

## UFC and Emotional Marketing

The Ultimate Fighting Championship is quickly becoming one of the most popular programs/events for people of all ages around the world. Why? Personally, I believe UFC is becoming popular because of the emotion put behind the brand. UFC is another great example of emotional marketing.

Looking back at the early days of UFC it was very simply, two men beating each other up with the winner moving forward. For the most part, that was it.

As I put my emotional marketing hat back on, I see a few elements that were critical to having UFC go mainstream into popular culture.

### Promotional Vignettes

UFC puts a lot of effort and money into the production of their promotional vignettes. Every commercial for a Pay-Per-View or television show on Spike TV are edited together with fast paced, dramatic music coupled with fast shots and powerful sound bites. Because of these vignettes it gets people interested in the program and perhaps gets them to buy-in to see more.

These vignettes are meant to draw people into the next level of programming they have available – either the UFC Pay-Per-View or their pump up shows.

### Pump Up Shows

If you got pulled in by the powerful vignettes, you might find yourself tuning into a pre-show “pump up” that sets up the upcoming Pay-Per-View. These shows commonly feature a documentary-like approach that goes into the lives of each headlining fighter. These shows are dramatic and commonly get people excited about seeing the fights. Why?

The pre-show “pump ups” are one of the most powerful tools UFC uses because they tell such strong stories within the span of one hour. The viewers will attach themselves and their emotions to a specific fighter because they identify with a particular fighter. These stories are golden examples of emotional marketing. They get specific, they’re dramatic and they get viewers to identify or side with a particular fighter.

### The Fighters

The reason why the UFC took so long to get going was because people didn’t know the fighters. They were just names. But now because of the pump up shows, viewers now know so much more about the fighters, they know their family, their goals, dreams, personalities, styles and so on. Because of this personalization with each fighter, people are more inclined to like someone over another. UFC’s approach to building a brand around each fighter is emotional marketing excellence.



Fighters such as Tito Ortiz, Georges St-Pierre, Anderson Silva and BJ Penn are all personalized by UFC through pump up shows and from there; the brand of each fighter takes off into a variety of directions as led by their agents which benefits the UFC tenfold.

### **Build up to a climax**

The climax, being the actual UFC event on Pay-Per-View, is what UFC builds up to. All of the pump up shows and promotional vignettes are powerful because they work together to lead the viewer to what will be a great experience on Pay-Per-View.

What makes the Pay-Per-View so compelling is that it's the completion to the stories UFC has been telling throughout the past few weeks. Everyone who watched the promotional vignettes and the pre-show "pump ups" will most likely tune into the event itself to see how the stories end. It's like watching a whole season of your favourite television show and not watching the season finale – you have to see how it ends!

### **Wrap it all up**

Everyone who knows UFC will dispute all of these points because they will say that UFC took off after the world saw Stephen Bonnar and Forrest Griffin fight. I argue that the fight had nothing to do with it. UFC was on television for years before this fight ever made it to air.

So what made this fight so powerful?

It was the season long story that was being told through the show "The Ultimate Fighter" and it all culminated with the fight that was free, on Spike TV. By having the free fight it gave everyone a chance to "test drive" the UFC brand and see if this was something they would like. And evidently it was. Couple the free offer with a product built on a foundation of emotional marketing and you have a winner.

With all of these activities and a solid product in the actual event, the UFC can now take their activities in different revenue generating directions. Video games, clothing, action figures, DVDs, website memberships and more can all be created because of all the hard work done to promote to with an emotional edge and tell a story. There is no doubt that if UFC had engaged in some emotional marketing activities earlier they would have taken off sooner. Regardless of when they started, UFC is now a powerhouse in the world of sports and I see no signs of them stopping.