The Relationship Between Spectator Motivations and Media and Merchandise Consumption at a Professional Mixed Martial Arts Event

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore how nine motives impact media and merchandise consumption among consumers of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). The present study extends previous research by examining the relationship between motivations and merchandise and media consumption among consumers at a large, professional MMA event. A one-way MANOVA was computed to test for gender differences in relation to attendance motivations in the present sample. After significant differences among spectator motives were identified, two separate backward deletion linear regression analyses revealed significant relationships between spectator motivations and media and merchandise consumption for males and females. The findings suggest the implementation of varying mar-

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"Given this rapid increase in popularity, the context of MMA provides sport management researchers a unique opportunity to examine a sport in its formative years and understand what attracts customers."

keting strategies for males and females in order to impact media and merchandise consumption of MMA spectators.

Introduction

The popularity of Mixed Martial Arts has grown dramatically over the last few years. Not only has the major North American promoter, the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), grown dramatically, but other professional MMA organizations such as Bellatar Fighting Championship, King of the Cage (KOTC), and Strikeforce have emerged. In addition, many amateur MMA organizations have begun promoting fights at a local level. Further, MMA has competed well against other popular sports in television ratings. According to Spike TV, UFC 75, held in the United Kingdom on September 6, 2007, recorded a 3.1 overall rating, surpassing the ratings for college football games, NASCAR, and the U.S. Open tennis tournament televised on the same Saturday night. The sport has been extremely successful in attracting men in the 18-49 years old demographic (Pishna, September 2007). Spike TV reported:

UFC 75 scored 2,503,000 [men in the 18-49 years old demographic] compared to 2.3 million for Oregon vs. Michigan [college football] on ABC; 2.1 million for NASCAR on ABC; 1.3 million for Virginia Tech vs. LSU [college football] on ESPN; 1.3 million for Notre Dame vs. Penn State [college football] on ESPN, and 546,000 for the U.S. Open Women's Tennis Final on CBS. (Pishna, September 2007)

The success of the UFC as a leading promoter of MMA in the world has not been limited to the United States. Indeed, as of July 2009, UFC events are televised