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## Sports marketing: A revolution in the development of sports in India

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### Abstract

Leagues and franchises in India are increasingly improving and are developing programs aimed at identifying and nurturing young talent. The future does appear to be bright for Indian sports, as such leagues help to popularize sports, make it viable as a career and also bring out talented sportsperson to the limelight. Moreover, cricket continues to dominate Indian sports, however advertisers, broadcasters, and viewers, have also increasingly gained interest in other sports including kabaddi, football, hockey and badminton. These sports have attracted more sportspersons, viewership, broadcasters, sponsors into the business of sport in India. This gave various other sports leagues (IPL, ISL, PKL, HIL, PBL) an opportunity to make their own space in the market and they are increasing Y-O-Y in India. The sports viewership on television, with around 90 per cent of growth, has gained most in the last four years among other genres, as stated by Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India in the yearly report of 2019.

**Keywords:** BARC - broadcast audience research council Indian premier league (IPL), Indian super league (ISL), HIL- hockey Indian league, PKL- pro kabaddi league, PBL- premier badminton league, y-o-y –year of year

### Introduction

The young flourishing middle class of India with their increasing disposable income offers huge consumption potential for the business of sports. The viewership of sporting events has been steadily rising in the country and so is general awareness on fitness. This is good news for the industry, as this would foster the adoption of active lifestyle by people through various means, including playing various sports. However, there is a need to vigorously promote a sporting culture in the country to encourage the consumption of community sports. This would, in turn, facilitate the creation of an environment that is conducive to sports commerce. India hosted international events like The Men's FIH Hockey World Cup by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) in 2018, held in Bhubaneswar at Kalinga stadium, The FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2017 for male players under the age of 17 organized by Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), has also increased awareness on sports in the country, and, subsequently, about their socio-economic impact. India is also going to organize The FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, is an international association football tournament for female players under the age of 17. The establishing of sporting leagues in India have made sports more commercial, though cricket has benefited the most. Sports can make significant socio-economic impact on a nation. It unites people from diverse backgrounds, hence promoting peace and development. With the Government providing numerous opportunities to sportspersons, sports also promote social inclusiveness. (Business of sports, 2014) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Sports in India have a tremendous potential for expansion in the existing huge market. With a high growth economy and an ever-growing middle class with disposable income and leisure time, together with rapid growth in TV-owning households and a strong passion for sports, there is high potential for growth. These conditions have fostered a rapid rise in advertising, as local and international companies target this lucrative underdeveloped market through sports. Moreover, buying TV and marketing rights for the large sporting events that now regularly take place in India provides ample business opportunities and huge revenue for many companies. (THE DIPLOMAT, 2016)

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The year 2008 and 2014 have been proved as crucial turning points for Indian sport with IPL taking the country by storm in 2008 and the launch of several promising leagues in 2014. IPL established a successful model for packing and marketing a league in India. It was power packed with some of the world's best cricket players, celebrities and even cheerleaders. It also televised the auction process which was helpful in creating a fan base even before the event started. (KPMG, page, 2015)13&17

The much-awaited Hero ISL Children's League, announced by Mrs. Nita Ambani, Founding Chairperson of Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), at the Hero ISL owner's meet back in August is all set to break ground this month and the registrations are now live. The Hero ISL Children's League, aimed at strengthening the football grassroots development in the country, will encompass the Under-6, Under-8, Under-10 and Under-12 age groups. In the first year, the Children's League had commenced in three states, i.e. West Bengal (Kolkata, Hooghly, Howrah), Arunachal Pradesh (Itanagar) and Meghalaya (Shillong), with each district hosting one or more leagues. The long-term goal of the project is to reach 40,000 children under the 6, 8, 10 and 12-year age groups across 12 states over the next three years. Sports is considered as one of the largest industries worldwide in terms of generating employment and revenue. Sports is a multi-billion-dollar global industry propelled by enormous consumer demand.

### **Sports leagues in India**

#### **Indian premier league (IPL)**

Officially known as vivo premier league for sponsorship reason. The Indian Premier League (IPL) consists of eight teams namely- Chennai Super Kings (2018 winners), Delhi Daredevils, Kings XI Punjab, Kolkata Knight Riders, Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Sunrisers Hyderabad. The league was founded by Board of control for cricket (BCCI) in 2008. The current title holders are the Mumbai Indians who won the 2019 season In June 2017 vivo retained the rights for the next 5 season (2018-2022) sponsorship. Vivo's IPL title sponsorship deal worth Rs 2,199 crore translates to 4s440 crore a year which is even higher than the Rs 330 crore Barclays English Premier League, the world's most watched premier league. (New concepts of sports marketing, Das Anindita) It is a professional twenty 20 cricket leagues in India. The winner of IPL 2019 has received a prize money of Rs 20 Crore. The winning skipper is awarded with a prize money of Rs 20 crore. 50 per cent of this prize money is awarded to the franchise and the rest of the amount is divided between the players. The runner-up is also awarded Rs 12.5 crore. The third and fourth teams in playoffs, received Rs 10.5 crore and Rs 8.5 crore respectively. (Hindustan times, 2019)

