Chapter III

Development of Cricket as a Game in India and Some Important Managerial Aspects – A Discussion

After having a detailed discussion on cricket as a game in India over the years in the Chapter II, an attempt has been made in this chapter to take up some important managerial aspects vis-à-vis the development of cricket as a game in India, keeping in mind, in particular, the research gap identified and the objective of the study. Those important managerial aspects on which the discussion will follow below are Leadership Strategy, Competitive Scenario, Marketing Effectiveness and Effective HR (Human Resource) Strategy. Obviously the discussion will be in the wider context of development of cricket as a game in India. In the questionnaire, designed to gather meaningful response from a randomly-chosen sample of cricket administrators spread all over the country vis-à-vis the theme of the research, contains a number of statements relating to these four important managerial aspects. The analysis of their responses and the statistical findings and the discussions thereon have been presented in the subsequent Chapter IV.

Leadership Strategy

Against the backdrop of the HR Strategy, it is imperative to provide an effective platform and contribute towards synergising by understanding today’s competitive scenario and developing appropriate marketing strategies in order to become and continue to remain effective. The role of leadership has to be viewed and appreciated in this perspective.

The advent of satellite technology in the post-Second World War era revolutionise the entire communication process and increasingly the physical presence in the sporting events in the western world was replaced by the virtual presence through the medium
of television. The BCCI leadership has been quick enough to understand the impact of this revolutionary change on cricket. Since, cricket has an intrinsically national appeal because games are played between India and some other foreign countries. There was already a base created by arranging commentaries over the radio in vernacular languages. Non-English speaking people, constituting an overwhelmingly vast majority in India, have already been lured to the game of cricket which in technical jargon means ‘commonality of Interest’ among the Indian population in general. The switch over to the television media, initially without any fees for granting the broadcasting rights, created a fan base which was extremely essential for charging broadcasting fees in the subsequent years. The live-viewing of the Cricket World Cup in 1983 paved the way for earning revenue by selling the broadcasting rights. In other words, the BCCI Leadership had a goal set for it, i.e., it would make cricket a foremost game in India with the necessary wherewithal for funding the promotion of the game. This, no doubt, reflects a great leadership quality on the part of the BCCI as a body.

This has been made possible because the constitution of the BCCI permits the President to hold office for a three-year term and his/her re-election only after a break. This, coupled with the stipulation that the Secretary can hold office for two consecutive terms, has rendered an element of continuity which is extremely necessary for achieving the mission of an organisation like the BCCI, which has moved towards that direction quite admirably. This has helped the successors of leadership to provide motivation and to play a significant role in generating and sustaining the success over a long period of time. The office-bearers have also played a key role in inculcating discipline among the players, ensuring their comforts both on and off the field, e.g., arranging for their stay in luxurious ambience during training
and providing all possible facilities to reduce their stress and strain, both physical and mental, and ensuring their career progression by providing them with handsome performance-linked compensation. Other manifestations of such leadership quality are the commitment to create and maintain a democratic environment for functional effectiveness, the ability to ensure the confidence and participation of the peers in the decision-making process, the initiative to develop and extend social networking both at the national and international levels and the arrangements made for spontaneous sponsorship in a most generous manner. The progressive increase in the fee from the sale of broadcasting rights, resulting from the dominating monopoly being enjoyed by the game of cricket, helped the BCCI achieve an enviable position so far as financial resources are concerned. Indeed, the BCCI today is one of the richest sporting bodies of the world. In other words, the professional commitment is the buzz word in the circle of the cricket administrators in India today.

Continuous product development and innovation as well as diversification are the key elements for sustained viability of the corporate and those are equally relevant for the sporting organisations. Cricket matches prolonging for 5 days or 3 days, which was the order of day until the 1970s, were fast losing their attraction because the pursuit of leisure was increasingly becoming a luxury in the new era of satellite technology. One day international was one such innovation introduced in the game of cricket. This could be equated with product innovation and this gave cricket a timely boost to retain its international market, i.e. fan, following. There was another innovation in quick succession, i.e., T-20, which was also fully commensurate with changing nature and pattern of entertainment.

