

FUTURE OF IPL - THE IMAGE MAKEOVER CHALLENGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS USING CBBM PYRAMID

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Abstract: IPL being a popular event in this part of the world has gained a great brand salience and has become bigger during the last five seasons. The sixth season had a great response and towards the end the betting/fixing scam related to players, owners and other stake holders created a dull finish to the mega event. There is a great amount of curiosity for us as researchers to know how these issues will impact the performance of the event in the next season. This research work tries to explore the role of such incidents on the event (IPL) and how much it has contributed towards reducing the effectiveness of the brand image in the minds of the viewers (consumers). The CBBE model of brand building by Kevin Lane Kelleris taken into consideration for the study and the impact will be assessed at each level of the branding ladder.

Introduction: The Indian Premier League (IPL) being a popular event in this part of the world has gained a great brand salience and has become bigger during the last five seasons. The sixth season had a great response and towards the end the betting/fixing scam related to players, owners and other stake holders created a dull finish to the mega event.

Indian Premier League:

Preamble: IPL is a Twenty20 cricket tournament which was inaugurated in 2008. During the same period Zee "Indian Cricket League" was

operational. Twenty20 cricket was first introduced at a competitive level by the England and Wales cricket board in 2003 but the Indian Premier League is largely credited with being the institution that projected the format of the game onto the world stage. The Indian Premier League was initiated by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and has been an enormous success. The annual tournament played in the months of April and May has gone from strength to strength and is largely viewed as being the 'richest' tournament in world cricket.

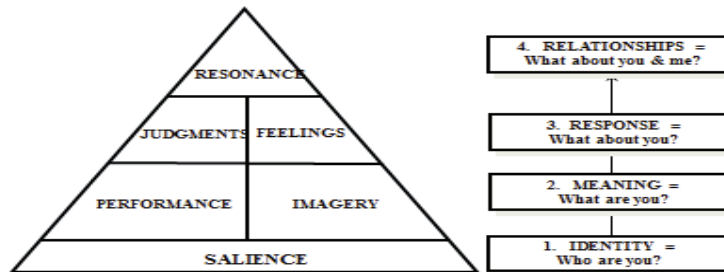


Figure-1 : Customer Based Brand Equity pyramid

Until 2012, the Indian Premier League was sponsored by DLF after they paid \$50 million for the five year sponsorship. Pepsi will take over the contract for the 2013 IPL after paying close to 4 billion rupees for the 5 year contract. In 2008, Sony paid \$1 billion for the broadcasting rights over a ten year period. The IPL is watched across the world and in 2010 made history by becoming the first sporting event to be broadcast live on YouTube. The tournament is the largest, best known and most prestigious Twenty20 tournament in cricket. Considering the above data and the recent developments in the conducting of IPL 7, there appears to be some apprehension about the image of the whole series and its credibility.

There is a great amount of curiosity for us, as researchers, to know how these developments will impact the performance of the event in the next season. It is in this direction that the researchers have made an earnest attempt to explore the role of such incidents on the event (IPL) and how much it has contributed towards reducing the effectiveness of the brand image in the minds of the viewers (consumers). The tool for data collection and analysis of the same have been done using Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid (refer Figure - 1).

Literature Review: Shanul Jain and Muthukumar R (2009) have indicated in their work about Godrej Re-Branding strategies for Brand Makeover. In this case

the logo, tagline and the repositioning exercise was done completely keeping in mind the changing demographics of the consumers and also targeting the global marketplace. This brand makeover exercise was done using IPL as the launch pad.

Sunil S Kale (2009) discusses about Rebranding India with reference to economic policies and how did it help India to reframe and position itself to the outside world. The major role was played by "India Everywhere" campaign in 2006 @ Davos, during the World Economic Forum.

Laura et.al (2008) opines that Philip Morris with the help of PM21 campaign tried to influence consumers' perception and the resultant impact on the corporate image due to the counter industry advertising.

Primary Objective: The primary objective of the whole study is to assess if the recent betting /fixing scams will have an impact on the future of IPL.

Secondary Objective: The following are the secondary objectives as envisaged by the researchers:

- 1) To study if the betting/fixing scam also has an impact on the sponsors (brands) of the event
- 2) To assess consumers perceptions with regard to the issue
- 3) To assess the role of media in creating awareness about the issue

Methodology: A combination of qualitative and quantitative research approach was used in the study. The quantitative research was focusing on the youth and information was collected based on a survey. The qualitative research was trying to bring out the changes in the mental map of IPL after the betting/fixing scandal and also the researchers were trying to gather information from experts with the help of in-depth interviews.

The quantitative part was done with a structured questionnaire with about 18 questions. The sample size was aimed at 200 respondents targeting the youth and young professionals out of which the researchers could succeed getting 176 usable questionnaires. Judgment sampling technique was used to identify the samples and collect the required information. In the qualitative research technique an exercise of mental map was done followed with an in-depth interview with a small sample of 9 experts.

