



Brand Promotions During IPL: Research Analysis

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Abstract

In recent years, the Indian Premier League (IPL) has gained in popularity. Given its short three-month or sixty-day timetable, customer participation, and high television ratings, the IPL has proven to be a highly effective platform for branding and advertising numerous products. The research paper concludes that the IPL's business strategy is multifaceted and generates revenue from brand sponsorships. For that, the paper analyses the business model of IPL and studies various campaigns led by the premium brands in the form of title sponsorship, in-kind sponsorship, OTT, and TV advertisements. Examples of TATA's strategic move of title sponsorship, promotion of their newly launched app, and other geo-targeted commercials were discussed. Concurrently it was analysed how companies leverage the IPL's success to promote their products and brands well-known internationally. The literature review investigated the fundamental concepts of marketing, which are the foundation of branding and its significance for organisations. The massive viewership and participation during the IPL are an excellent opportunity to reduce customer acquisition costs, increase brand exposure, and create substantial revenue.

Introduction

In times of advanced technology, live streaming has become so common, and the increasing craze of people towards mega sports events like IPL is on the rise. Given the size of the local and international audience, IPL attracts, it poses great opportunities for the companies to promote their products through various brand promotions such as sponsorship, TV advertisements, and influencer marketing. Promoting their brands during mega sports events like IPL benefits them in increasing brand awareness and expanding their market share, thereby increasing revenues (Subramanian, 2022).

The underlying research aims to analyze how businesses attain their objectives of spreading brand awareness, customer acquisition, and generating sales through the marketing strategy of brand promotions at big events. For that, various brand activities and their impact have been studied. The study will help understand how entrepreneurs can take advantage of event marketing to promote their brands worldwide.

Methods

The qualitative analysis has been done to identify the strategies of brand promotion during the IPL event. The study explores the concepts of marketing mix and branding being applied to event marketing (sports marketing). The method of literature review was used to understand the concepts and theories related to brand promotion during the sports events. Various news articles, journals, online resources, and books have been reviewed to carry out the study effectively.

Business Model of the Indian Premier League Cricket (IPL)

In its brief 15-year history, the IPL tournament has become one of the sporting events with the largest viewership worldwide. Players from across the world participate in the event. It is unquestionably the cricketing event that receives the greatest attention worldwide in terms of both live attendance and foreign spectators. The 60-day tournament brought around US\$182 million to the Indian economy in 2021, according to a KPMG survey report (Fox, 2022).

Title/Central Sponsorship

For their name to appear directly before the word IPL during various seasons, title sponsors spend much money. BCCI keeps 50% of this money. Each Indian Premier League franchise or team receives a portion of the remaining 50%. The Tata Group paid around INR 440 crore to have their brand name added before IPL 2022 season.

Broadcasting/Media Rights

For some teams, broadcast revenue is their main source of income. While the media rights for the present cycle are valued at INR 16000 crore, it is anticipated that the media rights for the following cycle (2023–2028) will fetch more than INR 36000 crore. The remaining money is divided among all the competing teams, with the BCCI keeping the majority (Munjal and Ghosh, 2022). It is a two-way benefit for the organizers and media channels. Various media channels benefit from advertisements during the live broadcasting of IPL matches.

