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Analysing The Effectiveness Of Promotional Strategies Of Indian Super League

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Abstract
Background: Sports brings people together. It has become an important source of entertainment and cultural exchange. It has reached such a level that it can be monetized. Indian Super League was launched in 2013 similar to the Indian Premier League which is a very successful cricket league in the world. ISL has 11 teams based on different cities and states in India. ISL was launched to nurture the local talent as well as revolutionise Indian football. The paper aims to assess the effectiveness of promotions and advertisement for ISL to create awareness, influence and make the consumer purchase or effect the behaviour of viewers. A total of 166 subjects were selected using convenience sampling technique. A questionnaire consisting of questions pertaining to six stages of response hierarchy model was used for the data collection. Factors influencing the purchase decisions of consumers such as celebrity stakeholder, Home team and social media use were identified and evaluated. Results indicated that the level of awareness, attitude and behaviour of the people towards ISL was highest in the 23-28 age group.
Keywords: Response hierarchy model, Football, Advertisement, Indian Super league

Introduction

Sports has always gained importance in people's lives all over the globe. Sports brings people together. It has become an important source of entertainment and cultural exchange. It has reached such a level that it can be monetized. In recent years sports industry has achieved great commercial success. Therefore, promotion of sports has become of utmost importance. Also, different leagues have been established for the sports like Football, Basketball, Cricket, Hockey etc. having large fan following which is a result of huge promotional campaigns. India is a country that is dominated by Cricket. The sports viewership of India is mainly restricted to cricket. The IPL was launched to provide entertainment and bring the hidden talent of India in front of the world [1,2]. Indian Super League was launched in 2013 similar to the Indian Premier League which is a very successful cricket league in the world. ISL has 11 teams based on different cities and states in India. ISL was launched to nurture the local talent as well as revolutionise Indian football. The number of registered football players in India is quite less compared to other countries having less population. Thus, popularizing and promoting football in India is the only way for the development of the sport. ISL has been taking several initiatives for the promotion of league such as social media marketing, rope in some globally renowned players, unique shareholding pattern etc[3]. The use of social media is increasing day by day and is a major factor in building fan following. The use of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and other websites contribute a lot to fan engagement [4].

Srikanth J et.al. (2013) [5] studied the importance of celebrity endorsement, pitfalls associated, and choosing the celebrity for company promotion strategy. They identified the relationship between the celebrity and brand. Celebrity endorsement cannot be the final successful solution for marketing a product. Celebrity's physical attractiveness, creditability and compatibility all affect the perception towards the brand endorsed. Most importantly celebrity makes the brand stand out, cause global awareness and brand recall. Sports celebrities' also influence teenagers greatly. The teenagers tend to purchase things that are related to their favourite athlete. This can be used by marketers and advertisers to increase brand loyalty and spread positive word of mouth. The media and advertising play a major role in spreading information regarding their favourite sports celebrity[6].

Several studies investigated the use of social media for engaging the fans. Waters RD et.al. (2011) [4] examined the use of websites and facebook to establish a relationship with the fans of National Football League. The Facebook and website of all 26 out of 32 teams were compared based on responsibility, reporting, relationship nurturing and reciprocity. Results indicated that the teams prefer websites over Facebook to establish a relationship with fans.

Many studies concluded that advertising, packaging, branding, availability, a discount were some of the major factors affecting the consumption of a particular brand [7].

The effectiveness of unconventional advertisements over conventional advertisements was measured using the hierarchy of effects method. The subjects were shown both the types of advertisement and their reaction was recorded. Results indicated that the unconventional breaking the stereotype advertisement proved to be more effective than the conventional one [3].

The paper aims to assess the effectiveness of promotions and advertisement for ISL to create awareness, influence and make the consumer purchase or effect the behaviour of viewers. The promotional strategies that have been proved successful in promoting and increasing the viewership of ISL were evaluated. The paper focuses on analysing the promotional factors such as advertisement, social media influence or celebrity involved. ISL has one of the best Impression/Reach Ratios. It also has extremely high stickiness amongst its viewers. No previous research has been done on why ISL enjoys such good viewership and what factors of promotion are driving viewership for ISL.

Methodology

The different promotional strategies such as social media, celebrities and franchises are based on cities promotional strategies. The Response Hierarchy Model was used to analyse the Indian Super league viewers response in different stages namely Cognitive stage, the Affective stage & the Behaviour stage. In the cognitive stage, people were made aware and knowledge was spread among people about the event. In the affective stage, the consumers try to compare and evaluate the event based on the knowledge they acquired during the awareness stage. In the final stage i.e., the behaviour stage the consumer decided whether to purchase the event ticket/watch the match or not. The Hierarchy of effects model was given by Lavidge & Steiner (1961). The model explains the six stages namely Awareness- Knowledge- Liking-Preferences-Conviction-Purchase through which a consumer has to go before making purchase decisions.

