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ATTITUDE OF VIEWERS TOWARDS IPL AS A PREFERRED FORMAT OF CRICKET VIS-A-VIS TEST AND ONE DAY MATCHES

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ABSTRACT

The study proposes to understand viewer’s preference for IPL s format vis-a vis other formats of cricket. The research will help us understand the ranking and position that IPL holds in the minds of regular and irregular cricket followers. The Study would highlight and examine what attracts viewers toward IPL as a format for cricket. The relevance of study in our context is based on the fact that India has a large TV audience base and is a cricket loving nation that has accepted 20-20 version of cricket enthusiastically. It will shed the light on various influences that explain the attitude, perceptions and motivation of viewers that choose IPL over other formats.

KEYWORDS

IPL, cricket, one day matches, test matches.

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INTRODUCTION

India may be the soul of world cricket, but IPL is its commercial heart. Just as ‘who want to be a millionaire’ changed the ground rules of quiz shows by injecting a massive dose of money into equation, IPL has changed the dynamics of cricket economy”

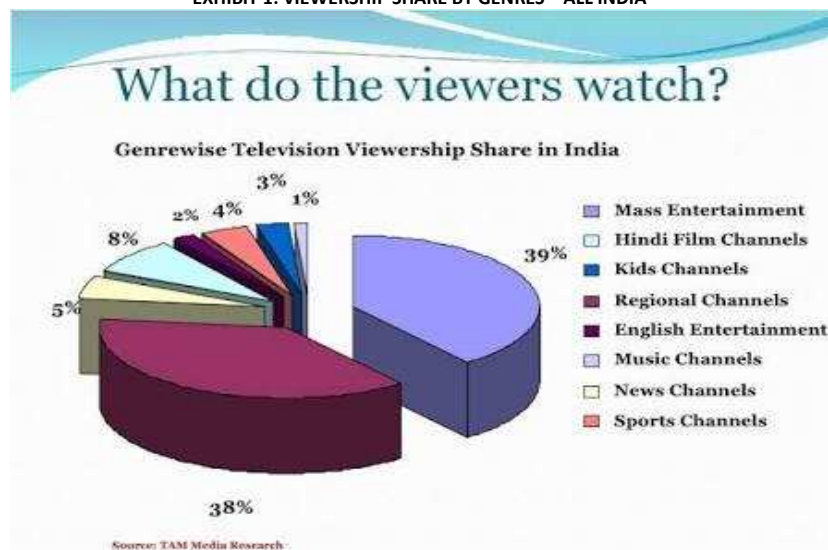
Vikas Swarup, Spokeperson of ministry of external affairs

The commercialisation of sports is the new and upcoming trend in the economy. Sports have always been an important part of entertainment industry. With the changing time its face has also been altered. It has become more vibrant and young. Shorter versions of the games are introduced and preferred. Viewers are looking for instant gratification. It has given way to sports broadcasting. It is very interesting to note that Sports broadcasting is one of the very big segment of global entertainment broadcasting industry. It has been continuously growing and has provided not only large number of viewership to a large no of different sports but also led to development of a large spectrum of very different sports.

Sports also has found a commercial value in today’s scenario Brands are looking at ways to connect with consumers. A lawn tennis fan may go for Nike because his favourite player Maria Sharapova endorses it. Players carry a price tag for branding purpose. Their value is much more than the game itself. Another trend that was termed foreign in Indian concept was the private league concept. Initially started out as foreign trend of big business houses owning various teams and players in private league of various sports like baseball, football. English premiers league and baseball season have given a new definition of sports marketing.

Interestingly, entertainment industry has responded very well to this change. Over last 20 years we have seen a tremendous growth in the entertainment broadcasting industry in India. India also has ventured in the field of commercialization of sports. It started out with cricket moving up to badminton, football and Kabbadi leagues (Bhagavatula, 2017).

EXHIBIT 1: VIEWERSHIP SHARE BY GENRES – ALL INDIA



The above exhibit 1 is based TAM media report It can be clearly seen that sports channels have 4% viewership. It is on rise as more channels are joining the forte. Thus, it can also be taken as an opportunity to widen the audience base and enlarge its market share.

