

The (Re)Shaping of the Israeli Sport Media: The Case of Talk-Back

Yair Galily

Zinman College, Wingate Institute, Israel

From its explosive development in the last decade of the 20th century, the World Wide Web has become an ideal medium for dedicated sports fanatics and a useful resource for casual fans, as well. Its accessibility, interactivity, speed, and multi-media content have triggered a fundamental change in the delivery of mediated sports, a change for which no one can yet predict the outcome (Real, 2006). This commentary sheds light on a process in which the talk-back mechanism, which enables readers to comment on Web-published articles, is (re)shaping the sport realm in Israeli media. The study on which this commentary is based involved the comparative analysis of over 3,000 talk-backs from the sports sections of 3 daily Web news sites (Ynet, nrg, and Walla!). The argument is made that talk-backs serve not only as an extension of the journalistic sphere but also as a new source of information and debate.

Keywords: sport section, Internet, fans, journalism

Providing a platform for Internet users to express their opinions is not a new phenomenon; its origins date back to the news groups of the early days of the Web. The classic news groups were based on their own protocol (NNTP) and dedicated application, which over the years became an integral part of the e-mail program. Although these news groups initially focused on academic issues, they also established an opening for free expression with so-called alt (for alternative) groups. In the mid-1990s, when the browser became the most common way of conducting online tasks, the news groups lost their luster. The desire of Internet companies to attract subscribers led them to develop communities based on their sites. In this new method, discussion groups became an integral part of the site and a source of attraction for its services. The most salient example from that period is the Internet site RagingBull.com, which began as a forum for discussing stocks and eventually turned into a proper financial site (Hadar, 2001; Ilan, 2001).

The soaring popularity of the new forums also underscored one very substantial limitation—they forced users to limit their commentary to a specific area on the site and to a limited group of users who were members of the same forum. This shortcoming did not escape the attention of Internet entrepreneurs, and in

1999 several firms, some Israeli, presented dedicated applications that enabled users to add comments to any page on the net. The Office 2000 package incorporated a program that enabled comments to be added to net pages and to share them with other users on the organizational network. Internet users had already become accustomed to the browser-based interface, however, and the dedicated applications failed to gain the popularity their creators had hoped for (Ilan, 2001).

In contrast, a somewhat different method known as talk-back, which allows users to add comments directly to an article or published news item, was a great success. Internet sites owned by the American publisher Ziff Davis were evidently those that turned talk-back into a popular method and were responsible for coining its name. From the users' perspective this was an enormous advantage, because their opinions and reactions received more extensive exposure than in a forum squeezed into a given site, and they had the opportunity to directly express their opinions on the published material. From the site owner's perspective, this system produced the same effect as the classic forum: It strengthened surfers' ties with the site while also providing more insight into the type of content that interested the audience (Hadar, 2001; Ilan, 2001).

The term *talk back* is by no means a new entry in the communications glossary. It can be traced as far back as the traditional days of media when the written press, radio, and television were dominant and provided an open framework for media consumers' reactions, as in letters to the editor or conversations with listeners on the radio. That being said, virtual talk-back represents a relatively new form of mass communications, consisting of a spontaneous structural system in which members contribute to constantly changing texts and situations dictated by the current-events agenda and text writers. The talk-back phenomenon is present-tense-oriented for one-time texts whose boundaries are defined by current-event frameworks and public interest. Mediation is minimal, and intervention by an external host is virtually nonexistent (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988). There are some cases in which a newspaper's editorial staff monitors and filters talk-back messages, although such systems are rarely used to their utmost. The absence of guided intervention amplifies the dimensions of spontaneity and anonymity, which in turn increase the pleasure derived from interactivity using unconstrained language and style (Hecht, 2003).

Long before the Internet came into our lives, Habermas (1991), of the Frankfurt School, identified the ideal conditions for a "public sphere" in which democratic discourse can be conducted. The architecture of the Internet helps create several of these ideal conditions. According to Habermas,

[The] public sphere is a middle ground between state and civilian society, a sphere (not necessarily physical) in which differences in power and status are temporarily suspended, a space where in principle all individuals have equal status and are aware of their right to use their intelligence to criticize any issue of public interest. (Verman, 1997)

Public discourse is rational and takes place in a free country in an arena independent of economic pressure. Habermas (1991, 1992) summarized the characteristics of the "ideal speech situation" in the following manner: Everyone is entitled to express his or her positions, ambitions, and needs; everyone is entitled to converse

and engage in discourse; everyone is entitled to pose questions, to question any argument raised in the discourse (criticism), and to make any claim that comes to mind; and participants cannot be prevented from exercising their rights by external or internal pressure.