Selection of the Subject:

The number of subjects studied were 166 which included both male and female subjects in equal numbers. The questionnaire was distributed among the students of different universities and to the general public of India. The subjects chosen for the study were in the age range from 17 – 51 years. The sampling technique used was Convenience Sampling.

Selection of the Variables:

The variables that were selected for the research were Celebrity Stakeholder, Social media and Home team.

Data Collection:

The questionnaire was distributed through various social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and Email for collecting the data. In the questionnaire, the individuals were asked to fill their demographic details like age and gender etc. The questionnaire contained questions such as   1) How Familiar are you with ISL, 2) How often do you watch ISL games, 3) How often you discuss or heard people discussing ISL, 4) Inclination to watch ISL after watching its advertisement, 5) Rate the ISL advertisement campaign until now, 6) How much does a celebrity stakeholder of an ISL team affects your choice of supporting a particular club, 7) How much do social media posts influence you to watch ISL games, 8) On what scale does having a local team makes you follow ISL and 9) How good was ISL advertisement campaign in comparison with IPL advertisement campaign. And the respondents were asked to give response using the Likert scale. Further, the analysis was done based on the responses (n =166).

Statistical Technique:

The data analysis was conducted through SPSS by using the Chi-square test of independence to find out significant difference between the male and female respondents and Chi-square goodness of fit was used to evaluate the 3 promotional strategies i.e. Celebrity stakeholder, Home Team and social media.

Results and Discussion:

The three statements in the questionnaire i.e. 1) How Familiar are you with ISL, 2) How often do you discuss or heard people discussing ISL and 3) How often do you watch ISL games were designed to measure the Awareness, Attitude and Behaviour of the people towards ISL.

Table 1: Mean Score of Awareness, Attitude and Behaviour

Measure	Age Range					
	17-22	23-28	29-34	35-40	41-46	47-51
Awareness	3.11	3.67	2.56	2.63	2.09	2.17
Attitude	2.39	2.85	2.33	2.38	2.09	2.83
Behaviour	2.05	2.59	2.33	1.75	1.73	1.83

The Table 1 shows the mean score for awareness level which is high among the youth as compared to the older generation. Specifically, highest in the age group of 23-28 years. The mean score of attitude and behaviour is less than 3 in all the age groups. According to the BARC report, 2016 showed that ISL has the best impressions after IPL and PKL (Pro Kabaddi League) but had the lowest reach among all the other sports leagues/events. Although ISL has a low audience base, it has a high level of stickiness among the audience. The report also stated that the ISL viewer base is 56% male and 44% female. ISL has maximum viewers in the age category of 31-50 years (36%) followed by 15-30 years (30%) [1]. The results also indicated that ISL is followed by the young generation more.

The Chi-square test of Independence was conducted on the sample of male & female participants in order to find out if there is any difference for respondents for various statements.

Table 2: Chi-square test of Independence based on Gender

| Sr. No.	Question	Chi Square Value	Significance Value
1	Familiarity	5.6895	0.224
2	Watch ISL	4.8467	0.303
3	Discuss ISL	1.4670	0.832
4	Watch after Advertisement	8.7087	0.069
5	Celebrity Stakeholder	0.3167	0.989
6	Social Media	8.6174	0.071
7	Home Team	5.6014	0.231
8	Rate ISL Adv Campaign	0.2889	0.991

The outcome (Table 2) revealed that no significant difference existed between male & female respondents concerning the familiarity with ISL, Watching ISL, Talking/ Discussing ISL, The Influence to watch ISL after Advertisement, Influence of Celebrity Stakeholder, Influence of Social Media posts, Influence of having a franchise based on one's city and how was the ISL Advertisement Campaign as the p-value was greater than 0.05.

Further, Chi-square test (goodness of fit) was performed to check whether a significant difference existed in the various promotional strategies.