#### **Indian super league (ISL)**

Founded in partnership with IMG, reliance industries and star sport. The league was launched with the goal of growing football in India. Before the 2017-18 season, the league earned recognition from the AFC, expanded to ten teams, and extended its schedule to five months. ATK (Atletio de Kolkata) won the title for the second time during the 2016 season. Each team could have maximum of twenty-five years players on their roster and a minimum of twenty-two. A minimum of eleven players could be foreign with a minimum requirement of eight per team. The ISL trophy was unveiled on 5th October 2014, by Nita Ambani, the founder and

chairperson of Football sports Development.

#### **Pro Kabaddi League (PKL)**

First established by Charu Sharma in 2014. close to 80% of the Pro kabaddi league viewership comes from the telecast on movie channels, and this share is increasing. The League also rewards the players generously. It comes with a top prize worth ₹3 crores, while ₹1.8 crores are given to the runner-up and the team which ends in third is rewarded with ₹1.2 crores. The MVP is also awarded 15 lakhs, and the top defender and raider are each awarded 10 lakhs. (Indian post newspaper, 2020)

#### **Hockey Indian league (HIL)**

Hockey India, the overall body which governs hockey founded the Hockey India League. The League is held for just 2 months (from January to February) and is made up of 6 teams which each play 10 games. These teams include Kalinga Lancers, Uttar Pradesh Wizards, Delhi Wave riders, Punjab Warriors, Mumbai Magicians and Ranchi Rhinos. (Indian post newspaper, 2020).

The top 4 teams at the end of the season move into the play-offs, where the championship game decides the HIL winner. If there is a tie in any match then there would be extra time, still, if the winner is not decided, there would be shoot-out and, if the winner is not decided there would be no option left other than penalty strokes. The shoot-out competition would be very interesting to watch.

#### **Premiere Badminton League (PBL)**

Premier badminton league is a franchise league; sports and private limited has the rights to operate and execute the premier badminton league. The inaugural edition of the Indian badminton league was won by Hyderabad Hotshots at Mumbai on 31st august 2013. In 2013 Star sports India purchased the broadcasting rights for India till 2025.

#### **Reports of Viewership of the various leagues in India**

According to reports of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), sports viewership on TV in India soared to 46 billion impressions in 2018, which was an increase of 7% from the impressions recorded in 2017. While the Indian Premier League remained the most viewed sporting league in the country, surprisingly, the Pro Kabaddi League grew to be the second most watched sport in India. (THE BRIDGE, 2020)

Similarly, 2019 was an important year with respect to sports, especially cricket. The first-ever Pink Ball Test Match played in India was also a big draw; day one of the test match was viewed by 43 million people and clocked 2 billion viewing minutes.

India's biggest domestic cricketing event, Indian Premier League, has only got bigger in 2019 since its inception in 2008. "In 2019, 424 million viewers, which is 51 per cent of total TV viewing population, watched live matches of IPL 12. It also showed that an additional 9 per cent watched tournament in restaurants, pubs and other such locations."

The top ten advertisers for IPL 12 were Vivo V15/V15 Pro, Mobile Premier League, Swiggy, Bjus, Fogg, Vimal Elaichi Pan Masala, and Sprite, among others.

The 2019 marquee event ICC cricket world cup had pulled at least 509 million viewers at home and out-of-home, as 10 nations battled for supremacy. And, at least 2 million seconds of advertising featuring 192 brands played out over the tournament's broadcast. (Indian television, 2020)

In fact, the Indian Premier League is currently the most-attended cricket league in the world and in 2014, was number 6 in the ranks of average attendance among all the leagues. In 2018, the value of the IPL had risen to about \$6.3 million. In 2019, over 400 million people viewed the Indian Premier League and it was estimated that up to ₹5,000 crore was bet on each match. (Indian post newspaper, 2020)

It is not strange to see that the Indian Super League takes the second place as football is easily the most loved sporting event around the globe. The Indian Super League (ISL) refers to the Professional Football league in India. BARC, India's official audience research organization, said there was a 51-per-cent increase in viewership among the affluent, city-based M15+ AB Urban demographic. The league's 'cumulative reach' across the season was reported to be 168m, and it had 261m 'impressions'. The 2019-20 ISL was broadcast on 11 television channels, and in seven languages, by rights-holder Star India, the pay-television company. Matches were also streamed on Star's Hotstar OTT platform, and by the JioTV OTT platform. (sports business, 2020)

The Pro Kabaddi league is one of India's favorite. The league got launched in 2014 and in its first season, it was able to acquire a whopping 435 million viewers, only next to the IPL which had 552 million viewers. In the final game of the first season between Jaipur Pink Panthers and U Mumba, up to 86.4 million persons were recorded to have viewed the games. Consequently, a 74% stake in Marshal Sports, the parent company of the league got acquired by Star Sports.

