Chapter-4

Sports Reporting in Media

4.1. Evolution of sports reporting

Sports in every society were prominent masculine symbols and were disseminated by using different mass media techniques prevailing in the society. This section gives an overview of development of sports reporting before the advent of prominent modern mass media technique; the moveable type printing press by Guttenberg as well as its evolution in the modern time.

4.1.1. Sports reporting in the pre-Guttenberg era

Sports like sprinting and wrestling found in cave paintings of Lascaux Caves in France dates back to Upper Paleolithic era.\(^1\) Stone slabs representing three pairs of wrestlers of Sumerian Civilization routed in 3000 BC. A cast bronze figurine is one of the earliest depiction of sports housed in National Museum of Iraq, dating back around 2600 BC.\(^2\) The inscriptions and drawings on the tombs of Beni Hassan in Menia Governorate, Saqqara Tombs and Marorika Tomb, Egypt, dating to around 2000 BC, clearly show their will to convey the message related to sports. Pictorial representation was used to propagate the basic rules of the game, uniform of the players and means to announce the winner by awarding them different collars. By these pictorial representations we know that games like Hockey, Gymnastics, Archery, Fishing, Boxing, Weight Lifting, Swimming, Rowing and Marathon running were popular sports of those times.\(^3\) From 776 BC Olympiads were organized by the Greeks and from there we find a series of athletes being depicted as champions through the paintings and statues.

In the medieval world, before the advent of mass media, there were two major kinds of periodical publications: the hand written news sheets and single item news publications. Carved in metal or stone, Acta Diurna (Daily Acts) were posted in the

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public places by the Roman Empire. In China, government produced news sheets called Tipao, hand written on silk and were read by government officials.

In 15th and 16th century long news accounts called Relations, were published in England and France. Single event publications were also posted in broadsheet format. Pamphlets and booklets were also published and were often read loud.

Historically, Indian society was considered as metaphysical beings, hardly interested in material things but ancient texts like the Vedas and the Upanishads talk in detail about physical activities in form of shlokas. All these texts convey the message to keep the body fit and healthy and seek health from activities like Yoga. “The existence of the world is dependent on strength. Be devoted to strength.” (Chhandogya Upanishad 7.8.1). “May our body become invincible like a rock” (Rig-Veda 6.75.12). Mold of seal found in Indus valley civilization depicts an asana of yoga. Like all the other activities, sports like wrestling and other physical activities were also depicted in the ancient monuments and paintings of India. Books written in medieval period also discuss about the sporting activities of Indian courts. According to Abul Fazal, in his book Aina-e-Akbari, the game of cards was of Indian origin and that it was very popular leisure activity in the Indian (Hindu) courts. He also discussed the rules of the game in that book. Hand written books, paintings and inscriptions on the walls, wood and metal slabs as well as public announcements were the main source of spreading information about all the activities including sports.

4.1.2. Advent of modern mass media and sports reporting

With the invention of moveable type printing press by Guttenberg in 1456, the wide dimension of mass media was unleashed by printing of the Bible and other religious texts on a mass basis. Although the first printed periodical Mercurious Gellobelgious, printed in Latin appeared in 1594 in Cologne, now Germany, England emerged the epicenter of journalism in the times to come. The first newspaper was published in English named Oxford Gazette which later it became London gazette, and was published twice in the week. In 1702 first daily newspaper the Daily Courant was published from London.4

There exists a symbiotic relationship between sports and media, by which both are benefited. Researchers like David Rowe call the relationship between media and sports as happiest of marriages.\(^5\)

The symbiosis of media and sport seems to find its roots in the Victorian England era. The year 1863 is marked in the history as a breakthrough in intensifying the relations between the two institutions. The introduction of rotary press in London provided an impetus to the growth of newspaper circulation. The same year in London, football association was formed which standardized the rules of the game eventually leading to its transformation into a game of mass attraction. A letter to the editor printed in the ‘Times’ in 1863 demonstrates how local rules limited the expansion of football as a game, before its standardization by the Football Association:

“I am myself an Ethonian, and the game of football as played by us differs essentially in most respects from that played at Westminster, Rugby, Harrow and most other London clubs. Now, this difference prevents matches being played between either school or club; and furthermore, prevents a player from gaining the credit of playing well anywhere but among his own associates. (Quoted from Tischler 1981: 24)”\(^6\)

The sports media complex started working and both media and sports gained in terms of popularity and circulation respectively. While the press developed into a mass medium, football simultaneously turned into a mass entertainment in Britain. By 1880 football started to drive the sale of newspapers. As such, newspapers as well as advertisers reacted accordingly.

Rob Steen, in his book *Sports Journalism*, claims that Victorian England saw positive and enormous changes in journalism and sports in particular and sports journalism in combination. To quote the Times in 1895, “apparently without much fear of contradiction that all the school boys of England read the cricket news, and that sport, moreover, had become a positive passion, thanks to the publicity given by the sporting press.”\(^7\) In the Victorian age, newspapers were the main source of

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information. With the abolition of stamp duty in 1855, many daily newspapers appeared in London, many of which carried sports news.  

The first newspaper with a special sports section was the *Morning Herald* in England (1817), many other English and American papers followed it: *The Globe* (England, 1818), *The American Farmer* (USA, 1819), and *Bell’s Life* (England, 1824, published on Sundays). *The Times*, the conservative London paper, introduced its sports section in 1829. The sports sections of all these newspapers contained local news, as telegraph transmission was not yet available.  

