IPL as a Catalyst for Sports Tourism in India a Learning Curve for Other Indian Leagues

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Abstract

Background: The tourism industry needs a very minimal introduction pertaining to the growing popularity and changing lifestyle of the people. It has boomed to the extent that most of the demographics of countries are now dependent on tourism. Sports tourism is one such part of tourism which is considered to be a niche sector, but with high potential and increased sports consumption, it is now recognized as a major growth sector in the sports industry. The objective of this paper is to understand the nuances of tourism especially inclined towards sports. The research has a greater inclination towards a very niche segment of sports tourism which is cricket tourism. With a growing number of events and people willing to travel across countries to support their favorites team or player has led to increased attention towards this sector with specialized sports tourism packages made for international world events. Cricket tourism which is at a very nascent stage but yet again has growth potential with the game being now played across a lot of countries.

Methods: To generate information secondary data collection was used and facts and figures were studied to better understand the situation of cricket tourism and assess what IPL has brought to the table for the sports tourism Industry.

Conclusion: The paper focuses on Indian premier league a very prominent league structure in cricket and tries to understand how IPL helped fuel in the sports tourism growth with leanings for other emerging leagues in India. With thorough research on Indian premier league, a prominent league played in India the paper tries to throw light up upon its success and how it can help the other Indian leagues foster immaculate success following the footsteps of the IPL.

Keywords: Cricket Tourism, Indian Premier League, Sports Tourism

1. Introduction:

The tourism industry needs no introduction to the kind of revenue and development that has been made throughout ages. It has always been a sector that has contributed towards the betterment of the society economically and is also working gradually towards sustainable development with various measures undertaken. A lot of countries have seen a huge amount of support from their government in recent times with most of them now investing in the tourism sector. If in roots of tourism were understood by the developed countries way back in time. But now the developing countries have inclined their force towards development in the tourism sector. The spirit of travel has lived on down the ages\textsuperscript{(1)}. Throughout, ‘man has travelled in search of new places, new lands, new cultures, and new experiences’\textsuperscript{(2)}. Tourism loyalty is key to the tourism business and sustainability\textsuperscript{(3)}. Cities and regions try to invest in a lot of major world events like Olympics, Commonwealth, World cups as there is a huge economic benefit associated with the same\textsuperscript{(4)}. To attain popularity and increase Jobs and capital, the cities use a mega-event strategy\textsuperscript{(5)}.

This paper would be focusing on a particular segment of tourism which is getting all the attention in recent times and that is Sports Tourism. It could be seen that tourism and sports have a positive relationship that directly has an impact on the national economies. Also,
sports tourism is, nowadays, assumed as the most lucrative commerce worldwide (6). The sports tourism itself is unique because of its participatory as well as spectating audience that it has had over the years. Every audience has a different set of motivations when it comes to tourism inclined towards sports (7). The fact that sports help in uniting people together is the main reason sports tourism has had success considering the Industry's point of view (8). Regeneration over the years have provided to be beneficial for various cities as the development in the infrastructure or as a whole attracts a lot of tourist for sports, club or international events (9). To build a community through sports tourism, event planners must have a social connection and interaction to increase curiosity regarding the event or sport (10).

Travel & Tourism contributed US$8.8 trillion to the global economy in 2018. This equates to 10.4% of global GDP. Sport and tourism where are not something very new and have been into consideration for a very long time. Back in time when countries used to hold world events and people travelled across countries to support their countrymen was when sports tourism came into the picture. Although the term Sports Tourism was not coined back then. It becomes famous with time and as the dynamics and consumption patterns of the customer changed a new approach for tourism was looked upon. Over the years it has been seen that the number of tourists travelling to other countries specifically for sports events has given rise to the sports tourism sector at large. User experience plays a vital role as tourists tend to have repeated visits at a particular event which will help the marketer understand the needs and expectations of the tourist (11). Understanding the attitude of the tourist is very important to create a strategy that will help in attracting them (12).

Push and pull factors play a very important role in the context of mega-events. IPL when happened in UAE back in 2013 initially was destined to happen in South Africa but considering various hospitality and geographical benefits was later moved to UAE (13). So the question comes what difference does sports tourism bring to the table where the tourism industry by large has been doing the same thing throughout the years. Through this paper, I have tried to put forth the views on how sports tourism is also helping countries grow and have a changed dynamic structure in place. The sports tourism industry has grown considerably in recent years. “In 2016 the sports tourism industry was worth $1.41 trillion and this figure is expected to increase to approximately $5.72 trillion by 2021. This is a whopping 41% growth in only four years” (14).