Democratic discourse is perceived as a process of mutual understanding and the conduct of dialogue to arrive at the truth or social integration. It enables a Web surfer, in this case, to become aware of other surfers' reactions and exchanges without worrying about the covert interests that characterize most off-line forms of discourse. Habermas (1991) refers to the public sphere as one in which discourse can transpire between private people who aggregate of their own free will—not coerced—and form a community. It would appear that the ideal speech situation described by Habermas can be found in talk-backs, in which equality, mutuality, and symmetry can be maintained as long as the participants in the discourse are not professionals or businesspeople looking out for their private business interests, nor public servants who must maintain certain proprieties. Similarly, the respondents do not represent a permanent virtual community, nor do they share defined goals or group commitments. In most cases, no lasting contact is formed among them.

The talk-back, which has quickly become a thriving arena of social, cultural, and political activity, has been called many things—from a center for democratic culture and a contributor to freedom of expression to a center for corrupting values and engendering social antagonism. To better understand these polarized perceptions of the talk-back, its unique characteristics must first be examined (Hecht, 2003).

Characteristics and Uniqueness of Talk-Back in Israel

New computer-mediated communication technologies have opened many opportunities for discourse enthusiasts, from politicians to common culture critics, allowing Web surfers to express their distinct positions and respond within a multileveled space of freedom and many virtual frameworks (Hecht, 2004). The uniqueness of talk-back is that it creates a new encounter between virtual texts and surfers. Unlike encounters with other texts, there is an element of initiative inherent in the encounter between surfer and text, when the invitation to respond and the responses themselves can be defined as social activity. Responses are, in fact, the surfers' creative process. Readers apply meaning to it according to their diverse points of view using previously acquired interpretive processes and cultural codes that are not necessarily dependent on the structure and literal meanings that the writer initially intended (Radway, 1984).

Talk-back has quickly turned into a cultural catalyst, accelerating the flow of ideas between the social center and the periphery, enabling large sectors of the population to express their opinions in the public arena. The prestige that talk-back enjoys derives from its identification with central organizations from the economic world (such as Microsoft) or reputable external and virtual information sources (such as Yedioth Aharonot or the Haaretz daily newspapers in Israel). For these reasons, and because feedback can be provided to the virtual press, talk-backs

have become a central and important public arena on the net and in society, unlike other forums, discussion groups, or chats, which focus on more esoteric, marginal communities in the hierarchy with a more limited reading public (Hecht, 2003).

In most online-discourse technologies, physical gestures and empathetic eye contact cannot be integrated, and blunt statements cannot be softened by means of a smile or lowering one's voice. Electronic discourse has become a type of communication that does not permit what Goffman calls "expression," or expressions, gestures, signs and vocal intonations, signals, and movements created by the very presence of a person in the vicinity. The many levels of freedom, however, with their spontaneity, creativity, and authenticity, compensate surfers for the disadvantages of no physical presence. Freedom levels provide surfers with a space that is not subject to predetermined rules or identities. Surfers are not obligated to choose a specific predetermined surfing track. As a result, they can disconnect themselves from familiar chains of thought and use resources that stimulate initiative and creativity (Hecht, 2004). Creativity and innovation are expressed in three central domains, described in the following sections.

Introduction of Symbols and Images From Linguistically Deviant Cultures Into Digital Language

One of the prevalent forms of online discourse is the use of emotional texts and expressions found outside the social consensus to create drama and stimulate discussion. This is especially true of subjects stimulating high interest. These forms of expression from anonymous surfers create a variety of inconsistent meanings and messages infused with internal contradictions. This phenomenon allegedly indicates the adoption of a split personality—replete with contradictions or arbitrary and irrational responses—that also offers challenging tools for forming mutual contact and expanding discourse among surfers (Hecht, 2003). Furthermore, it is possible to detect linguistic and metaphoric innovation and symbolization in talk-backs as part of an attempt to create conditions for social symmetrization. It appears that talk-back culture is heralding the start of a virtual version of a "commentating community," representing another aspect of development in Israeli culture. Talk-backs also manifest dimensions of protest that are comparable to other protest movements in pop culture, such as rap or graffiti. Thus, talk-backs sometimes take on the appearance of graffiti in "dirtying the public square" (Dror, 2003). Like graffiti, flame wars—or flaming, which is defined as "heated discourse that has gone out of control" (Rosenthal, 2004)—are essentially a personal subversive protest about social issues. It is expressed through linguistic aggression characterized by uninhibited free usage, slander, and expletives prevalent in most languages and cultures (Hughes, 1998).