The BCCI leadership was managerially very successful in adopting these two innovations, making the necessary organisational changes. This provided the BCCI
with inflow of funds which was converted into reserves after meeting the promotional and developmental expenditure. The income tax exemption used to be provided under the provisions of Section 10(23) of the Income Tax Act, 1961, further helped create a reserve, making involvement in the affairs of the BCCI a lucrative pursuit for business and political networking. The induction of Mr. Lalit Modi and introduction of the Indian Premier League (IPL) gave the BCCI the status of a multi-national corporation without the responsibilities and restrictions. The amendments to the BCCI Constitution, withdrawing *inter alia* the restriction on the office bearers, particularly the President, to seek re-election after serving the first term, were nothing but an aberration encouraging exercise of power without following the principles of corporate governance which is mandatory for any corporate in India with a turnover similar to the BCCI.

Indeed, the whole saga of spot-fixing in 2013 is a reflection of the structural and constitutional deficiency of the BCCI in the changed context. The Societies Registration Act does not envisage creation of such huge surplus and a possible managerial way out would be to convert the BCCI as a company with share capital to ensure more accountability and supervision. In fact, it would only be logical to take these steps as the BCCI has gone a long way towards bringing in professionalism cricket. The BCCI today has become a market leader in sports. There is no doubt that the BCCI continues to have very committed leaders over the years administering and steering the game of cricket, putting in place the effective platforms and formulating appropriate strategies, leading to the overall development of cricket as a game in India.

The discussion above with respect to the relevance of the four managerial aspects, in the context of the overall development of the game of cricket in India, has been
largely corroborated by the findings of the empirical survey presented in the next chapter, i.e., Chapter IV. This indicates once again that, in spite of the changes in the upper echelons of the leadership from time to time, the stability imparted by providing the effective HR platform and putting in place the appropriate marketing strategies in tune with the developing competitive scenario have lead to the development of the game of cricket in India.

**Competitive Scenario**

Another factor that has contributed significantly to the ascendency of the game of cricket is the clear vision of the cricket administrators in terms of anticipating the nature, extent and direction of the emerging competition and taking proactive measures to meet the challenges including the economic ones.

In the cricket world, such competition has two components as mentioned below.

1) **Competition from other cricket-playing countries,** participating under the banner of the International Council of Cricket (ICC), which are in the process of sustained improvement of performance through continuous skill up gradation, based on advanced and regular training

2) **Competition from the other games and sports bodies** within the country, notably football and, to a certain extent, hockey

Regarding the external competition, i.e., in case of facing competition from other countries, what was done was benchmarking with the best globally. This paid rich dividends in creating a pool of players who can very well be ranked with the best players internationally. Another equally important measure undertaken by the leadership of the BCCI was to develop state-of-the-art infrastructure, construct a number of international-level stadia in different states of India with modern facilities and establish some robust academies, providing latest training facilities and having
skilled supporting staff. All these have helped the Indian cricket effectively stand in the competitive world of cricket. It has provided right type of encouragement to the state-level associations to have their own their stadia to spread the game of cricket throughout India, e.g., Mohali at Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh Stadium, new stadia in the then Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Jharkhand. In addition, the stadia in some of the metropolitan cities were either upgraded or new Stadium was constructed. Thus, the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai gave way to the Wankhade Stadium in 1974 with all the modern facilities. The M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai and the Feeroz Shah Kotlah ground in Delhi and the Eden Gardens in Kolkata were completely renovated to make them comparable with the internationally-renowned stadia in the other cricket-playing countries.

Moreover, the focus on *Absolute Competition* in contrast to *Relative Competition* in the tournament structure within the country has created a tremendous sustenance power of the teams and their players to cope with the psychological pressure while facing the international tournaments. In the process, quality performance and psychological fitness of the teams to withstand the tough international competitive pressures are ensured, ultimately helping the game of cricket in India to uphold its glory.

Regarding the internal competition from the other games and sports bodies within the country, the leadership of the BCCI and the state/union territory-level cricket associations fully exploited the opportunities arising out the declining performance of other types of games like hockey, football and various Olympic Games in India.

In this context, mention may be made of the inertia on the part of the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF), reflected in failing to take advantage of the sustained improved performance in hockey in the fifties and the sixties, thereby, losing the mass base for
hockey in the subsequent decades. The BCCI was quick enough to capitalise on the breakthrough obtained by lifting the World Cup in cricket in the year 1983 and subsequently organising various international cricket tournaments in India to create a strong mass following in India over the years in the space provided by hockey. Thus, the BCCI scored over all other sporting bodies in India in terms of quickly understanding and using the advantage of innovations in the satellite technologies for promoting cricket as a game.