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Studies state that sports and tourism are “Not just about the management and operation of mega-events; it also concerns offering consumer-specific sports and tourism-related services and experiences to the sports tourist” (15). A sector of sports tourism that involves people traveling to different countries for thrill and adventure is the participatory variable of sports tourism where the sole purpose of tourism is to be an avid participant in various adventure sports and enjoy the thrill. Kayaking in the Gaugely river (Western Australia, US); Bungee Jumping over the Victoria falls, people travel to such places specifically for such events. Also, if you look at sports tourism as a luxury the changing consumption pattern has lead to people visiting across countries in order to have a sense of pride and to enjoy the rich heritage of sports across borders. People tend to visit a lot of museums and stadiums to go back to the memory lane and experience the feelings and gratitude towards one sport or country. A lot of educational trips are focused on such historical places helping the students understand such places. “The Barcelona Olympic Village was built in the late 1980s and early 1990s in preparation for the 1992 Summer Olympic Games, which were held in Barcelona. Nowadays, visiting the Barcelona Olympic Village is a popular sports tourism activity undertaken by many tourists visiting Barcelona” (14). Also one of the main influencing factors of sports tourism is the spectators in world events. You see a huge amount of crowd in world events like Olympics, World cup events are the major reason behind increased economic development across countries. Also, countries see a huge scope in world events and hence try to bid for such events so that it helps their country become economically strong. As a world event would get in a huge amount of diverse crowd from various countries it well indirectly pump in money in different sectors like hospitality, hotel groups, and generate employment in various tertiary sectors. ‘A lot of cities decide to bid for world events as they are aware of the economic benefits but at cost. Although

projections might not always be in favor yet cities do try best to get such events\textsuperscript{(16)}. So, when we look at such factors, we could see that we have a considerable amount of movement of tourist across countries and is a clear indication that we economy boots is very much achievable in such circumstances. So, in the wake of mega-events or participatory events, people travel and this creates employment opportunities, growth in demand for flight tickets, and hotel bookings which leads to the overall economic growth of the country.

Sports tourism has been considered to be a catalyst for urban development. The growing urge for urban development by the cities is forcing them to host events that will boost their economy and social status\textsuperscript{(17)}. Changes in lifestyle and inculcating healthy habits with cities attracting tourist with the help of sports has led to increasing demand for sports tourism\textsuperscript{(18)}. A successful sports tourism is when there is a proper amalgamation of sports and the place in its accordance\textsuperscript{(19)}. The experience one gets during an event might vary from person to person and hence understanding a tourist’s needs is of utmost importance\textsuperscript{(20)}.

The paper tries to comprehend how the Indian premier league did create an opportunity for sports tourism back in India back in 2008 and how can other leagues immaculate the success of IPL and try and inculcate changes in their model or style of running the leagues.

2. Material & methods:
In order to generate information secondary data collection was used and facts and figures were studied to better understand the situation of cricket tourism and assess what IPL has brought to the table for the sports tourism Industry. The study predominately focuses on understanding Cricket tourism and how IPL has been a driving force for the Indian sports Industry.

One of the research papers focuses on the economic impacts of tourism and explains how at times there are economic errors being done and they try to rectify the errors using various models and events\textsuperscript{(21)}. The paper also talks about certain ways through which sports tourism can sustain and throws light upon its growth in the coming years. It explains what all measures are taken before studying or considering the economic impacts of tourism.

Kour\textsuperscript{(22)} has analyzed the impact of demographics on sports tourism. He has mentioned the changes that take place in a particular location during the time of mega-events if hosted in a particular city. One of the studies on positives and negatives changes during an IPL match in the city investigated the changes in lifestyle and spending in and around the city during such events. A good mix of the relationship between sports and tourism is explained in this paper with considering the fact that sports tourism has a great future in the coming times they have tried to showcase certain types of clients that sports tourism has to deal with\textsuperscript{(15)}. Kurtzman and Zauhar\textsuperscript{(23)} focus on developing a sports tourism model which considers the very main aspect that is customers Interest along with understanding the scope of the subject altogether. A complete list of how sports tourism evolved over a period of time and got new avenues with changing technologies and lifestyle has been put forth in the study. The evolution of human life and advancement in technology and infrastructure has led to varied changes in human life pertaining to travel across to share viewpoints leading to a surge in the travel and tourism industry. It provides the value of sport and its importance in life with respect to travel. Burgo and Cromartie\textsuperscript{(16)} have mentioned about the challenges faced by cities in hosting Olympic events. It throws light upon the bidding process and all the projections made to bid for an event of such big stature. The authors concluded that public support proves to be a crucial factor in the whole process. The study has also mentioned about the negative and positive points of hosting an Olympic event.

