



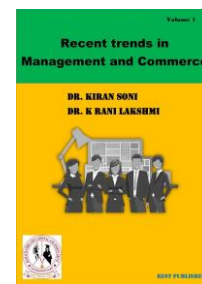
Recent trends in Management and Commerce

Vol: 1(1), 2020

REST Publisher

ISBN: 978-81-936097-6-7

Website: <http://restpublisher.com/book-series/rmc/>



A Study on Pay per View of Combat Sports- with Special Reference to events of USA

Thomas Lal,

1st M.Com Student, Dept. of Commerce, Christ College, Irinjalakuda, Trichur, Kerala

thomaslal48@gmail.com

Abstract

Pay per view (PPV) is a type of web cast service or play television by which a viewer can buy that event and watch it via private telecast. Here the event is shown by the broadcaster at the same time to all buyers of the pay-per-view. Combat sporting events like (mixed martial arts and boxing) and sports entertainment events like professional wrestling are usually distributed through PPV. Pay per views are very common in the US. These shows are aired on television in many other countries. The world of combat sports is not just a sport. It is multimillion dollar business run by promotional firms. They invest in fighters with potential to reap millions in the future. In this study we learn more about what has made these PPVs a grand success.

1. Introduction

The idea of pay-per-views started with a closed-circuit television also called by the name theatre television. This mode of telecast was popular for professional boxing matches. They were broadcasted live to a select number of venues. The viewer's paid money to buy tickets for the same. The first such telecast was Joe Louis vs Jersey Joe Walcott. This form of telecasts peaked with the rise of Muhammad Ali in the 1960s and 1970s. Famous fights of Muhammad Ali namely "The Rumble in the Jungle" and the "Thrilla in Manila" garnered 50 million and 100 million views respectively. Closed-circuit television was replaced by pay-per-view home television in the 1980s. The evolution of PPVs has been amazing. The fights of Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson and other flamboyant boxers always excited us. These days though the sport of fighting has changed into the business of fighting. Selling pay per views have become an art in itself. Promotional firms do all they can to make big money out of their fighters. Fighters themselves often resort to various strategies to promote their fights. There are many methods to sell a fight. The easiest one being making a matchup between two great fighters. That alone is not enough now to sell PPVs these days. The fighters have to be superstars. They should speak with charisma and charm at press conferences. That is not all in some cases the most hated fighters sell the most numbers. This has led to an era of combat sports win which the fighters often play a character of the 'bad guy' to sell their fights. 'Trash Talking' another method employed by fighters were they enter in to brawls or talk negatively about their opponents in any ways possible.

Objective of the study

1. To understand the commercial aspects of a PPV
2. To find out the background of PPVs.
3. To know about the promotional strategies of different PPVs.
4. To decide which is the best promotional strategy for PPVs.

Methodology

The focus is on the top selling PPVs. Data regarding the number of pay per views sold has been obtained from internet and online sites. It's a study based on secondary data giving details on what made these PPVs successful. My personal views are also included here.

Review of literature

The New York Times made a report of the fight in which they focused on how the negotiations came to fruition after a series of disagreements between both camps. They discussed the financial aspects of the fight. The report also included the result of the fight. There was a report in The Mirror regarding Britain's top ten selling pay per views. It give details of the fights. They also gave reasons that they believed were the reason for the success of the event. The First Post gave an extensive report on the UFC event- UFC 229, Khabib Nurmagomedov vs Conor McGregor. The fight itself and the aftermath of the fight were discussed in an extensive manner. A brief background for the fight was also given which mentions about the rivalry between these two big stars. The New York Times reported the backstory of the Mayweather vs McGregor fight. Its speaks about the rise of Conor McGregor as a star. Mayweather and McGregor was involved in a modern day social media war before the fight was announced. McGregor claimed that he would knock out Mayweather in 30 seconds which agitated the champion. The Bleacher Report in an article reported the strategies used by the fighters to win the fighters to sell the

fight. They made a special reference to the Oscar De La Hoya vs Floyd Mayweather fight. Details with regard to the press conference and how each fighter insulted each other were given in detail. Some insults were even personal. This helped to sell their fight.

LIST OF PPVs CONSIDERED FOR THE STUDY:

1. Floyd Mayweather vs Manny Pacquiao
2. Floyd Mayweather vs Conor McGregor
3. Khabib Nurmagomedov vs Conor McGregor

The pay per views listed above are some of the most bought sporting PPVs of all time in the US.

Floyd Mayweather vs Manny Pacquiao: The fight of the century

With 4.6 million pay per view buys in North America, this is the bestselling PPV till date. The bout was held at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. The titles on the line were the Unified WBA (Super), WBC, WBO and The Ring welterweight titles. The fight was six years in the making. The first was a joint production between HBO world boxing championship and Showtime championship boxing. Both the television services were America's most premium once. The PPV cost \$89.95. There was an additional charge of \$10 for HD telecast. The revenue from PPV alone almost went up to \$440 million.