In the year 1882, first imprint of journalism emerged on sporting history. Australian cricket team was touring England and managed to beat the mighty English on their soil for the first time at the Oval. In response to this incidence of sports, the Sporting Times published a mock obituary and announced the death of English cricket by headlining it as “body is cremated and the ashes will be taken to Australia”. In the subsequent year when England was preparing to tour Australia, English newspapers sensationalized and wrote, “the tour is to regain the ashes”. A damsel from Australia presented an urn to the touring captain Ivo Bligh which contains the ashes of a bail, a ball or a vail. Whatever it was, the urn would endure as the trophy for which the two nations would henceforth compete. Figure-1 shows the obituary published by the Sporting Times declaring the death of English Cricket.

![Obituary published by the Sporting Times declaring the death of English Cricket.](image-url)

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8 Ibid.

Pierce Egan is generally agreed to be the father of sports journalism, a writer who offended many Regency Sensibilities in London and beyond. Born in 1772 to an Irish road mender, Egan achieved a modicum of notoriety with a satire about the Prince Regent and his lover. It was in the burgeoning sporting arena, nevertheless, that he made his name. His first collection of pugilistic-themed musings, *Boxiana*, was published in 1812, he reported on bare-knuckle fighting and horse racing for the *Weekly Dispatch* from 1816 and, eight years later, suitably emboldened, launched a Sunday newspaper, *Pierce Egan’s Life in London, And Sporting Guide*. Another leading pioneer in sports journalism was William Denison, first Honorary Secretary Surrey County Cricket Club. He first reported cricket matches for The Times in the 1840s, a decade that also saw him produce the magazine, Cricketer’s Companion.\(^{10}\)

United States, another major power of the world was also undergoing a drastic socio-political change in the 19\(^{th}\) century. Before 1830s, sports were considered vulgar and disreputable among more literate people. Sports like horse racing and boxing received less coverage because it appealed to lower classes. The 1830s-40s saw dramatic social change in the United States. Wave of industrialization in Northeast was underway. Cities swelled because of migration from countryside & immigrants. Interest in reading and sports was also increased by that time.

By 1869, first pro-baseball league was also established. Newspapers started asserting health benefits of athletics and started to promote athletics as a way to train for life. Media began to extol virtues of sport for American society. U.S was transforming into an industrial power. Professional baseball entrenched as national spectator sport. Boxing moved from bar brawls to organized bouts. Golf and bicycling also rose in popularity. The cost of newspaper printing went down due to technology leading to increase in circulation of newspapers. Sports by the time started to attract readers hence advertisements followed. The symbiosis began to flourish. In 1883, Pulitzer created 1\(^{st}\) sports department for *New York World*.\(^{11}\) In 1895, Hearst started 1\(^{st}\) sports section at *New York Journal*. Use of telegraph enhanced the timing of serving the reports hot, sports journalism became a distinct genre.

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In other parts of the world sports was swelling into a cult called “Masculine Christianity”. France, Germany, Norway and the parts of the world which were colonized by the mighty imperial powers were also witnessing a shift towards modern culture; a culture in which information, entertainment and sport was rated high. By the end of the century, the religion was gaining fresh apostles. The French staged their first (strictly domestic) tennis championship in 1891; pre-empting the football league by forming the baseball league in 1876. The U.S. launched its own tennis (1881) and golf (1895) Opens, and in 1892 hosted the first heavyweight boxing title fight of the gloved era. This fledging internationalism culminated, initially, in the modern Olympic Games of 1896, in Athens, prehistoric home of the proto-type.12

The relationship between sports and media crystallized in beginning of the twentieth century. In England, football started eating up the editorial space covered by cricket. With the start of the labour movement and rise of the working class in terms of modicum of money and status, the pendulum swung. A more colorful and gossipy, American style of journalism took over from the old Victorian style. The improvement in the printing process and transportation enhanced the rewrites and updates of the test matches and golf tournaments.

Hugh Buggy, a Melbourne Herald reporter, made a mark by covering one of the biggest sporting controversies remembered as “bodyline ashes series” in 1932-33. In fact, the term bodyline was brainchild of the reporter covering the series in Australia, in which England bowlers were deliberately targeting Australian batsmen on their body, which was unethical and draws a line between fair and unfair play. Hugh Buggy was using the phrase ‘bowling on the line of the body’ in his reports but to cut the cost of telegram while sending the report he used ‘bodyline bowling’. The controversy was the first significant international row.13

*The People* boasted four pages of sports and increased its circulation from 60, 00, 000 in 1942 to 4.6 million immediately after World War II. It exploited the sports’ commercial possibilities optimally. The newspaper also financed the year-long investigation in English football about betting, one of the biggest scoops in sports of

13Ibid.
the era.\textsuperscript{14} Sports Illustrated, a weekly feature-led sports publication from North America, is the best known sports publication of the world. This sports magazine born in post war sports boom, has now turned into a brand. Thanks to its annual “\emph{Swimsuit Issue}”, where everything to do is with barely clad women, which generates profits for remaining 51 weeks. Similar cause and effect was apparent in the success of specialist sports newspapers in France and Italy.\textsuperscript{15}

In India, sports in newspaper appeared from beginning, the first newspaper which was started by James Augustus Hickey had sports news under the column named ‘Miscellaneous’. The vernacular press also gave detailed account of local cricket, football and other matches played between Indians and foreign rulers. Indian newspapers tried to acquire professional sports journalism skills by hiring professionals from outside the country.

In recent times, Indian newspapers are full of sports reports and dedicate three to four pages of special section to sports. The style of reporting the event has also changed considering the increasing market competition and introduction of other sources of information like the television and the internet. A shift in the priority of attracting more readership could be marked by introduction of beckoning style of reporting, with lots of background information. Besides this, coverage of more controversial news and focus on off-field happenings of the game including reports of governing bodies and its players started getting larger space in the media.