**Table 3: Chi-square test for promotional strategies of ISL**

Sr. No.	Question	Mean	Chi Square Value	Significance Value	Effect Size (Phi)
1	Celebrity Stakeholder	3.08	28.277108	0.000011	0.4127
2	Social Media	3.07	12.253012	0.015566	0.2717
3	Home Team	3.49	27.313253	0.000017	0.4056
4	Rate ISL Adv Campaign	2.89	55.084337	0.000000	0.5760
5	ISL vs IPL adv Campaign	2.64	48.879518	0.000000	0.5426

From the results of the chi-square test in table 3, it was observed that a significant difference existed for the above-mentioned promotional strategies. As the p-value is less than 0.05. Further, the comparison was done using the mean score. From Table 3 it can be seen that a franchise based on one's city (Home Team) was found to be the highest with a mean value of 3.49. Celebrity stakeholders with a mean of 3.08 and social media with a mean of 3.07 are also effective promotional tools.
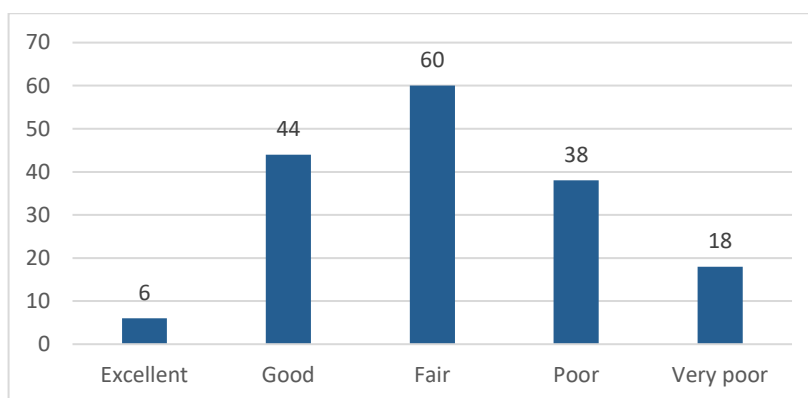

Figure 1: Rate the ISL Advertisement Campaign

Figure 1, indicated that out of 166 respondents, 36% of the subjects rated the ISL Advertisement campaign as Fair. Around 26.5% rated it as Good, 22.9% rated it as poor, 10.8% very poor and only 3.6% said it was excellent.
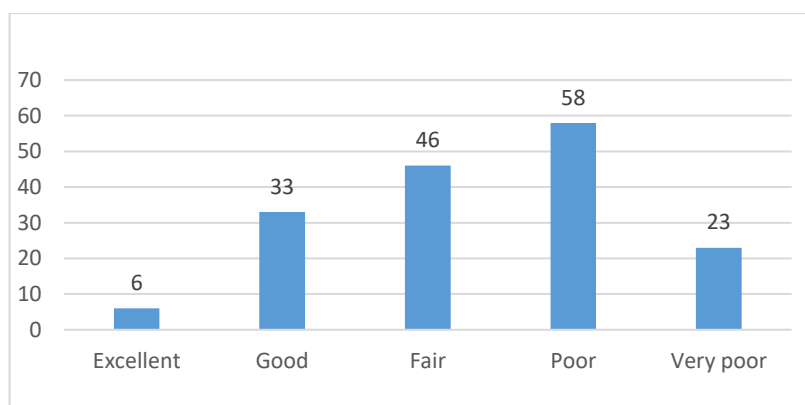

Figure 2: ISL advertisement campaign in comparison with IPL advertisement campaign

Figure 2 indicated that 35% of the subjects rated the ISL Advertisement campaign compared to the IPL Advertisement campaign as Poor, 27.7% said it was Fair, 19.87% mentioned it was Good, 13.85% said it was Very Poor and only 3.6% found it was Excellent.
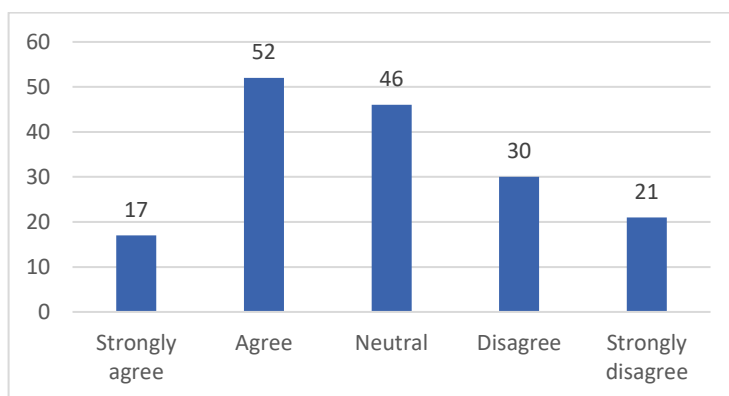
Figure 3: Influence of Celebrity Stakeholder

