Examining Television Consumers of Mixed Martial Arts: The Relationship Among Risk Taking, Emotion, Attitude, and Actual Sport-Media-Consumption Behavior

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The current study employs the hedonic paradigm model (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) to investigate the interceding function of emotions on the relationship between personality (i.e., risk taking) and attitude toward mixed martial arts. This study also examines sport-media (e.g., television) consumption of a nontraditional sport. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the proposed model incorporating risk taking, pleasure, arousal, attitude, and actual consumption behavior. The study found a significant mediation effect of emotion (pleasure and arousal) in the relationship between risk taking and attitude. In addition, attitude showed a direct and significant influence on actual media-consumption behavior. Theoretical and practical implications of the results are discussed, along with future directions for research.

Keywords: hedonic consumption, personality

Mixed martial arts (MMA), a sport that combines sophisticated fighting strategies of karate, kung fu, jujitsu, kickboxing, wrestling, and boxing, has carved out quite a niche in a sport marketplace that is filled with sport leagues, organizations, and franchises vying for loyal spectatorship. The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is one of the most recognizable MMA-promotion companies in the combative sport industry. Purchased in 2001 for $2 million by casino moguls Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta (Hedegaard, 2008), the UFC has become a dominant presence in the sports world. With the help of long-time friend and current UFC President Dana White, the Fertitta brothers have turned their $2 million investment into a billion-dollar franchise (Miller, 2008). The UFC has inked multimillion-dollar deals with corporate giants Harley-Davidson, Bud Light, and US Bank and ticket-promotional company StubHub. In addition, the UFC has launched action figures, a video game, and sport trading cards featuring UFC fighters that are in high demand among sport-trading-card enthusiasts (Hakke & Hackler, 2009; Workman, 2008).

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Just last year, the UFC generated over a quarter of a billion dollars in business in gate receipts, UFC merchandise, and licensing fees (Lopez, 2009). Arguably, the UFC’s biggest break came in 2005 when they paired up with Spike TV to produce a reality show called “The Ultimate Fighter.” The show features aspiring mixed martial artists competing for a six-figure contract with the UFC. The weekly television show offered the UFC more exposure through cable television to go along with the monthly pay-per-view bouts and additional opportunities to brand the UFC name and promote future pay-per-view fights via television. The show also solidified MMA as a legitimate sport in a very competitive market for the coveted male audience of 18–34 years of age (Lopez, 2009).

The UFC continues to be a force in key demographics. According to Miller (2008), its pay-per-views draw 3 million viewers between the ages of 18 and 49, equaling those for the well-known Michigan versus Ohio State college-rivalry games; they control 90% of the MMA market; and, in 2007, the UFC sold a total of 5.1 million pay-per-view buys, rivaling the pay-per-view outputs of Vince McMahon’s publicly traded World Wrestling Entertainment empire, which has been in business more than twice as long.

Although the popularity of MMA continues to expand nationally and internationally, there is only a limited amount of information available to sport-marketing practitioners on the sport’s growth in the competitive sport marketplace (Kim, Andrew, & Greenwell, 2009; Kim, Greenwell, Andrew, Lee, & Mahony, 2008). As a result of the limited available literature investigating this phenomenon, we are unclear about the elements that attract fan viewship to televised MMA events. Therefore, in order for sport marketers to better serve television audiences of an emerging sport, there is a need to examine psychology related to MMA-consumption behaviors.

Based on the literature in psychology and mass communication, the current study attempts to add to the body of literature by proposing a conceptual model explaining the relationships among individuals’ personality (i.e., risk taking), emotion (i.e., pleasure and arousal), attitude, and actual MMA-consumption behaviors. Research suggests that individuals who frequently engage in risk-taking behavior harbor the personality trait of a sensation seeker and are more likely, when the sensation-seeking trait is high, to enjoy violent media content (McDaniel, Lim, & Mahan, 2007; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Thus, the positive influence of individuals’ risk taking on emotion provides face validity, because MMA is known as one of the most violent forms of televised sporting events. This is important in terms of sport viewship because of the associated novelty and unusual sensation attached to MMA consumption. It is also critical for sport management academicians and sport marketers to understand key personality traits of fans in an emerging sport. Furthermore, given that there has been too much focus on cognitive constructs (attitudes) in the sport management literature to date, there is a need to investigate conative aspects (i.e., emotion) of sport consumers. Although it was suggested that emotion plays a critical role in experiential consumptions such as arts, sport, leisure, and media, little is known about how emotion affects attitudes, which are known as a cognitive construct. Therefore, it is important that the current investigation incorporate both cognitive and conative aspects of sport consumption by investigating the mediating role of emotion (pleasure and arousal) that perhaps helps shape attitudes, which may enhance our understanding of nontraditional-sport-media
consumption. As a result, the current study is one of the first known attempts to examine how consumers’ emotion mediates the relationship between individual characteristics and attitude in sport consumption.

