
**Participatory journalism in sports:
The impact of multimedia on the perception and engagement of sports
audiences**

Georgia Gioltzidou¹, Foteini Gioltzidou²

1. Hellenic Open University

School of Social Sciences

2. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Department of Journalism and Mass Media

Correspondence with:

Georgia Gioltzidou

gioltzidou@gmail.com

Hellenic Open University

School of Social Sciences

18 Aristotelous St

263 35 Patras

International Journal of Sport Management Recreation & Tourism, Vol.29d, p.69-86, 2025

© 2016-2025 I.J.S.Ma.R.T. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1791-874X

**Participatory journalism in sports:
The impact of multimedia on the perception and engagement of sports
audiences**

Abstract

The use of videos, infographics, podcasts, and audience participation are advancing modern sports journalism, and the genre continues to evolve with new additions. The intention behind this change is to foster deeper interaction and involvement from the fans in discussions relating to the coverage of sports events, and this study intends to analyze the attitudes of fans towards the use of multimedia in the reporting of the sports news and other related discussions. In this context, the study is framed by two domains: the evolution of journalism with regard to the development of multimedia tools and the notion of participatory culture in the context of information dissemination in journalism. This study gathers data using a structured questionnaire to measure fans' perception of sports content and fan engagements, and observed behavior in relation to certain multimedia tools. In addition, this research assesses the impact of these tools on the viewing experience and how fans interact with the tools. The results indicate that there is heightened perception of participation and sense of community with an increased use of sports engagement through multimedia tools. It seems more educated and engaged on many aspects as a result of employing multimedia tools, and the overall public's opinion is favorable toward the comprehension of symmetry.

Keywords: alternative journalism, participatory journalism, multimedia content, digital media, sports journalism, digital communication

**Participatory journalism in sports:
The impact of multimedia on the perception and engagement of sports audiences**

Introduction

Over the past ten years, the environment of sports journalism has undergone significant change primarily because of multi-media technology, such as videos, infographics, podcasts, and interactive sites (Pavlik et al., 2013). Not only has multi-media altered the narrative in sports journalism, but it's also redefined how journalists engage with audiences. Participatory culture in media consumption is partly a factor in this change, where audiences no longer exist solely in passive participation, but rather in contributory partnerships (Jenkins, 2006). Multi-media facilitates engagement with fans deeper by providing different modes to deliver content that offers choices for a diverse range of preferences, while enhancing the user experience (Hamilton et al., 2014). Additionally, media tools that enable real-time interaction and shared community around sporting events may enhance a fan's loyalty or emotional connection (Billings, 2011). The convergence of sports journalism and digital media offers several opportunities and challenges to obtain a better understanding of how identified audience segments consume and engage with these formats (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). As noted by Hutchins and Rowe (2014), demographics such as age, gender, and media consumption have been identified as variables that can account for how multimedia has been received and used in sports contexts.

Purpose

The aim of this research is to analyze how sport fans interact with and respond to the application of multimedia technologies in contemporary sports journalism. In an electronic media environment characterized by interactivity, immediacy, and the blurring of professional and amateur-produced content, conventional reporting hierarchies have been reformulated in more participatory formats (Jenkins, 2006; Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). Features like social media commentary, dynamic graphics, video highlights, and fan-generated content reflect not only technological advancement but also a cultural shift in how people consume media. These methods provide a way in which to explore the ever more hybridized work that fans do in the production, circulation, and interpretation

of sports news, and the blurring of professional/amateur, journalist/reader boundaries (Bruns, 2008; Sanderson, 2011). The study empirically measures the fans' attitudes, levels of involvement, and behavioral patterns towards multimedia content by adopting a survey approach.

Lastly, the study seeks to address a lacuna in existing literature by presenting a sophisticated picture of sports fandom as an active space of knowledge concerning the interplay between media evolution and audience agency in journalism. The current study is informed by two intersecting theoretical paradigms—the development of participatory culture and multimedia journalism within the specific setting of sports media. The research provides astute analysis for journalism and communication scholars.

Literature Review

Multimedia Journalism

The definition of multimedia remains fluid. While the blending of audio, text, and visual content is often regarded as multimedia, not every mode of communication qualifies to be called so. Beyond that, it seems that in many cases, the explanation of the term multimedia is too technological in nature. In other words, they focus more on technology in infrastructure instead of the experience of the user. Nonetheless, this same approach neglects the much more important aspects of interactivity and perception, both of which are crucial to the practice of communication known as multimedia. (Purchase, 1998)

As defined by Bornman (et al., 1993:2) multimedia is “the combining of different media types for example sound, animation, text, graphics and video for the presentation of information by making use of computers”. According to Blattner and Dannenberg (1992), a multimedia computer system is one which can take input or output through, at least, one visual display, sound, or video. In their definitions, the focus does not appear to be only on the existence of different formats, but on the merging of those formats to facilitate better communication by tapping into the user's senses. As they have pointed out, multimedia allows communicators greater latitude in choosing and blending the media that best serve their purpose, enabling more expression than systems which use single media.