In online culture, norms are still being developed so surfers feel they are in an anonymous society where the illusion of freedom conceals the physical presence of others, where they are free of moral restrictions and norms (Virilio, 1997). The incitement in online discourse in Israel is multivaried. It is not only between surfers and journalists but also among surfers and between surfers and the government, among others. Harsh language has gained a special status in talk-backs, which has aroused the anger of the press, which sees in talk-backs a mirror image

of the harsh language prevalent in the public discourse in the streets. Harsh online language—which according to its opponents in Israel has become a low-class culture of rudeness not possible in the conventional media (Hadar, 2001)—can actually be considered a form of aggressive personal protest (Hecht, 2004).

It is important to note that changes in communicative style and wording did not begin with talk-backs but penetrated the print media before the virtual era, as was the case in many other discourse channels in Israeli society (including school and the army). It may be that the language is inappropriate in the norms of written communication, yet in its essence it expresses protest that should be seen against the backdrop of changes in journalistic language, including the blurring of limits between written and spoken language, linguistic sloppiness, increased use of slang, the burgeoning of violent writing styles, and the intrusion of foreign words (Caspi & Limor, 1992). In other words, such online language is a tangible echo of offline discourse style in Israel (Hecht, 2004).

Another research area, which began developing before the Internet age but has been revalidated by behavior on the Internet, is in the field of introverted behavior and social phobia. It is believed that a high percentage of the population suffers from phobia of social situations and that many individuals have difficulty expressing themselves before others. Rolnick (in Hadar, 2001) claims that talk-back enables people to reveal themselves while still controlling what is known about them. It serves as an outlet for people suffering from lack of confidence, because writers can say whatever they wish without their blushing being seen or their shaky voice being heard. The prevalence of extreme opinions in talk-backs corresponds well to the image of the surfers, because people who lack confidence tend to adopt extreme opinions and, therefore, more often choose to express themselves via a medium that does not expose them to the real world (Hadar, 2001). Some psychologists find this development positive and speak of a sort of “safety valve” similar to that in a pressure cooker, serving to release pressure mainly among those who feel they do not have the right to speak (Drov-Heistein, 2003).

Novelty in Discourse Foundations

Virtual texts are not “passive” but, rather, provide the surfer with immediate, overt, active meaning. Reactions occur immediately and spontaneously. The dynamic vigor and responsiveness levels of talk-back surfers can be observed through their distribution by reaction time. Hecht (2003) found that most surfers seem to respond during the initial hours after a text appears on the screen. Responses can vary from time to time and even for the same surfer in different surfing sessions. Moreover, talk-back analysis can be regarded as a new tool and indicator for estimating public discourse output. In this manner, for example, social awareness can be examined by measuring the number of talk-backs in response to articles in different fields. Another characteristic of the talk-back writing style is “headline discourse,” which has turned into a popular form of response in talk-back culture. Each headline is the tip of the iceberg in terms of the interpretation a surfer gives to a text. For this reason the notation *WC/NC* (“without comment/no content”) that appears next to a response is inaccurate, for headline discourse hints at textual activity (virtual hermeneutics) no less than the content itself (Hecht, 2003).

Innovations in Social Organization (New Communities on the Basis of Talk-Back Patterns)

The evolution of talk-back is evident in the increased number of sites dedicated to audience reactions. In Israel, sites such as Isra-Blog, Israel Hope Movement, and The Reading Hart present excerpts of controversial articles. Talk-back discourse is conducted in an open format free of the journalistic criticism characterizing online journalism. In other words, instead of direct responses on Ynet, Walla!, and other major Israeli sites, visitors to these sites find “responder” communities whose characteristics, quite paradoxically and contrary to expectations, are more similar to those of discussion groups and forums than to talk-backs (Hecht, 2003).

