Impact of Fantasy Sports on Indian Sports Market

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Abstract

Background: Fantasy sports came into existence in early 2000 in the US and Canada; however, its introduction to the Indian market was in 2008 during the first season of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Fantasy sports rapidly captured the Indian market by attracting consumers and affecting the different sectors of the market and changed the psychology of the people towards sports. The sudden growth of sensation in viewers for fantasy sports increased the interest of people in watching different sports what resulted enhancement of the importance of the online gaming industry and fantasy sports companies. The present study analyzed the behavior of the consumers on fantasy sports, their attitude, motives, and the impact that created upon them.

Methods: The sample data of 297 participants was collected through a set of questionnaires based on different components like interest, knowledge, escape, monetary benefits, competition, and entertainment for fantasy sports.

Conclusion: This study revealed the psychology of the participants playing the fantasy sports that the interest of the participants towards a particular sport plays the main role for their inclination. It also revealed the impact of fantasy sports on the Indian sports market.

Keywords: attitude, fantasy sports, motives, sports market

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1.Introduction:

Fantasy sports are different from other sports consumption because they are based on the real (using stats from actual game and players) and the virtual world (engaging in a stimulated league on the internet). A spectator has a vital role in any sports, especially in team games like football and cricket. In fantasy sports, a customer gets an opportunity to choose the playing 11 for cricket, playing 7 for Kabaddi, captain, and vice-captain of their team and many other options. It is a platform where the customer has to play both the roles of a manager and the team owner⁸. In early 2000, fantasy sports gained popularity, got its structure built. The people started recognizing it. The advancement of technology helped the fantasy sports industry to grow exponentially with competitive participants along with the availability of multiple platforms like mobile phones, apps, computers, etc.⁹. Fantasy sports depend on the prediction made by the performance statistics of the players and the related data. It is played on the internet via an app or website where a customer can bid for its team and pay registration fees which are called subscription charges. Fantasy sports is used as a tool for fan engagement, it is a medium that connects the fans to the games. It also develops the interest of people in other sports apart from cricket as entertainment. Recently fantasy sports in India have increased viewership mostly in team games like Kabaddi, Football, etc.

The most popular game in India is Cricket followed by Football and Kabaddi. People are participating in fantasy sports as they have an understanding of the game and can gain some monetary benefits also. There are articles on the analysis of the impact of television viewership on National Football Leagues (NFL) and on Major League Baseball for playing fantasy sports. The survey has been done by ESPN Sports Poll and the pieces of evidence found to suggest that participation of fantasy sports leads to the increase in the Television viewership and the numbers of people who watch sports events. Therefore participation in fantasy sports acts as a compliment. The fantasy sports participation increases the potential of advertising sports more on television and also increases the scope for cross-marketing on the television and the internet⁷. Two parallel leagues are going on in India one is the Indian Premier League and the second one is the fantasy
sports league. There are many fantasy sports companies in India like Dream 11, MyTeam11, My11circle, Halaplay. Every cricket player is endorsing and promoting fantasy sports on television\(^4\). The reason for the exponential growth of fantasy sports in India can be ascribed in three ways. It makes the sports more interesting, interactive, and also converts fans from passive to active users. Fantasy sports gaming platform (FSGP) makes it very easy for the participants to understand the game and the logic behind it to play. It separates the regular followers from occasional ones and gives them a spot where they can play with unfamiliar players, with their unknown forms, ground conditions and pitch, etc.\(^6\). Fantasy sports require to know both the teams and their players, their performance, and to follow the game regularly. Fantasy sports possess a great knowledge of the sport as well as the strategies used by the participants. The most important thing is that it increases viewership or participants. It is an advancement of technology. The increase in the number of fantasy sports companies, new apps, and new leagues and discussions on the match predictions is the reason behind the growth of fantasy sports.

