



Marketing Through Sports: A Quadrant Analysis of Organizational Strategies

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Abstract

Sports has always played a very critical role in the upliftment and development of any society, be it bringing harmony and peace between two nations, or two individuals sport has its influence. Over the years one can notice the prominence Sports has received in our country and in the state of Karnataka. With the progress in sports awareness and increase in participation of people in various sports, there is an upsurge in the Sports Academies over the decade. This paper primarily focuses on the various Marketing Strategies that academies should bring together to market and promote their offerings.

Sports Academies as a practice are mainly managed by former athletes or people in the sports domain, but unfortunately majority of them lack the management orientation and fail to keep up with the primary management functions and do to recognise the latest trends in marketing due majority of their time is taken away in their core area of work (coaching).

The paper highlights the various activities and groups them into quadrants based on their level of significance. The paper assembles the various data and recommends the diverse strategies that individuals and managements running the sports academies should adopt in marketing the academy. Finally, a model is recommended with the various strategies that can be adopted by organisations.

Keywords: Marketing Strategies; Marketing of Brands and Organisations; Sports Marketing, Sports Management; Sports Organizations.

Introduction:

Sports marketing is a unit of marketing which concentrates both on the advancement of sports procedures and players as well as the advancement of extra services and products through sporting events and sports teams. (Neferu, 2017)

This research is an empirical in nature and aimed at analysing the different marketing strategies models. Further, the researchers have identified organisations in Karnataka and suggests suitable marketing strategies for promoting their products and services using Sports as a tool and reaching out to the larger audience. The present study is a modest attempt to analyze, at a micro level the corporate's activity to promote their brands through sports in Karnataka.

The researchers has used the Quadrant Analysis approach to explain the managerial implications of the results. The factor loading of sub-indicators is considered to plot the category map for Corporates. This quadrant approach to analyze the results is beyond the discussion of the factor loading scores of sub-indicators. It helps the decision makers for the strategic planning and their relevant activities to promote the organisations using Sport as a medium.

Category Map

The category of any Product / Service is the foundation from which any branded product or service emerges. The Brand or the strategic market plan for a service derives its existence and sustenance from the category and therefore the results depends upon the extent and strength with which it is entrenched in the category. In other words, the category is the mother of all strategic planning. Hence, this study has attempted to present the results and the derived model in the form of category map.



Description of Quadrants

Quadrant 1- CORE: Formed at the top right corner having high factor loading value or declared as important by the respondents. Further the research analysis also shows that they are the hygiene sub indicators for marketing of sports. Therefore, these factors are CORE for any category map. This means that the good performance on these sub indicators results in the better performance of any marketing initiatives. The decision about the financial investments, importance and focus should be more on these sub indicators.

Quadrant 2- Hidden Motivators: Formed at the top left corner has the sub indicators which are declared by the respondents next to CORE. However, the data analysis has clearly shows there is a marginal difference to the sub indicators scores in the CORE, therefore these are attributes that are Hidden Motivators in the category, in other words good performance on these attributes results in good performance of a market plan. The sub indicators in this quadrant helps the decision makers to leverage in differentiating themselves with their competitors.

Quadrant 3- Eliminators: Formed at the bottom right corner, these indicators are the opinions of the respondents which says they have a role in Sport Market planning; however, they have not attracted good score. Therefore, these are attributes that are eliminators in the category, in other words these attributes are considered to be important probably at the initial stage of market planning. This means, poor performance of these sub indicators may result in the low performance of sports marketing at the launch time.

Quadrant 4- Conditionally Un- important: Formed at the bottom left corner, these sub indicators have not only received the low score rate by the respondents, but the results of the data analysis reveals the low factor loading. These are sub indicators that are relatively unimportant to the category under those conditions in which the responses were gathered. In other words, these sub indicators are conditionally unimportant. However, this does not mean the sub indicators must be less focused or investment should be less because the market, the customer and the competition or in a constant state of flux and evolution. Therefore, it is possible that over a period of time the sub indicators in quadrant 4 could either move forward to quadrant 2 or quadrant 3.

Research Methodology

The target population for this study is the corporates involved in promoting their organizations through sports. That is, they sponsor or promote the sport and simultaneously promote their brands/organizations. Opinions have been gathered from the corporates on various aspects related to promoting their brands through sports. These aspects include, the objective of sports promotion, purpose of sponsoring sports events, type of sports events etc. The opinions from corporates on these aspects are measured on a 5-point Likert scale and they are appropriately named under different indicators. The following table 1, gives the details of the indicators related to promoting organizations through sports.