Research Questions

In light of the literature review and because of the lack of research and literature in the field of the new mechanism talk-back, this commentary is based on research that focused on three main questions:

- What are the structure of the talk-back activity and its significance as a public arena?
- Does talk-back serve as an extension of the press or as a new or culturally rejuvenating source of information?
- What are the characteristics of responders in the sports section?

Research Method

In the past 2 decades, Internet-related research has been moving from early descriptive studies about the medium itself—the Internet’s characteristics—to a higher level, focusing on Web users and social effects (Kim & Weaver, 2002). At the same time, however, the mix of various media characteristics made Internet content analysis fairly complex.¹ The current study sampled, studied, analyzed and compared more than 3,000 talk-backs from the sports section of three daily news Web sites. The number of people accessing sports sites on the World Wide Web has grown in a manner parallel to the growth of Web production and content, perhaps at an even faster rate. Thus, I decided to focus on the sports section on the central Web sites, which, as stated, become an ideal medium for dedicated sports fanatics, as well as a useful resource for casual enthusiasts.²

Talk-backs were collected over a period of 1 week from 105 virtual articles from the sports section of three online newspapers. Every day five central subjects were selected from the sports section on the three most popular Israeli news Internet sites: Ynet, NGR, and Walla.³ With five articles selected from each site—15 articles selected each day—the study involved a total sample of 3,078 talk-backs. To answer the research questions, we conducted a qualitative content analysis wherein the talk-backs were categorized and classified⁴ for the third question (characteristics of responders), and open analysis, which identifies the dominant

messages and subject matter in the text, was used for the first two research questions (structure of the talk-back activity and new source of information).

Findings

The findings of this study with regard to the first research question (talk-back's structure and its significance as a public arena) suggest that the talk-backs, which appear directly at the end of the article, are spontaneous, anonymous, usually one-time, and minimally mediated. In line with Hecht's (2003, 2004) observations, there is an element of initiative in the encounter between the surfer and the text; the invitation to respond and the responses themselves can be defined as social activity. The talk-backs seem to serve as a public arena, wherein discourse conditions of equality, mutuality, and symmetry are amplified. Similar to the ideal speech situations presented by Habermas (1991), it indeed seems as though everyone is entitled to converse and engage in discourse; everyone has the right to raise questions, question any claims made in the discourse (criticism), and make any claim that comes to mind. At the same time, however, one has to be aware of the paradoxical infiltration of supervisory mechanisms (Web site editors/gate keepers) into social systems in which freedom of speech is a central value. In regard to the second research question, it looks as if talk-back serves as an extension of the press and at the same time operates as a source of information that is both new and culturally renovating. Information found in talk-backs makes an important contribution and in many ways threatens journalists' exclusivity as information mediators, weakening the boundaries of the professional activity of journalists, who must now share the online arena with surfers. At the same time, talk-backs perform as a catalyst of cultural innovation when they accelerate the introduction of symbols and images from linguistically deviant cultures to digital language (including spelling mistakes—some intentional) and present innovation in discourse foundations (immediacy, "headline discourse").

A conceptual mapping of talk-backs (Figure 1), which attempts to characterize the responders to the sports section, uncovered three types of responders: those who post talk-back that is (a) related to the crux of the person, (b) related to the crux of the matter, or (c) unrelated to the matter. When related to the crux of a person talk-back was associated with one of two options: to the writer or journalist ("I love the way he writes") or to another talk-backer ("number 103 is absolutely right!"). Both of these are either reinforcement or criticism. When related to the crux of the matter talk-back also came in one of two options: in relation to the subject directly or indirectly. The third type of talk-back was usually unrelated to the matter, when people repeated mantras or made out-of-context remarks ("I am first in line!!!").

