Chapter-5

Theoretical Framework of the Study

5.1. Role and functions of media in society

The principal functions of mass media in the society are: information, correlation, continuity, entertainment and mobilization. The foremost function of media is to inform the public about the recent happenings or events people are interested to know about. The event could be about politics, crime, sports, stock market, and entertainment. Another responsibility of media is to explain, interpret, discuss and comment on the latest happenings regarding the issues related to common man. In performing its role as critical commentator and agenda builder, the media critically comments on the policies and initiatives of the state while reminding the people of what is important for them. Media speaks from the side of public and takes up their issues as prime motive. Besides reminding them of their responsibilities in performing its entertainment provider role, the media produces and presents some stuff which could provide distraction to the public from the problems of daily life. News related to celebrities, films and sports amuses the people and it is always enjoyable.

5.2. Sports as news

The three essential ingredients of news are: Event / Fact, Audience, and Interest. It means that news must be based on event or fact, directed towards an audience, who has interest in the event. By virtue of having wider interest across the world, sporting events, obviously, are important news for the media to report. An event can reach the level of news if it has certain salient features, which holds good for sports as well. News value owes much to the following elements of news: timeliness, proximity, prominence, oddity or unusualness, number and size, conflict, adventure, crime and sex, consequence etc. Measured against these elements, different sports events have different news value which guides the media in its news selection. While attempting to fulfill its three main purposes- to inform, to educate, and to entertain the audiences- the news media packages its contents distinctively as news stories, editorials, articles and features. While the news stories are aimed at informing the audience, editorials

and articles are braced for enlightening the audience and features and other material written in lighter vein are meant for entertaining the audiences. Sometimes, information and entertainment purposes are fulfilled simultaneously and sports reporting exactly does that. While informing it also gives something to relish.

Since people, cutting across all sorts of barriers, take an intense interest in sports events, the newspapers treat sports as very important news item to be reported. The result is every major newspaper has a separate sports section, once considered as an offshoot of news section. Sports lovers follow sports events passionately and want the newspapers to provide them with a detailed and updated account of major events. They love to see live coverage on TV, enjoy live commentary on radio, get scores on their handhelds and read the reports in newspapers.

In the specialized sports sections, newspapers provide detailed reports of sports events, advance stories of forthcoming big events, interviews with sports stars and features. The news stories often come with action photographs running into multiple columns. Leading newspapers also carry syndicated columns by prominent sports persons. Importance of sports in the scheme of news priority of the mainstream media can be understood from the fact that sports reporting is no longer considered as an offshoot of routine news reporting that could be taken up by any reporter, rather it is handled by a person who has developed a way with various sports and games- a person well versed with technical aspects of sports, its terminology, and well acquainted with past records of sports stars and their strengths and weaknesses. Newspapers generally make a senior journalist as sports editor and two or more reporters and copy editor work under him to bring out the sports pages.

5.3. Special demands of sports reporting

The ‘inverted pyramid’ style of reporting does not suffice sports reporting because sports reporting does not simply disclose in a logical order what has happened. The reader expects the play to be analyzed and individual performance to be assessed while presenting an account of the match in a fair, objective and unbiased way. This demands acquaintance with technical aspects of the game which has made sports reporting highly specialized. Newspapers report a match which was already telecast live and the result is known. So the reporter strives to provide a perceptible analysis of
the game by zeroing in on the performances of various key players. He praises and
criticizes players with equal force ignoring his personal likes and dislikes. Sports
reporting being essentially interpretative in nature, background information and
causes are enumerated.

It provides the necessary background information so that proper significance of a
particular performance could be fully highlighted. For example, if a leading cricketer
scores a test match century, the reporter is expected to provide information on how
many centuries he has scored earlier and how many batsmen scored centuries at that
particular ground. Past record of famous sports stars is supposed to be on reporter’s
tips and he is required to analyse the performance and make a comparison of today’s
performance with his past records.

The readers of sports page want to read a perceptive analysis of the game and they
also expect that the sports reporter will discuss who played a sterling role in win or
whose bad performance resulted in the crushing defeat. Hence, the report has to begin
with the elaboration of causes or he has to explain how victory was achieved, who
was the mainstay, and in what way he made a telling contribution. These questions are
answered at the beginning.