Adding onto this, the topic of interactive multimedia is covered in Encyclopedia Britannica, which describes it as any type of computer system which allows a user to

have dominion over the arrangement and amalgamation of different forms of media. The fact that users can decide how meaning can be created shifts the paradigm of multimedia from passive to active participation. The focus here is on the movement away from passively receiving multimedia content to actively contributing to it as an interactive element, which is essential in modern digital environments. Therefore, in all definitions, multimedia transcends the mere technical description of an arrangement of different media elements into a system, to encapsulate a means of communication that provides variety of expression and encourages greater user participation. (Rockwell & Mactavish, 2004)

In the field of journalism, Deuze (2004) identifies two important definitions of multimedia from the perspective of the field. The first concerns the integration of various media into a single coherent story. For instance, the integration of text, audio, video, images, animations, and interactive and hyperlinked content into an online story has become the standard in journalism (Deuze, 2003a). The second definition refers to how an integrated journalistic message is communicated over multiple channels, including web portals, television, radio, mobile text services, print media, and other computer networks. This is also known as cross-media or horizontally integrated reporting (Deuze, 2004), that prioritize the diversity of media used over the order in which they are presented.

Participatory Culture and Journalism

International literature often does not explicitly refer to “participatory culture,” but it does delve deeply into its underlying dynamics—such as user agency, cross-platform collaboration, and the blurring of roles between media producers and audiences—reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field (Delwiche, 2013). Lévy (1997) describes the current situation as a “knowledge space” in which hybrid media creators/consumers collaborate with traditional media producers. In this context, emerging new theories of participatory culture intersect with traditional understandings of our postmodern condition (Delwiche, 2013). However, there is broad recognition that we are currently experiencing a period of significant transition.

Heinonen (2011) explores the changing relationship between journalists and their audiences, placing particular emphasis on the increasingly active role that readers are assuming as engaged “users” of digital news platforms. Although the idea of an audience consisting only of passive receivers of information was challenged long before

the advent of the Internet era, the traditional media —such as newspapers, radio, and television—have generally operated linear and transmit messages one-way. The emergence of the Internet allowed people, who journalists once considered their passive audience, to enable dialogue. This nonlinear, interactive structure of digital news media formats has played a crucial role in redefining the relationship between journalists and members of the public, as well as in the way journalists interpret their own professional role (Heinonen 1999).

In democratic societies, journalists have traditionally been expected to serve the public interest and maintain accountability to the citizens they inform (Heinonen, 2011). Nevertheless, amidst the rapidly ongoing developments and the evolution progress of technology, the traditional journalists observe enormous changes, often frightening, in front of their eyes (Gioltzidou et al, 2022). Journalistic culture, which is shaped in part by journalists' work experience, the generation they belong to, and the nature of the media they work for - differentiates journalists' attitudes towards the use of technology (Gioltzidou et al, 2024) and consequently the way they react to participatory journalism.

On the other hand, Social Media has profoundly reshaped the processes through which news is gathered, shared, and consumed (Gioltzidou et al., 2024). In the words of Hermida (2012), the digital arena enables citizens to play an active role in viewing, selecting, fact-checking, sharing, and interpreting news-worthy incidents. In moments of breaking news, individuals often turn to their social media platforms to provide real-time accounts, images, and video footage of incidents as they unfold, effectively assuming roles once reserved for professional journalists. citizen journalists gather and disseminate information with the aim of reporting on issues that impact their local communities (Delwiche, 2013).

Sports Audiences in the Digital Era

John Tomlinson (2007:94) introduces the concept of “telemediatization” to describe the widespread integration of communication technologies and media systems into the everyday patterns of social life—a development that has fundamentally reshaped the “everyday flow of experience”. While new media and technologies have to a large degree supplemented rather than replaced mainstream media forms, they have in any case brought far-reaching changes in communication practice and the formation of embodied experience—both in material space and virtual media space. (Thorpe, 2017). Back in 1998, Back in 1998, Wenner described the growing intersection of sport

and media using the term “MediaSport” in an attempt to capture the growing intertwining of the two. Wenner pointed out how fans had become firmly embedded in broader systems of communication, representation, and cultural meaning. The term MediaSport, captures this convergence—where sport is not only a live activity but a strongly mediated and commodified spectacle. (Bowman et al., 2014)

The rise of the Internet and the proliferation of video streaming platforms have significantly transformed the way live sports are experienced, consumed, and circulated across a variety of screens and devices (Hutchins et al., 2019). According to Moore et al. (2013), the most commonly utilized multimedia tools among sports fans include live video, live audio, and archived video content.

