

Fighting Sports - US - 2022

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and the fighting sports market
- How fans engage with and follow combat sports and how to cultivate fandom
- The impact of fighting sports sponsorships on fans' purchase behavior and brand affinity
- The future trends set to take hold in boxing and MMA

Fighting sports excel at appealing to sought-after demographics. Gen Zs, Millennials, Blacks, non-Hispanics and Hispanics all overindex for fandom of boxing or MMA. This demographic makeup of fans of fighting sports creates a fairly unique audience, especially in comparison to the overall sports fan.

Consumers are feeling the impact of rising costs due to record inflation; as a result, discretionary spending will be more closely monitored. Whereas fan investment into many other sports are monthly bills baked into budgets, combat sports PPV events are one-off purchases that could easily be seen as an easy cut to make to save money. In addition, as fighting sports fans skew younger and lower income, inflationary concerns could impact combat sports fans even more than consumers as a whole.

The nature of PPV inherently limits the audience of fans for fighting sports events. Consumers must not only actively decide to watch a boxing or MMA fight but also pay on the spot to do so – a challenge other sports do not face.

Across sports, women's sports are attracting more focus and investment, with combat sports no exception. In 2022, two of the most decorated female boxers of all time and are set to go head-to-head at Madison Square Garden in what is being labeled the "biggest fight in women's boxing history." A fight of this magnitude could bring about a new era of prominence and attention for women's boxing.



"Fighting sports have several reasons for optimism. Its fandom appeals strongly to certain demographics often sought out by brands – namely Gen Z and multicultural consumers. Boxing and MMA are growing and create destination events for fans."

– Colin O'Brien, Sports Analyst

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