\textbf{4.1.3. Television and sports reporting}

A major change in sports viewing experience was awaiting, as television set its steps into the picture. The world was going to experience sporting events live in their living room with a cup of coffee. The sports lovers need not to go into the stadiums to enjoy the game; instead, television would cater them at their sofa. “In 1936, certain parts of the Summer Olympics could be seen on television in about 30 public areas in Berlin. In June 1937 approximately 2000 Londoners could watch a tennis match transmitted

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.,(p.28)
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.(p.29)
from Wimbledon, and in 1938, the first international football fixture – between England and Scotland – was aired on British television”.16

After the Second World War and emergence of the third world countries, scenario of the world changed. The dominant paradigm of development was injected in the developing and the under developed countries. The concepts like globalization, liberalisation and new world information and communication order were projected by the western countries as the sole path of development. In doing so, the West presented sports as one of the key mantra for cultural change.

“The phenomenon of sport was consistently presented as a prime instance of the gathering force of globalization, especially by extending and reconfiguring national cultural practices as global phenomena. As a result, ‘What may at first seem a national pre-occupation takes on global implications’ (Wenner, 1998:3)” 17

With the entire media available, the electronic medium of television emerged as the popular device to get amused and informed as well among the public. Sports journalism also saw changes as people would prefer the medium where fast news of the events is available. Television provides sound as well as images, which gives the feeling of being there to the spectators. The technology provides the spectators to enjoy the event from different angles. Slow motion and replays also enhance the view of the action and make it spectacular.

This curiosity of knowing who won was catered by electronic media but due to lack of time they were not able to provide the background information about a match. Print media started providing this stuff to the readers, special columns, comments and analysis of the overall proceedings of the sporting event, along with an alluring style of writing that propelled sports journalism into new heights of professionalism. 18

Television seems simultaneously to support, popularize, and dominate sports. It has contributed to the globalization of sports. By the worldwide transmission of sports, traditionally popular only in certain countries or regions such as baseball in America, cycling in France, sumo wrestling in Japan, television fueled new sporting fashions

elsewhere, and live reports from international events like the Olympics and Soccer’s World Cup introduced audiences across the world to new sports.\textsuperscript{19}

In the beginning, television cameras were immobile and actions were shot with defined panorama. Boxing matches were ideal for television to cover because of its limited space of small ring. 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s saw technology which innovated the camera to move around and focus on the action in every corner of the ground. Slow motion with 1000 frames per second crystallized the minutest of details of the action. Introduction of the cable and satellite network opened the floodgates for specialized TV channels dedicated to sports. The increased number of TV channels due to cable and satellite television made it possible in 1979 to start the first network in the USA specializing in sports, named ESPN (Entertainment and Sports Programming Network). In Europe, where the monopoly of public service broadcasters was broken in most countries in the 1970s and 1980s, Eurosport and DSF, a German sports channel, went on air. The specialized sports channels have also changed the nature of sports reporting by introducing more entertaining elements. Commentators make a lot of jokes and puns.

Researchers have tried to study the relationships between sports and media and coined some terminologies and concepts like the “sports/media complex” (Jhally 1989), the “media/sport production complex” (Maguire 1993), the “media sport cultural complex” (Rowe 1999), and the “sport-media nexus”.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{4.1.4. New media and sports reporting}

In mid-nineties came Internet which took over the field while competing with other forms of media like TV, radio, newspapers and sports magazines. Internet provides instant inflow of information from kilometers away on a single click at the fastest pace. People find it easy to follow a test match or a golf match while working in the office or travelling. Internet on mobile phones these days connects you with the world and events happening around. Sports fans can update themselves at every second even if they are pre-occupied. The dot com boom has significantly changed the media market. Websites like \textit{www.cricinfo.com} for cricket and \textit{www.livescores.com} for

\textsuperscript{19}ibid

soccer have emerged as the popular destinations on the internet, for sports lovers to update themselves while keeping themselves busy in the work they are out for.

Steen also wrote in his book, Sports Journalism, about introduction of web version of sports publications: “Cricinfo, indeed, was set up by English expats living in the US who were eager to satisfy their thirst for up-to-date scores, though Guardian Unlimited were first to produce the web version, accompanied by articles that could not be accommodated in print: one of the wonders of this is the freedom it afforded to break the tyrannical hold so long imposed by page sizes and the column format. Soon it was deemed commercial suicide not to follow suit, even though nobody had quite as yet, worked out precisely how to make such sites pay.”

Internet has, in fact, emerged as an encyclopedia which provides all the photographs, statistical data and other background information of a sport. Of late, clubs and organizations both government and private, own their websites whereon information about latest developments of the team, players’ performances and statistics are updated on a regular basis. For the sports which are neglected by media, internet, of course is a boon. Fans can find information about the tournaments and other latest developments on the net by the use of search engines. Every tournament which is organized has its website, information regarding venues and tickets can be availed from it. Due to hits on the website by the fans, advertisers are also attracted. A fair chance of getting handsome amount of money from the advertisers is there. As such, the internet provides and revolutionizes the sporting experience of the passionate fans of sports. Short message services are also available for the fans to be updated about latest scores of the match.

4.2. Media coverage of sports in India

This section deals with evolution of sports reporting in India from early newspapers to the advent of radio and TV. The section also discusses the contribution of new media in sports reporting.

4.2.1. Sports coverage in Indian newspapers

Sports coverage in Indian media started with India’s first newspaper the Hickey’s Gazette, which published news about cricket and football matches. Bengal being the
capital of British India and a hub of sports activities among others, the events were recorded in the journals of those times. Not having special sports pages, the journals published the sport news under the heading of ‘Miscellaneous’.

