotionally thrilling event.<sup>3</sup> By writing about her concert experience in such an enthusiastic manner, she seems to affiliate with all those readers who will share her enthusiasm, thus positioning herself once again in the fan community. At the same time, the person acts as a costumer of the ticket agency who is rating the quality of the sold product and makes use of the widespread and standardized valorization technique of awarding a number of stars ranging from one to five.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, however, the reviews, which every customer of Eventim (as long as the ticket was bought online) is asked to write, are called “Fan-Reports”, framing the reviewing process as a practice of fandom rather than mere consumption.

In this paper, I will have a closer look at this multifunctional nature of fan reports as online evaluation practices. Based on a corpus of approx. 360,000 fan reports and using corpus linguistic and data-driven methods, I will analyse lexical and stylistic features of evaluative language which underpin the textual admiration practices of fans as well as the product rating practices of consumers. Based on theoretical accounts of evaluation and positioning through language from both linguistics and sociology, I will show how both types of evaluation are intertwined in this genre and its discursive contexts.

My analysis of evaluation in fan reports brings together two strands of research. First, it contributes to the study of online reviews from a linguistic perspective, which has often drawn attention to the central role of evaluative practices in this genre and has produced valuable insights into linguistic means of evaluation in discourse.<sup>5</sup> However, most of the studies examining discourse features of evaluation beyond star ratings use qualitative methods based on small datasets. In contrast, computational linguistic approaches to the analysis of large datasets like sentiment analysis are mostly oriented to the task of automated detection of mood and

consumer preferences<sup>6</sup> and tend to abstract from the discursive aspects of evaluative language. I will therefore base my analysis on a large amount of data and at the same time conduct a discourse-oriented analysis which will cover discursive functions of evaluation like audience design and (self-)positioning.

Second, the particular type of online reviews analysed here contributes to the study of fandom and fan communication, which has become a vibrant branch in sociology and linguistics.<sup>7</sup> Analysing fandom through the lens of fan writings is a common approach here. As the cultural theorist John Fiske has argued, semiotic productivity and text production are important and constitutive aspects of fandom and fan communities:

All popular audiences engage in varying degrees of semiotic productivity, producing meanings and pleasures that pertain to their social situation out of the products of the culture industries. But fans often turn this semiotic productivity into some form of textual production that can circulate among – and thus help to define – the fan community.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, genres like fanzines, fan fictions and, more recently, internet forums have always been valuable resources for fan research.<sup>9</sup> As opposed to professional reviews e.g. by journalists,<sup>10</sup> fans' reviews, which can be found in large numbers on various platforms on the internet, represent a distinct type of expertise which also differs in the criteria of evaluation.<sup>11</sup> Most research on fans' textual products, however, also prefers qualitative methods for the analysis of rather small data sets. By contrast, I will show how corpus linguistic methods allows to work with much more data and to focus on more comprehensive patterns of evaluative language use. Moreover, the special case of fan reports may reveal how the fans' evaluation practices are entangled with economic aspects and processes of commodification. This will shed light on how fans make "their culture out of the commercial commodities [...] of the cultural industries"<sup>12</sup> and how they use the commercial platforms as resources for building up communities of shared feelings.<sup>13</sup>

In the following, I will first outline the theoretical framework of my analysis (sec. 2) and then present the data set and methods (sec. 3). Starting with a data-driven analysis (sec. 4), I will interpret the findings against the backdrop of some theoretical considerations on the social functions of evaluation practices: First, I will discuss audience design by language style and forms of address (sec. 5), second, I will

elaborate on acts of positioning (sec. 6). In the conclusion, I will discuss some implications for the constitution of fandom and fan cultures at the interface of subcultural practice and commodification (sec. 7).

## **2. Theoretical framework: Evaluation in (digital) discourse**

My analysis takes a data-driven approach to the analysis of evaluation in discourse.<sup>14</sup> Instead of looking for the distribution of certain linguistic markers of evaluation as derived from theory, I will rather seek to develop the analytical categories inductively from the data itself. However, my analysis moves within a framework of previous theoretical approaches to evaluation in general and in the field of digital media in particular.

Generally speaking, linguistic evaluation encompasses all instances of language use that are capable of taking a positive or negative stance on a person, situation or other entity, thereby assigning a certain value to that entity from a subjective, but possibly socially shared point of view.<sup>15</sup> While the primary function of evaluation is to express attitude, it also may construe social relationships between participants of communication as it serves as a rhetorical means for aligning with readers'/listeners' evaluative stances and will activate them to supply their assessments.<sup>16</sup> This is also what Systemic Functional Linguistics or Appraisal Theory, one of the most comprehensively theorized models of evaluative language, aims at when it assigns evaluations to the domain of interpersonal meaning.<sup>17</sup>

A somewhat different approach which still seeks to cover both the attitudinal and the interpersonal function of evaluation is positioning theory as introduced by Davies & Harré<sup>18</sup> and further developed in linguistics by John Du Bois.<sup>19</sup> According to his seminal stance triangle model, stance taking is conceptualized as an interactive process of two subjects evaluating an object, thereby positioning themselves and thereby aligning with each other, be it converging in their evaluative judgements or diverging.<sup>20</sup> From a linguistic perspective, this alignment in terms of shared feelings and opinions will rely on the adaption not only of attitudes but also of lexical as well as stylistic, e.g. graphemic means, particularly since text-based computer-mediated communication offers a broad range of stylistic alternatives which function as cues of positioning.<sup>21</sup> Based on the assumption that the writers of fan reports position

themselves and others both as consumers and as fans, it is to be expected that this will be reflected in differences in language style and in forms of address as a means of audience design.<sup>22</sup>

From a cultural analytic point of view in particular, it becomes clear that in this theoretical framework, evaluation is based on but not limited to individual cognitive judgements and emotional assessments. As evaluation represents a social and cultural process of establishing value, it includes both categorization based on negotiable intersubjective criteria and its legitimation within or towards social groups.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it is shaped by the available technological valuation infrastructures (in the case of fan reports the digital writing environment with its affordance to supplement the reviews with numerical ratings).<sup>24</sup> These aspects are in the focus of the sociology of evaluation, which can therefore complement the linguistic approaches well.<sup>25</sup> In the following, I will thus ask how the evaluation practice of writing digital fan reports with its characteristic linguistic features reflects a ‘heterarchic’ plurality of matrices against which the evaluated entities are compared<sup>26</sup>, and how this nexus of different “orders of worth”<sup>27</sup> points to the constitution of fandom and fan culture in times of commodification.

### **3. Data and methods**

The corpus of this study consists of 361,957 fan reports on live events of 11,491 different artists that were published between 2000 and 2017. Most of the reports are about rock and pop concerts, occasionally football matches or theater and comedy performances are also reviewed. For the sake of simplicity, I will generally speak of concerts in the following.

The corpus was compiled in February 2018 when the website was still completely HTML-based and could be easily scraped. For the corpus compilation, the texts were downloaded together with some metadata (i.e. artist, location, date, year, rating) and were processed as XML files. The corpus was lemmatized and part-of-speech tagged with the standard software TreeTagger.<sup>28</sup> After tokenization, the corpus contains 27,767,429 tokens. For the analysis, the corpus was imported to the software IMS Open Corpus Workbench<sup>29</sup> and its web-based derivation CQPweb.<sup>30</sup> This software offers a variety of methods for linguistic analysis, next to a flexible, regular

expression-based syntax for corpus queries. Statistical methods such as keyword and collocation analyses are also available.<sup>31</sup>

In this paper, I will use the ratings as metadata to group the texts and do contrastive analyses. Table 1 shows the distribution of the ratings which fits to the well-known J-shaped distribution of online reviews.<sup>32</sup>

Rating	No. of texts	No. of tokens
*****	255,211 (70%)	17,394,917
****	47,839 (13%)	3,855,732
***	21,995 (6%)	2,267,565
**	20,026 (5%)	1,939,660
*	16,886 (6%)	2,309,555

Table 1: Distribution of reviews by ratings

Most people seem to be happy with the sold product. This might be seen as a hint that most of the writers are indeed affectively committed to the rated artists. It does not mean, however, that the majority of the concertgoers are happy with the concert performance itself.