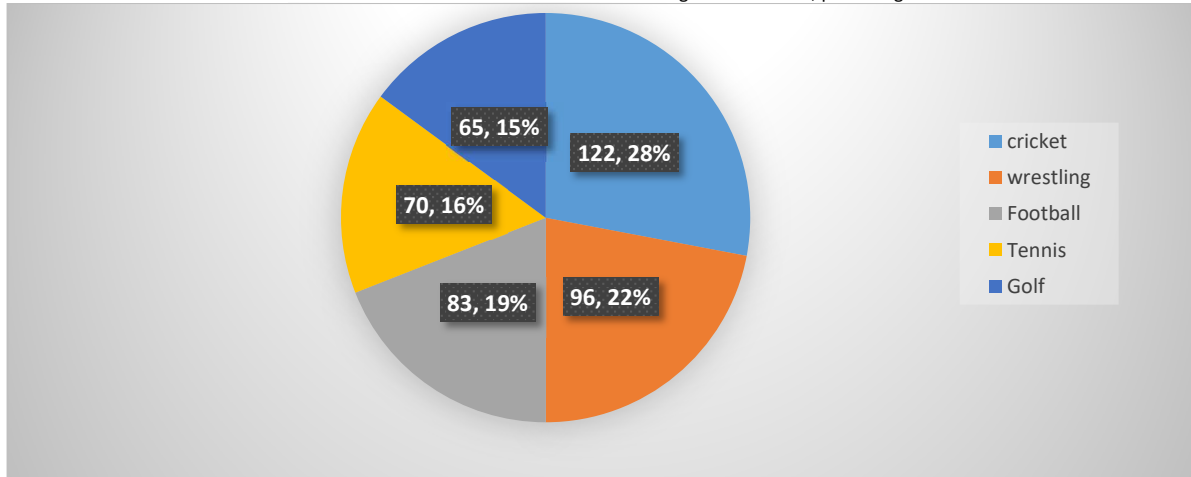
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CRICKET IN INDIA

Cricket is one of the most popular sports in India. Cricket has maximum reach and audience in terms of audience in this country. In the current scenario, the focus in no longer limited to only international response and loyalty. Only Bollywood fan following and loyalty can match the pace and passion this game generates cricket. Broadcasters are taking initiative to cover good quality domestic cricket. Another format of cricket i.e. 20-20 has also gained popularity due to fast paced nature of the game (Viswanath, 2012) (Vyas 2013).It suited the pace of the young India.

The Exhibit 2 given below, depicts the top five sports viewed in India. It highlights the fact that India is cricket loving nation.

EXHIBIT 2: TOP 5 SPORTS VIEWED IN INDIA *figures in millions, percentage



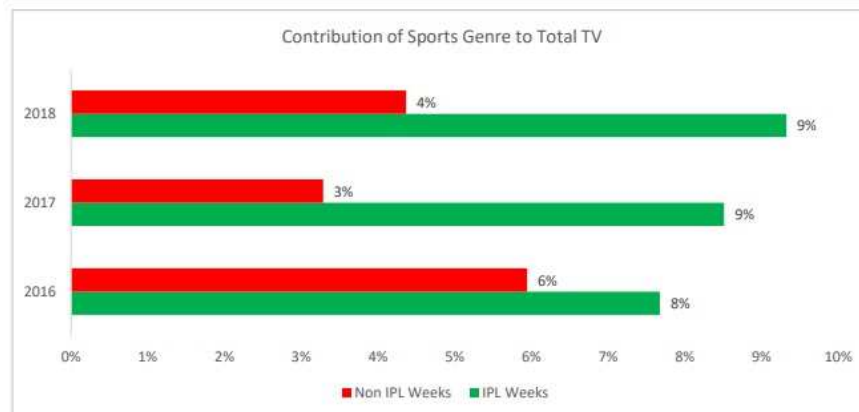
IPL

Lalit Modi is the man who along with BCCI conceptualised Indian premier league. (Ali, 2012) (TNN, 2013) He not only tapped the heart of India but also tapped the potential of young and vibrant India that was fast emerging. With more than half the population with median age of 25yrs, IPL has captured everyone’s imagination by giving cricket a new avatar (Ramprakash,2012) It has dolled up cricket to suit the needs and minds of young country. IPL was launched to fill the gap of the need of the new set of entertainment.

Lalit Modi took the two religions (cricket and Bollywood) and clubbed them together. In the process he also had the multiplier effect in terms of fans and followers. The presence of a blend of international players, national players and regional teams not only helped in building publicity, but it also built an overall enthusiasm and loyalty of viewers towards their regional teams (Maurya, 2009).

IPL is league that has competitive edge of cricket, fast pace of 20-20 with glamour quotient of Bollywood. It is a complete package in the terms of entertainment. The exhibit 3 present the viewership data of the last 2 seasons.

EXHIBIT 3



IPL has completed ten seasons in India. It has provided a platform to brands and companies to be associated with it.(Viswanath, 2012).All the title sponsors and the team sponsors brands have ample opportunity to be viewed and recalled.