The other elements which drive this fantasy sports into the public are the introductions of the new leagues like Pro-Kabaddi League (PKL), Badminton League, Indian Premier League (IPL), and other countries’ leagues/ matches also. Now people are aware of and updated themselves with other country games and leagues like NFL, American football, cricket leagues. Recently Dream 11 and Myteam11, the fantasy sports companies in India have included Baseball and Handball also. Due to the crisis of recent Covid-19, there were no sports events in the affected countries. The other countries which are not affected by the virus have organized the leagues namely the Tie pie T10 league of Taiwan, Vanuatu T10 League of Vanuatu Island. The market captured by all these companies in India is huge and they are growing day by day. There is a prediction that the growth probably would capture the whole Indian market by 2024 and may reach up to 250 billion rupees\(^4\). The biggest achievement made by the fantasy sports companies in India is that the game is free from any kind of legal issue in some states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. The High Courts of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Bombay have given their judgments in favor of Dream11 format of fantasy sports and confirmed it as a game of skill\(^2\). In India, according to the law Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the central Public Gambling Act, 1867 (“Central Gambling Act”), any game can be considered as a sport where skill is required not on just luck and prohibits any kind of gambling activity. However, many states like Orissa, Telangana, Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim haven’t yet given any license for these fantasy sports companies because in these states fantasy sports are considered to be betting or gambling\(^6\).

In fantasy sport, participants have a different mindset to play the game. The motives, constraints, and attitude which influence them to play the game are based on various parameters. It includes likeness towards sports, sports interest, competition, time pass, entertainment, love for sports, and knowledge\(^5\). It does not only depend on the team, its logo, images of the players, and other similar factors. It is predicted that India will become the largest fast-growing market for fantasy sports in 2020\(^8\). The FSGA (Fantasy Sports and Gaming Association) has stated that there are 45.9 million players of the age group above 18 years who are fond of fantasy sports. In 2017 a study has been conducted on fantasy sports players. The study was on the average amount annually the players spend on fees, subscription for knowledge gaining, research expenses, and many more. It reveals that 73% of players pay for non-cash prizes like a trophy or a belt\(^9\). In 2017 there were 59.3 million people who used to play fantasy sports in the US and Canada. It was noticed that fantasy sports players and sports bettors are more than the normal population follows Instagram\(^2\). Several studies have been taken up on how fantasy sports have increased TV viewership. The studies also include their motives, attitude, and constraints behind playing fantasy sports. The research was done mainly over the US or Canada. It included studies on fantasy football participation, sports betting, and gambling in the NFL. Sports leagues also bound to acknowledge the impact the fantasy sports left on it as it effects the continuous increase of consumers of sports leagues. Also, the fantasy football participants use various media sources namely television, internet, and press media which indicates their interest to participate in fantasy football\(^12\).

This study was aimed to find out the impact of fantasy sports exclusively on the Indian market and to examine the possibilities of inclusion of different sports in fantasy sports in India. The objective of this study was also to analyze the motives, attitudes of players, and the impact therefrom created on fantasy sports, audiences, market, economy, and entertainment. The study
also covered the reasons why consumers were influenced for playing fantasy sports in India. The earlier studies hitherto were conducted keeping in view the entire Indian sub-continent and were confined to finding out the reasons which influenced the audiences to play fantasy cricket. The present study created an extensive effect on several spheres such as market development, growth of the economy, advancement in technology, employment generation, and flourishing social life. It will build a community for sports and will help fantasy sports companies for their exponential growth in India.

2. Material & methods:

2.1. Selection of the subjects

This research was conducted by a survey. The survey included distribution of a questionnaire to students of different universities and to general people of India (n = 588) through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and email. Out of 588 to whom the questionnaire was distributed responses were received from a convenient sample of 345 people of which 279 were real consumers and interested in fantasy sports. The subject includes (n = 279) responses of participants from different age groups such as 18-25 years (50%), 26-35 years (30%), and 36-50 years (15%). For the survey, preference was given to the students as they were supposed to be interested more for fantasy sports and also the fantasy sports are popular within age group of 18-26 years. Over and above the students play an important role for the growth of fantasy sports. The Convenient Sampling Method was used for this research for a large section of the participants was unaware of fantasy sports. So the questionnaire was set with a beginning question “Are you interested in playing fantasy sports?” to filter the data of non-participants to process the analysis correctly.