3. Results and Discussion:
A sports tourism event’s pull, or drawing power, is measured by its ability to attract non-residents and induce consumer spending at and near the event venue. As this statement clearly says the main work of sports tourism is tapping onto the right audience and then understanding how this audience could be offered the right set of services, in turn, to help them revisit such events every year\textsuperscript{(21)}. Indian premier league is
BCCI recognized league structure formed back in 2008 which is a franchised based league conducted between 8 teams. The league which was started with a view of promoting and providing a platform to the youngsters and foster new roots in International cricket with foreign inculcation is now considered a festival by the Indians. Cricket tourism is considered to be a subset of sports tourism and in India, it is still at a very nascent stage. There has been a huge demand for IPL matches played on weekends with people willing to travel across cities just to see their favourite team play. This has led to an increase in demand for hotels and the Airline Industry. April and May is the peak IPL season with a lot of fans travelling from domestic as well as inbound travels. A sudden spike in the number of foreign tourists can be seen as a lot of families travel across countries to support their players. The foreign tourist which visits the country during the IPL time also consists of a lot of them travelling for employment and other reasons as well. One of the leading tourism companies named Cox and kings has seen a 30% increase in travel bookings and these travel bookings are made with considering the fact that travellers could enjoy ongoing IPL matches and sightseeing surrounding the city. IPL matches being played at host cities see an increase in tourist visitors at places in and around the cities. So if a match is played at Mumbai, Wankhede stadium the places in and around the stadium like Marine drive, Gateway of India see a huge number of visitors. Also, foreign tourists or inbound tourists visit restaurants nearby the stadium to have the taste of famous delicacies adding to the increase in demand for food gateway nearby. Indian premier league is considered has proven time again that the reason to pull such a great crowd in India both domestic and International is its inclination towards a very strong model based on fashionable and entertaining sports league in India also focusing on the infrastructural development not only of the stadiums but everything in the vicinity during the season. All these mega-events like World Cup or Indian Premier league give huge importance to the community tourism sector. Cricket over the years has played a major role in social-economic development. It helps in enhancing sustainable development in terms of heritage, culture, and a community as a whole. Community tourism by large focus on local development and skill set around it which helps in the overall development. Creating experience that leads to value creation is the key in the sports tourism scenario and the Indian premier league has been surreal about the same.

“According to market analysts, the launch of the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2008 was a landmark event in the growth of sports tourism. Since the launch of IPL, there has been in a massive upsurge in travel by cricket fans at the venues where the cricket matches were held. The encashment of IPL opened ways for various other leagues and world events to be successful after 2008. Commonwealth games in 2010 followed by a cricket world cup hosted by India. After IPL it was quite evident that India was looked upon as a country with great potential not only into cricket but also into various other sports. India is a country with varied diversity and a huge population which provides leverage to the country to hold such world events and leagues. ‘Tangible spectators are those the direct viewers in the stadium and intangible spectators are those who watch the game through broadcasting. It can be seen that the total number of tangible spectators of the WCC 2011 was 1,361,000.’ These statistics provide a clear picture of how India as a country is leaned towards sports and is a future market for the growth of sports tourism. The world market is also aware of India's potential and hence events like ATP 250 in tennis and other leagues in sports flourished in the country.

We had a clear picture of the tangible audience but the set of intangible audiences who watch sports through broadcasting is also huge in number. “The numbers of intangible spectators were estimated by the ICC as 180,000,000 and media estimated a little higher number of 200,000,000. Among the intangible spectators, the numbers of Indian viewers were 25,000,000. The numbers mentioned below helps us understand that any sporting event in the country related to cricket will lead to a sudden increase in demand for three
sectors that is tourism, hospitality, and the airline industry. These three things can be further classified which generates a lot of revenue and employment for secondary and tertiary sectors. The success of Indian premier league lies between these figures, as a world event that is conducted over 4 years that too with an uncertainty of being a host for rest many years still is very confident of pulling such crowds in the stadiums, an event like IPL which is conducted every year would help the country in economic, social and political development.

Indians have always been passionate about both travel and sports, so spending time with family and watch sport with a vacation are a perfect treat for tourists. As a resultant lot of tourist agencies have understood the importance of such tourists and they try to lure them with fancy tour packages segmenting them into different categories(22). Also when it comes to hotels and restaurants in the nearby areas where Ipl matches do take place, it usually has a great impact on their occupancy as you see an increase in demand by the tourists travelling across cities to watch matches. Source everyone has a sudden change in consumption patterns during IPL matches which led to a demand in most of the items in and around the city. If you classify people according to their respective business a person who sells local products to someone selling food items each and everyone is impacted by the increase in demand and enjoys a good amount of business during match day.” those who had travelled from neighbouring sectors for putting up stalls (Shakes, puri-channa, bun-Tikki) only during match days. They fall in the Rs. 500- 1200 earnings group on normal days and earned doubled during match days(22).