As revealed in Figure 2, five types of responders were found in the sports section of the news Web sites: *minimalists*, who preferred to write one sentence or word (e.g., *bullshit*) with the suffix of *NC* (no content); *intellectuals*, who wrote their theses on various subjects and individuals; the *knowledgeable*, who seemed to know a lot and were willing to share their information or insights ("come in and read the truth") regarding the subject; people who used *slogans* or mantras; and

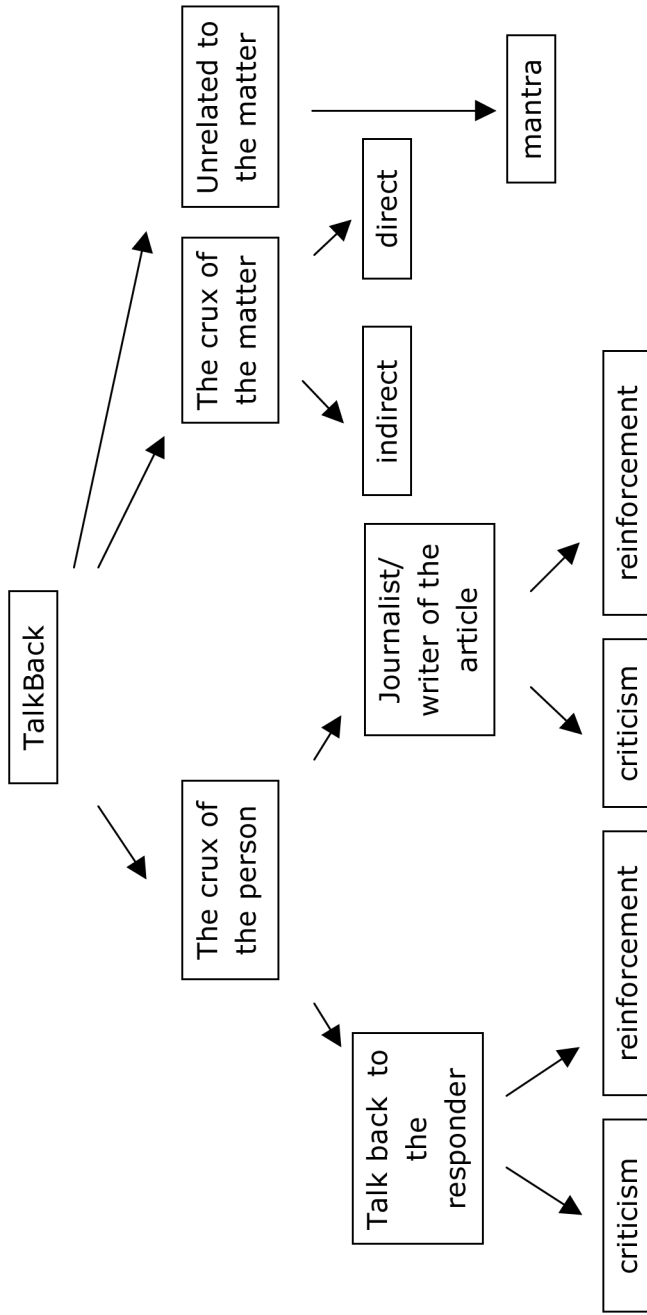


Figure 1 — Characteristics of respondents: a conceptual mapping of talk-back in sports journalism.

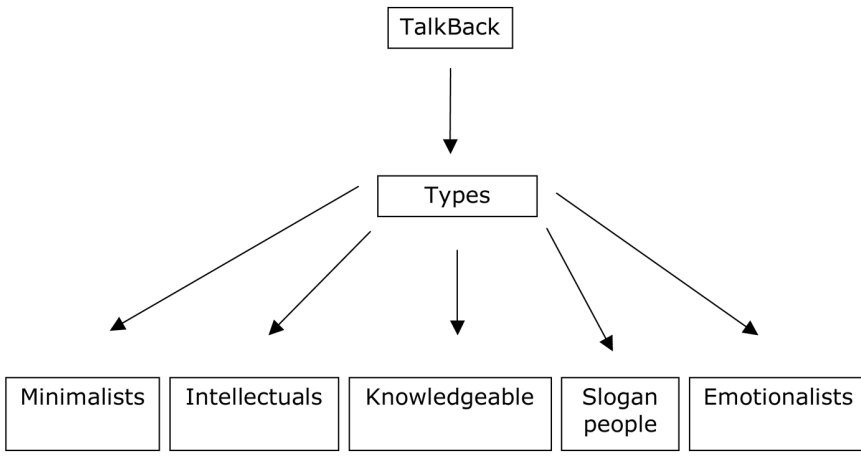


Figure 2 — Typology of responders.

emotionalists, who were emotionally involved and felt obligated to share with the other readers their thoughts regarding a beloved team or athlete.