2.2. Selection of the Variables

The variables considered for this study were - 279 interested candidates (M =193, F=86), the reasons for playing fantasy sports, the duration of playing fantasy sports, games they prefer to play, and the resulting impact on the sports market. This study was based on the mindset of the consumers who were interested in. Further students in majority were assumed to be acquainted with the technology. The questionnaire was set up keeping in view of the extract of previous studies and to understand the factors which influenced the players to be prone towards fantasy sports. Further, the questionnaire was framed based on the feedback received from the experienced players who were attached to fantasy sports for the last three to five years. The questions were mandatory to answer and designed as suitable for the general public. For example: (1) Are you interested in playing fantasy sports? (2)Which fantasy sports do you play? (3) How long are you playing fantasy sports? - The options given for answers: Cricket, Kabaddi, Football, and others. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions. The questions targeted the age group 18-50 of consumers, gender, status (employment, student), individual’s attitude, behavior, and interest for participation. For example what are your reasons for playing fantasy sports? and the options were: (1) Entertainment (2) Escape, (3) Monetary benefits, (4) Knowledge Application, (5) Love for sports, and (6) to be a Manager or Head coach.

2.3. Data collection/Procedure

The sample data for the study was collected from an online survey by using web-based app Google forms. The questionnaire in Google form was distributed to (n=588) different categories of participants having different backgrounds throughout India. The data collected was filtered by asking a conditional question “Are you interested in playing Fantasy sports?” in the beginning of the questionnaire. Each participant took only 10 minutes to answer the questions in the survey. The sample data, who were interested in playing fantasy sports, was collected on excel sheet. The sample was segregated into different categories such as gender, age group, the reasons for playing fantasy sports and game preference, duration of their playing fantasy sports, depth of knowledge of the sports, their willingness for inclusion of new sports. The subsequent analysis was done based on the responses (n = 297).

2.4. Statistical Techniques

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Data representation of the survey results was done through graphs, pie charts by using Microsoft excel to show the results of survey in terms of percentage. Based on the result of the survey, the data analysis was done through SPSS version 25 by applying statistical test like chi-square goodness of fit test and post hoc test to identify the significant relation of the variables. Several tests were conducted on the data set, only the results which were significant in comparison to the base line .005 were considered.

3. Results and Discussion:

The results against the questionnaire were studied further to examine whether any association existed between the two variables. The study through chi-square test was conducted on a small group of 279 fantasy sports consumers in India to observe any significant trend in preferring the games for playing fantasy sports in India. The questionnaire statements were designed to measure attitudes, motivations, the popularity of fantasy sports and the reasons to play the games. The first chi-square test (goodness of fit) was conducted on overall population of male and female participants. It was found that there was no significant difference in choosing the games for playing fantasy sports in India as the p-value (Asymp. Significant) was higher than alpha-value (0.005).