Looking at the surge in restaurants during IPL other sectors also have a boom like the Airline and Hospitality Industry. These two industries have a change in demand during the Indian premier league. The main reason behind this being the operations of the league carried on a greater scale. With the league reaching new heights every year the number of domestic and International tourist increases. Also, every year each and every team has a dedicated fleet for their support staff, cheerleaders, and various other search people. This leads to an increase in the number of occupancies and also travel and food need to be arranged for these people by adding to the revenue earned due to the tourism industry. Also, this IPL period proved to be valuable for the hotel industry as it is considered to be a relatively off-season in a lot of places in India, and hence an all-round league like IPL with all its glamour, media and money brings in huge opportunity(33). “IPL, like any big sporting event, will generate travel and hotel demand, which is valuable for hotels during summer when leisure business drops,” (33) Vijay Thacker, Director of the hospitality consultant Horwath HTL India. The league also has control over the hotels as to which hotels should be allocated to teams he reason is nothing but for the safety. So all the negotiations are looked after by the IPL organizing committee.

Every team usually has 20 to 25 players with 10 odd support staff travelling across for the stint of two months. “According to industry estimates, the 60-game tournament is expected to create as many as 45,000 room nights for the hospitality sector this year” (33) The Marriot group itself expected to clock 10000 plus rooms during the IPL season – quoted by Ramesh Daryanani, area director of sales and marketing, South Asia, Marriott International.

The hotel industry has a direct surge of 30% in occupancies and food and beverage sales. Courtyard by Marriott, Pune expected a 30% rise in food and beverage sales during the matches (General Manager, Hemant Tennatri). Also, the hotel industry tries its best to provide the topmost service with dedicated rooms for the teams and they make sure that in-room service requirements by each and every player are met by them –(Praveen Chander Kumar, Taj Mahal Palace). Mumbai’s boutique hotel Marine Plaza, managed by Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, projects a direct occupancy gain of around 20% during the match days(33). This explains that tourism in India is no more a niche market especially sports tourism. The concept of sports tourism started to gain importance back in 2003 with the ICC world cup, as the Indian fans experienced something that they never dreamed of. This continued and saw a huge change drastic change after the inclusion of the Indian Premier League. Even
after the IPL being shifted to South Africa, it was able to pull off a fair bit of international tourists with people travelling to support their team and also enjoy South-Africa as a tourist place (34).

A growing fan base in India leads to an on the growing demand for Indian tourists travelling places to support or watch the game they loved. A lot of agents and top-notch tour companies work specifically into sports-based tourism. Personalized packages for IPL, World events are being provided by these agents of agencies which help the tourist choose the best among the specified packages and enjoy the sport and travel around places during the event. Sports tourism helps serve both the demands of a tourist and hence is gaining huge importance. Another major reason for the success of IPL in India is the time frame in which the league is conducted. Scheduling plays a very important role when it comes to attracting crowds and players during the IPL season. So, cricket is normally played in six months in a particular country because teams travel across countries during monsoon or offseason in their countries. April – September is when England plays most of its cricket while South-Africa, Australia, and New Zealand have a season of October to March. West Indies despite having good summers and no monsoon find it difficult to host games due to various reasons. Moreover in the subcontinent, cricket is played from October to March. This shows it’s a clear masterstroke as this period is generally an offseason and hence most of the starts are available for IPL, and hence it is successful in pulling huge crowds in the stadiums. A perfect time when it is a no cricket time for the rest of the nations is the time when they unite and play together in IPL. Also, domestic seasons of most of the countries do not clash, again adding to more attention towards the Indian Premier League (35). Also, the Bollywood connection to the Indian premier league helps the cricket fans get attracted to the game of cricket. Three hours of cricketing entertainment filled with pure entertainment from the famous Bollywood stars is a treat for every Indian fan. The people in India have a great obsession with Bollywood and when these stars perform in major events and match the stadiums are bound to have huge crowds. So the Bollywood connections prove very healthy in terms of getting good numbers to the stadium. They're by adding to the numbers of people travelling for sports across cities during IPL (36).