Sports’ reporting goes beyond objectivity or presentation of news in unbiased or
unprejudiced manner. Here, one could show his range of vocabulary and develop a
lucid style. Adjectives, metaphors, similes, personification and other figures of
speech, if one desires so, could be used. One could use his ability to weave words
freely but one has to hold readers’ interest. There is no restriction, as far as the use of
words and language is concerned. Sport stories are read leisurely without the anxiety
to know the outcome at once. For the reader seeking to be fully entertained and
enlightened, language is no hurdle. The sports reporter usually develops a lucid style
to lure readers. If a technical term needs further explanation, it is spelled out fully. A
sports report is basically a description attempting to conjure an image by using action
verbs and appropriate adjectives so that the mental picture could be provided for the
reader. Being a report of an event already watched live on TV or listened to radio
commentary, objective interpretation is expected. In providing objective analysis, the
sports reporter provides background information and appraisal of the performance of
players. As such, a sports report is a judicious blend of event of the moment,
background information and interpretation. The job of sports reporter is to provide an appraisal of the game and he is also supposed to visualize individuals’ efforts, atmosphere, and crowd’s attitude so that the readers could recreate the game by themselves if they desire so. One-idea-one-sentence structure is preferred in sports reporting too.

Newspapers usually publish four kinds of news reports - Spot news or on-the-scene report, follow-up, roundup and curtain raiser. The curtain raiser is known as advance copy. Newspapers file a detailed report or a series of reports ahead of a major sports event. This report discusses comparative strength and weakness of rivals and also ropes in historical background. They may predict the outcome.

The sports pages usually carry action photographs running into two or more columns. In drawing sports page makeup, action pictures are given dominating position. The page lead is placed on the left hand of the page. Bold headlines are given under the picture. For a balance, an equally important story is placed at the right hand. Placement of picture next to advertisement is avoided. To attain ease of eye movement, the items are properly selected. Box stories and single column photos are used to add variety to the page.

5.4. Media logic and cricket

In India, cricket is the most popular game and its fans never skip to watch on television a match India plays. Indo-Pak match days are like holidays, as people spend their time by watching live coverage of the match on television. It is like a fervor that gets life paralyzed. The super success of IPL is an eloquent testimony to the growing audience craziness. About 220 million people watched the game on television in India, making it one of the largest television markets in the world\(^2\). The media just caters to that eagerness by reporting the events, often live. Cricket qualifies all the tests to figure at the top of the media’s scheme of news priority. Media reports it and provides relevant information and updates of the matches. In this fast life of today people find it easy to get updated by live scores provided by news channels during the matches. Also thanks to the internet, people stay updated about the cricket scores during the working hours at the work station on a single click. Even while travelling,

fans keep a track of the latest scores through SMSs on the mobile phones. Fact of the matter remains that people wants to know about cricket and media informs them, hence the symbiosis flourishes.

5.4.1. Cricketers as icons/celebrities

Cricket in Indian subcontinent is more than a game; it is followed as a cult. Players like Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar and Mahendra Singh Dhoni are referred to gods of the game fearlessly. Researchers call it as a ‘love affair of India with cricket’, reporting such an event which is popularly followed by the masses beyond boundaries of religion and age, is a responsibility of media.

Another function of media is to interpret the event and discuss its prospects. People are keen to know about the results of the match. In any case fans never want their team to lose and that’s why media these days gratifies to this curiosity and dedicates programs which discuss the game thread-bare. At every news channel we can find programs in which experts of the game discuss the prospects of projected winners and runners. At every tea and lunch break of the match, the news channels schedule their program specially dedicated to cricket, in which former cricketers and guests from foreign countries participate. The main motive of the program rests in the discussion of the decisions taken on and off the field, the team selected by the captain, performances of the players and projected results. In newspapers special columns of legends of the game appears at regular intervals. They also discuss the proceedings of the mach according to their study of the situation. They play role of a critic to the performance of any team as a whole and performance of players as individuals. The strategy of the game is also discussed in the columns. At the eve and end of every match, a press conference is organized in which media, on behalf of public and fans, ask questions about the failure or success of the match. Good performances are appreciated and bad performances are criticized by the media.

5.4.2. Cricket as entertainment

Media reporting of sports including the news, commentaries, updates, features, and discussions form a source of entertainment for the curious audiences like other subjects. Cricket, a hangover from the erstwhile British raj, has now became a main source of entertainment for millions of people in Indian subcontinent and the media
cater to them by providing news, reporting its on and off field controversies and making celebrities out of it. The organization of extravagant tournaments like IPL makes cricket a festival to celebrate and jerk-off the tensions of daily life. The success of T-20 format of cricket speaks volumes about its popularity as a tool for entertainment. Media call it as an item number of cricket. Covering it is a responsibility of media.