The length of the reviews ranges from 6 to 501 tokens (mean = 74.6, median = 56). When grouped by their ratings, it shows that reviews with higher ratings tend to be shorter (cf. Table 2). This points to a tendency known from conversation analysis as the notion of preference, which states that criticism as a dispreferred action must be justified in more detail.<sup>33</sup>

Rating	Mean	Median
*****	68.2	51
****	80.6	60
***	103.1	79
**	96.9	89
*	136.8	89

Table 2: No. of tokens per text (i.e. text length) grouped by ratings.

The most reviewed artist is the German comedian Mario Barth with 3,992 reviews, followed by the pop singer Helene Fischer (3,813 reviews) and the pop band Unheilig (3,336 reviews). The most reviewed international artist is Pink (2,589

reviews). 3,362 different artists (29%) received at least 10 reviews, 675 (6%) at least 100.

In what follows, I will start with corpus linguistic, data-driven findings concerning patterns of evaluative language derived from the whole dataset. Afterwards, I will further enrich these findings by focussing on selected aspects that are particularly meaningful for the research question on the entanglement of fandom and consumption.

## 4. Corpus linguistic findings: Patterns of evaluative language use

### 4.1. Keywords

To get an impression of the linguistic means of evaluation in the genre of fan reports, a keyword analysis is a useful first step. Keywords are words whose frequencies in a target corpus differ significantly from their frequencies in a reference corpus and are thus in some extent crucial to the target corpus.<sup>34</sup> For this study, five subcorpora were built from the texts of the different ratings that were contrasted with the whole corpus in order to find typical formulations for the different ratings.<sup>35</sup> The keywords were calculated with lemmas instead of word forms, the statistical measure was Log Likelihood Ratio (LLR). The keyword analysis can be replicated with the code and data in the Dataverse repository.

Rating	Keywords
*****	!, einfach, super, wieder, toll, Hammer, genial, geil, jede, und, Konzert, Abend, immer, nah [nächste], absolut, dabei, begeistern, empfehlen, live, Wahnsinn, unvergesslich, perfekt, Erlebnis, Dank, klasse, unglaublich, Stimmung, er, fantastisch <i>!, simply, super, again, great, awesome, brilliant, genius, every, and, concert, evening, always, close [next], absolutely, there, enthusiastic, recommend, live, insane, unforgettable, perfect, experience, thank, great, unbelievable, atmosphere, he, fantastic</i>
****	etwas, aber, sehr, leider, gut, allerdings, schön, Abzug, trotzdem, ansonsten, Stern, einzig, die, gefallen, kurz, finden, gelungen, Platz, ., insgesamt, Manko, dennoch, jedoch, wenige, (, klein, Kritikpunkt, laut, Parkplatz, doch <i>bit, but, very, unfortunately, good, however, nice, deduction, nonetheless, besides, star, alone, the, enjoy, short, find, successful, place, all in all, shortcoming, nevertheless, but, few, (, small, criticism, loud, parking lot, but</i>

***	leider, aber, nicht, schlecht, die, allerdings, etwas, mehr, schade, wenige, jedoch, doch, ok, Platz, dann, kurz, eher, gut, zu, fehlen, erwarten, Preis, teilweise, laut, Uhr, teuer, nett, finden, Stunde, insgesamt <i>unfortunately, but, not, bad, the, however, bit, more, pity, few, but, okay, place,</i> <i>then, short, rather, good, too, lack, expect, price, partly, loud, o'clock,</i> <i>expensive, nice, find, hour, all in all</i>
**	nicht, schlecht, leider, schade, enttäuschend, enttäuscht, mehr, die, ?, keine, eher, dann, aber, mittelmäßig, erwarten, Geld, wenige, Enttäuschung, Euro, teuer, zu, Naja, Preis, um, viel, enttäuschen, laut, nichts, Stunde, schwach <i>not, bad, unfortunately, pity, disappointing, more, the, ?, no, rather, then, but,</i> <i>mediocre, expect, money, few, disappointment, Euro, expensive, much,</i> <i>disappoint, loud, nothing, hour, weak</i>
*	schlecht, Geld, nicht, enttäuschend, Enttäuschung, keine, ?, enttäuscht, verlassen, schade, nie, nichts, dann, Frechheit, Reinfall, um, wir, Euro, leider, die, langweilig, enttäuschen, mehr, Pause, gar, überhaupt, laut, völlig, teuer, peinlich <i>bad, money, not, disappointing, disappointment, no, ?, disappointed, leave, pity,</i> <i>never, nothing, then, outrage, flop, about, we, Euro, unfortunately, the, boring,</i> <i>disappoint, more, break, completely, loud, absolutely, expensive, embarrassing</i>

Table 3: Keywords

First, the keyword table shows the standards of assessment, i.e. the presupposed norms and expectancies against which the writers evaluate the concert performance and their concert experience respectively.<sup>36</sup> In the highest rating, positive adjectives with purely attitudinal meaning like *super*, *toll* (great), *geil* (awesome) and *perfekt* clearly prevail, but nouns like *Stimmung* (atmosphere), *Erlebnis* (experience) and also *Gänsehaut* (goosebumps, rank 46 of the keyword list) point to emotional aspects as the crucial evaluation criteria for the events; people obviously go to concerts because they want to be emotionally touched. Moreover, the adverb *immer* (always) which is mainly used in the phrase *wie immer* (as always) shows that people often attend several concerts by the same artist. They have acquired concert experience and use it as a resource for evaluation. In the lower ratings of four and three stars, the keyword *kurz* (short) points to the more concrete expectation that concerts should not last too short (1), while *Platz* (place or seat) indicates that the quality of the concert experience is related to the taken seats (2). In both examples, these judgements are clearly separated from the quality of the artists' performance itself.

(1) Einziger minus punkt: haben ein kleines bisschen zu kurz gespielt. Sonst wirklich ein sehr, sehr gutes Konzert! (\*\*\*\*)



*The only minus point: they played a little bit too short. Apart from that, really a very, very good concert!*

- (2) Tabaluga Konzert und Künstler Top. Halle an unseren Plätzen viel zu warm und z.T. schlechte Akustik. (\*\*\*\*)

*Tabaluga concert and artist were top. The hall was much too warm at our seats and partly bad acoustics.*

From the ratings of three stars downwards, keywords appear that point to monetary aspects like *Preis* (price), *Geld* (money), *teuer* (expensive) and *Euro*, mostly by the claim that the concerts were too expensive for the quality offered:

- (3) Kurzum wir waren enttäuscht und würden nicht noch einmal gehen, dafür sind die Karten zu teuer. (\*\*\*)

*In short, we were disappointed and would not go again, the tickets are too expensive for that.*

- (4) sehr kurz viel zu wenig fürs Geld bei mäßiger Akustik. (\*\*\*)

*Very short, far too little for the money with mediocre acoustics.*

The lowest ratings of one and two stars naturally include purely negative adjectives like *schlecht* (bad), but also more descriptive adjectives like *laut* (loud) and *langweilig* (boring) which again point to more concrete expectations towards the concerts. Moreover, different lexemes from the semantic field of disappointment (*Enttäuschung*, *enttäuschen*, *enttäuschend*) are typical for the lower ratings, indicating the consumers' higher expectations that were not fulfilled by the concerts. Expressives like the stance adverb *leider* (unfortunately)<sup>37</sup> and *schade* (pity) as expressions of regret point in the same direction. In the lowest rating of one star, the emotional response of disappointment and regret is even surpassed by embarrassment (*peinlich*) and indignation (*Frechheit*, outrage) which seems to put the blame more on the side of the artists:

- (5) So hatt die Dame bei einigen Liedern z.B. Noch die Mundharmonika im Mund, während der Gesang schon weiterging. Und das finde ich für einen Weltstar wie Shakira einfach nur peinlich! (\*)

*In some songs, for example, the lady still had the harmonica in her mouth while the singing continued. And I think that's just embarrassing for a world star like Shakira!*

- (6) Das Konzert in Köln war kurz gesagt, einfach nur eine frechheit! Weniger als eine Stunde gespielt, und dafür sind leute über 300 km angereist! (\*)

*The concert in Cologne was, in short, just an outrage! Less than an hour played, and people travelled over 300 km for that!*

In addition to these evaluative means, the keyword table also shows lexical items used to scale or graduate the evaluative judgements.<sup>38</sup> In the extremes of one and five stars we find intensifiers like *absolut* (absolutely), *überhaupt* and *völlig* (completely), but also indefinite pronouns expressing completeness like *jede* (every) and *nichts* (nothing). In the mid-range ratings, graduating lexical items like *etwas* (bit) or *teilweise* (partially) can be found, allowing writers to mediate between praise and criticism. This also holds true for adversative conjunctions like *aber*, *jedoch* (but) and *allerdings* (however) which are typical for the mid-range ratings, too:

- (7) Das Event war sehr schön, aber leider nur für die Ohren. Der Sitzplatz war Block 01 und die Scheinwerfer waren ständig im Gesicht, so daß man nicht viel gesehen hatte. (\*\*\*)

*The event was very nice, but unfortunately only for the ears. The seat was block 01 and the spotlights were constantly in your face, so you didn't see much.*

Still another finding is noteworthy: In the five-star ratings, exclamation marks are significantly frequent, emphasizing the expressiveness of the evaluations:

- (8) Tolle Musiker, Solisten, Tänzer, die Promi-Darsteller, tolles Bühnenbild, bzw. die ganze Halle war ja eine einzige Bühne - Wahnsinn!! (\*\*\*\*\*)

*Great musicians, soloists, dancers, the celebrity performers, great stage design, or rather the whole hall was a single stage - awesome!!*

In the lower ratings of one and two stars, however, question marks are frequent, mostly used in (rhetorical) questions that express consternation about the bad quality of the concert and function as indirect accusations:<sup>39</sup>

- (9) [...] katastrophale Klangqualität, eine Klangsuppe, Bass und Schlagzeug überbetont, Gesang und Gitarre (auch bei Soli) kaum zu hören - saß da überhaupt jemand am Mischpult? (\*)

*Catastrophic sound quality, a sound soup, bass and drums overemphasised, vocals and guitar (even during solos) barely audible - was there anyone at the mixing desk at all?*

## 4.2. Distribution of lexical items

The findings from the keyword analysis can be supplemented by visualizing the distributions of selected lexical items. As Fig. 1 shows, *aber* (but) and *leider* (unfortunately) share a similar distribution with their highest frequencies in the mid-range ratings.<sup>40</sup> Fig. 2 shows that exclamation marks are more frequent in both the extremes. While writers of mid-range ratings try to balance positive and negative evaluations, writers of one-star ratings just seem to be angry. Finally, Fig. 3 shows that financial aspects are mentioned more frequently in the lower ratings.

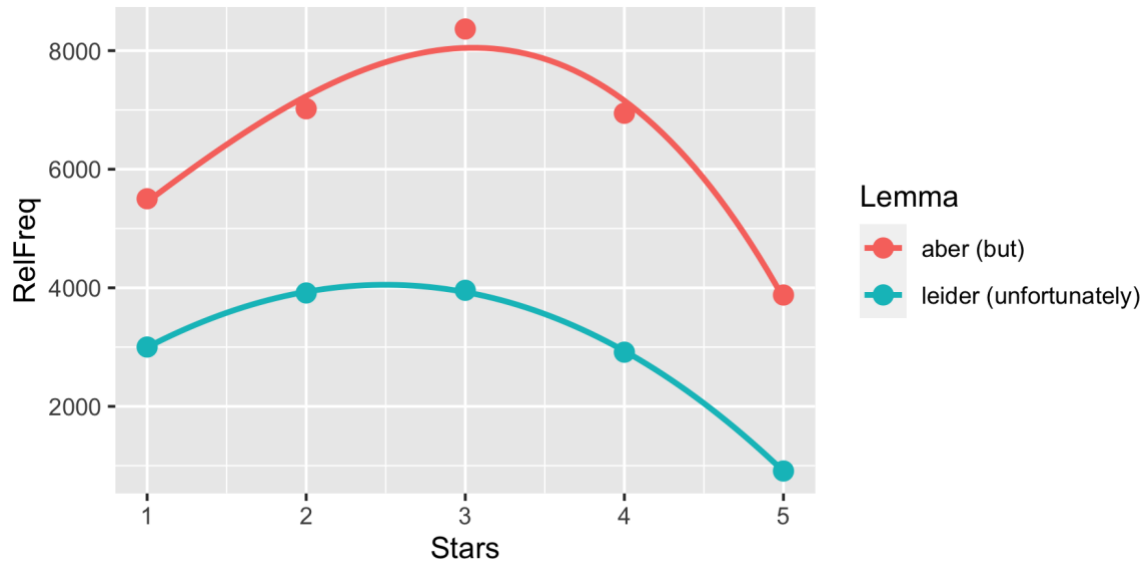


Fig. 1: Distribution of *aber* and *leider*

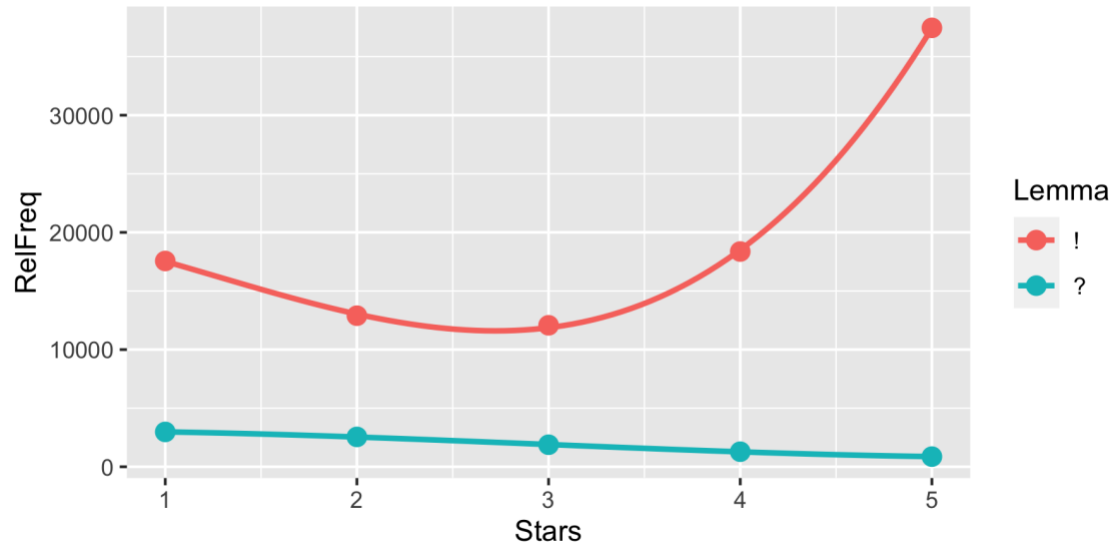


Fig. 2: Distribution of punctuation marks

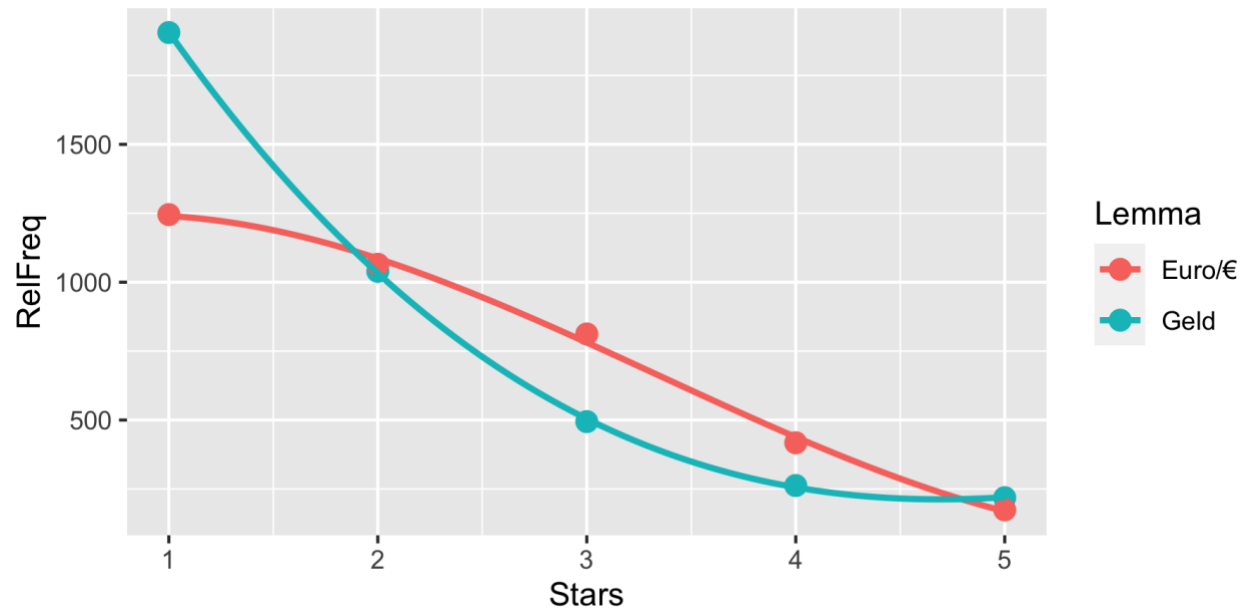


Fig. 3: Distribution of Euro/€ and Geld

### 4.3. Key-trigrams

The keyword analysis can be expanded by moving to key-ngrams (in this case: key-trigrams).<sup>41</sup> Like the keywords, the key-ngrams were calculated with lemmas using the statistical measure Log Likelihood. This analysis, too, can be replicated with the data and code in the Dataverse repository. Table 4 shows selected results with the most frequent word form instantiations:

Rating	Key-trigrams
*****	es war ein; war einfach nur; auf jeden Fall; war der Hammer; das beste Konzert; freue mich schon <i>it was a; was simply; in every case; just awesome; the best concert; looking forward to</i>
****	leider war die; sehr gut gefallen; alles in allem; ein Stern Abzug; ein schöner Abend; nicht so gut <i>unfortunately it was, liked it very much, all in all, one star off, a nice evening, not that good</i>
***	leider war die; gut, aber; nur 3 Sterne; an sich war; nicht so gut; für den Preis <i>unfortunately it was; good, but; only 3 stars; in itself it was; not that good; for that price</i>
**	viel zu laut; gut, aber; mir mehr erwartet; für den Preis; war viel zu; auf der Bühne <i>much too loud; good, but; expected more; for that price; was much too; on stage</i>
*	schade um das; in der Pause; Geld nicht wert; nicht zu empfehlen; war sehr enttäuscht; viel zu laut <i>a pity about the; in the break; not worth the money, not recommended; was very disappointed; much too loud</i>

Table 4: Key-trigrams

Whereas exclamative constructions like *war einfach nur {toll/super/genial}* (was simply {great/super/brilliant}) prevail in the five-star ratings, financial aspects come to the fore in the lower ratings. Again, for the mid-range ratings a balancing of praise and critique can be found, e.g. with the adversative construction *gut, aber* (good, gut) or with the focus marker *an sich* (itself) which allows to separate the quality of the performance from surrounding factors:

(10) Das Konzert an sich war spitze, nur unsere Sitzplätze waren leider schlecht. (\*\*\*)

*The concert itself was great, but our seats were bad.*

As in (10), writers often comment on this with expressions of regret (*leider war die*, unfortunately it was) and with references to unfulfilled expectations (*mir mehr erwartet*, expected more). Finally, the trigram *freue mich schon* (looking forward to) points to the desire for repetition of the concert experience, which is indeed typical for fans, as it has already been shown for the review of the Justin Bieber fan quoted

in the introduction. This desire for repetition finds its counterpart in the caution notes with the set phrase *nicht zu empfehlen* (not recommended) in the one-star ratings, by which writers warn others not to make the same mistake as themselves.

## **5. Audience design by language style and forms of address**

The data-driven analysis has shown an uneven distribution of the thematisation of emotional or financial aspects across the different ratings. In order to interpret these findings, it is helpful to take into account the specific audience design of the genre of the so-called fan reports.<sup>42</sup> As stated above, linguistic evaluation encompasses both categorization and legitimation which will differ depending on the addressed group. Generally speaking, writers of fan reports seek to share their experiences with other actual or possible visitors of the events for which Eventim is selling tickets. On the one hand, the targeted audiences include other fans who also passionately admire the artists. By sharing their positive emotions in writing fan reports in an expressive manner, writers may appeal for and align with a community of shared feeling. On the other hand, fan reports are aimed at other consumers and function as purchase recommendations, thus being a type of online word of mouth.<sup>43</sup> Of course, fans are consumers too, and fans even can be defined as persons who invest time and money in the relationship with a fan object with a certain regularity.<sup>44</sup> To some extent, also an enthusiastic review can be seen as an implicit purchase recommendation. However, the writers tend to separate between these two functions, which, as I want to suggest, are mirroring two different audiences, and their orientation towards different orders of worth. In addition to lexical features already discussed in the section above, stylistic features also play an important role which, following Bell, can be described as indexing the presumed relation to other people.<sup>45</sup>

### **5.1. Non-standard spellings**

As an example, I will first focus on non-standard spellings which are very common in the genre of fan reports. As it has often been shown, non-standard spellings are characteristic traits of different genres of text-based computer mediated communication, “exhibit[ing] a wealth of non-verbal cues, providing information and expressing emotional intimacy”.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, non-standard spellings have always played an important role in textual products of fans like fanzines.<sup>47</sup> Following

the taxonomy of Androutsopoulos, different types of non-standard spellings can be found in the corpus. First, prosodic spellings representing prosodic patterns are very frequent. Common typographic means include character iterations representing vowel lengthening (11) or capitals simulating word stress (12).

(11) Einfach der Waaaaahnsinn!!! (\*\*\*\*\*)

*Simply aaaaaawesome!!!*

(12) Das Konzert von Massive Attack war einfach SUPER! (\*\*\*\*\*)

*The Massive Attack concert was just SUPER!*

Both types can easily be queried in the corpus by regular expressions. `\S*(.)/1{3,}\S*` matches all instances of character iterations within a word with a minimal length of 3. `[A-ZÄÖÜ]{2,}` matches all capitalized words. The results include highly frequent acronyms like *CD*, *DJ* and *TV*, which must be excluded. Fig. 4 and 5 show the distributions of both patterns, showing that they are mainly used in five-star ratings. Assuming that both patterns can be interpreted as conventional means for expressing emotional involvement, these findings support the hypothesis that such stylistic choices serve to affiliate with others who share the writer's enthusiasm.