Methodology

The current study employs a quantitative research design with the objective of systematically examining the role that multimedia tools—such as videos, infographics, podcasts, and interactive platforms—play in shaping fans’ perceptions of, and engagement with, sports journalism. The central research question guiding the study is: How do multimedia tools influence fans’ perception and involvement in sports events? The research further seeks to answer the following sub-questions:

- (a) What is the attitude of fans toward the use of multimedia tools in sports journalism?
- (b) To what extent do these tools enhance the sense of participation and community among fans?
- (c) How do multimedia elements influence the way fans interact with sports content and with journalists?

To collect the data, a structured questionnaire was designed and distributed online during the period of January and February 2025. The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended questions and five-point Likert-scale items, focusing on key dimensions such as perceived quality of multimedia content, emotional involvement, and frequency of interaction. The final sample consisted of 110 sports fans from various demographic backgrounds, including differences in age, gender, and sports viewership frequency. Participants were recruited through social media platforms, sports-related online communities, and fan groups to ensure diversity.

The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The methodological approach was chosen to provide a robust and objective framework for

interpreting fan behavior in relation to modern multimedia usage in sports coverage. This structured and data-driven methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of how the integration of videos, infographics, podcasts, and interactive features affects fans' engagement and fosters a participatory culture within sports journalism.

Research results

From Screens to Streams: Where Fans Find Their Game Updates?

Figure 1 illustrates how people's habits are changing, while also showing how traditional and new media co-exist, each serving a distinct purpose when it comes to news. From the current research, it is clear that traditional media—like TV and radio—still play a significant role in how people get their sports updates. Over half of those that participated in the survey (more than 54%) admit they mainly rely on these sources. At the same time, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have established a solid presence. About one-third of respondents turn to these channels for the latest sports news, as they want to join conversations, share opinions, or catch highlights on the go. Specialized sports news websites come in third, chosen by 9% of participants. While they might not be the first choice for most, these sites offer deeper insights and analysis for those who want to dive a bit further into their favorite sports.

Figure 1. What is your main source of information about sports events?

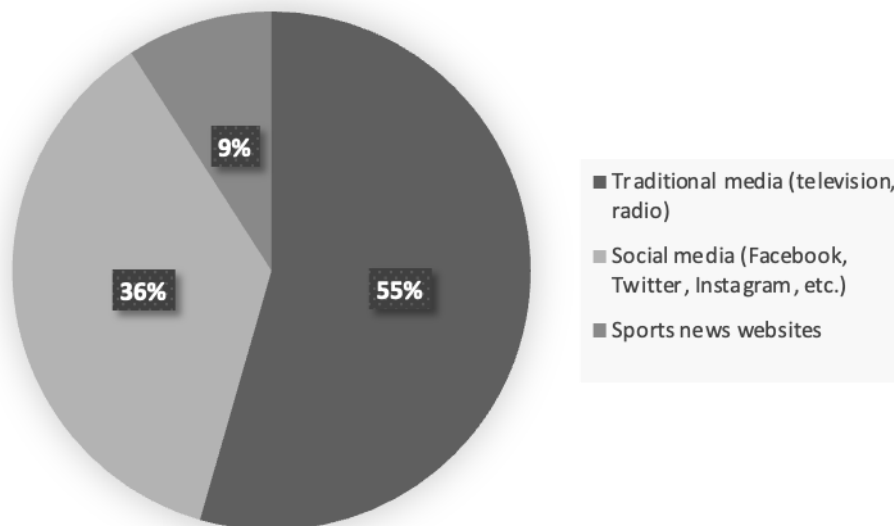
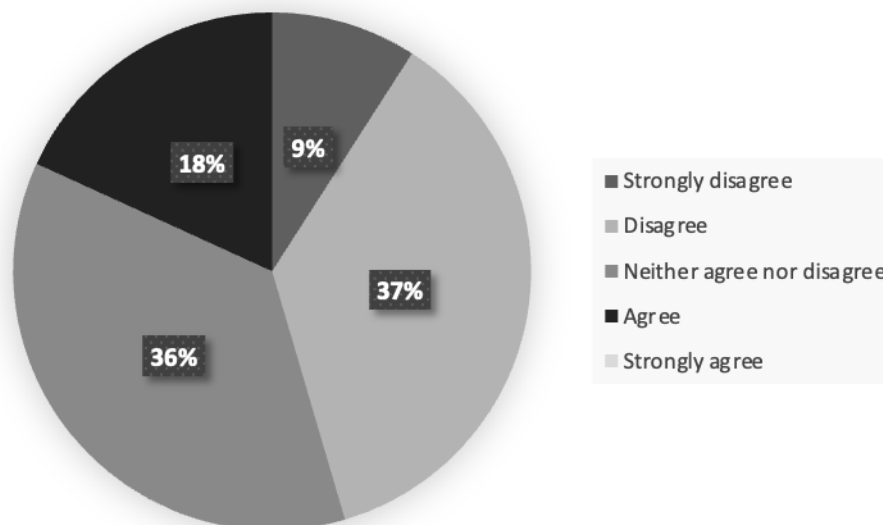