5.4.3. Cricket and public health

Coverage of cricket in media also fulfills another big function and that is opinion building on importance of health. By covering sports and a popular sport like cricket and making its players a celebrity, media successfully produces icons which are followed by young and youths. A culture of sport is built and everybody is conscious towards their health. Youths follow the working habits of their icons. Their dedication, determination and struggle are brought forward by media which inspire new generation to become faster, stronger and fitter. An environment of health and fitness among the youth is created by media. Youth are the real strength of a country and can be distracted easily in the activities of drug and alcohol. By intending their liking towards sports, the chances of distraction become minimal. This is a big asset to any nation if the youths are on the track of self-development health wise because healthy body possesses a healthy mind.

5.4.4. Cricket as a source of employment

Employment opportunities are also created by the development of sports in a nation. In quest of excelling in the world arena, a comprehensive amount of workforce and institutions with latest facilities are required to produce competent sportsmen to represent the country. This workforce includes the services of coaches, executives and employees of the sporting bodies and other workers at every level. More journalists and experts are required to cover the sporting events. This process leads to creation of more employment opportunities. When different venues of the matches are covered, journalists, camerapersons, editors, whole team of media persons are required. Media fetches money which is indispensable for a large organization to work and make payments to their workers and journalists. Self-reliant media seems to be unbiased in terms of covering the government’s policies and issues related to common man. The
money, after all, is necessary to get going fearlessly in the world and do justice to the profession.

### 5.4.5. Cricket and Nationalism

Coverage of cricket also helps media to perform an important function of spreading the spirit of nationalism and sense of belonging among the citizens. When whole country prays for and passionately follows the team of the nation, the boundaries of cast, creed and language are breached. People forget every other diversity and a sense of nationalism whips the countrymen in every nook and corner of the nation. Without media, this important component of sustaining a state is impossible. Another aspect is that making India a money pot because of the combination of cricket and media, the government retrieves enormous amount of tax. The BCCI is one of the richest boards of cricket in the world with revenue of Rs. 5,300 crore; so, the state also gains in monetary terms. The tourism industry is also stimulated by organization of enticing, extravagant events of cricket where players from all over the world perform. Media plays a key role in advertising and making the event a big success.

### 5.4.6. Cricket and international relations

Cricket is a game played and followed by nations such as Australia, England, India, Pakistan, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh, West Indies, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Sri-Lanka. The Indian subcontinent is a major hub of the game. People are also passionate about cricket in the countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri-Lanka. All of these countries share boundaries with India and it is strategically important for India to consolidate and maintain good relations with its neighbors. Apart from that, other countries like England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa play an important role in the world politics and improving relationship with these countries will prove profitable for India to compete in the world. Cricket plays an important role in this path of building and maintaining relations with other countries. India’s hostile neighbour country Pakistan has used the cricket diplomacy very smartly to sweeten the sour relationship though effective use of media.

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5.5. Mainstream theories of media

The most visible and accessible evidence of the working of mass media is what they produce and transmit and, as such, it has attracted more attention than any other aspect of media, from both researchers and commentators. This vast, diverse and changing body of material is conventionally referred to as ‘mass media content’. Understanding the possible impact of the content on the public and what public wants from media has been the concern of researchers. Researchers like Walter Lippmann, Marshal McLuhan, and Rosengren have studied the content of media and propounded theories of media on the basis of their studies. Some of the mainstream theories of the media are produced here under as inputs for theorizing the cricket, media and society linkage.

The bullet theory

When we put cricket in the early assumptions of the bullet theory that, a) people receive information directly from the mass media and b) reactions are individual, an ambiguous picture is formed about the audience’s reaction towards mediated massages related to cricket. But as the concept of ‘subgroup’ emerges, the picture clears. This concept of ‘a mass within the masses’ provides us the information how members of mass audience react when information about cricket is published or aired. In other words, there are some group of people who don’t want to listen or read about cricket and flip the channel or the page, whereas some of them might find it interesting. Some people are informed about cricket through direct contact with the mass media and others derive information from other people who are already exposed to the media and relay the messages to them acting as gate keepers.

Two step flow, opinion leaders and cricket

The two step flow theory proposed by researchers, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet hypothesizes that ‘much of the information disseminated by mass media comes to the individual’s attention second hand from people who relay their

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In every newspaper and news channel today we find so many opinion leaders discussing the cricket match which was beamed live through the sports channels. But information regarding the performance of players, the strategies, the team selection and execution of plan on the ground is relayed in two-step flow. The panelists and the columnist act as the opinion leaders and interpret the events to and thereby influence the audience and receivers.