Success Factors: Mayweather was an undefeated boxer who at the time of the fight had a winning streak of 48 professional bouts. He was a polarizing figure and many people wanted to see him lose. Manny Pacquiao is an elite Philippine boxer who is still considered by many as the best pound for pound fighter in the world. People believed he will be the man to finally beat Mayweather. There were a lot of disagreements between both fighter camps leading up to the fight. The long wait for the fight made the fans curious to know the result of the fight. Many of the world's biggest stars from the silver screen and from sports promoted the fight. There were many in attendance at the MGM. The promotional strategy was a brilliant blend of sports and entertainment. Here the main aim was to blend the purchasing power of pop culture with the combat sport of boxing. The promotional houses regularly sent out mini documentaries, interviews of fighters, expert opinions and teasers to peak the interest for the event.

Floyd Mayweather vs Conor McGregor: The Biggest Fight in Combat Sports History

The T-Mobile arena in Las Vegas played host to Floyd Mayweather vs Conor McGregor. It was held on the 26th of August, 2017. The event generated 4.3 million PPV buys in North America. The fight was aired via Showtime PPV. The PPV cost \$100. This is the second biggest event in terms of PPV buys. The PPV revenue was almost \$400 million.

Success Factors: Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor were at the time the biggest draws in combat sports at the time. Floyd Mayweather was set to break the record of 50 consecutive wins in professional boxing set by Rocky Marciano. Conor McGregor was a two division world champion in the sport of mixed martial arts under the promotion UFC. Many of the "casual" fight fans were interested to know how an MMA fighter would fare against a world champion boxer of Mayweather's caliber. Most true fight fans considered this only as an exhibition match. McGregor became very popular with the masses because of his charisma and attitude towards fighting. Many people started believing that Conor might knock Mayweather out. The worldwide promotional press conference held at 3 places namely Toronto, Los Angeles and London was a huge measure to boost sales of the PPV. Many fans were interested in this cross over match between the biggest star in the sport of boxing and an MMA icon. Conor McGregor backed by Zuffa and his own team the Mac life and Mayweather promoted by his own firm the Money Team was extremely well managed to make huge profits on both sides. The coverage of the press meet and the various promos released built anticipation for a super fight.

Khabib Nurmagomedov vs Conor McGregor: UFC 229

The event which crossed 2.4 million pay per view buys in the US was MMA's biggest fight in terms of PPV buys. The match was held at T-Mobile arena in Las Vegas on 6th of October, 2018. The pay per view cost \$54.99 and for HD it cost \$64.99. This mixed martial arts event was promoted by the UFC was for the lightweight championship of the world. Khabib was the defending champion. Conor McGregor was the former champion in the division.

Success Factors: Khabib was a Russian Muslim with an undefeated MMA record at the time of the event. Being a dominant champion who ran through his adversaries were always in demand for the fans. Conor McGregor, MMA's biggest star was on a hiatus from MMA. So his return to the sport created a lot of hype. Stylistically Khabib's strong wrestling background was thought to be Conor's weakness, who was more of a stand up fighter. MMA fans wanted to see who each other's styles would match up in a fight. Khabib is devote Muslim. He has a huge fan base in the Muslim countries. This helped him gain huge popularity. Conor's method of "thrash talking" added spice to the press conferences. The fans wanted to see him fight to know if he does what he says. An argument between Khabib and a friend of Conor's sparked the rivalry to new heights. After the argument Conor and a group of friends attacked a bus that had on board Khabib and fellow fighters on their way to an MMA event. Conor got arrested as a result. But this incident fueled the rivalry between the two. It was a personal grudge match between two supreme athletes in their prime. This helped the promotion of the fight. The promotional videos and interviews repeatedly showed visuals of the bus attack and arguments between the two fighters which created tension among the fans. UFC releases a promotional series named 'Embedded' before their big fights. Before this fight also there was six episode embedded series which itself had more than two million views on YouTube.

Oscar de la Hoya vs Floyd Mayweather: The World Awaits

This was a professional boxing event headlined by the match between Mayweather and Oscar for the WBC light middleweight championship. The event had 2.4 million buys. It was held on the 5th of May, 2007 at the MGM Grand arena in Las Vegas. The PPV cost \$55 in the US. The fight was televised on HBO PPV. It was promoted by Golden Boy promotions.