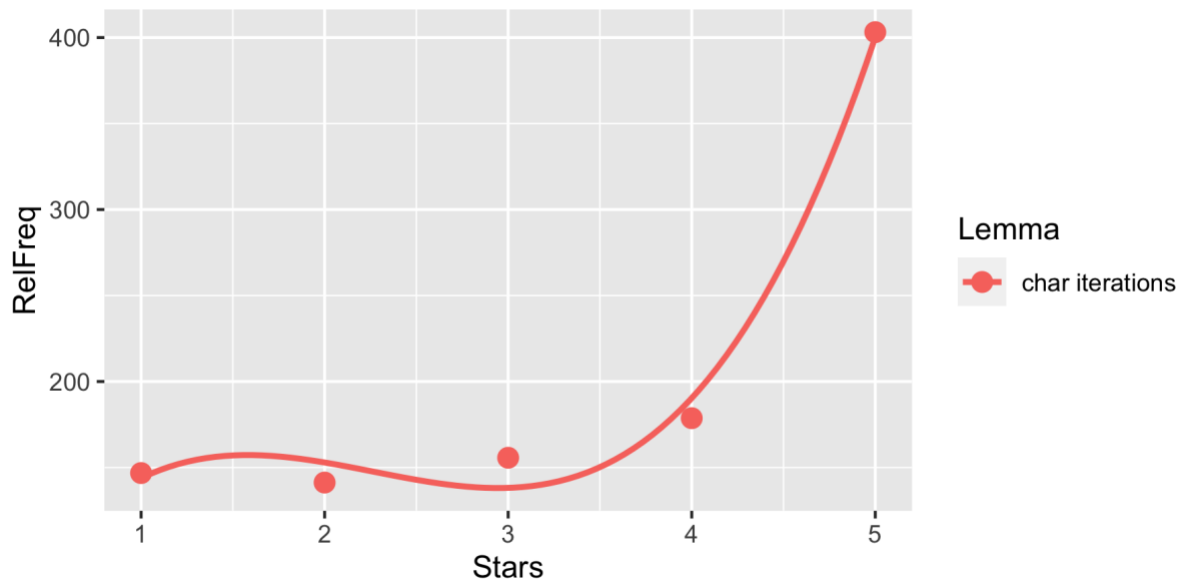


Fig. 4: Distribution of character iterations

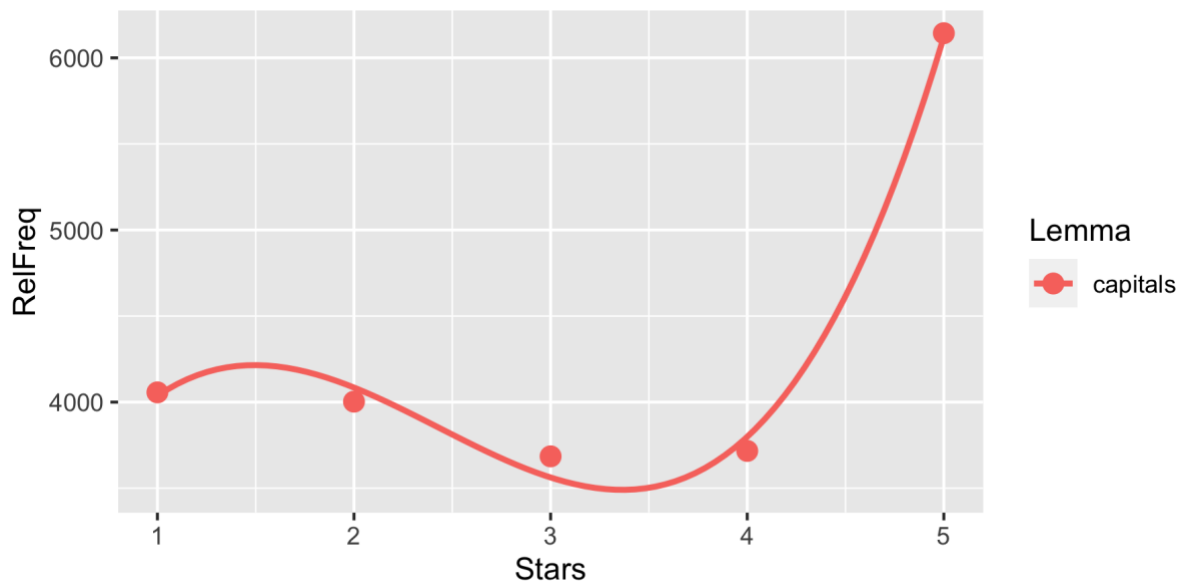


Fig. 5: Distribution of capitals

Second, various forms of phonetic spellings can be found, i.e. spellings that mimetically reproduce colloquial pronunciation. A common technique is the replacing of the word ending *-er* by *-a* like *aba* (but), *supa* and, most importantly, *hamma* (roughly: awesome). Although it is difficult to query directly for phonetic spelling, it seems that mainly expressive words are spelled that way. The spelling *hamma* alone occurs 1099 times. Moreover, phonetic spellings of *geil* (awesome) like *gail* or even *goil* can be observed. This latter spelling could be included under the third type of regiolectal spellings, which represent features typical for regional varieties. Especially reviews on artists who sing or perform in dialect often adapt to this linguistic choice in order to express affinity towards the artist and “to convey a positive assertion of local identity”.<sup>48</sup> For instance, a review on a show of “Franken goes Musical” is closed with an exclamative in Franconian dialect including the characteristic invocation formula *Allmächt*:

(13) Allmächt, war des abba subber! (\*\*\*\*\*)

*God almighty, that was great!*

All the mentioned types of spellings share the common feature of emulating features of orality in the written mode. They can be described as instances of what Koch and Oesterreicher have called conceptual orality, which usually is associated – and thus



is able to construe – situations of informality, familiarity and communicative immediacy.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, these stylistic choices on the graphematic level, which all are found to be typical for higher ratings, serve as rhetorical means for aligning with other enthusiastic fans in an emotional way and help to build up communities of shared feelings.

Next to these oral-like features, still other types of non-standard spellings can be found that cannot be explained with reference to the sound of spoken language. An example can be found in fan reports of the German Band “Tokio Hotel” who started as teenagers and therefore had mostly teenage fans. In fan reports from the early period, the somewhat systematic substitution of the letters *g* and *k* by *q* can often be observed like in *qeil*, as well as the substitution of *j* by *y*:

- (14) **Eiinfach qEiiL!!!** Ich war auf den konzerten in oberhausen und essen... es war einfach **hamma** geil!!! die stimmung vor der halle war echt supi und als das konzert endlich anfang...**OHA^^** einfach nur bombe!!! man kann nicht richtig erklären wie es **is...**man muss **selba** auf einem TH konzert gewesen sein!!! **naya** ich denke mir einfach mal:... **DorTmunD wiirD geroqqT!!!** (\*\*\*\*\*)

*Just awesome. I was at the concerts in Oberhausen and Essen... it was just freakin' amazing!!! The atmosphere in front of the hall was really great and when the concert started... WHOA^^ just a blast!!! You can't really explain what it's like... you have to be at a TH concert!!! Well, I just think to myself: ... Dortmund will be rocked!!!*

- (15) **qeiiiL^^** whoaaa ich war Bremen o6,Bremen o7 und Hamburg o7!!! Das war so ends **qeil^^** ich kann nur jeden ein TH konzi empfehlen die sind live einfach soo geil.!! Bill singt mit so viel gefühl \*herzchen **augen** krieq\* xD **Hamburg** war für mich das **qeilste** die **stimmung** war der HAMMA und ich hoffe das ich auch nach Essen kann das ist für mich so **wichtiq** DA bei zu sein!!naja ich wünsche allen die auf jeden fall dahin **qehen** gaaanz viel spaß ... rockt nochmal mit den **junqs** ordentlich die bude ^^ (\*\*\*\*\*)

*Awesome^^ whoa I was Bremen 06, Bremen 07 and Hamburg 07!! That was so cool^^I can only recommend a TH concert to everyone, they are just so cool live!! Bill sings with so much feeling \*heart-eyes\* xD Hamburg was the best for me, the atmosphere was amazing and I hope that I can go to Essen as well, it is so important for me to be there!! Well, I wish all who will go there a lot of fun ... rock the house again with the boys ^^*

In German graphematics, spellings like *qeil*, *geroqqt*, *wichtiq* and *naya* are deviant, but yet understandable. It can be ruled out that these are spelling or typing errors, rather they are highly marked variants. Also, word internal capitalization or even the constant change between upper and lower case like *qEiiL* or *DorTmunD* are common

stylistic features in Tokio Hotel reviews. Finally, emoticons, i.e. iconic uses of characters in digital writing like ^, x3, xD, =) or the like can often be found. All these patterns form a kind of group style that serves as a subcultural identity marker of the Tokio Hotel fan community as part of the so called *Emo* subculture. Its use presupposes familiarity with group specific repertoires of evaluation<sup>50</sup> and binds the fans together as they share a common way of expressing their admiration and enthusiasm in language – a way which includes those who are familiar with it and excludes those who are not. In the special case of a teenage fan community, the spelling's deviance from orthographic norms as taught in school is likely to be an additional motive for its use in the reviews. It thus seems reasonable that the reviews are targeted at other fans, as it is explicitly stated in (15). A general recommendation is made to visit a Tokio Hotel concert (*kann nur jeden ein TH konzi empfehlen*, just can recommend a TH concert to everyone) which seems to be directed at outsiders. However, it is overlaid by the direct address of other fans who will visit the Essen concert with the imperative *rockt nochmal [...] die bude* (rock the house again). Although it is difficult to operationalize these group identity-related types of non-standard spellings for a quantitative analysis, it seems that they occur mainly in very enthusiastic reviews with five-star ratings.

## 5.2. Forms of address

Even more overt linguistic markers related to audience design are forms of address. At least parts of the reviews are written in the second person plural. In some cases, the writers explicitly address other potential concert visitors by second person pronouns or even imperatives as already shown in (15).

(16) PINK live ist einfach der Hammer! Das müsst Ihr Euch anschauen! Geht hin und Ihr werdet begeistert sein! (\*\*\*\*\*)

*PINK live is simply awesome! You have to see it! Go there and you will be thrilled!*

Thereby, writers explicitly position themselves and their addressees as parts of the same community. Along with these addresses of the fan reports' readers (and, at the same time, potential ticket purchasers), addresses of the artists can frequently be found, too:

(17) Über zwei Stunden ohne Pause, ja Jungs ihr wart einfach spitze. Macht weiter so.

*Over two hours without a break, yes, guys, you were just great. Keep up the good work.*

Moreover, addresses in the second person singular, particularly with the proximal pronoun *du* expressing solidarity and intimacy,<sup>51</sup> can be found in the corpus, which, as in the following example, sometimes even sound like a love letter:

(18) Mein Mann und ich lieben Deine Musik. Auf unserer Hochzeit wollte ich keinen langweiligen Walzer, sondern ein Lied von Dir. Du und ich für immer!