The report also mentions that more than 70 per cent of rural India watches the kabaddi tournament (Indian television, 2020)

Hockey is also a popular sport in India; hence, the Hockey India League is another highly rated league in the country. Like the other sports leagues mentioned above, the Hockey India League is also a professional league.

The advent of the Hockey India League brought about financial success and large followership in India; hence, like the Pro Kabaddi League, the right to broadcast was also acquired by Star Sports.

The Premier Badminton League takes our number 5 spot. Badminton is another sporting event heavily enjoyed by Indians; however, the Premier Badminton League is not as followed as the four discussed above. Upon its advent in 2013, it was referred to as the Indian Badminton League but was later on regarded as the Premier Badminton League before the commencement of its second season. In its first season, it was able to attract up to 21.7 million viewers over the course of the 18-day tournament (August 14 to 31, 2013). Consequently, the rights to broadcast were also acquired by Star Sports until 2025. (Indian post newspaper, 2020)

### **Growing female viewership**

There has been a huge increase in global female viewership for sports events. For example, female viewership for the National Football League (NFL) (at 26 per cent in 2014) has grown at a faster pace compared with male viewership (18 per cent growth in 2014). Further, it has been observed globally that apart from watching the game, female fans follow it over second screens for game-related activities, majorly on social media. This trend is also emerging and sponsors and broadcasters could capitalize on this to a large extent. In India too, sports viewership is no longer male dominated, as females and kids comprise a significant portion of the viewership pie. The ninth season of the IPL (2016) had 41 per cent of its viewers as females (including rural). In the first

season of ISL, approximately 57 per cent of the total 429 million viewers were women and children. Similarly, this demographic accounted for about one-half of the total viewership in the second season of PKL. (KPMG, 2017) 21

The average IPL audience among women has increased by almost 18%, business daily Economic Times has reported with a reference to data from the Broadcast Audience Research Council. The women audience for the first three weeks have registered 10.3 million impressions. Male audience is up by 15% to 13.9 million in the first three weeks this year.

The cumulative reach is up from 43.6% last year to 45.3% this year as around 145 million women viewers aged 15 years and above have watched the matches across India between March 23 and April 12. (INSIDESPORT)

### **Growth in rural viewership numbers**

Regional games packaged in interesting league formats have been successful in garnering rural viewership as well. Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India reported that the rural contribution to the number of impressions was as high as 45 per cent in the sports genre. This trend is consistent across new sports leagues as well. For example, ISL Season 2 garnered 47 per cent of its viewership from rural areas, with 210 million out of 447 million TV Viewership in Thousands (TVTs) coming from the rural markets. High levels of interest in rural areas is indicative of the latent potential in rural sports offering. With Star India placing its hope on kabaddi and Sony Pictures Network (SPN) on wrestling, the broadcasters too are vying to woo the rural viewership. The interesting part here is that they are trying to present these predominantly rural sports with an urban packaging, and have seen significant development. (KPMG, 2017) 22

According to the report, in 2019 more than 70 per cent of rural India watches kabaddi tournament, whereas, football gets more than half of its viewership from Kerala, Assam, Sikkim, and West Bengal. (Indian television, 2020)

### **Conclusion**

Over the past decade, the meaning of sport has completely changed in India. It has brought a revolution in the country. The emergence of several sports leagues have turned India into a multi-sporting country. There are basically four partners in making any sport a success, the players, media, sponsors and the spectators. (New concepts of sports marketing, Das Anindita)

Fan behavior and trends have evolved, sports leagues brought a renaissance in Indian sports and sports economy. The period of 2013-2014 when sports leagues started to develop, Kabaddi, Wrestling, Tennis, Hockey and Football was in clear contrast with cricket. If leagues are the answer to the growth of sports in India, franchise/team owners should rise to build a strong and sustainable fan base. The duty lies purely in franchise/team owners to build familiarity around players and help them become superstars since fans connect with the players more. Players are the gluing factor that keeps the fans engaged with the team and hence the sports league. (ETBr and Equity July 17, 2019)

Even parents are now considering sports as a viable career option for their children. Digital consumption has also been instrumental in driving fan engagement in new age sports properties. Sports properties are connecting with their audiences online and engaging them with all the latest information on sports that have been sidelined for ages. Many

statistics now imply that in the coming decades, sports will come at par with entertainment.

India, today, is becoming a country where people are actually watching sports other than cricket. Slowly but steadily, fans are moving towards sports for a pure and unadulterated brand of entertainment. The thrilling and exciting experience that sports provide is quite unmatched. (THE BRIDGE, 2020)

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