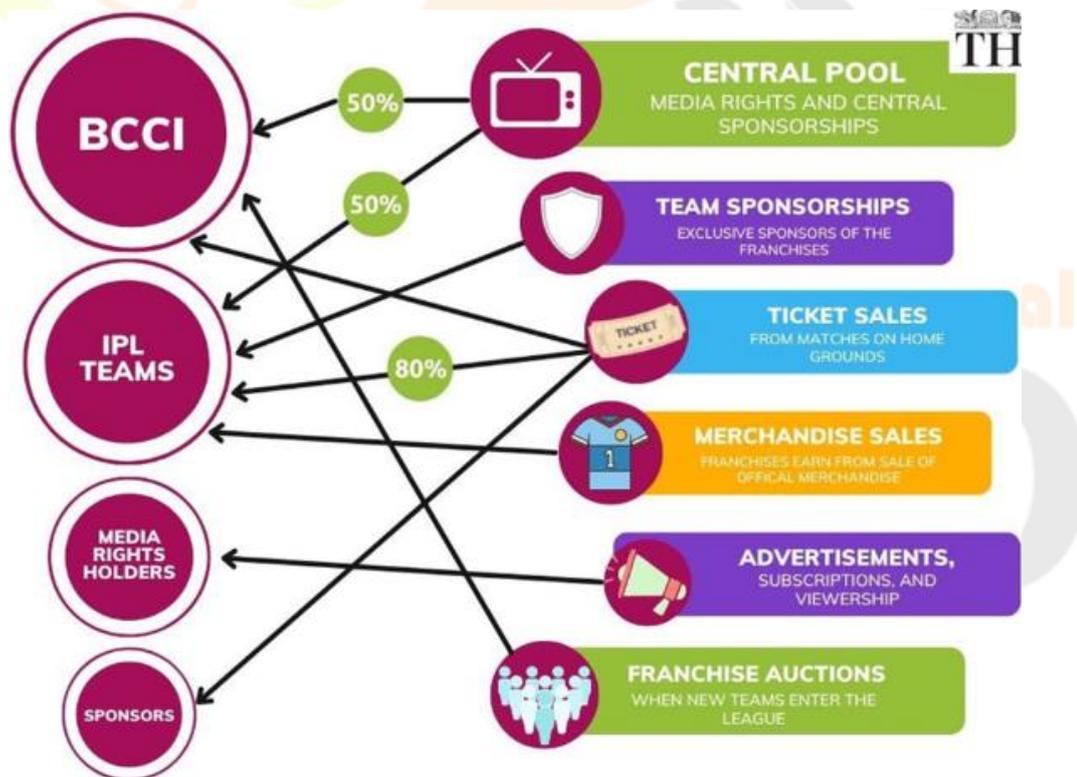


Figure 1: Business Model and Revenue Streams of IPL

(Source: Munjal and Ghosh, 2022)

Local Revenues/Businesses

Local revenue includes the purchase of tickets and concessions at the home stadiums. The teams are free to determine the cost of tickets at their home grounds, and they get to keep about 80% of the money made from

ticket sales, with the remaining 20% going to BCCI. Team owners also keep a sizable chunk of the money made from food and drink sales, merchandising, and money from regional sponsors (Munjal and Ghosh, 2022)

Official Sponsors

The other source of sponsorship income is companies paying to have their logos displayed on the players' uniforms, helmets, training equipment, and barricades next to the goal lines. The names and logos of businesses printed on the back and front of the jerseys represent the greatest value and draw the most significant sponsors. The additional benefit of having specific players take part in their brand-promotion events is received by the sponsors. The players also receive unpaid accommodation and travel advantages.

Literature Review

When a person starts a business, the key question is where they will sell and to whom they want to sell their products. Once they study who will be interested in the products (Target market), they need to tell them about the products entrepreneurs are offering, their quality, and how the customers can benefit from them. All of this takes product and service promotion. Since cricket is one of the most sought-after events in India and worldwide, companies have great opportunities to invest in advertising and promote their brands locally and worldwide.

In the views of Singh (2019) the Indian Premier League helps marketing experts bring players and companies closer together. Instead of going through their agents and managers, companies can deal directly with IPL teams to get top cricket players like Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni, and Rohit Sharma to promote their products and services. This saves time, money, and resources for everyone involved. **As a result, many companies that sell goods or provide services sponsor IPL to get more people in India and worldwide to know about them (their brands).** To understand why companies do branding and how it benefits them, it is vital to understand the marketing mix concept.

Marketing mix

A marketing Mix is a combination of several factors that must be incorporated into a successful marketing plan. Before now, marketing consisted of a combination of four factors: product, price, placement, and promotion. There are additional types of factors employed by many strategists, but these four are the most important. Comprehensive market planning focuses on the parts of the "marketing mix" that combine to form it.

Product

According to Kapoor (2021), a product can be anything that satisfies the needs and wants of the customers. To carry out an effective branding initiative during sports events, the companies need to identify the products that are related to sports and suitable to promote during sports events. Moreover, they need to ensure that the products they want to promote during the IPL have the target audience watching them. Although, given the audience size during sports events, every brand wants to promote its products. For example, CRED is a fintech company unrelated to sports, yet the organisation chose to promote its brand name during IPL in 2022. The reasons are obvious; the great size of viewers (Misra, 2022).

Place

On the other hand, the place is a crucial element for branding as it refers to the place of selling and promotion. Simply put, companies need to find the right place to market their products, including selling and promoting. To spread brand awareness, even start-ups must find the right place to promote their products. Therefore, Singh (2019) opined that IPL was the ideal place to promote even PropTech companies like Makaan.com, Housing.com, and PropTiger.com. During the pandemic, these companies took a bold step to sponsor and promote their brands during IPL2020.

According to the company's Growth and Marketing Head, LIVE sports were the only fresh content getting the audience's attention during the pandemic. They anticipated that the viewership for IPL 2020 would be at an all-time high, even though the event has always attracted a large audience. Being a young brand that focuses on young homebuyers from India's major residential areas, IPL was the obvious choice for their brand marketing. Singh (2019) also stated that the brands having a common target audience as the IPL events will have a positive outcome and better returns from promoting on the IPL platform.