*My husband and I love your music. At our wedding I didn't want a boring waltz, but a song by you. You and me forever!*

It can hardly be assumed that the writers of these reviews really do think that the artists who are literally addressed will get notice of the reviews. Rather, these forms of address, indicating a kind of para-social interaction,<sup>52</sup> are to be described as means of staging familiarity and closeness to the artist that is indeed primarily exhibited by fans. By directly addressing the artists in front of the public audience, writers can successfully act as fans with a particular close relation to their stars that privileges them to communicate with them in a correspondingly intimate way.

Although this direct addressing of the artists is most frequent in the five-star ratings, it can be found in the lower ratings, too:

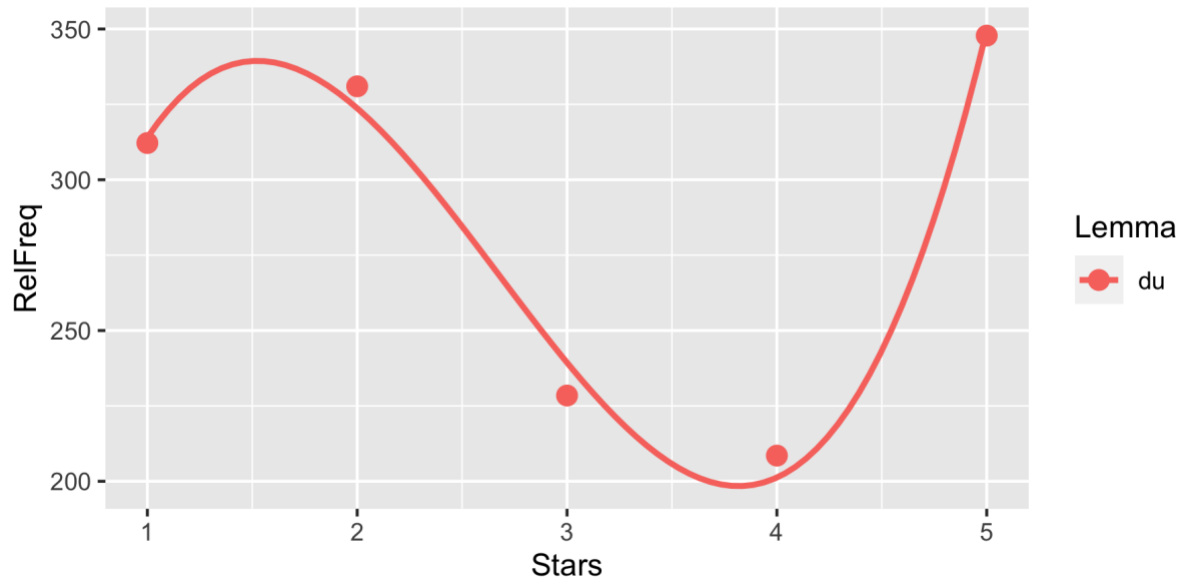


Fig. 6: Distribution of *du*

On a closer look, the one-star ratings with direct addressing often turn out to be reviews by disappointed fans, that is fans who had very high expectations based on their former experiences that were not fulfilled in this particular concert.

- (19) Schade Schade Helene, daß Du dem Mainstream folgen mußt und Deine Show dadurch zum Pop Klamauk herabstufst. Du bist so eine tolle Künstlerin! Ich verstehe nicht weshalb Du nicht nur Deine eigenen Lieder präsentierst, sondern noch zig andere Interpreten nachsingen mußt, das hast Du wirklich nicht nötig! (\*)

*It's a pity Helene that you have to follow the mainstream and thus downgrade your show to pop clamour. You are such a great artist! I don't understand why you don't just present your own songs, but also have to sing after other artists, you really don't need to do that*

If the artist would have stayed true to herself and focused on her own music instead of following the mainstream,<sup>53</sup> the concert would have been of better quality. The writer therefore presents herself as familiar enough with the artist to be able to judge on this. The observation that direct forms of address, especially with the pronoun *du*, serve as means of presenting oneself as a fan thus also holds true for their use in the lower ratings.

## 6. Acts of positioning: Fandom vs. consumption

Within the enthusiastic reviews under the five-star ratings it stands out that economic aspects like the money spent for the tickets or the like are hardly ever mentioned. When expressing admiration as fans, they lose sight of the fact that they are consumers who buy and consume products. On the other hand, it is precisely these economic aspects that are addressed in the lower ratings, where enthusiasm seems to lack. Some evidence for this can be found in the complementary distribution of the lexical items *Geld* (money) and *begeistert* (enthusiastic), which suggests a separation between the roles of consumers and fans:

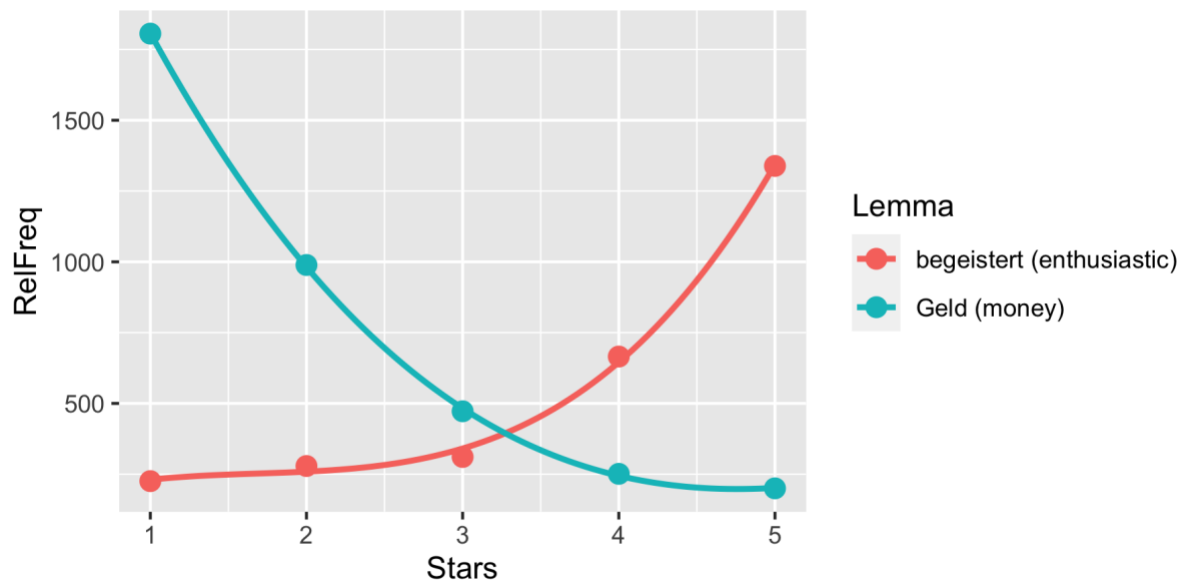


Fig. 7: Distribution of *begeistert* and *Geld*

To put it in Boltanski & Thévenots terms, the writers orient towards different and even competing orders of worth: the “inspired” order representing emotional judgements on the one hand and the “market” order representing monetary classifications on the other.<sup>54</sup> By this divergent orientation, writers take different roles and thus position themselves in different ways.