TABLE 1

Franchise name	Owners	Value in \$
Mumbai Indians	Mukesh Ambani (Reliance Industries)	\$112.9m
Royal Challenger Bangalore	Vijaya Mallya (UB group)	\$111.6m
Deccan chargers	Deccan Chronical (Venkatram Reddy)	\$107.0m
Chennai Superkings	India Cements (N.Srinivasan)	\$91.90
Delhi Daredevils	GMR Group (G.M.Rao)	\$84.0m
Kings IX Punjab	Ness Wadia (Bombay Dyeing), Preety Zinta, Mohit Burman (Dabur group), Karan Paul (Apeejay Surendra group)	\$76.0
Kolkata Knight Riders	Red Chillies Entertainment (Shahrukh khan, Gauri khan, Juhi Chawla and Jay Mehta)	\$75.1m
Rajasthan Royals	Emerging Media (Lachlan Murdoch, A.R Jha and Suresh Chellaram), Ultratech Cements, Shilpa Shetty, Raj Kundra	\$67.0
Pune Warriors	Sahara Adventure sports group	\$370m
Kochi Tuskers(only for season-4 in2011)	Rendezvous Sports world group limited	\$333.3m
Sunrisers Hyderabad (played in 2013 season)	SUN TV	\$217m

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The benefits to the corporate and their brands from this association, however, depend upon the IPL viewership (the number and its profiles in terms of age, income, geographical area, gender etc.) That eventually helps them marketing their products. The Study would highlight and examine what attracts viewers toward IPL as a format for cricket. The relevance of study in our context is based on the fact that India has a large TV audience base and is a cricket loving nation that has accepted 20-20 version of cricket enthusiastically. Ten seasons of IPL have seen an increase in customer base and viewership. It has also seen an increase in digital viewership. We are trying to understand the attitude of viewers towards the entertainment benefits of IPL. We are trying to understand various influences that explain the attitude, perceptions and motivation of viewers that choose IPL as format over other formats of cricket.

Scanning through the literature and seeking the opinions of various experts in the field, we have tried to identify that there is a gap in understanding the viewer's preference for IPL and how it is developed. Our modest attempt would provide insights into viewer's behaviour that will further help in marketing and promoting the league. This insight would be great help in developing strategies by the companies to market their products through IPL. It will also add to the literature regarding an understanding of the motivations and triggers of viewers that makes them choose the commercial form of cricket over other forms of entertainment. *In nutshell, this research study proposes to understand the viewer's approach towards IPL as a preferred format of cricket vis-a-vis Test and One day matches.*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology chosen for the research was given below:

One-on-One, qualitative In-depth interviews with 50 consumers. The consumers were segmented as under:

- Regular IPL followers
- Irregular IPL followers
- Lapsed audience

RATIONALE

In-depth interview is a useful tool when one wants detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or want to explore new issues in depth. In-depth interviews work better than focus group discussions when one wants to distinguish individual (as opposed to group) opinions about the subject.

The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information — People may feel more comfortable having a conversation with you about their program as opposed to filling out a survey.

PROCESS

The process used for conducting these in-depth interviews followed the same general process of: planning, developing instruments (discussion guides), collect data (actual interviews), analyze data, and disseminate findings.

PLANNING

We choose the research participants, keeping in mind, the research objectives, whereby we wanted to assess the current standing of IPL amongst general consumers, pin-pointing the consumer journey with the format, the appeal of the format, triggers and barriers to enjoyment and finding mechanisms to keep the format relevant for them.

ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATION

The following is observed during the conduct of research:

1. IPL CONSUMER PROFILE

IPL viewership is across the age board and gender. We can easily define IPL viewer in age group of 15-50 yrs. This viewer are adventurous, risk taker, goal oriented, focussed, fun loving. Another important characteristic is the viewer lead busy lives, stuck in the rigmaroles of job, family, goals and finances. They are on the fast track of daily grind. They have an active lifestyle.

2. CRICKET CONSUMPTION

Cricket is the first choice in sports being followed. The viewers follow cricket as it is associated with India. The idea of following and supporting Indian cricket team is exhilarating and exciting for even the irregular sports follower. India Pakistan match catches eye ball and interest at the level that creates fervour of emotions.

3. VIEWERS OPINION ON VARIOUS FORMATS IN CRICKET

TEST

Cricket is considered gentleman's game. Test cricket is closely associated with this term. Test cricket is termed as pure form of cricket, real cricket and game of strategy. It is however losing its sheen because of 5-day duration. Viewers were disappointed as sometimes rain washes over the game and game is drawn due to it. Others cited shortage of time as reason for not following it.