Promotion

The combination of marketing campaigns, bills, and hoardings is known as the promotional mix. All these efforts consist of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and other forms of public-media interactions. This is also important because it ensures that the local populace is aware of the product. The marketing experts participating in promotional activities construct a message that frequently relates to the other three components and assists them in pitching their product to the appropriate target audience.

Branding and its importance

A brand is an essential component of the product mix. It helps the customers to recognize and make a purchase decision when several products with the same features are available. According to a survey report, 9 out of 10 customers like to make purchases from well-known brands (Allen, Fournier, & Miller, 2018). Furthermore, what makes them well known is that the consumers have watched their advertisements several times a day or have come across their logos and symbols on great platforms like IPL Live telecast on the cricket ground, to mention a few.

In the views of Allen, Fournier, & Miller (2018) brand marketing helps buyers have a strong, positive impression of the brand, while branding helps people recognize the product. Not only that, but promoting a brand also builds customer trust and convinces them that the brand's products and services are the best ones on the market for anything they need. Because of this, people often choose that brand when they want to buy something.

Moreover, Kapoor (2021) opined that using brand promotion during IPL helps brands reduce customer acquisition costs, increase brand awareness, expand their target market by reaching the audiences that were ever exposed to their products, and more. There are many benefits to increasing sales and revenues by employing brand promotion during IPL, which has great brand value and worldwide viewership.

Analysis

IPL has been a great place for fintech, health tech, e-payments, hyper-local delivery services, and streaming platforms to get their names out there. In the past few years, brands like Dream11 and CRED among others have become TV and digital sponsors of the IPL.

According to marketing experts, the growing interest is also due to the current market, where consumers across all categories are moving toward a digital-first strategy. The IPL has been the best way to reach many people through TV and OTT (Subramanian, 2022).

Sponsorship

Through sponsorships, companies attempt to enhance their reputation and spread brand awareness for the target customers for whom these events matter. Consequently, the audience is more able to relate to these brands leading to more engagement with the brands and eventually long-term relation with the brand.

Title Sponsorship

Tata bought two-year IPL title sponsorships for 2022 and 2023. The brand's name appears with IPL, whether it is their training camps, on the trophy, or the prize check for the winning teams and other awards.



Figure 2: TATA- The title Sponsor of IPL2022

(Source: FirstCricket 2022).

It is a grand way to promote the name of the brand in the following ways:

- The title sponsor's logo can be seen on a team's bike, car, uniform, or other official clothing.
- The logo appears on printed materials for the team, such as TV backgrounds, publications, bulletins, posters, and headed paper.
- The title sponsor is prominently featured on a sports team's website and social media channels.
- Team fans and the visitors in the stadium are exposed to the company's products, resulting in increased customers, higher sales, and thus more profits.
- The team's reach was used to take advantage of contests and deals highlighting the sponsor's goods and services.

- Access to participants, drivers, riders, and sportspeople as the headline sponsor for occasions like trade shows
- The title sponsor's name will have the opportunity to plan hospitality functions and business meetings at a sporting event where the sports team will be participating or competing (Singh, 2019).

Benefit

Although TATA is an established brand, the company used the opportunity to promote its newly launched app. It helped promote their app, TATA Neu, during the IPL events. No matter where in the world, wherever the IPL has broadcasted the app's name, the TATA brand is reflected in the newspapers, magazines, TV, website, and international channels. As a result, more people came to know about the app using IPL fame (Rakheja, 2022). One example is being a title sponsor. TATA Motors offered its new edition of Tata Punch to be auctioned during the IPL2022. It was one of the strategic ways to attract customers for their newly launched avatar of Tata Punch.



Figure 3: TATA Punch Promotion during IPL2022

(Kadian, 2022)

In-kind Sponsorship

Sometimes, sponsors do not directly pay for the event's sponsorship; instead, they offer their products or services. This sponsorship saves them money while promoting their products directly during the events. It is a great chance for them to showcase their expertise or the high quality of their products. For example, a company manufacturing sports gadgets can offer high-quality equipment or gear at sports events (Karg & Funk 2020). During IPL, Dream Sports, the parent company of Dream11, sell its official team merchandise on its websites. However, their sponsorships in IPL helped them promote their products, resulting in a year-on-year increase in their sports merchandise sales on their website.

TV Advertisements

With a solid 60 days of mass viewership, brands have a great opportunity to reach new markets they could not reach otherwise. Even during 2020, when there were no-in-stadium viewers, people watched Live broadcasting

on TV in rural and urban India and abroad. Such a wide window enabled various brands to reach their potential customers and preach about their products and services. Besides that, FMCG companies also took the opportunity to curate TV advertisements based on region (PV & Varma, 2020).