This separation between these two roles seems to be countered by the distribution of the lexical item *Fan* which is also frequent in the lower ratings:

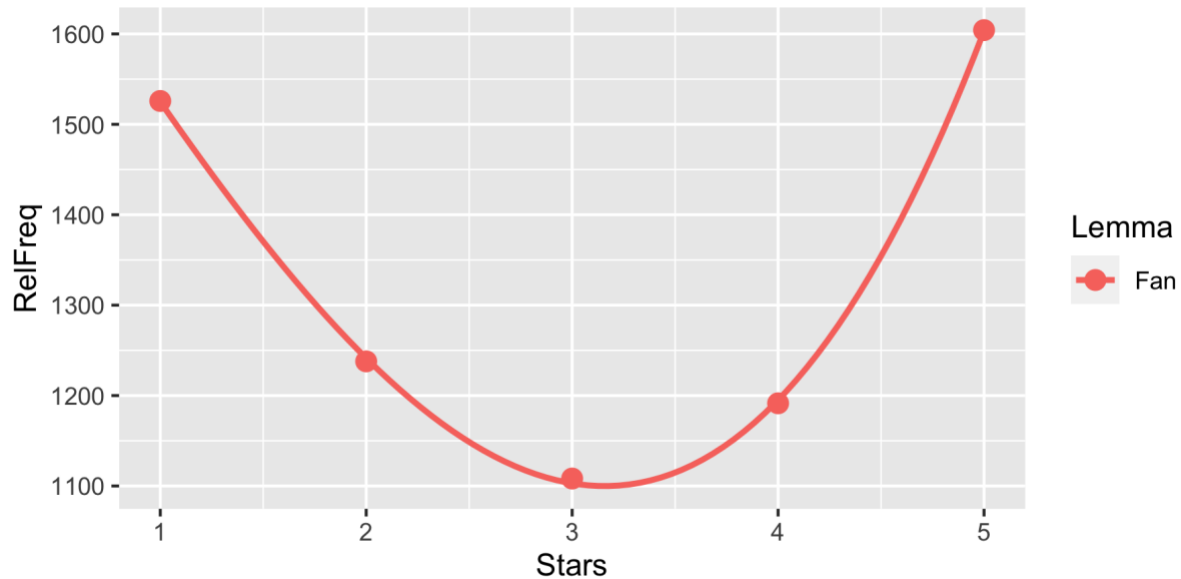


Fig. 8: Distribution of Fan

On a closer look, however, there turn out to be different patterns of use. In the one-star ratings, common patterns include *nur für Fans* (only for fans) or *nur für eingefleischte/Hardcore Fans* (only for die-hard fans) that clearly address fans as an out-group which the writers themselves do not belong to:

- (20) Solche Konzert scheinen nur etwas für Fans zu sein, die Ihre Gruppe auch persönlich erleben möchten. Um die Musik scheint es dabei nicht wirklich zu gehen. (\*)

*Such concerts only seem to be something for fans who want to experience their group in person. It doesn't really seem to be about the music.*

- (21) Für Hardcore Kelly Fans sicher ein Muss. Alle Anderen sollten sich auf viel Lärm einstellen. (\*)

*For die-hard Kelly fans certainly a must. All others should be prepared for a lot of noise.*

From a disappointed consumer's perspective, fans are profiled as people who are so fanatic and irrational in their fanhood<sup>55</sup> that they will ignore the bad artistic quality of the performance, be it by giving more weight to the experience in person (20), be it by perceiving pure noise as music (21). Therefore, fans appear as people unable to realistically assess the poor economic balance of the product. This incompatibility between fandom on the one hand and economic judgement on the other is explicitly stated in (22):

- (22) Fazit: unverschämte Abzocke für teures Geld und viele Fans wollen das nicht merken. Nie mehr irgendeinen Cent für Genesis. (\*)

*Conclusion: outrageous rip-off for a lot of money and many fans don't want to notice that. Never again any cent for Genesis.*

In the five-star ratings, the pattern *nur für eingefleischte Fans* is usually negated in order to emphasize the positive evaluation even more, as the quality of the performance is objectively evident also for non-fans:

- (23) Wahnsinnig tolles Konzert, charmant bayrisch und nicht nur für eingefleischte Fans. (\*\*\*\*\*)

*Insanely great concert, charmingly Bavarian and not only for die-hard fans.*

In this example, the writer leaves open whether she is a fan by herself. In other cases, the lexical item *fan* is clearly used as a self-reference as already shown in the very first example in the introduction. Accordingly, patterns like *wir Fans* (us fans) or *wir als Fans* (we as fans) occur mainly in the five-star ratings.

- (24) Die Stimmung sensationell, die alten Herren haben wieder so richtig abgerockt, wir Fans nicht weniger. (\*\*\*\*\*)

*The atmosphere was sensational, the old men really rocked out again, us fans no less.*

- (25) Als Fans vom Circus Roncalli können wir nur sagen: absolutes muß (\*\*\*\*\*)

*As fans of Circus Roncalli, we can only say: an absolute must!*

Note that in (24) the adverb *wieder* (again) identifies the writer as a regular concert visitor of the reviewed group which also qualifies her as a fan.

In terms of the stance triangle model Du Bois<sup>56</sup>, these findings can be systematized as follows.<sup>57</sup> The function of five-star ratings can be described as self-positioning of fans who thereby align with other enthusiastic fans. As noted above, they build up communities of shared feelings through this and even may establish idiosyncratic linguistic codes that will exclude everyone not familiar with it. In the lower ratings, by contrast, writers typically position themselves as disappointed consumers who, on the one hand, distance themselves from the fans as irrational subjects unable to judge objectively on the economic value of the product. On the other hand, they align

with other potential consumers, often by explicitly giving advice against purchase. Seen from this perspective, the fan reports' heterarchy of standards of evaluation and their linguistic expression and negotiation can at least partly be resolved by assigning them to different types of social demarcation.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analysed fan reports, that is online concert reviews written by customers of the ticket agency Eventim. With corpus linguistic methods and by using the ratings as metadata, I have analysed lexical and stylistic features of evaluative language within the genre of fan reports which is located between the two poles of fandom and consumption. Starting from linguistic theories of evaluation and of social positioning, I have developed an analytical framework which combines a data-driven approach to the analysis of patterns of evaluative language with functional and discourse-oriented perspectives. As I have shown, in the higher ratings fans typically express their enthusiasm while they tend to play down economic aspects of concert business in favour of fan culture as an emotional community. Of course, fans are also customers and consumers of economic products, but this very fact, the economic side of the culture industry, so to speak, is hardly ever mentioned. By contrast, in the lower ratings people often oppose to the concept of fandom already imposed by the name of the genre and profile their purchase recommendations as not affected by the irrational admiration practices of fans. Therefore, the fan reports reflect the orientation towards competing orders of worth which is in turn used as a resource for social demarcations.

Of course, the ticket agency's website section entitled „Fanreports“ is a commercial space in the first place. In a way, the company is taking economic advantage of the fans, their experiences and their expertise in order to promote their products. Nevertheless, it is the particularly enthusiastic fans who appropriate the platform and use it as a communicative space for subcultural practices and community building beyond economisation. However, in contrast to genuine formats of fan culture and fan productivity like fanzines or fan forums, the genre of fan reports is always permeated by economic judgements. The fact that the reviewed concerts are part of a concert business and the result of a comprehensive commodification of culture remains ever present. The genre of fan reports thus sheds light on the constitution



and transformation of fan cultures and the intersection of subcultural practice and commodification.

Further research could address related forms of (online) reviews e.g. in the domain of social reading, where again other hierarchies of standards of evaluation and different social functions might be observed. Still the genre of fan reports as analysed in this paper is a most interesting case in point for a corpus linguistic and cultural analytic study of multifunctional evaluation practices. Methodologically, this paper shows how both the study of online reviews and of fan cultural practices can benefit from corpus linguistic methods. Moreover, it shows how a data-driven approach oriented towards linguistic aspects of evaluation practices can complement sociological approaches to evaluation and make them empirically more precise.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own. Note that many of the original quotes show characteristic features of internet-based writing like missing blanks, incomplete punctuation and so on. I will drop these features in my translations and will point to them in the text only if they are crucial for my argumentation.

<sup>2</sup> Heike Wiese, "So as a Focus Marker in German," *Linguistics* 49, no. 5 (2011): 997, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.2011.028>.

<sup>3</sup> Hubert Knoblauch, "Publikumsemotionen: Kollektive Formen kommunikativen Handelns und die Affektivität bei Großpublika in Sport und Religion," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 46, no. 4 (2016): 552, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41244-016-0040-4>.

<sup>4</sup> Camilla Vasquez, *The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472593535>.

<sup>5</sup> Vasquez; Judith Bridges and Camilla Vásquez, "If nearly all Airbnb reviews are positive, does that make them meaningless?," *Current Issues in Tourism* 21, no. 18 (2018): 2065–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2016.1267113>.

<sup>6</sup> Cornelius Puschmann and Alison Powell, "Turning Words Into Consumer Preferences: How Sentiment Analysis Is Framed in Research and the News Media," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 3 (2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118797724>.

<sup>7</sup> Monika Bednarek, "Fandom," in *Pragmatics of Social Media*, ed. Christian Hoffmann and Wolfram Bublitz (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 545–72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110431070-020>; Paul Booth, *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119237211>; Stefan Hauser and Simon Meier-Vieracker, eds., *Fankulturen und Fankommunikation*, Forum Angewandte Linguistik 68 (Berlin: Lang, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience. Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 30.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Klemm, “Doing being a fan im Web 2.0. Selbstdarstellung, soziale Stile und Aneignungspraktiken in Fanforen,” *Zeitschrift Für Angewandte Linguistik* 56, no. 1 (2012): 3–32, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfal-2012-0002>; Bednarek, “Fandom.”

