EXPLORING THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES
OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL FANS:
THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF ONLINE MESSAGE BOARDS

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ABSTRACT

In light of the uses and gratifications theory, this study examined how college football fans use online message boards, what their motivations are for using online message boards, and whether online message boards are complementing or displacing traditional media for them. A quantitative survey posted to four different subscription-based online message boards revealed that when it comes to their favorite college football team, college football fans (N = 995) are spending significantly more time on message boards for needs gratification than they are with newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Six motivations of message board use were extracted from a factor analysis, and surveillance emerged as the most salient reason for accessing message boards. Multiple regressions then revealed which motivation variables were significant predictors of message board use. Analysis on attitudes showed that college football fans are very satisfied with their subscriptions, find the information provided on the message boards to be highly credible, and experience a strong dependency on the message boards.