Previously, they were required to use various shows on local TV stations as touchpoints for their diverse geographic target audiences. IPL on TV's multilingual feeds have facilitated these initiatives by presenting brands to new, regionally diversified consumers via a single platform. Brands collaborate with locally known ambassadors or influencers to provide a localised experience in its entirety. Coca-Cola, for instance, partnered with IPL to promote its Cola beverage in English and Hindi TV feeds, Maaza and Sprite in Tamil TV feeds, and Thums Up in Telugu and Kannada TV feeds - each feed suited for local consumers. Therefore, marketers utilised IPL events to increase the bar for advertisement content and brand visibility.

Digital Media Partners and OTT platforms

Various OTT platforms bid to become digital media partners of IPL. It gives them an edge over their competitors to attract more and more digital users to their platforms. According to Disney+, more than half of new users came from its OTT platform Hotstar thanks to the vast viewership of IPL. Even though large premiums on digital, FMCG, consumer durables, electronics, and autos continue to bid for advertisements during the IPL streaming service. Brands can go for short 10-30 second videos or use billboards to promote their products and features that are high visibility assets.

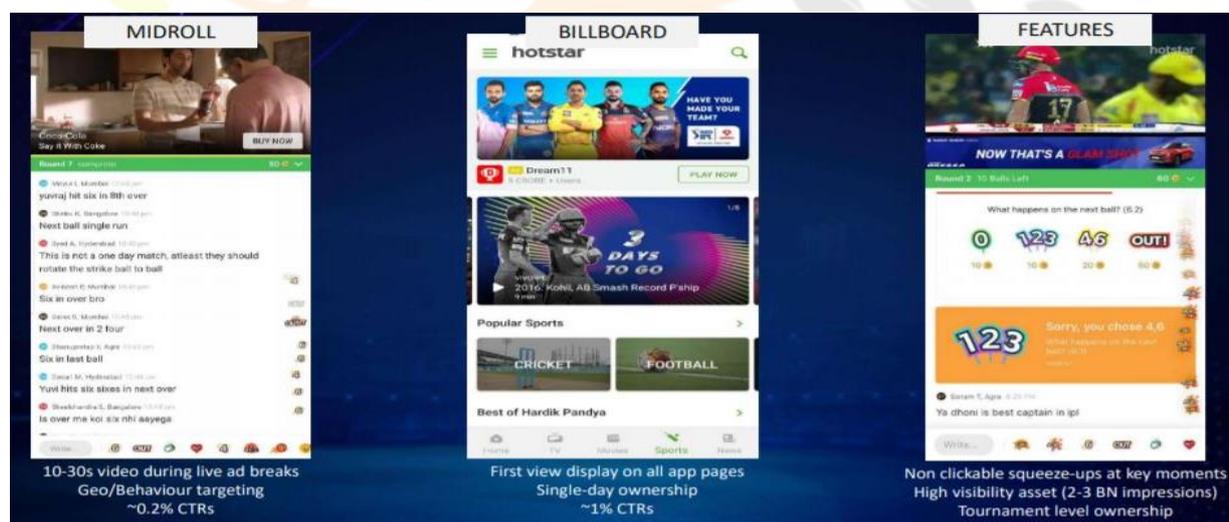


Figure 4: Ways to advertise on OTT platforms like Hotstar

(Star, 2020)

Social Media Campaigns by Small Businesses

Even small companies that cannot afford big campaigns on TV advertisements, sponsorships, or ads on OTT platforms use social media to run campaigns/or sell products during IPL season.

The key idea is to attract the target audience passionate about IPL to draw them to their websites or e-commerce businesses. For example, local food businesses run social media campaigns with hashtags, organize polls and watch parties to create engagements through their businesses' social media handles.

IPL lets brands reach out to a wider range of people, not just the men they want to reach. Every family in India watches IPL games together, even if they do not like sports. So, businesses use this time to launch their new

products and services and get the word out among their most important customers. They work with influencers to do the same thing and create a valuable message to keep people interested in the new launch (Arunraj & Viduthalai, 2018).

People watch TV and use their cell phones to keep up with IPL news, which is why new products get all the attention they need by catching up with the IPL season. It makes it easier for people to notice the brand. All they need to do is choose the right timing for new product launches.

Conclusion

The popularity of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has soared in the last few years. Given its short three-month or 60 days schedule, consumer involvement, and high television ratings, the IPL has proven to be a very effective platform for branding and advertising various goods. The paper concluded that the business model of IPL is multi-faceted, generating revenues from the brands. Simultaneously, companies use IPL popularity to make their products and brands famous worldwide. The literature review explored the base concepts of marketing, which is the root of branding and its importance for businesses. Furthermore, it was analysed that title sponsorships, in-kind sponsorship, TV and OTT commercials, and social media campaigns during IPL season help businesses to reach their target customers where they cannot reach otherwise. The mass viewership and engagement during IPL is a great opportunity to minimise the customer acquisition cost, attain brand awareness and generate handsome revenues.

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