<sup>10</sup> Rainer Diaz-Bone, *Kulturwelt, Diskurs und Lebensstil: eine diskurstheoretische Erweiterung der Bourdieuschen Distinktionstheorie*, 2nd ed., Theorie und Praxis der Diskursforschung (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Andreas Wagenknecht, “‘Trotzdem sollte man als Metalfan dieses Album besitzen.’ Online-Rezensionen auf Amazon als Form der Fankommunikation,” in *Fankulturen und Fankommunikation*, ed. Stefan Hauser and Simon Meier-Vieracker, *Forum Angewandte Linguistik* 68 (Berlin: Lang, 2022), 177–198.

<sup>12</sup> Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom,” 46.

<sup>13</sup> J. Martin and Peter R. R. White, *The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230511910>.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Meier, “Einzelkritiken in der Fußballberichterstattung. Evaluativer Sprachgebrauch aus korpuspragmatischer Sicht,” *Muttersprache* 129 (2019): 1–23.

<sup>15</sup> John W. Du Bois, “The Stance Triangle,” in *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction*, ed. Robert Englebretson, vol. 164 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2007), 143, <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.164.07du>.

<sup>16</sup> Geoff Thompson and Susan Hunston, “Evaluation: An Introduction,” in *Evaluation in Text. Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*, ed. Susan Hunston and Geoff Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>17</sup> Martin and White, *The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English*; Michele Zappavigna, “Evaluation,” in *Pragmatics of Social Media*, ed. Christian Hoffmann and Wolfram Bublitz (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 435–58, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110431070-016>.

<sup>18</sup> Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré, “Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20, no. 1 (1990): 43–63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x>.

<sup>19</sup> Du Bois, “The Stance Triangle.”

<sup>20</sup> The function of evaluation practices as a form of socio-cultural (self-)positioning is also emphasized by Stefan Nicolae et al., “Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens,” in *(Be)Werten. Beiträge zur sozialen Konstruktion von Wertigkeit*, ed. Stefan Nicolae et al., Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2019), 14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-21763-1>.

<sup>21</sup> Jannis K. Androutsopoulos, “Non-Standard Spellings in Media Texts: The Case of German Fanzines,” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4, no. 4 (November 2000): 527, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00128>.

<sup>22</sup> Allan Bell, “Language Style as Audience Design,” *Language in Society* 13, no. 2 (1984): 145–204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4167516>.

<sup>23</sup> Michèle Lamont, “Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 38, no. 1 (2012): 205f., <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-120022>.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Meier, Thorsten Peetz, and Désirée Waibel, “Bewertungskonstellationen. Theoretische Überlegungen zur Soziologie der Bewertung,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 26, no. 3/4 (2016): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11609-017-0325-7>; Anne K. Krüger and Martin Reinhart, “Theories of Valuation - Building Blocks for Conceptualizing Valuation between Practice and Structure,” *Historical Social Research* 42, no. 1 (2017): 278f., <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.1.263-285>.

<sup>25</sup> Nicolae et al., “Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens.”

- <sup>26</sup> Lamont, “Toward a Comparative Sociology of Valuation and Evaluation,” 208.
- <sup>27</sup> Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, “The Sociology of Critical Capacity,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 2, no. 3 (1999): 368, <https://doi.org/10.1177/136843199002003010>.
- <sup>28</sup> Helmut Schmid, “Probabilistic Part-of-Speech Tagging Using Decision Trees,” in *New Methods In Language Processing*, ed. D.B. Jones and H. Somers (London: Routledge, 2003), 154–64.
- <sup>29</sup> Stefan Evert and CWB Development Team, “The IMS Open Corpus Workbench (CWB),” 2019, [http://cwb.sourceforge.net/files/CQP\\_Tutorial.pdf](http://cwb.sourceforge.net/files/CQP_Tutorial.pdf).
- <sup>30</sup> Andrew Hardie, “CQPweb — Combining Power, Flexibility and Usability in a Corpus Analysis Tool,” *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 17, no. 3 (2012): 380–409, <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.17.3.04har>.
- <sup>31</sup> Access to the corpora can be granted on request at <https://fussballlinguistik.de/korpora/registrierung/>
- <sup>32</sup> Bridges and Vásquez, “If nearly all Airbnb reviews are positive, does that make them meaningless?,” 2059.
- <sup>33</sup> Anita Pomerantz, “Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/Dispreferred Turn Shaped,” in *Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis*, ed. J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 57–101.
- <sup>34</sup> Jonathan Culpeper and Jane Demmen, “Keywords,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of English Corpus Linguistics*, ed. Douglas Biber and Randi Reppen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 90–105, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139764377.006>.
- <sup>35</sup> Meier, “Einzelkritiken in der Fußballberichterstattung. Evaluativer Sprachgebrauch aus korpuspragmatischer Sicht.”
- <sup>36</sup> Birte Arendt and Pavla Schäfer, “Bewertungen mm Wissenschaftsdiskurs. Eine Analyse von Review-Kommentaren als Aushandlungspraxis normativer Erwartungen,” *LiLi* 177 (2015): 104. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03379894>.
- <sup>37</sup> The role of attitudinal stance adverbs for evaluation in online reviews is also emphasized by Vasquez, *The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews*, 39.
- <sup>38</sup> Martin and White, *The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English*, 37; Zappavigna, “Evaluation,” 439.
- <sup>39</sup> Vasquez, *The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews*, 47.
- <sup>40</sup> Christopher Potts and Florian Schwarz, “Affective ‘This,’” *Linguistic Issues in Language Technology* 3, no. 5 (2010): 14f. <https://doi.org/10.33011/lilt.v3i.1219>.
- <sup>41</sup> This method is extensively discussed by Noah Bubenhofer, *Sprachgebrauchsmuster. Korpuslinguistik als Methode der Diskurs- und Kulturanalyse* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110215854>.
- <sup>42</sup> Bell, “Language Style as Audience Design.”
- <sup>43</sup> Ana Margarida Barreto, “The Word-of-Mouth Phenomenon in the Social Media Era,” *International Journal of Market Research* 56, no. 5 (2014): 631–54, <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2014-043>.
- <sup>44</sup> Jochen Roose, Mike S. Schäfer, and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, “Einleitung. Fans als Gegenstand soziologischer Forschung,” in *Fans. Soziologische Perspektiven*, ed. Jochen Roose, Mike S. Schäfer, and Thomas Schmidt-Lux (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2010), 14.

<sup>45</sup> Allan Bell, “Back in Style: Reworking Audience Design,” in *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation.*, ed. Penelope Eckert and John R Rickford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 141f.

<sup>46</sup> Yen-Liang (Eric) Lin, “Non-Standard Capitalisation and Vocal Spelling in Intercultural Computer-Mediated Communication,” *Corpora* 11, no. 1 (2016): 64, <https://doi.org/10.3366/cor.2016.0085>. See also further references in this section.

<sup>47</sup> Androutsopoulos, “Non-Standard Spellings in Media Texts.”

<sup>48</sup> Androutsopoulos, 525.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, “Schriftlichkeit und Kommunikative Distanz,” *Zeitschrift für Germanistische Linguistik* 35, no. 3 (2007): 346–75, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zgl.2007.024>.

<sup>50</sup> Nicolae et al., “Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens,” 14.

<sup>51</sup> Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity,” in *Readings in the Sociology of Language*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter, 1968), 252–75, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110805376.252>.

<sup>52</sup> Donald Horton and Richard Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance,” *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956): 215–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>.

<sup>53</sup> For the discursive functions of the concept of “mainstream” cf. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (John Wiley & Sons, 1995), 5.

<sup>54</sup> Boltanski and Thévenot, “The Sociology of Critical Capacity,” 368.

<sup>55</sup> This view was also wide-spread in early sociological accounts of fandom. Cf. Joli Jenson, “Fandom as Pathology. The Consequences of Characterization,” in *Adoring Audience*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 9–29.

<sup>56</sup> Du Bois, “The Stance Triangle.”

<sup>57</sup> The function of evaluation practices as a form of socio-cultural (self-)positioning is also emphasized by Nicolae et al., “Soziologie des Wertens und Bewertens,” 14.