“While recorded history speaks of stray matches in Calcutta from 1792 onwards, a startling entry in Hickey's Bengal Gazette (Saturday, December 16, 1780) in the year that the Calcutta Cricket Club was founded, testifies to a flourishing cricket culture in Bengal by the late 18th century. The report ran as follows: News extraordinary from the Cricket Club: The gentlemen of the Calcutta Cricket Club are themselves into wind and preparing to take the field for a very active campaign - but as Prior observes: - "The strength of every other member depends upon the belly timber. They are laying in a capital stock of that necessary ammunition fed beef and claret, allowing no other intervals but the short time required for its concoction...many of the clubs are so in-defatigable as to work double tides, at this agreeable, the fatiguing operation. Calcutta Cricket Club enjoys today the use of a splendid site as good as can be found anywhere. At a meeting it was decided to admit officers of Her Majesty's regiments quartered in Fort William, Dum Dum, Alipore, Barrackpore on payment of half fees because their pay did not permit them to incur the expense. As the Cricket Club had the free use of regimental bands, they have to show some appreciation so the underpaid band men gave their services to help their officers enjoy themselves.”

Trend of covering the local sports, be it the football club matches of Bengal or Cricket tournaments of Bombay, was apparent in the content of newspapers of the 20th century India. The Statesman, The Times of India and the vernacular press followed the same pattern.

“The Amrita Bazar Patrika was the only daily that made attempts to report native sporting feats. But it was unable, due to financial constraints, to compete with its rivals, The Statesman and the Englishman, which recruited sports journalists from Britain”. By this account we can trace out that newspapers from those times were serious about sport news and they were striving towards perfection by hiring well trained professional sport journalists. Feature stories about the sportsmen and

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23ibid
continuous queries from the readers, about the rules of the game answered by the editors were also published.

“The first remarkable event in the history of sports journalism in India was the introduction of a sports page by a leading English daily of Bombay in the late thirties. This bold and revolutionary step was resented by some readers who had no interest in sports, but the majority of the readers liked it. Its sport page became so popular that the other newspapers followed suit”.

These days sports have become a staple diet in the newspapers of India. News items, features, interviews and points of view of the experts regularly appear in the sports pages; important sporting news even finds place in the front page. Three to four pages of coverage is dedicated to sports in almost every newspaper. Cricket leads in the coverage but other sports like Hockey, Tennis and Football also draw a good space. Following is the spectrum of styles in which print media reports sports especially cricket:

a. **News story**: is a single article, news item, or feature, usually concerning a single event, issue, theme or profile of a person. Correspondents report news occurring in the main, locally from their own country or from foreign cities where they are stationed. Most reporters file their information or wire their stories electronically. Breaking stories are written by staff members. When it comes to cover cricket, stories related to reporting of cricket matches come under this category. Every newspaper has its correspondents specially dedicated to cricket. They tour foreign countries if team India is touring or any tournament is held at the foreign soil in which India is participating. They also cover matches held in different cities of India. Their reporting is simply informative. Only match proceedings are covered with scores and performances. Generally the news is purchased from the wire services like Reuters, AFP, UNI and PTI, but some journalists made their mark in this field in India such as Kadambari Murali Wade worked for Hinduatan Times and broke the story of BCCI to launch the IPL. Stan Rayan working for The Hindu, Gautam Bhattachariya for Anand Bazar Patrika, Rahul and KN Prabhu

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for Times of India. Rahul Bhattachrya writes for Wisden Cricketers Almanac and The Guardian. Magazines like sports star and sports world have their own journalists such as Rohit Brijnath.

b. **Editorial:** An editorial is an article that presents the newspapers opinion on an issue. It reflects the majority vote of the editorial board, the governing body of newspapers made up of editors and business managers. It is usually unsigned. Editorial writers build on an argument and try to persuade readers to think the way they do. Editorials are meant to influence public opinion, promote critical thinking and sometimes cause people to take action on an issue. It is an opinioned news story. Cricket these days is clouded with different issues such as match-fixing and spot fixing. Issues of captaincy and performance of players need to be addressed by the newspapers through the editorials. People should know what different editorial writers think of an issue related to cricket which is connected to emotions of the people. The objective of editorial related to issues of cricket is to explain and interpret the happenings of the game or event, criticize persuade and praise the moves of different players and organizations dealing in cricket.

c. **Feature article:** Articles that intend to inform teach or amuse the reader on a topic. It is an umbrella term that includes many structures. Cricket fits in these pieces such as interview with players, personality profiles of players and their personal experiences. These entire pieces come under the umbrella of features. Newspapers’ sports pages are full of these stories. Some of the journalists are expert in this field such as Ayaz Memon, a senior cricket journalist and writer, Kadambari Murali, Boria Majumdar and Nalin Mehta.

d. **Column:** A short newspaper or magazine piece that deals specifically with a particular field of interest. They appear with bylines on regular basis. In covering cricket, regular columns appear in the sports page. Experts of the game who also mastered their journalistic skills are given space on a regular basis. People find it interesting and informative to read because the issue is elaborated and performances are praised and criticized by those who are placed as icons in the minds of the readers. They have a different value to the statement and their point of view is certainly different from the view of the
common man. Greats like Sunil Gavasker, Wasim Akram, and Vivian Richards, Ravi Shastri, regularly get space in the newspapers for their column. Some prominent columnists are Harsha Bhogle for the Indian Express, Wasim Akram, Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri for the Times of India.

4.2.2. Sports coverage in Indian magazines

Magazines dedicated to sports provide a fair amount of content about sports to the readers. Even general news magazines provide sports news to their readers to update them on sports counts. The publication of sports magazines in India dates back to the early stage of the press in India.

The earliest sports journals in Bengal, the Bengal Quarterly Sporting Magazine and the India Sporting Review may be dated to the second and third decades of the 19th century. Sports coverage was of a fairly accomplished level, as evinced from the reports and news items published in these magazines. Detailed accounts on the rules of cricket and horse racing were published, often drawing queries from readers. Following is an illustration of the queries of the readers:

“Dear Sir- Will you very kindly favour me with an answer to the following query connected with the game of cricket. Is a batsman when he is in common phraseology ‘winded’ allowed any time to recover breath?”

