ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I ask: Why do Danish football fans use the web and does the web change the way fandom culture works? In my analysis, I show that the web is used for many different purposes, but not primarily that with which it is often associated. First, the web enables the voice of the many, but it is actually mostly used in this way by those fans who are already the dominant voices of the community. I show that instead of enabling more people to broadcast their opinions, the web allows more people to follow those few who choose to broadcast in order to let the many feel part of the community. Second, I show that a new type of fan may be emerging who has little in common with the traditional supporter. This fan still supports a specific club, but takes a much more general interest in football and uses much more time to analyse the games and gain in-depth knowledge about game events, which is shared among friends and family rather than the traditional supporter community. Lastly, I also show that the web is not replacing TV as the dominant medium for following football matches, but rather works a supplement for enriching the understanding of the game and support existing social practices. This dissertation is empirical in its findings, but also contributes to the field of fandom theory. The dissertation is divided into three parts:

In the first part of the dissertation (Chapter 1-4), I present the theoretical position from where I choose to analyse football culture and the web as a medium. I begin by arguing that communication and the related concept of meta-communication can be used as key concepts in understanding what we mean when we talk about fans and football fandom. I conclude the theoretical argument by presenting the idea that football culture is a symbolic activity that has produced its own distinct domain of reality through the particular ways it has been communicated by football fans in different media and within different social contexts.

In the second part of the dissertation (Chapter 5), I present the methodology of how to analyse a 'social field' and I present the techniques as well as the data used in my analysis. The data collected for the analysis consists in interviews with webmasters from Danish football websites (N=68), user tracking data from two selected websites (circa 3.6 billion visits) and a survey (N=804).

In the third part of the dissertation (Chapter 6-8), I present my findings. First, I review the existing data on Danish football culture and present a reinterpretation of how Danish football culture works as a social field today. I then use my own data to analyse how the websites are actually used by Danish fans, and I present a typology of different types of fans, their social characteristics and what use each type of fans actually make of the web.