**Conceptual Background**

**Uses and Gratification**

In earlier research by Sargent, Zillmann, and Weaver (1998) on sport-media audiences, analysis of sport consumption was clustered into three categories: stylistic sports, mechanized sports, and combative sports. Each of the three categories was further divided into subcategories. Sports deemed stylistic can be categorized by competition featuring athletes exhibiting elegance and grace, for example, aerobics and skiing, with the former activity defined as nonrisky and the second sport risky largely because of the associated dangers. Mechanized sports (e.g., cycling, auto racing) are classified based on the use of tools by participants of the sport. Combative sports specifically deal with physical contact among opposing figures and include additional classes that are defined as aggressive combative (e.g., basketball, soccer) and violent combative (e.g., football, ice hockey). In addition, the combative category was further labeled according to team violence or aggressiveness (e.g., football, baseball) and violent individual sports (e.g., boxing, karate). Although Sargent et al. found variance in enjoyment of televised sports within the construct of gender, there is still a growing need to understand certain characteristics of spectators to predict what genres of music, film, and television sustain personality traits (McDaniel et al., 2007; Zuckerman, 1994).

This study is grounded in the theoretical tradition of uses and gratification. Rather than examining what media do to consumers, uses and gratification was constructed in an attempt to understand what consumers do with media (Blumler & Katz, 1974). The theory sets out to explore how and why audiences use certain types of media for gratification aimed at fulfilling intrinsic needs (Rubin, 1994). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) suggest that media users have specific goals in terms of their media behavior and are actively engaged users. In addition, audiences are socially and psychologically attentive to media that satisfy a particular purpose.

Although a number of previous examinations applied the uses and gratification model to advance current literature, more research is necessary to expand our understanding of specific personality traits (e.g., risk taking) that are mediated by emotive characteristics (e.g., pleasure and arousal). These emotional factors may in fact help shape consumer attitudes in actual consumption of an emerging sport. A theoretical understanding of the relationship between personality traits and emotional elements is important. Understanding the role of uses and gratification in conjunction with an emotional paradigm may offer more insightful information that bridges gaps in the existing research literature. For practical purposes, it may provide a better understanding of what type of personality is more likely to gravitate to nontraditional sports. If arousing content from an emerging sport plays an interceding role between risk takers and attitude shaping that ultimately leads to media consumption, the current study may help sport practitioners focus their attention on certain personality traits and affective content.
Emotion in Consumer Research

Over the last few decades, more research has been conducted measuring the intangible and subjective nature of consumer consumption, which enhances our understanding of decisions made based on hedonic attributes (Holbrook, 1980). According to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), the hedonic paradigm is important because it allows for experiential factors (e.g., pleasure, fun, joy, excitement) to be examined that may provide a better understanding of the importance of emotions in consumer behavior and how emotions influence consumer attitudes. The paradigm suggests that internal multisensory (e.g., visual images, sounds, tastes, scents, tactile impressions) impressions enable consumers to reference past events of pleasure or mentally construct arousing multisensory images (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Furthermore, the hedonic paradigm proposes that certain individual characteristics (e.g., risk-taking traits) influence preferences for and interests in certain types of experiential consumption. Based on the hedonic-consumption paradigm, the current study examines the impact of an individual personality trait and its correlating relationship with emotions. In addition, this study sets out to explore the influence emotions have on shaping attitudes that may lead to consumer consumption.