Table 1: Details of the indicators related to promotional activities of organizations through sports

S. No.	Indicator	Code
1	Sports Promotion Objective	SP
2	Sponsoring Sports Events	SS
3	Organization's Sports Event	OS
4	Encouraging Sports for Brand Marketing	ES
5	Reaching Global Audience and Competitors	GC
6	Achieving Brand Recognition	BR
7	Effective Sales Promotion and Sports Marketing	ESS
8	Promotion of Sports Marketing	PSM
9	Sports Promotional and Marketing Strategies	SP and MS
10	Areas in which CSR initiatives involved	CSR
11	Appropriate sports for the Business	ASB
12	CSR Budget	CSRB
13	Budget for Sports Development	BD
14	Evaluation of Sports Marketing	EM
15	Social Media	SM

Source: Based on literature review

Note that the above indicators are measured using the scores given by the corporates for the variables. These variables include various aspects related to promotion of organizations through sports and the aggregate of



the scores give the measurements on indicators. These measurements are analysed to draw appropriate inferences on the indicators and are used to build a model.

Discussion on the Category Map for Organisations

The researchers opines that, companies are using sports as a platform for brand promotion, CSR activity and Brand Identity and develop Marketing strategies. Using sports as medium to blend brand image, brand identity and brand promotion is primitive in nature. The statement is justified by the presence of factors in the category map, Data Analysis and opinions shared by the respondents. The category map shows that some of the core factors such as Sports Promotion objective, Sports Promotional and Marketing strategies, reaching out to global audience and competitors etc are in hidden motivators quadrants. With this explanation, the researchers has made an attempt to describe the manager's implication of the factors considered under promotion of brands through sports by corporates.

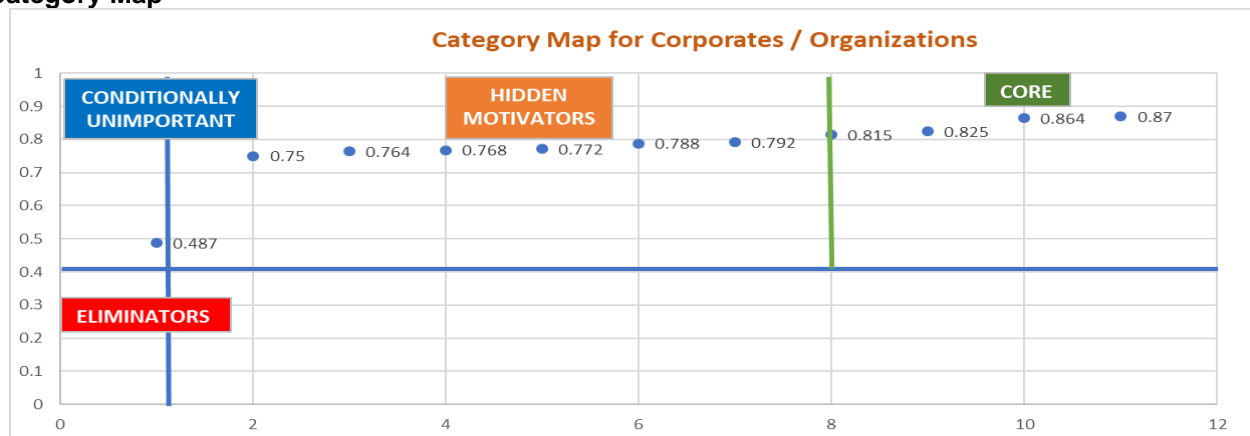
When the above understanding and the models presented for the corporate based on the factors, the researchers opines that, given the situation of Indian companies and use Sports as a platform for brand building exercises in a transition mode.

Companies need a proper professional approach on inclusion of sports with the brand, sports celebrity, brand ambassadors and proper model for execution.

Table 2: Scores obtained for the indicators by organization for promotional activities through sports

Indicator	Scores	Category Map
ASB	0.815	Core
BD	0.487	Conditionally Un Important
BR	0.864	Core
ES	0.750	Hidden Motivators
GC	0.772	Hidden Motivators
OS	0.788	Hidden Motivators
PSM	0.825	Core
SM	0.792	Hidden Motivators
SP	0.764	Hidden Motivators
SP&MS	0.768	Hidden Motivators
SS	0.870	Core

Category Map



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CORE

Of all the indicators on which the study has been conducted, only 4 indicators namely ASB, BR, PSM and SS qualify to be in the core quadrant. This clearly indicates/ says that, companies are considering sponsorship for brand recognition, promotion on appropriate sports as an elementary factors. It is observed that, the decision makers treat sports as a safer and non – controversial platform for promotion of brands. Further, as sports is futuristic in nature the factors/ indicators in core quadrant highlights the revolutionary approach by companies pertaining to sports.

Many of the respondents who belong to the domain opined that, CSR initiative is relevant in today's business strategy, one it helps the community and organisations to develop a strong presence in the community.