According to the theories of selectivity, there are three approaches to understand the reactions of audience to their exposure to the information related to cricket:

- **Individual differences approach**

  The individual differences approach coined by De Fleur and Ball-Rokech, proposes that ‘each of us has unique qualities which result in our reaction to media message’. The variation in the reactions of audience is influenced by their selective exposure, perception and retention. This theory holds true in case of cricket. On a news channel when the experts are discussing the game, or sports pages of a newspaper are full of cricket opinions of the columnists some people might find it interesting and some not, they will flip the channel or turn the page. Similarly fans perceive some players to be good and if media try to underrate their performance, the audience opts to disagree with the view. The audiences wish to interpret media content in a way that confirms to their belief. Because of the selective perception people remember those parts of the program and comment which they are in agreement with. The theory of selective retention assumes that people try to retain media content which is in consonance with their belief and forget that which contradict their accepted position.

- **Categories approach**

  Mass audience is divided into demographics- sex, age, and income. When content related to cricket is provided in the mass medium its exposure is subjected to the category of the audience. Girls might read or listen less as compared to boys, similarly youth might be more interested rather that the olds.

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5 Ibid (pp.400-401)  
6 Ibid.,(p.402)  
7 Ibid
• **Social relationship approach**

This approach says that mass media can help disseminate the initial message but how it is retransmitted, determines the effect of the message.\(^8\) How cricket is being talked, discussed and re-discussed among the audience defines its effect.

We were discussing above what media do to people when information about cricket is relayed or published. Now let us discuss how audience inter relates with the media in context of cricket. Elihu Katz, a well-known researcher, is said to be the one who studied this aspect of functional or uses and gratification approach of how audience use the media.\(^9\) Like Louis M. Savary and J. Paul Carrico who divided film audience into three distinct groups- highbrows, middlebrows and lowbrows,\(^10\) we can divide the audience of news related to cricket into similar categories. Highbrows are those who are grossly interested in the field of cricket and try to learn from the information mediated by the medium. They read and re-read the articles in the newspaper and magazines or thoroughly watch the programs related to cricket on every channel in order to get intellectual satisfaction. For the lowbrows audience, the experience is entirely different; an excuse to get out of daily routine. In between these two groups are the middlebrows, somewhat knowledgeable in the field.

**Play theory and cricket**

In 1967 William Stephenson published the play theory of mass communication,\(^{11}\) in which he suggested that the most significant function of mass communication is to facilitate subjective play, to give people pleasure and interlude from the pressing matters that concern them most of the time.\(^{12}\) It should provide people something to talk about so as to foster mutual socialization. With the help of entertaining stimuli

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\(^{8}\)Ibid  
\(^{9}\)Ibid, (p404)  
\(^{10}\)Ibid  
\(^{11}\)Ibid, (pp404-405)  
present in cricket, it gives people the element of subjective play. Cricket is discussed among the people and fosters the mutual socialization.

Uses and Gratification

It specifies what uses we make of media and what gratifications we gain from exposing ourselves to the media content. For example, researcher Lawrence Wenner examined the elderly and found that one use of television among this group was companionship. By exposing themselves to the content related to cricket, some people might use the program as only entertainment and fun, while young aspiring cricketers may find the program useful in learning the game and some could find it reason for injecting cheerful moments in their sad life. Apart from that, cricket also provides a tool for social interaction with others. People like to discuss about cricket in gatherings. It also provides escape or relaxation from the daily problems.

Agenda setting

As Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1976), two prominent agenda setting theorists, have written, “Audience not only learn about public issues and other matters from the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the media put on it.” By covering cricket and issues related to cricket, media not only informs us but influences us to what is important to know. Apart from just playing and reporting the game, a lot more goes off the field. International relations of the hostile countries change due to cricket especially in the case of India and Pakistan, where a win or a defeat can cause cease-fire violation from both the sides. Besides this, match fixing and betting scandals are some of the examples where media sets an agenda for public to make a decision regarding important issues tied up with cricket.

Socialization

Socialization is defined as the teaching of established norms and values by way of symbolic rewards and punishment for different kinds of behavior.\textsuperscript{15} The content of message effects differently to different people specially children. Researchers like Wolfe and Fiske, 1949; Himmelweft et al., 1958; Brown, 1976; Noble, 1975 confirm a tendency of children to find lessons about life and to connect these with their own experience. Further studies also draw attention to the systematic presentation of images of social life which could strongly shape children’s aspirations and expectations.\textsuperscript{16} If a cricket star is discussed and praised by the media the oldies might call it media hype but it could be an inspirational story for young ones. When sporting spirit of the loser, fighting spirit of the victor and fair play is discussed, coupled with fashionable presentation, children learn how to behave in those situations and adopt it in their social integration.