As a result of the growing interest in consumer research in the role emotions play, a litany of information can be found on consumer behavior (e.g., Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Ladhari, 2007; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Poels & Dewitte, 2006; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Other areas of research that have gained attention in regard to emotions have been complaints (e.g., Stephens & Gwinner, 1998), purchasing intentions (e.g., El Sayed, Farrag, & Belk, 2003), the retail segment (e.g., Babin, Lee, Kim, & Griffin, 2005; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Machleit & Eroglu, 2000), customer satisfaction (e.g., Ladhari, 2007; Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002; Westbrook, 1987; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991), the processes of consumer decision making (e.g., Chebat, Laroche, & Bandura, 1995; Stayman & Batra, 1991), and service failure (e.g., Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003), to name only a few. Furthermore, Hirschman and Stern (2001) have suggested in their research that entertainment commerce (e.g., film, music, art, and sport) benefits tremendously from emotions evoked in the previously listed consumptions and requires much more emotional dispensation and sensory stimulation than cognitive processing.

Increased attention to consumer research in the area of emotions has made it critically important that researchers have accurate methods of measurement available to examine affective elements. Poels and Dewitte (2006) argue that two different affective paradigms have been applied in consumer research. First, the researchers contend that Plutchik’s Emotion Profile Index uses a list of basic emotions to gauge emotional responses. Second, Poels and Dewitte characterize Mehrabian and Russell’s (1974) paradigm as a dimensional approach, which attempts to capture the full spectrum of emotions via three independent dimensions (pleasure, arousal, and dominance; PAD). Considering the bipolar nature of the scale, when arousal is present, it eliminates the prospect of nonarousal (Ladhari, 2007).

In a comparison of these two models of affect, Havlena and Holbrook (1986) found the dimensional approach of the PAD Scale more robust in capturing the emotional characteristics of consumer experience than the basic emotions model discussed previously. The PAD Scale has been applied in previous studies on hedonic consumption (Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva, & Greenleaf, 1984). Some research on
hedonic consumption has explored the relationship between personality and subsequent emotional response (PAD) in the playing of video games (Holbrook et al., 1984), thus making it a plausible scale to expand our knowledge of the emerging sport of MMA.

The current study uses Mehrabian and Russell’s (1974) PAD Scale to evaluate emotional factors associated with MMA consumption. The three orthogonal emotions are pleasure (27%), arousal (23%), and dominance (14%), in terms of variance according to previous literature (Mehrabian, 1995). However, previous investigations have also proposed that the dimension of dominance is an excludable factor (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Russell, Weiss, & Mendelsohn, 1989; Wirtz & Bateson, 1999). Earlier works employing PAD suggest that the role dominance plays in explaining emotions is fairly insignificant (Donovan, Rossiter, Marcooyn, & Nesda, 1994; Sweeney & Wyber, 2002). In addition, dominance was cited as having low correlations with pleasure and arousal (Poels, Karolien, Dewitte, & Siegfried, 2007), and a number of studies have only employed pleasure and arousal (Ladhari, 2007; Mattila & Wirtz, 2000). Following the previous literature, the current study uses the two components of pleasure and arousal.

Risk Taking and Sport Consumption

Risk taking has been previously characterized as an evaluation that considers the possibility of a negative outcome, which may include fiscal problems, lawlessness, bodily harm, and social repercussions (Zuckerman, 1994). Earlier empirical examinations in the area of risk taking conceptualized it as the propensity to engage in acts that threaten or cause injury or harm to the physical or mental well-being of an individual (Krcmar & Greene, 2000). Risk taking has been found to be a developmental phenomenon resulting from egocentric behavior (Elkind, 1967; Greene, Rubin, Hale, & Walters, 1996), learned behavior (Krcmar & Greene, 2000), and a part of one’s personality traits (Ball, 1995; Zuckerman, 1994). Previous research has shown that high marks were recorded for sensation seeking in participants involved in sports considered high risk compared with low-risk-sport participants (Zuckerman, 1983). This was additionally supported when participants of the high-risk sport of surfing scored significantly higher in several risk-taking categories that included sensation seeking and thrill and adventure seeking than did their low-risk golf counterparts (Diehm & Armatas, 2004), further documenting that an individual’s level of risk tasking is linked to personality characteristics. Therefore, further research is necessary to examine high risk takers’ inclination to consume sports featuring analogous elements of risk taking.