Major Findings and Inferences:

- ❖ IPL was asked to be rated if it was a pure sport, sport and entertainment, time pass. The mean value indicated that respondents considered it to be more of sports and entertainment followed by time pass. The same point was again reiterated when respondents were asked why they watch IPL about 57% said for entertainment while only 17% said for sports.
- ❖ A whopping 77% of the respondents were of the age group ranging between 18 and 24 years. About

22% of the respondents were ranging between 25 and 30 years which is the clear target group that was aimed at achieving during the research work and was rightly done so by connecting with the youth and young professionals.

- ❖ While correlating overall IPL as an event with if it is having a pure sport image it is significantly correlated with a value of 0.446 at a 0.01 level of significance.
- ❖ Another correlation between IPL as an event with that of it is viewed as a sport and entertainment the correlation was found to be significant (0.417) at a 0.01 level of significance.
- ❖ There was no significant correlation found between IPL as an event and IPL considered to be time pass. This is quite surprising to notice that many people have taken this pretty seriously. This is contradicting with the finding of 57% say they watch IPL for the entertainment. Though they agree it is entertainment, they do not buy the argument that it is just a time pass.
- ❖ The mean value (3.750) indicates that the current scams have a high impact on the image of IPL and will definitely hamper the overall image gained so far.
- ❖ The level of awareness about the scam is also reasonable high (3.313). This shows that people are closely watching and gathering information about the scams on a regular basis.
- ❖ The major source through which the respondents came to know about the betting/fixing scam was Television (56%) followed by Newspaper (24%) and 14% became aware of the same through multiple sources.
- ❖ The research study indicates that there is a significant level of relationship between the awareness of IPL scam and the impact of the scams on its brand image. It is 0.162 at a 0.05 level of significance.
- ❖ The current perceptions were measured using mode before the scams and post the scams. It clearly indicated that the perception is inferior post the scams which is ideally the current perception held by the spectators.
- ❖ There is a very high association found between the loyal IPL fans and their intention to continue their association with the game. The correlation is 0.653 at a 0.01 level of significance.
- ❖ The loyal IPL fans would not only continue their association but also would recommend their friends/colleagues to watch IPL. The correlation is 0.402 at a 0.01 level of significance
- ❖ The role of BCCI in Image makeover is reflected with a mean score of 2.65 which reveals that the respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. It goes on to explain that not very visibly efforts

have been taken by BCCI in reviving the Image of IPL.

- ❖ Though there are indications about the impact on the brand image by awareness of scam, there exists a correlation indicating that respondents recommend watching IPL and IPL image which is .200 at 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that despite the scam still there are fans who urge their friends and colleagues to continue supporting IPL.

The researchers met with a few people who were associated with cricket to gather some expert opinion through in-depth interviews about the ongoing scams and its likely impact on IPL. The experts included, sports journalists, past cricketers at the state level, media and brand professionals. The discussions are summarized in the below mentioned points

- ❖ When all of them were asked to come out with a mental map of IPL which captures the key and abstract associations of a brand. All of them invariably mentioned the betting, fixing scams related to IPL which indicates the impression it creates in the minds of the viewers and fans.
- ❖ They all generally agreed that these scams will have a lasting impact on the brand IPL. The image makeover will take time.
- ❖ They were also of the opinion that IPL has lost its trust among the viewers and fans and hence rebuilding the trust itself is a huge task.
- ❖ They were all of the same feeling that BCCI isn't doing enough in the image makeover process. BCCI needs to put in more effort and go about the process.
- ❖ They were of the opinion that the poor image will have a rub off effect on the sponsors who have invested heavily on this coveted event expecting high rate of return in one way or the other

(awareness, brand visibility, sales, image). Hence this may have an effect of attracting more sponsors in the forthcoming seasons. The stakes of the current sponsors are very high and they may not spread positive word of mouth to the fellow Industry counterparts which may affect the revenue and attraction towards this event in the future.

Conclusion: Looking at IPL from the CBBE point of view and assessing it at each level gives us some meaningful insights. The first level deals with the identity, which was not an issue for IPL earlier with its great awareness and positive image is now a big question because of the scams. Now we could clearly witness an identity crisis for the IPL. The second level is about the meaning and IPL had a clear meaning of sports with entertainment. But presently the meaning conceived by the respondents and experts about IPL is, it is an unethical sports with a lot of money laundering activities. The third level which deals with response is multifold; the loyal fans of IPL are continuing to support the game whereas the others have started losing the faith on the game itself. In the fourth level where people who were religiously following their favorite team and players have become passive due to the recent developments. Media played a key role in spreading awareness about the scams related to IPL betting and match fixing. The perceptions about the much coveted event went for a toss and seem to be much beyond repair. The sponsors of the tainted IPL seem to be in a bigger fix since they have huge sum of their money at stake along with their brand image. The greater challenge is how the image makeover of IPL will be done? Who will do it? What will be the future of IPL? The forthcoming season and BCCI has the challenge.

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