Figure 2 explores the degree of trust people place in social media platforms (such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Tik-Tok) as sources of reliable sports news. The results reveal a divided audience. Only 18% of respondents agree that they see social media as a trustworthy source for sports updates. Meanwhile, 36% remain neutral—perhaps indicating uncertainty about the reliability of content found on these platforms. At the same time, 36% express disagreement, and another 9% strongly disagree, clearly reflecting a level of distrust in the accuracy and credibility of information shared on social media. Overall, while social platforms undoubtedly play a role in how sports content is consumed today, many still view them as less reliable compared to more traditional or specialized sources.

Figure 2. Social networks (such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) are a reliable source of sports information for me.



More Than Just a Game: How Multimedia Shapes the Sports Experience

Figure 3 indicates that most fans prefer a more lively and interactive viewing experience where videos, infographics, podcasts, and other multimedia elements are combined. About 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this preference, highlighting the importance of variety in content presentation. However, there is a smaller group (around 18%) who disagree or strongly disagree, as for some, traditional formats like texts and static images remain sufficient.

Figure 3. The use of multimedia tools (videos, infographics, podcasts) has improved my experience of watching sports events

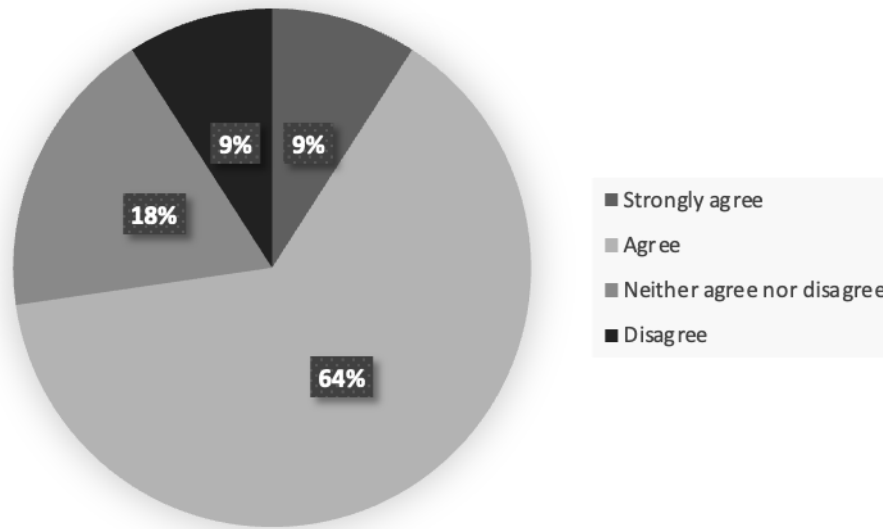


Figure 4 shows what kinds of sports content people prefer these days, confirming that live game viewing remains the primary way people consume sports content, while other formats like interviews and infographics complement audience interest with more specialized options. The majority (about 82%) choose live game broadcasts, showing how important it is for viewers to watch events in real time and experience the excitement as it unfolds. Far fewer, around 9%, prefer interviews with athletes and coaches, which offer a more personal and in-depth look into the sports world. An equal percentage opt for statistics and data presented through infographics, showing that there is also interest in more analytical and visually accessible content.

Figure 4. Which of the following types of sports content do you prefer the most?

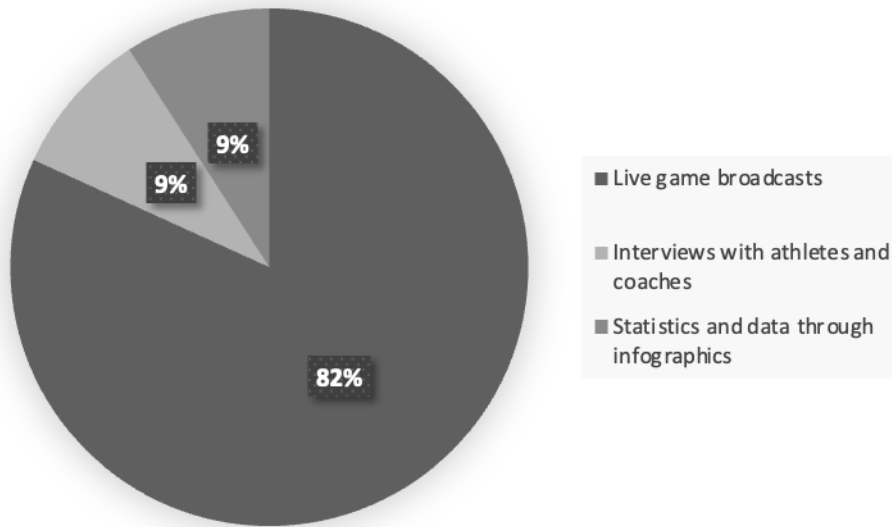


Figure 5 focuses on how multimedia tools—such as videos, infographics, and podcasts—impact the way people experience sports events. The results suggest that multimedia tools have become a key part of the sports viewing experience for most fans. The majority of respondents (64%) agree that these tools have significantly improved their overall experience. An additional 9% strongly agree, showing a clearly positive reception of multimedia in the sports context. Meanwhile, 18% remain neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and only a small portion (9%) disagree.