Zuckerman (1994) proposes that there is an assortment of risk-taking characteristics that include physical, legal, financial, or social ramifications. It was also suggested that an individual’s inclination for risk taking is positively related to his or her optimum stimulation level (OSL). OSL derives from an individual’s personality, which affects individual responses to environmental stimuli (Raju, 1980). The fundamental design of the theory postulates that an individual’s behavior is influenced by individualistic desires to attain optimal stimulation. According to the literature, OSL varies among individuals (Raju, 1980). For example, consumers make the necessary adjustments when environmental stimulation is too high or too low to achieve a desired level of “pleasantness” (Orth & Bourrain, 2005; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992).
Previous research has identified the modification of OSL as “exploratory,” characterized by three dispositions: curiosity-motivated behavior, variety seeking, and risk taking (Raju, 1980). Risk taking is explained as a personality trait that is associated with novelty, unfamiliarity, intensity, and complexity of stimulation (Orth & Bourrain, 2005). In an early empirical examination, Jack and Ronan (1998) suggested that an individual’s personality influences the consumption of certain types of sports (i.e., risky sport) such as mountain climbing and skiing. Furthermore, it was found that people’s OSLs affect preferences for violent media content such as horror movies (Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that people’s level of risk taking may positively relate to consumption of MMA, which is known as one of the most violent sports today.

Research Questions

This study proposes a new sport model that examines the mediating correlation of emotions between a specific personality trait (e.g., risk taking) and attitudes, which may lead to actual consumption. Hypotheses for this study were formulated based on comprehensive review of the literature on risk taking, emotions, and attitudes and are as follows:

H1: Risk taking would have a positive effect on pleasure.

H2: Risk taking would have a positive impact on arousal.

H3: Pleasure would have a positive influence on attitudes toward MMA.

H4: Arousal would have a positive effect on attitudes toward MMA.

H5: Positive attitudes toward MMA would significantly affect actual media-consumption behavior.

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Participants were obtained from undergraduate classes at a large Midwestern school. College undergraduates were used in this study because they fall within the coveted 18–34 demographic in terms of television viewership and are a highly sought-after group by marketing practitioners. However, it should be noted that this study is limited in terms of generalizability because of the convenient sampling of college students. Following a prepared script, a brief 10-minute presentation was made to each class explaining the nature of the study. The current study used an online survey method, and e-mails were sent to each potential respondent that included an overview of the study and the Survey Monkey Web link to the study’s questionnaire. A total 340 participants participated in the study. Of the 340 surveys, nine were removed because of incomplete data. Data were collected from a variety of classes, which enabled us to recruit participants from various majors and diverse academic backgrounds. Those who participated completed the online survey outside of class, providing full anonymity. Survey completion took approximately 15 minutes.
Measures

Based on a comprehensive literature review of previous research, this study used a collection of surveys aimed at assessing risk taking, emotions, attitudes, and media consumption, as well as demographic items.

Risk Taking. The Attitudes Toward Risk scale (Franken, Gibson, & Rowland, 1992) was employed to assess individuals’ risk-taking traits. Items used a 5-point Likert scale anchored by *not like me* and *like me* to describe how well each participant identified with a statement. An example of a question the participants were asked is, “I like to do things that almost paralyze me with fear.” Five items were used to assess the psychological risk-taking characteristics of MMA fans.

Emotions. To measure respondents’ psychological feelings toward MMA, this study used Mehrabian and Russell’s (1974) pleasure and arousal scale, which includes a 5-point Likert scale of bipolar opposite paired words (e.g., unhappy–happy, annoyed–pleased, sluggish–frenzied, unaroused–aroused). Participants were presented with the following statement: “Using each of the following pairs of words, select the number closest to how you feel when you watch MMA on TV.”

Attitude Toward MMA. The instrument used to measure attitude items was a 5-point bipolar Likert scale anchored by *bad–good*, *unfavorable–favorable*, and *unpleasant–pleasant* (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989). Participants were asked to rate their overall evaluative judgments of the sport of MMA.

Actual Media Consumption. Consumption was assessed through a single-item measurement asking participants to provide information on television-viewing frequency of MMA competition: “In the past year, how many times on average did you watch MMA events per month?”