Figure 3 represented the influence of celebrity stakeholder on the people to watch and follow ISL. We saw that most of the people (31.3%) agreed that Celebrity Stakeholder influences their purchase decisions, 10.2% of subjects were strongly agreed, 27.7% of the subjects said the influence was Neutral, 18.1% disagreed and 12.6% strongly disagreed. The celebrity stakeholder's involvement by the brands had an impact on the minds of the consumers which made them purchase that product. Subjects confirmed that sports league advertisements which featured their favourite Celebrity made it more appealing. Celebrity creates a positive image of the brand in minds of people. It also helps in brand recall and creates emotional involvement of the fans.
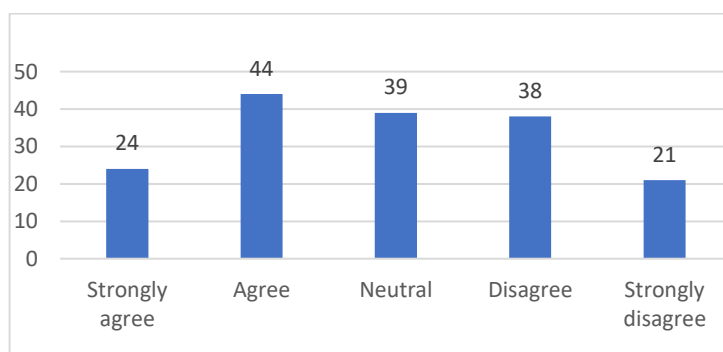
Figure 4: Influence of Social Media

Figure 4 represented the influence of social media on the people to watch and follow ISL. It was observed that 26.5% of the subjects were agreed to the social media influences on their purchase decisions. 14.5% of the subjects strongly agreed, 23.5% said the influence was Neutral, 22.9% disagreed and 12.6% strongly disagreed. Sports fans over time develop a relationship with the sports club online or offline. Especially online as the fans need information regarding the team which includes player interviews, a list of team events, behind-the-scenes, news around the team etc. Social media empowers the fans helping them directly share their views with the sports organisation. This type of social interaction gives the fans a sense of power leads to a higher level of fan engagement [8]. The use of social media apps to communicate and encourage engagement and interact with fans is the biggest opportunity for all sports organisations to make people aware and form a relationship [9,10].
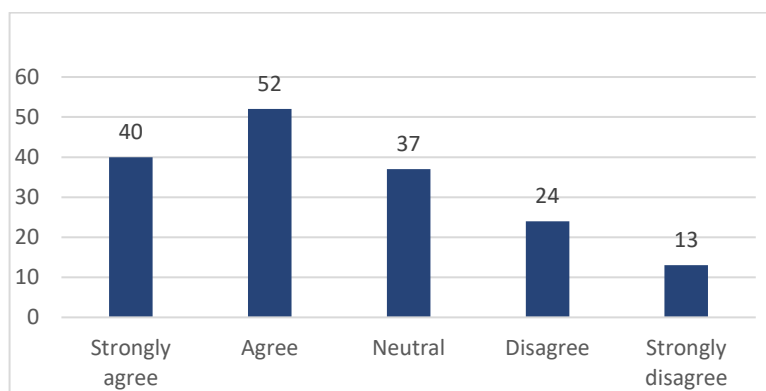
Figure 5. Influence of Home Team

Figure 5 above described the influence of having a home team/ Team based on his/her city/state. Out of 166 subjects, largest share of 31.3% agreed to the fact that Home Team influenced them to watch and follow ISL, 24.1% strongly agreed, 22.3% of subjects said influence was neutral, 14.5% disagreed and only 7.8% strongly disagreed.

A sport, especially like football will have enough to get a person following it, but it is the experience that the sporting bodies governing the sport deliver to these followers that will help them transform into fans. And with relatively new leagues like the ISL coming up to boost football in India, there is a need to work on creating that special experience which will help the league and sport take off in India. The advertisement campaign has improved a lot as compared to the previous years and could be more improved.

There is a sizable number of fans who attend ISL matches regularly. This number should not only be further increased, but in fact efforts should be made to retain such fans for further seasons so that they can become regular season ticket holders. There are individuals who like football but are not even aware of the matches taking place. There is scope to convert these individual into fans who attend a few matches in the season.

Celebrity endorsement plays a crucial role in enhancing the league image. Research shows that individual exposed systematic pairing of a sporting event with a celebrity did develop a more favourable attitude towards the event[11].

Conclusion

The objective of the research was to evaluate the promotional strategies of the Indian Super League and identify the promotional strategies that performed well in increasing the viewership of ISL. Using the Responses Hierarchy Model, it was observed that the level of awareness, attitude and behaviour of the people towards ISL was highest in the 23-28 age group. It was also found that both males and females responded in a similar way to all the promotional strategies and there was no difference. The overall advertisement campaign was fair and not so effective. The Home Team factor of the promotional strategy has influenced the ISL's popularity among the masses. Better advertisement campaigns, learning from other successful leagues and focus on new promotional tools will help to increase the popularity of ISL and the development of the sport.

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