Figure 5. The use of multimedia tools (videos, infographics, podcasts) has improved my experience of watching sports events

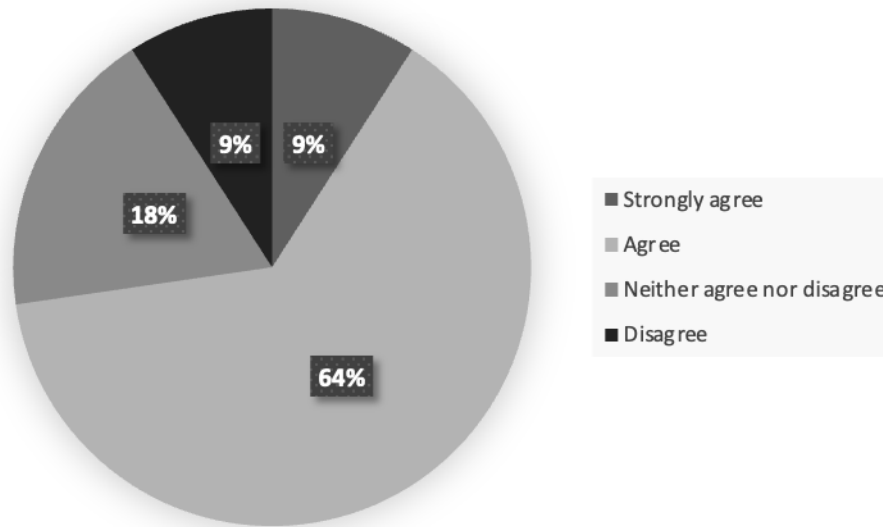


Figure 6 explores people's preferences regarding the format of sports content—specifically whether they favor a multimedia experience over simple text or static images, and shows that most viewers are drawn to a richer, more immersive way of engaging with sports content. A strong majority, nearly 64%, say they prefer watching sports events that incorporate multimedia elements such as videos, infographics, and podcasts. An additional 9% strongly agree, highlighting the growing role of dynamic content in today's sports coverage. A small portion, around 9%, remain neutral, while 18% say they strongly disagree, indicating a preference for more traditional forms of media.

Figure 6. I prefer to watch sports events that incorporate various multimedia tools (videos, infographics, podcasts, etc.) rather than just text or static images

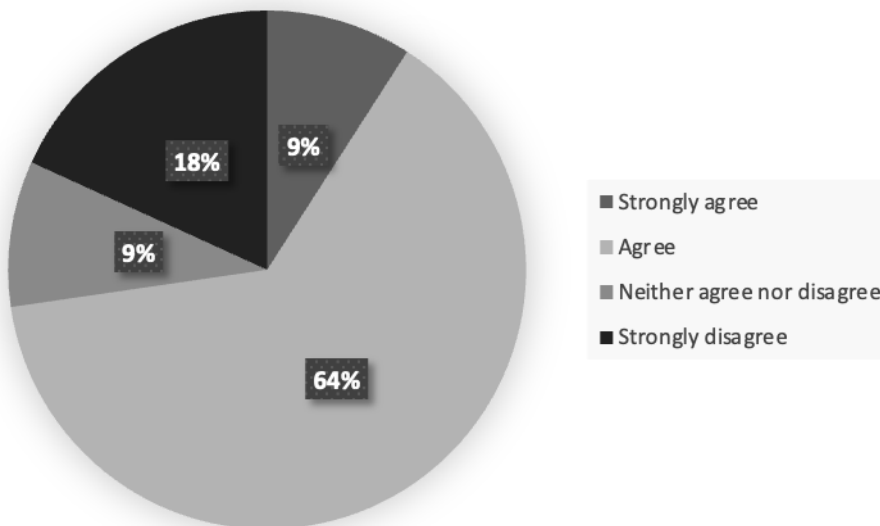
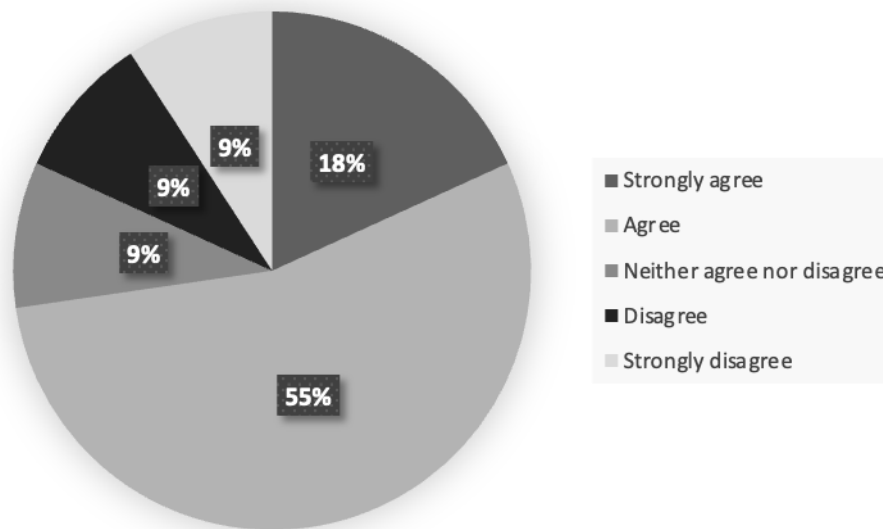