Data Analysis

Before conducting main analyses, the data were tested to ensure that they reasonably meet the assumptions for structural equation modeling techniques used in the current study. Univariate normality of the observed variables was assessed using descriptive statistics (i.e., skewness and kurtosis). A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the measurement model using the EQS6.1 program. The $\chi^2$ and $df$, the comparative fit index (CFI), the standard root-mean-squared residual (SRMR), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess the overall fit of the model. Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested a cutoff value close to .95 or higher for CFI in combination with a cutoff value close to or less than .09 for SRMR. Browne and Cudeck (1992) noted that RMSEA values of less than .06 indicate good fit, values of .06–.08 would indicate reasonable fit, and values higher than .10 indicate poor fit.

Average variance extracted (AVE) was used to assess how well the items on a specific subscale accounted for the representing factor’s variance. AVE values greater than .50 indicate that the items collectively explain an adequate amount of variance in the underlying construct (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005). Discriminant validity of each construct was tested by performing multiple $\chi^2$-difference tests of unity between all pairs of constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was used for internal consistencies.
of the constructs. Finally, structural relationships among risk taking, pleasure, arousal, attitude toward MMA, and media-consumption behavior were tested using EQS6.1.

Results

Descriptive Results

The final sample comprised 135 women and 189 men, with most participants ranging in age from 19 to 26 (\(M = 19.52, SD = 2.18\)). In regard to general media use, most participants reported that they watched television more than 1 hr per day (\(M = 3.40, SD = 1.08\)), and they also used the Internet more than 1 hr per day (\(M = 4.11, SD = 0.99\)). Of those who indicated that they watched MMA on a regular basis (\(n = 164\)), most participants (\(n = 120\)) reported they watched it one to three times on television each month. Furthermore, of those who visited MMA-related Web sites, most participants (\(n = 47\)) reported that they visited the sites one to five times per month.

Evaluation of Assumptions

Absolute values of the skewness ranged from 0.30 to 1.39, and for kurtosis, absolute values ranged from 0.06 to 2.46, indicating that the data met the univariate normality assumption (Kline, 2005). All randomly selected pairs of observed variables demonstrated a linear relationship.

Measurement Model

Table 1 shows correlations, means, and standard deviations of the measures. In the measurement model, each observed variable was predicted to load just one factor. Confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model of risk taking, arousal, pleasure, attitude, and media behavior yielded satisfactory model fit. As indicated by chi-square value (\(\chi^2 = 316.40, df = 109, p < .001; CFI = .95; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .07\)), the measurement model fit the data well. Table 2 displays factor loadings, reliability coefficients, and AVE values. All factor loadings were positive and significant (\(p < .05\)), ranging from .65 to .97. All reliability coefficients were higher than the recommended criterion of .70 (Kline, 2005), and AVE values ranged from .49 to .86, indicating that the values were marginally acceptable (Hair et al., 2005). All pairs of constructs showed a correlation coefficient significantly different from 1.0, indicating discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Taken together, these results provide evidence that the measures used in this study were reliable and valid.

Structural Model

The proposed model specifying the structural relationships among risk-taking behaviors, arousal, pleasure, attitude, and media behavior fit the data well (\(\chi^2 = 331.49, df = 112, p < .001; CFI = .95; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .08\)). Figure 1 demonstrates standardized parameter estimates for the structural model. The results indicate that the effects of risk-taking behavior on arousal (standardized
Table 1  Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations Among Variables

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*p < .05. **p < .01.
γ = .55, z = 8.57) and pleasure (standardized γ = .51, z = 9.10) are significant. The impact of arousal on attitude is significant (standardized γ = .19, z = 2.73), and pleasure also showed significant impact on attitude (standardized γ = .61, z = 8.96). With respect to attitude’s effect on media-consumption behavior, the results were supportive (standardized γ = 1.53, z = 10.07). The comparison of standardized path coefficients suggests that pleasure has a stronger mediating effect on attitude than arousal does. Taken together, the results indicate that there was a complete mediation from risk-taking behavior through emotion (arousal and pleasure) to attitude, and attitude had a positive direct influence on media-consumption behavior.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the structural relationship among risk-taking behavior, emotions (pleasure and arousal), attitude toward MMA, and actual media-consumption behavior. As expected, the results showed that risk-taking behavior, arousal, and pleasure explained 58.4% of the variance in attitude toward
Television Consumers of Mixed Martial Arts

MMA (see Figure 1). This is consistent with previous literature providing support to the notion that high-risk-taking tendencies are associated with preference for violence and/or morbid events (Zuckerman & Little, 1986). In particular, risk-taking behavior had significant influence on emotions (H1 and H2). The findings suggest that high-risk-taking tendencies can induce more arousal and pleasure when watching MMA. Also found was how arousal and pleasure affected the attitude toward MMA (H3 and H4). This result is in line with previous research showing that emotion is an important antecedent to attitude and behavior in the hedonic-consumption context (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook et al., 1984). A full mediation by pleasure and arousal in the relationship between risk-taking behavior and attitude toward MMA highlights the importance of emotion in the attitude-formation process.

