

Sports marketing is about building brand equity



Sanjay Gupta

'Boost' signed Sachin Tendulkar because of his spectacular performances, time after time. With this, the brand got the right positioning and a huge fan following, which helped it create a

big market in India.

Thus, when a player and platform are appropriate, the brand is able to leverage them and scale up its business by establishing a connect with its existing and potential customers.

Choosing a game and platform for branding is not an easy call. Such partnerships are chosen keeping in mind a multitude of benefits that the company wants to derive for its positioning.

Brands are impressions of how a particular product/idea is looked at in the eyes and minds of people. Products have life cycles. Brands outlive products. The best brands use remarkable

creativity and ideas in advertising to help them break through people's wall of indifference and help create brand heat and product affiliation.

Nike, the world's most famous sports brand, was in the news recently for its attempt to break the two-hour barrier for the marathon.

Steve Jobs also got his inspiration for Apple's 'Think Different' campaign two decades ago from Nike ads. Nike sells shoes, yet in its advertisements, it never talks about its products. It only honours great athletes.

No presumption on audience; focus on maximum engagement.

It is wrong to presume that only males watch a game like cricket. Latest data suggests that IPL-related programming has found 45 per cent viewership coming from women.

IPL is backed by a huge fan following in India. So a brand, which would look at creating additional revenue streams to leverage brand, has to engage with the audience at large with



creative strategy.

The massive outreach and appeal of IPL is the most important reason why marketers use high impact to reap the premium for brands.

The IPL telecast has the appeal and consistency, which allows you to plan a

campaign and reach the target audience. When the community itself is the biggest cricketing league in the world (IPL), it is sure to make differentiation and impact in terms of its positioning.

The name and logo of the company must be astutely used for branding

during the game in different spaces — be it jerseys, kiosks, boundary walls and everything related.

It's important because with this, a company along with players, strives to enhance its brand's visibility among cricket fans, who could be its potential audience.

For unknown and lesser-known brands, such an exercise assumes even more importance. From internet dating platforms and auto classifieds' sites to food delivery apps and mobile wallet companies, a raft of start-ups have sought a leg-up from the IPL.

A dating app called Woo has tied up with Kings XI Punjab as its kit sponsor; one of the reasons for the tie-up was the team had the maximum number of bachelors for any IPL unit and resonated with its brand strategy of reaching out to singles to use the app!

Advantage sponsorship

As an alternative to an advertisement or other promotion tools, sponsorship provides some benefits to the sponsor.

Consumers may realise that the sponsor is trying to persuade them about something, but the approach has to be subtle.

This makes the consumer less defensive about responding to the persuasion and the sponsorship communication may find responses with general goodwill.

For example, even though a football team loses, the economy of the club doesn't necessarily react negatively. Sport marketing is no longer about the marketing of a sport and the results of the game, but merely to build brand equity, increase revenue and to secure economic growth.

To conclude, you have to take a step back and consider which platform is best for your business. If your target audience is millennial, concentrating on cricket and football may seem like the right decision. Also, the game must relate to the core objective and the theme a company intends to project for its brand.

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