The success of IPL and its ability to pull large crowds benefitting to the Sports tourism sector in India across sectors like hospitality, Airline, and others is indeed a learning curve for various leagues coming up in past 5 years. If they follow certain things that IPL did over the years they might have a good chance of pulling huge crowds from other countries as well as domestic crowds. The Indian premier league over the years has been a pioneer in the field of cricket leagues with a major impact on commercialization over the years. The league has been able to market itself and successfully attract sponsors on a global scale. The major impact created is because of the entertainment factor considering the format of the game and the inclusion of Bollywood as the major contributors to the league (37).

The globalized world economy perspective is another great example of why the Indian premier league should be a benchmark for other Indian leagues who wish to create successful model taking sports tourism into consideration. The aim of increasing the economic growth of the nation and tapping the untapped cricket market will help in attracting a huge crowd (38). Another major impact the Indian Premier league created was taking leverage of the culture of cricket in India. Understanding and tapping the sentiments of Indians and love towards the game made people more inquisitive to travel around cities to support their teams (39).

Indian super league is a football league in India which was started back in 2013. Football enjoys a lot of attention across the globe and ISL was started with a viewpoint of increasing the sports with increasing its exposure in India. The vision behind ISL was pretty simple to make India a global superpower and help them reach heights in this game of football (40). It is pretty evident that if soccer emerges as a popular game in India the sports tourism sector would be benefitted. Football is a game that has the highest number of people travelling across for their favourite players or teams so if a league like ISL does well we have a good future in the tourism sector with India’s ability to cope up with such population.
Pro kabaddi league is another league in India that has a good future with growing viewership year by year and a shorter game time which grabs attention. The league just needs a good exposure as year by year it shows a good increase. The league has a growing appetite for consumption for this sport if channelized properly may help India with great numbers in the coming future.

Table 1.1. Cricketing season across major cricket playing nations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>Percentage Increased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Food and Beverages</td>
<td>Courtyard by Marriott, Pune</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boutique hotel</td>
<td>Marina Plaza, Mumbai</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Travel Bookings</td>
<td>Cox and Kings</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1. above showcases that the cricketing season for major cricket playing nations is not more than 6 months. So, the other six months they either spend playing overseas against different countries or prepare for world events. If you look closely all these countries have one common break and that is April and May window. IPL makes maximum use this window and hence is able to attract a lot of tourists as people across countries travel to support their heroes. Moreover, this (April-may) is a summer break in India and hence families travel across cities to support their teams.

Table 1.2. Increased demand during the IPL season in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>Country Name</th>
<th>Crickenting Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>April - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>October - March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>October - March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>October - March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table 1.2 shows the percentage increase in demand in the various sector during the IPL season. All the sectors have a sudden spike in demand in terms of consumption of food, occupancy of hotel rooms, or a surge in Travel bookings during the IPL seasons.

4. Conclusion:

It is very much evident that the sports tourism industry in the coming years would be rated much higher than before. Sports have always been a medium of expressing love, gratitude, and a sense of belongingness towards each other. And hence the industry of sports tourism will achieve great heights in the coming future. The paper largely focused on how IPL as a league helped India towards creating employment opportunities for the locals due to increased demand for how it helped the tourism industry grow over the years and how it has always been a driving force for revenue generation and proving economically beneficial for the country. The league has certainly paved a way for all the other leagues and has set an example on how they can attract tourists to our country. With a lot of emerging leagues like ISL and Pro Kabaddi league soon getting attention due to the growing sports culture the viewership has already reached heights and needs no introduction. If these leagues follow how IPL positioned itself over the years and with growing sports infrastructure in the country and government initiatives focused on promoting a sporting culture the league structure certainly has a lot of power to attract tourists across borders. The way IPL has functioned in recent years with great assurance to the three important aspects of tourism that is Airline, Hospitality, and tourist destinations is an eye-opener for opportunities in sports.
tourism in India. And hence the upcoming leagues should try and pull more and more tourists through lucrative tourist destination packages customized as sports tourism packages in India. But before this commercialization of leagues should be the major factor to focus on, as once you market the league well and are able to market the sport the tourist would love to travel across countries to enjoy the beautiful mix of sports and tourism. Also, India has an abundance of adventure tourism, and hence such an untapped market when marketed properly could reap higher economic gains. Indian premier league had certain advantages which they used to perfection and hence we now have an upper hand over other countries in cricket tourism. The perfect mix of viable strategies right from having media houses, Bollywood and business tycoons as team owners to starting the league with a perspective of reaching out globally and perfect commercialization in place the league has indeed set a benchmark for other leagues to try and understand how can they create a strong structure and attract possible tourist to the respective leagues. The success of IPL is the perfect example of how leagues can help the tourism industry grow.

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