Comparing the standardized parameter estimates, pleasure had a stronger influence on attitude toward MMA than arousal did. This finding supports the theory of OSL that people differ in their comfort level of arousal. The OSL theory posits that the threshold of accepting external stimuli may vary depending on individuals’ arousal-seeking tendencies (Zuckerman, 1994). Therefore, for some, MMA could be viewed as an aversive and gruesome event. For others, it could be viewed as a pleasant and enjoyable sporting event. In this regard, it could be argued that the arousing effect of certain stimuli (i.e., MMA) may present whether the stimuli are pleasant or not. Subsequently, arousal may play a relatively minor role compared with pleasure in explaining attitude formation. However, more research is needed to further examine the utility of arousal and pleasure in other hedonism-based sport-consumption contexts (e.g., participant sport, sport betting, etc.).

A significant relationship between attitude toward MMA and actual media-consumption behavior was established in the current study (H5). This finding also confirmed the positive attitude–behavior relationship. Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions, not behavior, the current study employed actual consumptive behavior (e.g., media behavior) in the proposed model and examined the relationships among constructs of interest. The findings suggest that positive attitude toward MMA as explained...
by risk taking and emotion had a direct effect on media-consumption behavior. This is further supported by the literature, which states that media are selected to fulfill specific individual needs by the users (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Krcmar & Kean, 2005).

From the proposed model, we have a better understanding of the role an individual personality plays in terms of emotions and how those emotions influence attitudes that lead to actual consumption of a nontraditional sport (e.g., MMA). What the findings suggest is that sport marketers and practitioners may need to place greater emphasis on the specific types of personalities (e.g., risk taking) that are likely to view MMA events. This could certainly help better serve current fans and continue to develop growing interest in the sport. Therefore, using this conceptual model may aid in understanding fan needs and target markets within the MMA sport segment.

Although the arousal factor was moderately significant, one should not underestimate the impact emotions play in regard to fan behavior. Intangible and subjective elements of consumer behavior are important to sport marketers and practitioners as they attempt to understand how best to serve their constituents. The current study is supported by previous literature examining the decisions made based on hedonic attributes (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In their hedonic-consumption paradigm, Hirschman and Holbrook suggest that some decisions are related to the excitement evoked by previous consumption. The hedonic paradigm is important because it allows researchers to examine experiential factors that are directly connected to emotions.

Because emotions are specific to an individual it is important that research continue to further develop our understanding of the complexities faced by sport marketers and practitioners regarding consumers’ internal multisensory impressions (e.g., visual images, sounds, tastes, scents, tactile impressions). According to the current study, the data suggest that emotions are a key element of MMA fandom, which falls in line with Hirschman and Holbrook’s (1982) hedonic-consumption theory. MMA-promotional companies’ featuring contests with top contenders in the sport, as well as action-packed showdowns, would help increase or maintain levels of pleasure and arousal in spectators. In addition, promoters’ upping the ante in terms of monetary payouts for the card’s top fight, top knockout, and high-energy music consistently played throughout the event may enhance sport fans’ emotional attachment.

There are limitations in the current study. As a result of the convenient sampling method employed, we cannot generalize our data beyond the current sample. Future studies should include a broader population than undergraduate students (e.g., MMA blog visitors). In addition to the sampling limitation, the instruments used in this study pose limitations. As a result of the self-report instruments, random responses may have occurred throughout the survey. Replicating the current study would be useful in terms of the scales’ validity. Applying another nontraditional (X Games) sport would also add to the literature and help determine the scales’ applicability. Examining additional personal traits (e.g., curiosity about morbid events and normative beliefs; Huesmann & Eron, 1984; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986) and their relationship to emotions and nontraditional-sport consumption would enable further understanding of consumer behavior.
References