Concluding Commentary

There is little doubt that the rapid development of information and communication technologies and the introduction of new media forms have had a significant impact on society in general and sport in particular. The media, in particular television and the press, play a pivotal role in producing, reproducing, and amplifying many of the issues associated with sport in the modern world. Changes in contemporary technologies and the economics of the broadcast and print media have contributed significantly to an expansion in the volume of sports texts and to the emergence of new styles of sports writing (Lange, 2002).

The aim in this commentary was to shed light on a process in which the talk-back mechanism, which enables readers to comment on Web-published articles, is (re)shaping the sports realm in Israeli media. This commentary—based on a comparative analysis of 3,078 talk-backs from the sports section of three daily news Web sites—concludes that talk-backs serve not only as an extension of the journalistic sphere but also as a new source of information and debate. It appears that talk-back serves not only as an extension of the press but also as an alternative source of information. At the same time, however, it is characterized by superficial and limited discourse (inarticulate language and violent and harsh content, often mimicked from the streets). The number of talk-backs serves as a popularity measure (rating) for the site or journalist but at the same time leads to professional tensions in the communications arena and often has been metaphorized as the new world coliseum where “the crowd either cheers the writers or orders that they be executed” (Dror, 2003). Furthermore, there are sometimes problems with the source of messages (i.e., anonymous postings, imposters, multiple timers).

The research suggests that talk-backs serve as a public arena wherein discourse conditions of equality, mutuality, and symmetry are amplified. At the same time, however, the research points to the paradoxical infiltration of supervisory mechanisms (Web site editors or gate keepers) into social systems in which freedom of speech is a central value. A conceptual mapping of talk-backs was presented alongside five types of responders.

It can be argued quite persuasively that talk-backs reflect the difference between print and Internet journalism, especially in regard to critics and opinion writers, because they most significantly offer the freedom that Internet writing permits, as well as the dynamism and immediate interaction between writer and audience. In other words, talk-back embodies the manner in which the Internet has become more relevant than the printed paper. Talk-backs significantly disrupt the traditional hierarchy of highbrow and lowbrow journalism.

Furthermore, not only does the text lose its authority when anyone can add an opinion, but in terms of the audience, the hostile media is much less threatening when you can "give back as much as you get." In this sense, talk-backs give surfers a sense of being "part of the game," and the rules committee is no longer watching. When writers are more exposed, their authority is undermined and their hold on the truth is less exclusive, in terms of the readers' psychology, as well as that of the writer. In addition to contributing to freedom of expression in Israel's media and democracy, talk-backs also serve as a measure of popularity for the writers themselves, and they have enormous influence on the writers' character (Becker, 2005).

Talk-back's positive characteristics such as openness, spontaneity, and freedom explain much of its inherent charm, as evidenced by its growing popularity (Hecht, 2004). In Israel talk-backs are thriving among Internet surfers who have been quick to replicate the heated public discourse taking place in the streets, markets, and traditional media into the boundless and uninhibited virtual world. In this study, it is especially noticeable with regard to sports fans.

At the same time, there are many, especially among those of the traditional media, who claim that contrary to the hope of realizing the vision of a free democracy in the Internet Age, talk-back has turned into a stage for slander stained with blatant antidemocratic values. Everything seems immediate, urgent, interactive, and impulsive, and everyone joins in the "shouting" (Hadar, 2001). In their opinion, the positive meaning of freedom of expression on the Internet has become "freedom of incitement," and the discussion level has declined to a nadir that can be summed up as "cursing, obscenity, slander, and racial slurs" because site operators refrain from censoring most responses (Dror, 2003). Critics interpret this freedom as a violent stratum threatening the status of virtual-media personnel in Israel. Talk-back's critics claim that the basic structure of the talk-back system creates unease that is not necessarily related to its lack of reliability (as not reflecting a representative sample of public opinion but, rather, only the opinions of site surfers). The awkward structure of the talk-back, like a stage on which anyone can "have his or her say" and run, does not permit readers and editorial personnel to form opinions, discuss explanations, or analyze commentary and form a news-worthy synthesis, because there is no way to control the discussion. In addition, opponents claim that the permissive stage at the public's disposal enables extreme remarks to be made without anyone bearing criminal responsibility or paying a

social price (Hadar). Because talk-backs are anonymous, surfers can express themselves in any way they choose. Anonymity means shirking responsibility, which leads to a brutalization of discourse (Dror).