It was statistically proven that, achieving a strong Brand and Brand recognition is vital for the growth of the organisations, they opined that, building a strong Brand is the core reason for associating with sports and sports related events, namely conducting college sports, offer gift vouchers during sports events etc, this would intern help organisations to attract new customers and retain the existing customers.

The promotion of sports marketing falls in the core quadrant, respondents clearly have stated the need for a strong promotional communication strategy using sports and publicity opportunities as sports is considered as a wonderful toll for Marketing.

Sponsoring Events traditionally has been considered as one of the strongest ways to promote organisations and their offering, displaying the products and marketing during the events has been around for a long time as a part of the marketing strategy of organisations. This has led to the familiarity of Logos and tag lines of respective companies to be recognised easily by the public in this competitive world. For eg- NIKE'S logo is well recognised and punchline remembered across the world mainly due to sponsoring of sporting events and sponsoring sports persons across the world.

HIDDEN MOTIVATORS

More than 40 % of the indicators considered for collecting the responses from the corporate are placed in the Hidden quadrant by the statistical analysis. The presence of these factors as Hidden Factors clearly shows that corporates do not have a defined model for using Sports as a platform for Brand Building and Marketing. The factors are ES, GC, OS, SM, SP and SP & MS.

Building brand is always on top of the list for all organisations, as Brands helps in many aspects of business, Many of the respondents opined that, through sports, organisations can build brand by sponsoring individual athletes, sponsor a team , associating with a team as a brand building exercise ,get associated or sponsor a tournament of a mega stature as a part of their brand building exercises, for e.g.-BYJU'S is a typical example of this brand building exercise where they have sponsored the Indian national cricket team to strengthen their brand and increase their growing reputation in the Indian market.

Sport is a great vehicle to reach out to the global audience, it has no barrier with respect to language, nationality and race a person belongs to. The researchers has observed that, many of the respondents have expressed that, enhancing corporate image through sports will lead them to reach out to global audience across the world. Corporate goodwill will assist in developing a strong network of global audience for which sports acts as an enabler.

The organisation respondents namely the Marketing and Branding departments, expressed the need for branding and strong presence to be felt in the market. Organising sports conferences, BTL activity namely brochure distribution (Below the Line activity) and organising clinics will surly help sports and issues in sports to be resolved and benefit the organisation that is sponsoring these activities. It is not necessary only to conduct or be a part of bigger sporting events, there are other avenues that sports support organisations in building their brands in the market.



Cricket is a religion in this country and binds everyone. The respondents opined that, cricket has been used as a very effective marketing tool over the years to brand products and services, expensive in nature might be the only reason that's holding back organisations going full out. The researched also observed that, organisations there are other sports that corporates are willing to get associated with apart from cricket, namely Tennis, Football, Table Tennis, Shuttle badminton and chess. It is also observed that, Football and Shuttle Badminton and Kabaddi are gaining popularity among the corporates, corporates are willing to sponsor these sports and their athletes which is good for the sport and organisations.

Lastly the use of social media by organisations to promote their sports marketing activities, the extensive growth of social media and its tools, namely Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn and others have left organisations with no choice but accepting it as a part of their sports marketing strategy.

Although these are core marketing strategies but are not considered in the primary quadrant due to reasons such as financial constraints, lack of knowledge, lack of personnel are some of the reasons observed by the researchers. So, it is suggested that, organisations should start focusing to shift these indicators to the CORE quadrant for better results through sports marketing.

CONDITIONALLY UNIMPORTANT

Only one factor budget for sports development is in this quadrant, this may be because of allocation of funds through CSR activity. To consider sports as a platform companies should focus on proper fund allocation from different heads of accounts, apart from CSR activity.

ELIMINATOR

There are no factors / indicators in this quadrant. This shows the indicators identified by the researchers are essential and appropriate for the corporate / organizations which promotes their brands / products through sports as a medium.

Conclusion:

As per the literature review, data analysis and the proposed model, the researchers opines that companies which are focusing on the sports sponsorship are targeting the customers who are "RUBANS"-Rural Urbans. The focus has been shifted from high end customers to India's smaller towns and tier II and III towns. The suggestions and opinions expressed through category map are recommendations in nature. These views can vary based on the situation, geographical location and approach towards sports by the society.

Today, Organisations are considering Sports as a Marketing tool to promote their Product and offerings in the market. Many of the organisations target their segment of audience using sports events, sports personalities etc., which as seen in the various statistical tests conducted is on the rise due to various reasons.

Organisations are becoming extremely vary of the sports environment and its potential impact on their brand and sales outcome. For eg- VIVO is a typical example of a brand using sports as a tool to promote its product, which has immensely benefited the brand in terms of brand value and increase in sales in the Indian market to be specific.

To conclude, present day organisations are strongly considering sports as a medium of promoting and increasing their sales in the market. Initiatives such as CSR is also benefiting the organisations off late to reach out to the global and domestic audience.

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