November 23, 1844. Answer- “No rule for it. It must depend on the umpire calling play”----Editor.25

In today’s market driven media, sports magazines have thoroughly changed their style. Editorials, features, profile of the players and expert comments on every sport with dashing photographs and juicy style of writing entice the readers. Prominent sport magazines of India are the Sport Star published by The Hindu group and Cricket World.

The sports magazines cover almost all the sports played but in India, special attention to cricket is given. Important snazzy and controversial sports news from all over the world is published in these magazines. In-depth, high quality coverage of special

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international sports is also provided to the readers when they happen like the FIFA World Cup, the Olympics and the Wimbledon. Some of the sports magazines also provide poster of a star in every issue.

4.2.3. Sports coverage in Indian radio

On April 4, 1921, the radio station KDKA broadcast for the very first time a sporting event, namely a boxing match from the Pittsburgh Motor Square Garden. BBC Radio first covered live cricket in 1927 and ball-by-ball commentary on Test matches began in 1957. Test Match Special – TMS became a fixture on Radio 3 medium wave, then moved to Radio 4 medium wave and, later, Radio 4FM.26

Radio broadcasting in India was started in the year 1923 by the radio clubs of Bombay, later followed by the Calcutta and Madras clubs. The Indian Broadcasting Company was formed in 1927 to take care of radio broadcasting in the country.27 Before that, the drama of sports could be shared only by playing the game, watching it on the ground or by reading it in the sports section of the newspapers. Radio broadcasting gave the listener feeling of being present at the scene of action which gave it an edge over print media. The capability of live reporting gave an impression of being witness of some suspense and excitement. Radio announcers learned quickly how to present an intense game dramatically. Radio was a portable and fast medium which made it an instant hit among the listeners. Today, radio has a mass reach as it can be accessed in offices, cars, work stations and households, anywhere, any time. Interviews of the players were another advantage of radio; people now could hear the voices of their heroes. Radio cricket commentary in India started in early 1940s when AIR started Bobby Tal Yar Khan, a popular columnist of that time. Maharaj Kumar of Vizianagram famous as Vizzy (ex-captain of Indian Cricket team) also contributed a lot in this area.

4.2.4. Sports coverage on Indian television

A revolution in the field of media, the biggest game changer of the media markets around the world, was the arrival of television. Sports lovers could now experience the excitement of the action in a more realistic way. Radio only engaged the sense of

hearing, but on television people could hear as well as see the action live while sitting in their living room with a cup of coffee. The sense of ‘being there’ in the stadium is stronger for a television spectator than radio listener. Transmission of live images made possible an event to be witnessed by millions of people at every nook and corner of the world.

“We could enlist the power of numbers, such as estimations that almost 900 million people watched at least some of the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, or that almost 910 million did the same for the 2010 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup final.”

Indian media bazaar was untouched by this powerful entity until 1991; India had only one television channel namely Doordarshan, little more than a mouth piece of the government. Privatization and deregulation of television changed the media landscape of the country and transformed it into one of the world’s largest television markets. The most obvious indication of this change is evident in the exponential growth in the number of television channels and the resultant expansion of media players in the country. At a time when the television program profile was being stretched to include new areas of human endeavor, sports obviously got increased attention. Survival in a cut throat competition was not easy in India, as the country was by now engulfed in the spectacles of sports specially the game of cricket. Television talk shows and more detailed analysis of the game was the only mantra left for Indian television news media, after the sports channels claiming all the television rights to air the matches on Indian soil and abroad.

Indian news media found sports as one strong shoulder to ride on. Following is the style in which sports is covered on television for Indian viewers:

a. **News coverage:**

   Anchors present the news either videotaped or live, through transmission from on-the-screen reporters called news correspondents. News channels send their reporters to different parts of the world where team India is participating in a tournament or touring a specific country. Bulletin is prepared in such a way that

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sports news also captures some space with visuals from the game. A detailed description of every sport which is followed by the Indian viewers is also presented by news anchors with the use of new technology such as graphics and highlighting the turning points of the game. Broadcasters who made their mark in this field of sports journalism are Mallika Bajaj, Sumera Khan for ABP News and Romana Israr for Zee News.

b. Panel discussion:

Panel discussion has emerged as one of the favorite programs of every news channel in recent years. The match is dissected on a table in front of the camera at a studio by a news anchor and some experts of the game, generally former players. Female models like Mandira Bedi and Veena Malik also appeared in some news channels just to add the glamour quotient. ‘Aaj Tak’, the famous 24-hour news channel in Hindi first started this type of coverage to make a hype of the Indian series with Australia in 2001. After that, every channel made it an essential part of their reporting of sport. This type of reporting always attracted the audience because they find legends of the game discussing the moves of the players, which everybody holds informative. The conflict of opinion among the former greats on an issue makes it controversial, which adds spice to the coverage. The feedback is also entertained by providing viewers the facility of calling and directly posing their doubts in front of the sporting legends.

c. Talk shows:

Organizing talk shows with popular players of any game amuses the audience as they are able to know about personal life of stars they admired during the match. These players are real life heroes in the minds of common man as they save the nation’s pride so many times by performing on the grass. Fans credit them and almost worship them in India, and knowing their struggle and personal life always attracts people. The program of interview is the best example of infotainment as youth finds it informative and amusing simultaneously.

4.2.5. Sports coverage on Internet and Mobile

Before the advent of the internet, sports fans were dependent on the copy of their local newspaper to get the updates of their favourite sports team. The boom in IT industry
changed the entire scenario and now sports updates and news are just a click away. There are many more sources that provide latest news, views and discussion about sports on the web. Traditional journalists are also contributing in this new medium. Bloggers, fans and athletes themselves are breaking news of their own via sports related websites. Old prerogatives are challenged and new vistas are opened. Mobile companies are also providing latest updates via SMSs on the cell phone which enables the fans to get updated wherever they are and whatever they are doing. Another big change which was brought by the internet and mobile in sports reporting was the advent of global sporting culture in India. Apart from cricket, Indians are now exposed to every sport around the world. Increasing popularity of sport like formula one and inauguration of the Buddha International Circuit in Noida for formula one racing, strongly betrays the impact of globalization and rising popularity of sports globally. In India, first hockey, then cricket ruled the hearts of people, but due to the advent of internet other sports like soccer, tennis, and other adventure sports are also followed.