**Diffusion of innovation**

As consumers of mass communication people are constantly exposed to information that both informs and persuades- information about new discoveries in technology, product designed to make our life easier, inventions and other innovative procedures.\textsuperscript{17} Cricket is a game which is continuously evolving since its origin. Players of different regions perform this knack with their unique style. New techniques of batting, bowling and fielding are shown and discussed in the media which helps evolve the art of cricket. The young generation may find it easy to learn the skills through media which might not be popular in their part of the world. Usage of fitness products, energy drinks and bars, sports gears, and costume by the cricketers may attract people to pursue it and make their life good.

**Catharsis**

As explained by Seymour Feshbach,\textsuperscript{18} a key proponent of the catharsis theory in communication research has distinguished between three conceptions of catharsis: the Dramatic, the Clinical and the Experimental models. The Dramatic model for


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid


example goes back to Aristotle who used the term “catharsis” in his Poetics to describe an effect of the Greek tragedy on its spectator. He argued that drama provides with a way to purge their feelings of fear, grief, pity, anger and other negative emotions. Catharsis requires a component that is internal to the person (drive or emotion), as well as a component that is external (the media message). Enormous amount of drama, action and discharge of emotions is present in the game of cricket which is presented by the media in a beckoning style to the readers/viewers, eventually leading them to jerk-off their negative feelings.

**Cultural Studies**

Theorists such as Stuart Hall\(^9\) of British Cultural Studies maintain that the media represents ideologies of the dominant class in a society. Because media are controlled by corporations, the information presented to the public is necessarily influenced and framed with profit in mind. Cultural Studies theorists, therefore, are concerned with the view that media is being influenced and framed with profit in mind and how power plays a role in the interpretation of culture.

**Spiral of Silence Theory**

Noelle-Neumann (1974) coined Spiral of Silence theory\(^{20}\) which argues that, due to their enormous power, the mass media have a lasting effect on public opinion. The theory maintains that mass media work simultaneously with majority public opinion to silence minority beliefs on cultural issues. A fear of isolation prompts those with minority views to examine the beliefs of others. Individuals who fear being socially isolated are prone to conform to what they perceive to be a majority view. Cricket and its massive coverage in Indian media have stirred the fear of isolation among the non-cricket sports fans, so they are eventually bound to cheer cricket even if they don’t like it.

**Cultivation Analysis**

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Cultivation analysis is an approach to the study of media effects developed by George Gerbner who also calls it ‘cultivation of dominant image pattern’. The theory argues that, television (and other media) plays an extremely important role in how people view their world. According to Cultivation Analysis, in modern culture most people get much of their information in a mediated fashion rather than through direct experience. Thus, mediated sources can shape people’s sense of reality. This is especially the case with regard to violence. Cultivation Analysis posits that heavy television viewing cultivates a sense of the world that is more violent and scarier than is actually warranted.

5.6. Theorizing sports, media, and society linkages

As depicted in the cultivation analysis, people’s sense of reality of the world, including sports, is shaped by their repeated exposure to the media content. Despite the audiences’ exposure and responses to media content being subjected to their individual subjective judgments (De Fleur and Ball-Rokech) they are sometimes exposed to contents designed by the media as a part of fulfilling its commercial agenda. By incorporating cricket in its agenda, the media attempts to influence the audience perception about the importance of cricket. This agenda setting function of the media sometimes seeks to fulfill the interests of the dominant class and the media’s own commercial interest. As explained in the uses and gratifications theory, the audiences most often make use of cricket and other sports news to gratify their own need for entertainment and fun besides using it as a tool for social interaction with others in the society. It provides relaxation or escape from daily problems and the audiences get their emotions released through vicarious participation in the roles being displayed in the media scene. By virtue of not having interest in sports, many members of the audience never read cricket and sports news thereby forming a part of the spiral of silence and in no way harm the growing media coverage of sports. In the present age of media globalization and corporatization, theorists in cultural studies maintain that the media represents ideologies of the dominant class in a society. Because media are controlled by corporations, the information presented to the public is necessarily influenced and framed with profit in

21 Ibid.,(p.99)
23 Ibid.,(p.405)
mind. Rich sports federations like the BCCI, the cultural studies theorists believe, influence the framing of the media content with profit in mind. These forces play some role in the interpretation of culture, especially in the promotion of a sports culture.