Opponents add that reactions often do not refer to the journalistic texts whatsoever. Instead, they might be used for internal discourse among talk-backers, with no relation to the articles, as they refer to each other by response number tagged with a derogatory name. According to opponents, very few intelligent responses appear in the talk-back; for the most part they are inarticulate, ignorant, violent, and impatient, and their sole purpose is to attract attention. Nevertheless, even those who disapprove of such responses realize the futility of trying to eliminate them completely; instead, they are attempting to change the current format (Drov-Heistein, 2003).

On the other hand, talk-back supporters claim that although virtual incitement, including curses, insults, and what can be defined as perverted language and images, does exist, a closer observation of talk-backs reveals that this is not the language used by most participants (Caspi & Limor, 1992). Moreover, they claim that it is erroneous to assume that the medium is the cause of violence, and it is more probable that the reactions merely reflect the discussion culture of Israeli society (Drov-Heistein, 2003). Supporters go so far as to regard talk-back as a breakthrough in communication culture and claim that the Israeli net is “a replica of the native landscape”—that there is no logic in demanding that it be cleaner, more polite, or more elitist. Criticism of responses on the net ignores the fact that the vast majority of them are legitimate, although not always well articulated. It appears that the written press has difficulty adjusting to the responses (Mor, 2004).

Despite its opponents, there is no doubt that talk-back is another cultural product in the series of new cultural innovations seeking their niche in the digital era. As observed by Real (2006), research on the Internet is understandably still at an early stage. Internet use for political and social purposes—travel, political campaigns, issue advocacy, dating, pornography—is important and is being examined in journals and books. Sport as an interest group, or “genre,” of Internet use offers the opportunity to explore in depth the leisure uses and social dimensions of the Internet. What does the future hold for sport and the media, coverage and fans? That, like so many interesting questions concerning the Web, will only be answered by time.

Notes

1. For example, Dominick (1999) claims that there was no existing sampling frame on the Web. On one hand, the amount of information on the Web is enormous and expands at an exponential rate. On the other hand, the decentralized nature of cyberspace allows any Web user to create and transmit various forms of information anytime from anywhere. The anonymity makes it even harder to estimate the sampling frames for content-analytic research (Weare & Lin, 2000). Thus, Riffe et al. (1998) described the Internet as “a city without a telephone book or map to guide people” (p. 101).

2. Another reason for choosing the sports section is Real’s (2006) observation that the shift in media research and theory away from the passive “couch potato” of bullet theory to the active user seeking information and gratification finds an ultimate expression and qualifier in the Web

sports fan. Real's findings clearly show that most ESPN.com users in the United States are in the 18- to 34-year-old male demographic who dedicate a lot of time surfing the Web. They average 9 minutes per Web page, whereas the global average is 45 seconds per page. The second- and third-page usage on ESPN.com, when fans have found what they are most seeking, averages an amazingly sustained 13 minutes. Most users are college educated or in college. They are affluent, white-collar types.

3. Ynet is one of the most visited Israeli news Web sites. Although it is owned and operated by Yedioth Aharonot, the Israeli newspaper with the largest circulation, and includes articles from the tabloid print edition, most of the content is original work published on the Web site only, written by a semi-independent staff. Originally it was launched with both Hebrew and Arabic versions (Ynet and Arabynet), but the Arabic page stopped operating in 2005. Ynet's main competition is nrg, operated by its competitor in print, Maariv. Although a large part of content on the Web site comes from the print edition, most of the material is written exclusively for the Web edition, including 24/7 news updates and channels such as Judaism and new age. Walla! is one of the first Israeli Internet portals and considered one of the most popular Web sites in the country. It provides news from Israel and around the world 24 hours a day. Most news stories that appear on Walla! come from the Haaretz Group (unlike Maariv and Yedioth, Haaretz is relatively highbrow, with longer articles, smaller print, fewer pictures, and daily science and literature pages), news agencies, and other content providers. During the year 2006, however, Walla! started building an independent news and editorial staff, which produces original news stories and special features. In addition, Walla! produces original content in various fields such as sports, cinema, music, fashion, and food.

4. According to Weber (1990), "to make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way" (p. 12). Thus, my research assistant and I independently reviewed the material and came up with a set of features that formed a checklist, as suggested by Haney et al. (1998).

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