Figure 7 explores whether multimedia tools help improve people's understanding of sports statistics and match data. Most respondents appear to agree with this idea. Around 73% overall express agreement—with 18% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing—that tools like videos, infographics, and podcasts make it easier to grasp complex information such as stats or tactical analysis. About 9% remain neutral, while another 18% disagree to some extent—suggesting that there is still a portion of the audience either unconvinced by multimedia or more comfortable with traditional forms of presentation. The results show that multimedia is increasingly recognized as a valuable way to make complex information more accessible.

Figure 7. The use of multimedia tools in sports coverage improves the understanding of statistics and game data.



From Audience to Storytellers: Fans as Creators in the Digital World

Figure 8 explores how important it is for fans to have the ability to create and share sports-related content—such as commentary, analysis, photos, or videos. The results highlight a growing shift from content consumers to content creators—though not everyone is equally on board with this transformation. The majority (about 55%) agree that this feature matters to them, reflecting a modern trend toward a more interactive and participatory relationship with sports. Audiences are no longer just passive viewers—they want to express themselves, comment, and actively engage with online sports communities. At the same time, the 36% (including 9% who strongly disagree) seem indifferent or even opposed to this aspect of digital sports culture. This may reflect lower

digital engagement or a preference for more traditional, passive ways of experiencing sports content.

Figure 8. It is important to me to be able to create and share sports content (e.g., comments, analyses, photos, videos).

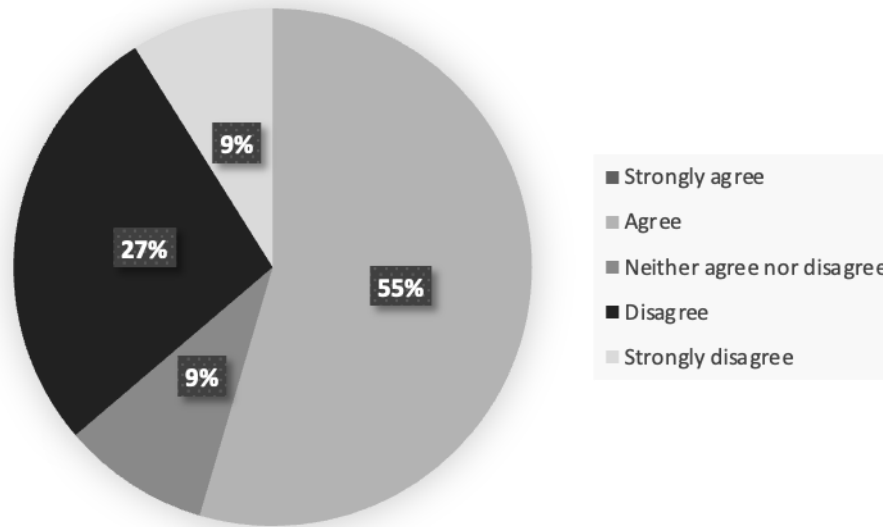


Figure 9 explores whether fans believe that their involvement in creating content—such as comments, posts, or videos—makes sports journalism more engaging. Rather than replacing traditional journalism, fan participation seems to complement it, making the sports experience more dynamic. Around 64% of respondents agree (with 9% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing), recognizing the value of audience voices in shaping more authentic and multidimensional narratives in sports reporting. Meanwhile, 27% remain neutral, possibly reflecting some uncertainty about the role of fan-created content. Only 9% disagree, indicating that the idea of participatory sports journalism has gained traction, though it hasn't yet become a universal norm.

Figure 9. Fan participation in the creation of sports content (e.g., comments, posts, videos) provides more engaging sports journalism experiences.