The use of social media by professional sports teams is also increasing rapidly. Many teams are dedicating more time and resources to operate their social media presence and to connect with stakeholders. Additionally, nearly all sports teams’ websites now integrate links to their respective pages for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and blogs. This makes sense because brands rely heavily on fan following, so it is essential to understand what media fans want. These digital media outlets provide efficient means for sports organizations to facilitate fan interaction and commentary of their brand due to low entry costs and large fan population present.

4.3. Role of media in building sports as brands

In an era of cut throat competition, brand image gives an edge and drives success. This is applicable to sports like any other product. Greek and Spartan army marked their cavalry to differentiate from others and used a specific symbol to recognize their horses. Those branded horses were rated most in the auction market of the retired cavalry as people recognized the symbol and felt that these branded horses of the army will be well trained and fed. This was the beginning of a practice which later became most inevitable to survive in the market.
According to renowned marketing guru Philip Kotler,

*Brand is a name, a word, a sign, a symbol, a drawing, or a combination of these, which aims at identifying the goods and services of a company and differentiates them from the competitors.*\(^\text{29}\)

When we associate ourselves with a particular brand we get a psychological satisfaction after using it.\(^\text{30}\) When we wear a dress of our favourite brand, apart from fulfilling the function of clothing, it also gives us some extra satisfaction of wearing a world class brand. We find ourselves standing in the league of celebrities and icons that are projected to use that product.

*A brand is a promise a company makes to its customers, and this promise is built on the coherence and continuity of the brand’s products.* When you assemble various elements of marketing mix into a whole to identify yourself in the competitive market, it is called branding.\(^\text{31}\) It captures the mind of the customers with the brand name and projects the image of an experienced, reliable and huge business behind it. Primarily the aim of branding is to differentiate one’s product from others but it also persuades the customers to buy the product, creates loyalty towards the product and builds the level of confidence among the company and the consumers. Branding also creates a picture in the minds of the public that this brand is the perfect solution of the problem.

Brands are different from other products in the terms that brands are what consumers buy and products are what companies make. Apart from shaping the consumers’ perception of the product, brand is an accumulation of emotional and functional associations. Consumers emotionally attach themselves to the brand, which is done by engaging icons, celebrities and sports persons to this task. Consumers find the brand a reliable one, if over a period of time the product is successful in satisfying the needs of the consumers. This enables the consumers to take a quick decision about what to go for. As long as consumers believe that the brand will continue meeting their


\(^{30}\)ibid

expectations and perform in the desired manner consistently, they remain committed and loyal to it.

*High levels of brand awareness and a positive brand image should increase the probability of brand choice, as well as generate higher consumer loyalty and reduce vulnerability to competitive marketing actions.*

A brand, is a name, term, sign, symbol or a combination of all these planned to differentiate the goods/services of one seller or group of sellers from those of competitors. It represents values, ideas and even personality. It is a set of functional, emotional and rational associations and benefits which have occupied target market’s mind. Associations are nothing but the images and symbols associated with the brand or brand benefits. The key elements of a brand which drive success are: relevance, consistency, proper positioning, sustainability, credibility, inspiration, uniqueness and appeal. These are created though consistent efforts, both communication and action programmes. Brand equity is the perceived value of the brand which determines its place in the brand hierarchy of the particular category.

A successful brand needs a perfect strategy to sneak on the top of the market and sustain its place. Communication is the most important tool in brand building. Organisations put a large amount of money and effort to communicate with the consumers in the form of advertisement and other promotional activities. Communication helps in placing the product into the hearts and minds of the consumers, known as brand or product positioning.

### 4.4. Media and the making of brand cricket in India

In India, cricket has become a powerful brand which appeals to millions. The IPL promoted 20-20 format of the game has in fact become a global brand enjoying unparalleled brand loyalty. The media has played a vital role building brand cricket in India.

Cricket in Indian subcontinent is a cult. Hangover of the erstwhile British raj cricket seems to be a lot more than a game to the people in this part of the world. Earliest tournament of cricket being played on Indian soil was the Bombay Pentangular.

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recorded by Majumdar: The foremost tournament in pre-partition India, the Bombay Pentangular, controlled by the communal gymkhanas in the city, had its inception in the Presidency matches of the 1890s.\textsuperscript{33}

Indian society was deeply divided in the name of cast and creed at that time, which was clearly reflected by the existence of the communal clubs and matches between them. \textit{In course of time, the Pentangular tournament came into existence, with the inclusion of Hindus in 1907, Muslims in 1912 and the ‘Rest’, comprising mainly Christians and Anglo-Indians in 1937. Despite considerable opposition, the tournament continued until the 1940s, to be finally abolished in January 1946.}\textsuperscript{34}

Ram Chandra Guha, an eminent historian wrote in his essay on history of sport in colonial Bombay that: \textit{Cricket helps to understand the fissures and tensions of a deeply divided society......}\textsuperscript{35}

India absorbed the gentlemanliness of the game and breached all boundaries of cast and creed in times to come. The very trait of the game of cricket came into play and helped Indians to unify.

