

Chapter 6

Bollywoodizing Cricket!

A Fascinating World of Global Sensibilities, Entertainment Revolution, Cultural Representation, and Economic Stunts

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ABSTRACT

Bollywood is a cultural product that has molded their representational possibilities to depict the changing social and political scenario of India. Moreover, it is an industry that is commercially successful and makes all efforts to take into account its middle class Indian sentiments and interest. One of its recent ventures is the launch of the Indian Premier League with most of the franchised teams owned by Bollywood stars or at least branded or heralded by film stars. This makes cricket matches extremely glamorized events with the mix of a Bollywood film. This chapter look into this aspect of transformation of a popular game like cricket in India with due consideration to the cultural, entertainment, and Bollywood-izing aspect of the game.

INTRODUCTION

Bollywood is undeniably one of the biggest cultural industries in the world. It is celebrating its centenary year with greater global acceptance and recognition. Over its last 100 years it successfully surpassed the most acclaimed Hollywood market in production, revenue and audience strength. Bollywood is a film industry that has displayed the changing socio-political situations of India. From mythological films to melodrama,

Bollywood reached a juncture when western or diasporic character became inevitable in these films. Gradually, considering the large migrated Indian population around the world, films began to target these audiences transcending the language and cultural barrier to reach out to global audience. At present it is a globalized cultural industry, a cinema of attractions and the most fascinating global film industry packaged with romance, melodrama, action, costumes, songs and dance extravaganzas.

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When Bollywood established a devoted fan base around the world, it entered into a lucrative and previously unseen area of cross-media entertainment by stepping into the world of sports. Bollywood stretches its long business tentacles with Indian version of twenty20 cricket, popularly known as Indian Premier League (IPL), the money making machine which is now as competitive and profitable as English Premier League Football. Nevertheless, IPL is now one of the much celebrated events in the global sporting world where the celebrity film stars and business tycoons sponsor and organize the team. This nexus of Bollywood stars with the global business leaders and international cricketers fetched an easy revenue model of 200 billion dollars in the beginning year. As IPL reached the sixth season of its triumph and tribulations, it has become a prototype of a new age business entity and the model of which has been adopted in different parts of the world.

Bollywood actor's entry into the cricket field made the sport the most glamorous event in Indian entertainment scenario. In the present era, people are searching for countless ways to get entertained. Entertaining the public is the core of most of the new researched television programs. Previously, the presence of any celebrity in the pavilion excited both the live and television audience enjoying the game. Conversely, now cricket turned out to be star-studded event bedecked with cheer-girls that made the televised world to compete for the tele-cast rights. This revolutionized the entertainment culture of public where they are now witnessing the merging of the most popular entertainment outlet – film and sports. This not only merged two big industries, but brought together the audience of cricket as well as the film. Now audience witness their favourite stars like Shah Rukh Khan, Preety Zinta and Shilpa Shetty cheering for his/her team, and the celebrity or star image that the players are getting due their presence and involvement in styling the players according to their image. Here the game of cricket is getting the image of a 2-3 hour Bollywood film of anticipation, sentiments, joy,

sorrow, and where, the dance and song sequence is replaced by the cheer girls, live-drum beats and theme songs, and the highly emotional reaction by the stars on the pavilion provides the best scene of the day (as Shahrukh's quarrel with the security staff of a stadium in Mumbai after the victory of his team Kolkota Knight Riders that banned him from entering the stadium for five years).

The proposed chapter will be an earnest attempt to evaluate the entertainment value of IPL that makes it not only a profitable revenue model, but a change agent of public attitude towards leisure and entertainment. This article also traces the growth and development of Bollywood as soft power market leading towards a global entertainment by moving out of the comfort zone of film industry to an ambitious platform of corporate business venture. Textual/news analysis will be used as primary source of data.

Starting with a general introduction on Bollywood and its global entertainment and cultural prospect, the chapter moves on to the definition of entertainment in this ICT era, and the transformation of the most popular sport, cricket into a new format of 20 overs reducing its timespan. This is followed by the Indian adaptation of T20 and the arrival of betting of players and a new revenue model, taking the game to a next level of entertainment.

BACKGROUND

India, aiming to become one of the super powers of the world, has only a faded image in the sports arena. Despite the population of one billion and a growing economy, India's poor performances in world sports have been a major discussion whenever a sports event occurs. According to Chess Grand Master Pravin Thipsay, India's meagre performance is only because of the lack of facilities for sports and practice ("Relative poor performances", 2012). According to Kulkarani, a sports psychologist, this is also due to the lack

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