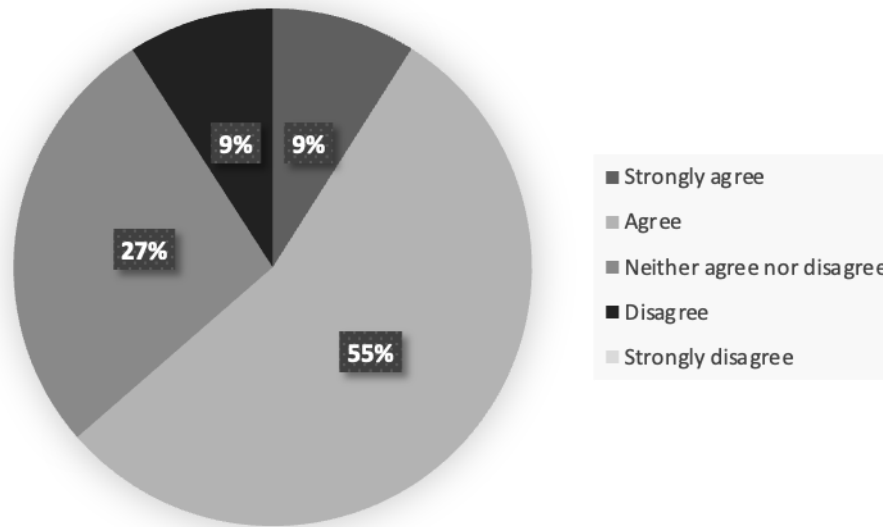
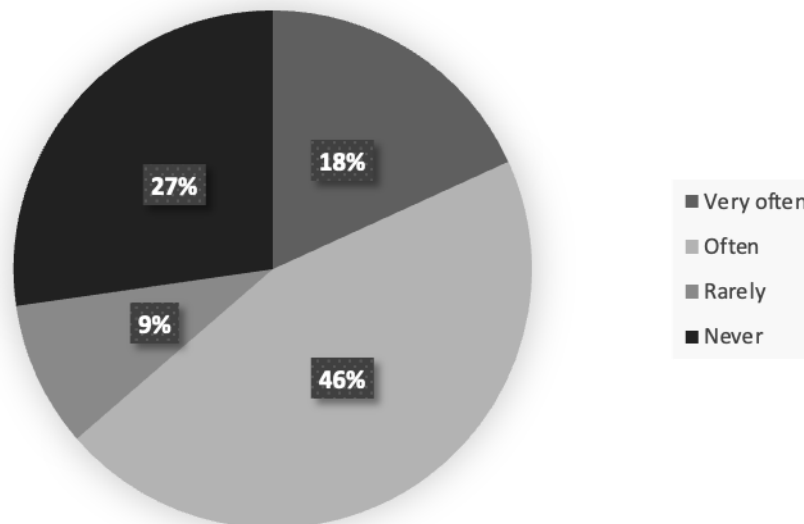


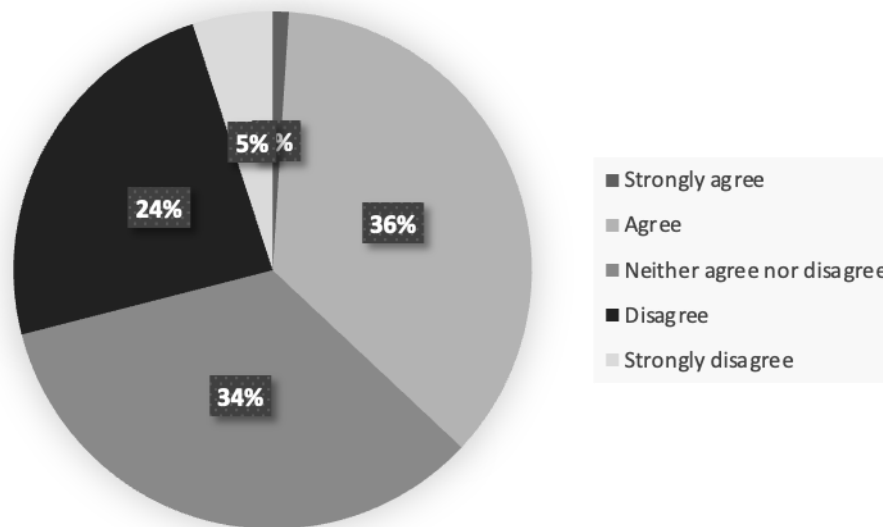
Figure 10 shows that active engagement in sports discussions is a key part of the experience for most fans, that enhance the sense of community and interaction. More than 64% of fans participate often (45%) or very often (18%) in discussions about sports topics via social media or other platforms. Conversely, around 27% report participating rarely (9%) or never (18%), preferring passive consumption or uses other means to stay informed.

Figure 10. How often do you participate in discussions about sports topics via social media or other platforms?