Success Factors: Oscar De La Hoya was American boxer with a huge fan base. He was a six division world champion. Floyd was at the time the Ring magazine number 1 pound for pound fighter in the world. This set the stage for a showdown between two of the best at the time. HBO released an 4 episode prelude to the fight named 'De La Hoya-Mayweather 24/7' as part of a promotional strategy. The show was aired for three Sundays before the fight and the last episode just two days before the fight. This show focused on the daily life of the fighters. This was able to raise anticipation among the general public increasing the PPV buys. Many experts believed that the winner of the bout will be looked up to as the best boxer in the world which boosted the sales of the PPV. A subplot of the fight was that Oscar De La Hoya was trained by the estranged father of Floyd. Hoya was trained by Mayweather Sr. from 2001. Initially Floyd Sr. declined to oppose his son. Later on though he offered to train De La Hoya for a \$2 million dollar paycheck. Finally Oscar decided to train under world renowned trainer Freddie Roach. Floyd Sr. went on to join team Mayweather. Floyd Jr. decided to train under his uncle which left his father without any role in the training process. Later on this lead to a dispute in camp which was during the taping of the prelude episode. The family conflict added flair to the whole bout which helped in increasing sales.

Floyd Mayweather vs Canelo Álvarez: The One

The PPV had 2.2 million buys was held at The MGM Grand Arena in Las Vegas. The professional boxing event was headlined by the bout between Floyd Mayweather and Canelo Álvarez. The fight was for the WBC Super Welterweight, WBA (Super) Super Welterweight and The Ring Junior Middleweight titles. The PPV in HD cost \$75 and in standard definition cost \$65. The bout was held on 14th September, 2013.

Success Factors: Floyd Mayweather was a veteran fighter with an undefeated record. With a personality that was not very popular among the masses lot of people tuned into see him lose. Canelo was an up and coming Mexican talent. He too had an unbeaten record at the time of their bout. This led to an excitement among the fans to know who's unbeaten run would end after the fight. Canelo's Mexican style of boxing was exciting to see. The followers of boxing wanted to see how well it would hold against the defensive style of Floyd. This contrast of styles made this fight exciting. Being a Mexican fighter Canelo always has support from the loyal Mexican fans. The fight was viewed by at least some as a fight between Mexico and America. Many viewed this bout as a passing of the torch. Many were expecting Floyd to lose to the then young prodigy. But this was not to be.

Findings

It is observed that for a PPV to be successful it needs two global superstars. The presence of one might be enough in some cases but profits are maximized when the fighters are both icons. Personal feud between fighters can be cashed in. People like to see two people who don't like each other fight it out. This preference of human beings help in increasing PPV sales. Demographic factors like religion, nationality, language, race etc can be effectively used by the promotional firms to sell PPVs. Dislike for a fighter which results in haters wanting to see him/her lose, if used effectively can boost sales in a big manner. Two fighters who claim to be the best in the world fighting will always result in anticipation. Controversial superstars and controversy prior to the event has a positive effect on the sales of the PPV. Press meetings and interviews of fighters in which there is an argument and chances of brawls are always keenly followed by fans. Promotional videos and teasers for the fight play a crucial role in sales. Videos that go into the personal life of fighters make it extremely interesting. Fans starts admiring these fighters and thus increasing sales. Family conflict when mixed with the fight business is a catalyst for sales. Professional boxing matches sells the most PPVs among all sports available on PPV. Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor are at present the biggest PPV superstars. Floyd has been part of many leading pay per views in professional boxing. Similarly Conor has been the main focal point in world of MMA PPVs. Stylistically different fighters while fighting always attracts attention. It creates a debate regarding whose style is better. It is observed that now a day's many fighters play a character to sell fights. It can also been seen that many a times good fighters do not get enough PPV buys because their personality is not flashy enough to catch the attention of a casual fan.

Conclusion

Pay-per-views will always keep growing. As one star falls another will rise but what sells fights will more or less remain the same – controversy mixed with great fighting caliber. Millions of dollars are made by these prize fighters from all around the world. The promoters of the fight sell these fights by hyping the fight to its full potential and at times beyond what it really is. It is all part of business. Combat sport specially boxing has a large fan following. This fan following is made use of by the promoters and their company to create global icons like Floyd Mayweather who was one of the highest earning athlete during his active years. This showbiz requires the best promotional strategists in the world. This is because the difference between a good PPV and a bad one might just be the wrong promotional strategy.

References

1. www.Businessinsider.com
2. www.Wikipedia.com
3. www.Ringtv.com
4. www.totalsports.com

5. www.essentiallysports.com

6. New York Times, The New York Times Company, Floyd Mayweather jr. Defeats Manny Pacquiao in boxing's big matchup, May 3, 2015
7. New York Times, The New York Times Company, In Mayweather-Pacquiao Buildup, Surprisingly Little Fight in the Fighters, April 30, 2015
8. The Mirror, Reach plc, Top 10 boxing pay-per-view fights ahead of Anthony Joshua vs Andy Ruiz Jr, 6 December, 2019.
9. New York Times, The New York Times Company, Conor McGregor and Floyd Mayweather Jr. Agree to Fight, June 14, 2017.
10. The First Post, Dennis Publishing, UFC 229: Khabib Nurmagomedov defends lightweight belt as Conor McGregor taps out in chaotic finale, October 7, 2019.
11. The Bleacher Report, Warner Media, Remembering De La Hoya vs. Mayweather: The Fight That Made Floyd a Superstar, 21 April, 2015