ODI

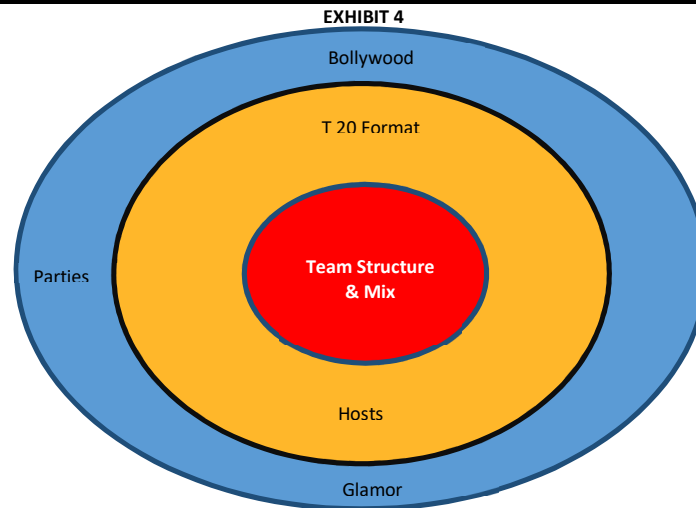
One day formats are well liked and well received by the viewer. Its 50-50 format ensures that match is finished in 6-8 hrs. Viewer's interest in this format is based on time duration. Viewer terms it as perfect format of cricket. The association with this format are India Pakistan matches, world cup final, patriotism, team spirit, must watch. Viewer also found themselves in time constraint to watch both innings. So this format gives flexibility to watch one inning and be involved. Disadvantage of this format is 6-8hr of time during weekdays, also inability to sit for such a long duration to watch a game was negative for some.

20-20

This format is rapidly being chosen over the other two formats as its 3 hr match. It fits perfectly in life of viewers that is time constraint and on fast track. It is associated with runs rather than techniques and finesse (Pradhan, 2017). Words association with this format is fast, aggressive, young, champions, excitement, Dhoni, Virat, Indian team.

IPL is considered as a part of this format and audience preference for the format comes from the following points.

- **The three-hour format** seems very convenient and quick – full flavor of cricket in short time.
- **The teams** too are a strong pull for the consumers – the way teams are formed, the bidding of players etc. brings the intrigue value to the format.
- **The celebrities** catapult the appeal and involvement to a higher pedestal.
- **Spectacular performances** increase the energy level of the game. Since it's a short format, every player tries to show his best capabilities.
- **Interactive nature** of the format asks for consumer involvement – contests, giveaways – consumer loves it all as it gives them a feeling of being a part of the game.
- **Cheerleaders** bring that extra dash of glamor to the game. They are highly noticed, appreciated and ridiculed at the same time for making things a bit too spicy at times.



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Cricket league IPL is a right mix of sports competitiveness and entertainment quotient. It has attracted audience both in live setting and in broadcast arena. Increasingly sports in general and cricket in particular has found a new stature in India with newly launched channels and upcoming leagues. It is now said that India has become a cricket obsessed nation in the last half a century. Today each and every Indian is aware of IPL. It is a made in India league with all the Bollywood masala. It's not only about sports. It's not only about commercial aspect. It's not only about the entertainment. It's a season!

IPL is each one in these aspect and more. IPL is more refreshing version of gentlemen's game. It is fast paced and full of thrills. It is what a new generation demands and needs. A 90-minute frenzy with all the element of entertainment. Music (branded tune of IPL), dance(cheerleaders) action(cricket), passion(teams), emotion(teams), glamour (provided by the owners of franchises, Bollywood stars and cheerleaders). A whirlwind ride that is now called the IPL experience.

With the help of the research, it was concluded that 20-20 format was considered as key element of IPL personality. The short and fast format ensured that viewer is hooked to it after coming from work. The mix of Bollywood and celebrity complete the entertainment landscape for the viewers. International feel that is infused with international player as a part of team mix also provide an extra edge to the event. As a cricket loving and Bollywood crazy nation IPL has become synonym with entertainment.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We made an attempt in this study to understand and analyse the viewer's preference for the IPL format. Cricket formats like Test and ODI are appreciated and savoured but in fast paced world the viewer preferences are for shorter formats like 20-20. However, the study suffers from a number of limitations:

- Additional analysis could be attempted using some of the statistical tools and techniques for reinforcing the conclusion and making the study richer.
- To examine the attitude of IPL viewers towards the various forms of commercials sponsored by corporate.
- Analysis can be done on attitude of marketing managers of corporate sector towards IPL Vis-a Vis other entertainment alternatives in sports, movies and television.
- Research can be conducted to understand attitude of marketing managers of corporate sector towards IPL vis-a vis other forms of cricket (Test matches and ODI)

Despite these limitations, the study hopefully fills up an important gap in the literature on viewer's attitude towards IPL format vis-a-vis other formats. From this point of view, this study is a useful attempt.

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