\textit{Cricket, a ‘gentlemanly’ sport, could only serve to remedy social ills. The existing historiography of Indian cricket has portrayed the game in chaste terms, as being a social unifier cutting across class boundaries, a civilizing agent and a cultural bond striving to overcome communal divisions.}\textsuperscript{36}

The gentlemen’s game was used by Indians to challenge the British and defeat them and to give them a taste of their own medicine. The princely states of India such as Maharaja of Natore and Cooch Behar gave patronage to the game which helped it flourish in times to come. As Boria Majumdar stated:

\textit{Indian cricket thus was not simply an act of mimicry, but was conceived of as a tool for remedying deeper, more serious allegations that underplayed native abilities. The roots of cricket in India went deep – to help ideas of self-respect, manliness and self-worth to permeate among the natives. Educated men from middle-class backgrounds}

\textsuperscript{34}ibid
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
promoted cricket, trying to legitimize physical activity in society and win respect for the players. The sport had emerged as the mirror wherein an Indian identity started to reassess itself, and in that sense was certainly part of a nationalist enterprise.

India’s love affair with cricket was a news item for the press which weighed it as an important content to cover. The tournaments and matches between the Europeans and Indians were reported in the press frequently. The politics behind the game was also reported by the press in those times. The famous boycott of the tour of Marylebone Cricket Club by the Hindu Gymkhana was reported in Times of India as: The Hindu Gymkhana has, however, refused to cooperate with the Bombay Cricket Association. At a recent meeting of the Association when the proposed tour was discussed, a letter from the Hindu Gymkhana was read in which they stated that they were unable to participate in any of the matches with the MCC.

In recent years cricket in India has emerged to be a major event to celebrate and enjoy. Indians follow cricket as a religion and cricketing heroes as their gods. Cricket has also reinforced the spirit of nationalism among the Indians, as to quote Nalin Mehta: there has been a substantial literature in recent years focusing on cricket’s journey from colonial mortar during the British raj to national cement in independent India.

With time, cricket has become an integral part of Indian culture and India a leader in the world of cricket.

While nineteenth- and twentieth-century cricket owed much to the pragmatism, enthusiasm and energy of the English empire builders, decolonization and the rise of postcolonial nation states since the 1980s have heralded a fundamental transformation in the character of the sport. In the modern cricket world, the Indians lead; the others follow. As a consequence, cricket has become integral to defining the culture of post-colonial India, a nation anxious to define its own position in a rapidly changing world characterized by globalization and growing interdependence.

Taking full advantage of this love affair of cricket and nationalism Indian media made it a staple diet. The contemporary situation of Indian media after the ‘Murdockization’ of news, as coined by D.K.Thussu, is obsessed with three ‘C’s namely celebrity, cricket and crime. Commenting on the coverage of cricket in Indian media Thussu states that: Murdoch’s media recognizes the primacy of cricket in India’s popular culture, the colonial game having become the most important sport among Indians, cutting across class, language and even gender barriers, and second only to Bollywood in its popularity across the country. The game generates such strong passions that, during a dispute about rights to broadcast the 2003 Cricket World Cup matches, the government of India petitioned the Supreme Court, requesting that broadcasting live coverage of one-day matches as well as test series was in the public interest and therefore, Doordarshan should have the rights to telecast it live. It was argued that if cricket was not available free on the national network, there was a danger of riots in parts of the country, a plea that the country’s highest court upheld.40

While television broadcasting began in India in 1959, the state maintained a monopoly on the airwaves on the premise that this would ensure judicious use of the media in developmental tasks.41 The government through the use of its controlled policies tried to use media in a balanced way. But scenario changed when the stance of the government tilted towards the open door policies in the year 1992. In the year 1998, the first Indian 24-hour news channel started and since then there was no looking back. Indian news media found a market which fetched them loads and loads of money. By the year 2005 the Indian market grew as one of the biggest market of the world. The media business, one of the fastest growing industries in India is estimated to be worth $5 billion.42

Cable and satellite television have increased substantially since their introduction in India in the year 1992, when only 1.2 million Indian homes had access to these

42Supra note.
facilities.\textsuperscript{43} By the year 2012, the Indian television market grew in leaps and bounds, counting as many as 44.2 million DTH subscribers and 825 channels operating 24x7.\textsuperscript{44}

Cricket, by its massive popularity, became a central character in the whole scenario. News media tried to inform the public about the latest events related to the game, its controversies were exposed and its players were made celebrities by the media. Nalin Mehta wrote: \textit{Unlike any other country in the world, the Indian television news industry has consciously ridden on cricket’s shoulders to such an extent that by 2006, cricket-oriented programming accounted for the greatest expenditure in news gathering and the greatest visibility across most news channels.}\textsuperscript{45}

To survive in the competitive market of news, Indian media apparently tried to make a brand of cricket based on the tactics of brand management. Cricket had all the potential to become a brand as people in India were psychologically attached to the game. They were satisfied with the content of news related to cricket provided by media. The experiment of selling cricket in England was successfully done by Rupert Murdoch, so he tried his hand in the exponentially growing Indian market of news media.

\textit{In Asia, through Star Sport, Murdoch has tried to replicate the British success story. Cricket-related stories appear almost daily on Star News, as well as on other private networks – and not just on sports news. These include details of private lives of cricketing stars as well as regular stories about their expensive lifestyles. When international test matches are under way, Star News runs a regular hour-long programme titled ‘Match Ke Mujrim’ (The Guilty of the Match), where ex-cricketers and commentators dissect the day’s sporting action, with active participation by audiences, naming and shaming the worst-performing players on a particular day. Interactivity is central to such an enterprise, as this kind of coverage can lead to}

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{44}TRAI. (2012, April 14). \textit{India has 44.2 mn DTH subs, 825 channels:TRAI}. Retrieved January 8, 2014, from Indian Television Website: www.indiantelevision.com/headlines/y2k12/apr/apr129.php \\
channel loyalty in the long run and, at the same time, provide a new revenue stream for privatized telecom networks, which obviously benefit from this convergence.46