**Marketing Effectiveness**

Cricket had a long and rich tradition of live broadcasting of test matches as stated earlier and the BCCI lost no opportunity in mobilising its resources in live telecasting of one-day matches, including the World Cup of 1983, initially through Doordarshan and subsequently through international private television channels, making full use of the technological innovation. This not only gave a cutting edge in increasing the mass following of cricket in India but also paved the way for generation of the most important source of sports revenue today, viz., income from the sale of broadcasting rights.

Strengthened by the huge inflow of funds from this source, coupled with resulting income from advertisement and sponsorship, the BCCI started concentrating on product development by creating a pool of talented cricket players. When the T-20 was introduced at the beginning of the current century, it could quickly diversify its product profile internationally and set up a subsidiary body through the formation of the Indian Premier League (IPL). The result has been that the BCCI today is one of the richest sporting bodies in the world flushed with enormous funds. This is a unique case of market penetration in sports and the BCCI today has become a market leader in sports.
Effective HR (Human Resource) Strategy

In any discipline of sport, product and people converge in the sense that the athletic prowess of players is the product which generates revenue for the owners through their organised marketing and sale. Another equally important factor which should be kept in view is that, unlike a machine-made product, there is lack of homogeneity in the sports product, i.e. players, and there is a long gestation lag in bringing the product in the market place. Besides the life of the sports product, i.e., the time span of the players’ ‘highest efficiency’ (the top-form period), is very short. It is, therefore, a tremendous managerial challenge in any discipline of sport to have a sustained design for product development and human resource development.

Starting with Mr. Jagmohon Dalmiya, successive presidents of the BCCI addressed this peculiar characteristic of sport in an exemplary manner. They were instrumental in creating a successive pool of talented players through vigorous training process, providing them with the state-of-the art training centres and academies, comprising international coaches, physiotherapists and psychiatrists, in various states of India, exposure through various competitions, thus, helping all the way to improve and upgrade their skills. What is most important is to devise a very scientific scheme of providing handsome remuneration as well as various monetary rewards linked to performance of the players in various tournaments, which, in managerial jargon, is known as productivity-linked compensation. They are also encouraged to take endorsements for further augmenting their income. Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Md. Azaharuddin, M.S. Dhoni and Virendra Sehwag all have endorsed products of various companies against very high monetary consideration comparable with those of the film personalities.
If there is an uncertainty in terms of the outcome of the fight between two teams of equal caliber, the success of any sporting event will largely depend on what is known as ‘absolute competition’ in contrast to ‘relative competition’. This creates a tremendous psychological pressure on the team concerned. In order to ensure quality performance, the psychological issues must be carefully addressed. This becomes even more pronounced, if it is a tournament in which India and another country is involved and the expectations are aroused through media hype. It speaks volume of the BCCI leadership, particularly of Mr. Jagmohan Dalmiya, i.e., how he helped the players throughout his tenure as the President of the BCCI to overcome such psychological stresses and strains. In fact, the entire team management in cricket has been geared to deal with all such issues.

At this stage, it is important to appreciate the relevance of the ‘cricket product development’. It is a common knowledge that talents attract talents. The BCCI leadership has been able to create an environment to attract new talents continuously because it has stressed on the three key elements, viz., People Capital, Structural Capital and Social Capital.

- **People Capital**—skills, knowledge and attitudes and imagination of the individuals employed

- **Structural Capital**—the organisational structure and the roles, making up the organisation of the business

- **Social Capital**—the most significant area in the search for competitive advantage and most difficult to copy, described as the synergies created by combining all the assets of the organisation together, being the ethos and culture of the organisation

What the BCCI has concentrated upon is developing the ‘brand’ of cricket in India, extending it into a new and even more profitable concepts of activities. This approach
relies increasingly on vision, imagination and innovation to succeed and continuously revitalise and refresh the brand.

Another wonderful thing that has happened at the administrative levels of the BCCI and various state/union territory-level cricket associations (which has not been done by any other sports bodies in India), is the recruitment of professional managerial personnel at the various administrative levels who have become catalysts in the smooth functioning of these cricket associations. A steady supply of players, umpires, ground staff and support staff has played a significant role in the development and remarkable performance of the game of cricket in India.