The role of fans in the production and dissemination of sports news seems to divide the participants (Figure 11). Although the findings of the survey show that while fan contributions are valued and considered important, they are not expected to fully replace the traditional role of sports journalism. Specifically, about 36% of respondents agree that fan participation could partially replace traditional methods. However, an almost equal percentage (34%) remains neutral, indicating uncertainty. On the other hand, about 29% disagree or strongly disagree with this view, emphasizing the trust in traditional forms of sports journalism.

Figure 11. How often do you participate in discussions about sports topics via social media or other platforms?



Conclusion

In recent years, multimedia tools have reshaped the way fans experience sports journalism, making the whole process more engaging and interactive. The findings of this research show that fans today are drawn to formats that go beyond traditional text and static images – they want videos, infographics, podcasts and live updates on social media. These multimedia elements do more than just provide information. They create a sense of community and active participation that was harder to achieve before.

A key finding of this research is how these tools foster a deeper connection between fans and the sports they watch. Whether it's watching highlight videos,

participating in social media conversations or delving into detailed statistics presented through infographics, fans feel more engaged. Increased engagement, in turn, helps build a stronger bond not only with the sport but also with other fans, turning passive spectators into active participants. In addition, fans value having a voice in the conversation through user-generated content such as comments, posts, and videos. However, they do not see this participatory approach as a replacement for professional journalism. Instead, they see it as complementary, adding new perspectives.

However, traditional media still holds a critical place in sports coverage. Television and radio offer credibility, professionalism, and a level of trust that many fans still value. The challenge for modern sports journalism lies in balancing that credibility with the immediacy and interactivity that digital platforms provide. Fans expect the best of both worlds: accurate, well-researched reporting combined with dynamic, multimedia-rich content.

References

- Billings, A. (2012). *Sports media: Transformation, integration, consumption*. Routledge.
- Bornman, H., & Von Solms, S. H. (1993). Hypermedia, multimedia and hypertext: definitions and overview. *The Electronic Library*, 11(4/5), 259-268.
- Bowman, N. D., & Cranmer, G. A. (2014). *SocialMediaSport: The fan as a (mediated) participant in spectator sports*. Routledge handbook of sport and new media, 213-224.
- Boyle, R., & Haynes, R. (2013). Sports journalism and social media: A new conversation?. In *Digital Media Sport* (pp. 204-218). Routledge.
- Delwiche, A. A., & Henderson, J. J. (Eds.). (2013). *The participatory cultures handbook* (pp. 10-21). New York: Routledge.
- Deuze, M. (2004). What is multimedia journalism1? *Journalism Studies*, 5(2), 139–152. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670042000211131>
- Gioltzidou, G., & Gioltzidou, F. (2022). Generation as a key factor in the diversity of journalistic cultures in Greece. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 139, p. 04001). EDP Sciences. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202213904001>
- Gioltzidou, G., Mitka, D., Gioltzidou, F., Chrysafis, T., Mylona, I., & Amanatidis, D. (2024). Adapting traditional media to the social media culture: A case study of

-
- greece. Journalism and Media, 5(2), 485-499. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5020032>
- Hamilton, W. A., Garretson, O., & Kerne, A. (2014, April). Streaming on twitch: fostering participatory communities of play within live mixed media. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1315-1324).
- Heinonen, A. (2011). The journalist's relationship with users: New dimensions to conventional roles. Participatory journalism: Guarding open gates at online newspapers, 34-55.
- Hermida, A. (2012). Social journalism: Exploring how social media is shaping journalism. The handbook of global online journalism, 12, 309-328.
- Hutchins, B., & Rowe, D. (2013). Digital media sport. Taylor & Francis
- Lévy, Pierre. 1997. Collective intelligence: Mankind's emerging world in cyberspace. New York: Plenum Trade.
- Moore, J. H., & Carlson, A. (2013). Reaching the audience: new communication technology practices in college sports public relations. Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science, 23(1), 109–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2012.744515>
- Pavlik, J. V., & Bridges, F. (2013). The emergence of augmented reality (AR) as a storytelling medium in journalism. Journalism & communication monographs, 15(1), 4-59.
- Purchase, H. (1998). Defining multimedia. IEEE multimedia, 5(1), 8-15.
- Rockwell, G., & Mactavish, A. (2004). Multimedia. na.
- Thorpe, H. (2017). Action sports, social media, and new technologies: Towards a research agenda. Communication & sport, 5(5), 554-578.
- Gioltzidou, G., Gioltzidou, F., & Chrysafis, Th. (2024). Journalistic culture and artificial intelligence: The case of Greece. *Annual Hellenic Scientific Conference of Communication Laboratories*, 3(1), 47–57. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12681/cclabs.8059> [Γιολτζίδου, Γ., Γιολτζίδου, Φ., & Χρυσάφης, Θ. (2024). Δημοσιογραφική Κουλτούρα και Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη: Η περίπτωση της Ελλάδας. Ετήσιο Ελληνόφωνο Επιστημονικό Συνέδριο Εργαστηρίων Επικοινωνίας, 3(1), 47-57.]