Star News was the first channel to air cricket specific program in 1999 named “Turning Point”, inviting Bishan Singh Bedi as resident expert and British batting legend Sir Jeffery Boycott as foreign expert. This was an important innovation but the program was scheduled only for the duration of the Cricket World Cup 1999.47

Several other programs dedicated to cricket started to air on the news media. The newly mushroomed news channels tried to capitalize on the way shown by Star News. Major breakthrough was gained by Aaj Tak, a 24 hour Hindi news channel. In 2001 Australian cricket team was scheduled to tour India just after two months from the launch of the channel. The world champions in one-day cricket Australians were on a winning voyage and conquered every country at their home grounds. India was the final frontier, as publicly stated by the Australian skipper, in the quest of total domination of the game. Aaj Tak, in a bid to nail its position in Indian market, started a daily half-an-hour program named Kaun Banega World Champion. This program was aired throughout the duration of the series and on the match days, regular bulletins were also interrupted and exclusive program of cricket was shown discussing the strategy and prospect of the game. Aaj Tak was the first to introduce the concept of showing live scores on the top right side of the TV screen. The news programming was also halted at every lunch and tea break of the match and cricket experts dissected the proceedings of the day’s play.

The whole strategy was to convert a cricket series, that would otherwise have been covered as part of the regular sports news, into a mega-news event like the general election or the annual union budget. According to Uday Shankar, the then Aaj Tak editor:

We started hyping it up. Our agenda was very simple. We knew cricket was important. We wanted to plug in. . . . We knew that it was going to be a high viewership activity but until then news channels hadn’t found a way of plugging into the cricket activity

and creating a news agenda based on cricket. We had serious limitations with pictures [Aaj Tak did not have broadcast rights for the series and could only use a few minutes of match footage daily] so we decided to hire Bishen Singh Bedi [former India captain] as our resident expert.\textsuperscript{48}

Aaj Tak’s strategy paid rich dividends and by the next series this dissection and discussion style of covering the game became the standard model to cover cricket in Indian media. The TRP ratings of the programs dedicated to cricket started shooting up, which is the only way to show the presence in the stiffly competitive Indian market, where new news channels were mushrooming at an increasing rate.

The fact that cricket is one sport in which India does well, also contributes to its wide and prominent coverage in regular news updates and daily sports bulletins. It’s a tactic that registers well in television ratings and helps channels connect to younger audiences. According to Anisa Khan, who anchors NDTV India’s daily sport show, Khel India (Sport India), ‘On all channels, sports coverage is primarily cricket coverage. Except for Sania Mirza, everything else is ritualistic, with the sole exception of World Cup Football or Olympic Games. The bulk of programming is cricket.’\textsuperscript{49}

Within general news programming as well, cricket competes with political and social news and, almost always, wins. To quote the head of Star India:

“Almost on a regular basis, we open the news bulletin with cricket. Today if you were to ask me to gauge the mind of a newsroom producer, a run-down producer in the news room of all channels, I think it will require a big national, natural disaster for a person to relegate a cricket match involving India to a second or third-headline status”\textsuperscript{50}.

Claiming that cricket always sells in Indian market Rajdeep Sardesai, former managing editor of NDTV and CEO of CNN-IBN, says ‘I once did an interview with

\textsuperscript{49} ibid
\textsuperscript{50} ibid
Virender Sehwag for the Hindi show Takkar and the ratings on that were much higher than for politicians and even film stars.\textsuperscript{51}

Through all these years we find that news media started making cricket a brand to sell. Like a brand to its customers, promising to cater his needs and fulfill his desires, cricket promises to its viewer’s wholesome entertainment and a way to purge their emotions. Cricket satisfies almost all the attributes of a brand to be successful in the market. A win over any foreign team whips up the emotions of people and they find a reason to celebrate. People find themselves on highest level of psychological satisfaction when they are attached to any cricketer or simply use the brand which the cricketer is advertising for. This is evident in the fan following of the top cricketers like Sachin Tendulkar in India.

With the launch of IPL in 2007, the Indian cricket and its connection with media exponentially expanded. The trio of cricket, media and Bollywood created a rage in the cricket loving country. This certainly reflects the power of a successful brand that changed market scenario of the country. To quote Srinivasan Rameni, “From being a sport that was a hangover from the colonial era and restricted to teams divided on communal basis (the Pentangular, for example, during the early 1940s) to becoming a symbol of nationalism and now to a full- fledged commercial enterprise, cricket has traversed a path very much followed by the nation in its socio-economic course. If playing for the nation’s pride was what drove professional cricket after independence, it is playing for commercial gain that is the driving story today, much in consonance with the sharp changes in the nature of nation-building that exists in India today.”\textsuperscript{52}

It is because of the viewership of cricket, that IPL became an instant hit. About 220 million people watched the games on television in India, Writing in The Guardian, Paul Kelso commented on the impact of the IPL: Theatrical, wildly hyped and hugely lucrative, the auction was a watershed moment for the IPL and the international

\textsuperscript{51}ibid
game. In the last month, before a ball has been bowled, the league has raised $1.8 billion, more than the ICC will receive for its next two World Cups.\textsuperscript{53}

Another reason of success of IPL as a brand is the mass fan following of cricket. Yes, hockey has a traditional edge, but in recent times, the game has lost its popularity and fan base. Cornering football and other games which have a good following in the world, cricket dominates the Indian market. \textit{Cricket corners approximately 80–85\% of the advertising revenue that goes into professional sports in India.}\textsuperscript{54}

“Where there is passion there is profit”.\textsuperscript{55} This notion seems to be tailor-made for the love affair of Indian cricket media and people.

\textsuperscript{53}Gupta, A. (2009). India and the IPL: Cricket's Globalized Empire. \textit{The Round Table}, 98 (401), 201-211.
\textsuperscript{54}ibid