In February of 2020 the XFL reintroduced itself as a professional football league, after a nearly 20-year absence from its first go around in professional sport. This XFL season, although shortened due to Covid-19, has featured innovative technological approaches focusing on fan engagement. One such innovative approach was the introduction of live on-screen betting odds displayed during XFL game broadcasts. The XFL embraced sport betting as a tool for furthering the fan experience (Harris, 2020). Therefore, it is important to study the impact of the XFL’s progressive take on implementing a sport betting experience for their consumers. Furthermore, the impact of such sport betting innovation on fan engagement in the U.S. sport market has not been examined. This research aims to identify the impact of this innovative technology on fan engagement of XFL sport spectators and consumer experience, through the analysis of variables that are related to their increased enjoyment and gambling intentions. Moreover, the second aim is to discover if there is a relationship between these variables.

A questionnaire composed of five scales: Gambling Intention, Personal Innovativeness in Information Technology, Perceived Enjoyment, Gambling Outcome Expectancies, and Promotion of Gambling and Live On-Screen Betting Odds Display during televised sport was administered to a hard to reach community of XFL sport spectators. Data was collected from a sample of 47 spectators and was analysed through Fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to allow for the conjunctions of all logically possible combinations to reach a specific outcome (Sereikhuoch & Woodside, 2012). Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) methodology was developed for a small sample size (Tho & Trang, 2015).

The results from the fsQCA analysis indicate that both for increased spectator enjoyment and high levels of gambling intention, the most explanatory configuration is the combination of high levels of perceived enjoyment, excitement expectancy, and escape expectancy. Moreover, increased XFL spectator enjoyment is correlated with gambling intentions. These findings highlight the power of mediated sport as a way of excitement for sport consumers, while contributing to new knowledge through the use of sport-embedded gambling promotion. Progressively using innovative strategies to increase perceived enjoyment of XFL spectators when they see live on-screen betting odds displayed during televised XFL games, can enhance their gambling intentions.

For current U.S. sport league executives, and future XFL league executives, incorporating live on-screen betting odds displayed during game broadcasts may serve as an attractive technological service aiding in improving spectator experience. For betting and/or gambling companies looking to partner with U.S. leagues, our research shows increased spectator enjoyment correlates positively with an increase in gambling intention. Thus, future collaborations between U.S. sport leagues and betting and/or gambling companies could be mutually beneficial.