3.1 Analysis on male and female participants preferring the sports

The next analysis using chi-square was conducted to observe the preferences of male and female separately for the games (Cricket, Football, Kabaddi, and Basketball) to play in fantasy sports in India. The outcome (Table 1) revealed that a significant difference existed within males preferring the sports for playing fantasy sports as the p-value (Asym. Significance) was less than the alpha value (.005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>70.414</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same test was conducted for females (Table 2) to check whether a difference existed in preferring the game to play fantasy sports in India. The outcome showed a significant difference within females also as the Asymp. Significance value was less than the alpha value (0.005).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>25.125</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.000</td>
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For further analysis another test called post hoc test was performed using SPSS 24. In this test a comparison was drawn between male and female with respect to their preferences for any particular game for playing fantasy sports. The comparison process was conducted giving six pairs of games (Cricket-Football, Cricket-Kabaddi, Cricket-Basketball, Football-Kabaddi, Football-Basketball, Kabaddi-Basketball) out of four games, on males and female to have their choices. The extract of the analysis found to be that there existed a significant difference between male and female in choosing the games as each individual level, the value was found to be lesser than the alpha value (0.0084). The data of the post hoc test reflected that when two different sports were compared gender wise, the male/female would opt for Cricket over Kabaddi and again the same.
male/female would opt for Kabaddi over Basketball in different points of time. The graphical representations of the questions of the questionnaire and the interpretations were explained below.

![Figure 1. Percentage of participants playing Fantasy Sports](image1)

The Figure 1 above, showed the trend of popularity of each sport for playing fantasy sports in India. It also showed that popularities of Cricket, Football, Kabaddi and Basketball were 46%, 31%, 12% and 10% respectively. The Figure 1 indicated that the higher percentage of people were interested in cricket rather than in other sports.

![Figure 2. Percentage of participants- age group wise](image2)

The Figure 2, indicated the popularity of fantasy sports in India within different age groups. It showed maximum percentage (61.7%) belong to players of age group 18 to 25 years followed by (35.8%) of age group 26 to 35 years and the minimum percentage (2.5%) belong to 35 to 50 years age group.
Figure 3. Reason for playing Fantasy Sports in India

The Figure 3 represented the reasons for playing fantasy sports in India. It indicated that love for the sport was the main reason for the players to play fantasy sports and the percentage was maximum (20.7%), followed by (42.5%) players for the interest in the game. The Figure 3 also indicated that the participants of fantasy sports were either more interested towards a particular sports or interested for sports in general. Entertainment was also a reason for some players (13.6%) to play fantasy sports. The graph thus revealed the various reasons for playing fantasy sports in India.

Figure 4. Percentage of participants interested for several additional sports

The Figure 4 above described that people who were interested to add new sports in leagues of fantasy sports. Larger people (53.3%) were interested in participating in different sports who put demand for introduction of new sports leagues (baseball, handball, rugby) in fantasy sports in India.
Figure 5. Percentage of participants having knowledge of playing sports

The Figure 5 depicted that the knowledge in the sports played an important role to attract people (67.2%) including male (43%) and female (25%) to participate in games of fantasy sports in India.

Figure 6. Years spent on playing Fantasy Sports

The Figure 6 showed that maximum number of participants were the first time players (52.8%) followed by participants engaged for 1 to 3 years (25.1%) in fantasy sports.
The Figure 7 showed that more participants (59.6%) played fantasy sports at least 2 hours a day.

An extensive experiment was conducted taking samples of people of many categories to accrue the conclusion of what motivated people to play fantasy sports in India. The results of the experiments indicated many factors like monetary gain, game interest, entertainment, and so on, playing an important role to make people conducive to fantasy sports. Previous researchers studied seven motivation factors of the consumers such as Economic, social interactions, escape, fantasy achievement, knowledge, and time pass\(^\text{(1)}\).

During this research the same previous factors revealed that game interest, love for sports, and monetary benefits motivated most the players. In addition to the points mentioned above, some more elements also came to light through this study namely for entertainment and social interaction, people also liked to play the sport\(^\text{(9)}\). It was observed that most of the people of India started playing this game the first time and used to spend two hours a day for entertainment. It was also one of the findings that some fantasy participants consumed two hours a day while a few others take two days of a week but only two hours as the daily playing ones do\(^\text{(10)}\). This indicates the existence of competitiveness among the participants along with the monetary gain and entertainment\(^\text{(11)}\). This research further revealed that the participants who could gather some knowledge out of the games, on the formation of their fantasy teams and picking up their favourable players preferred to watch the matches and leagues. The research also reflected that the maximum percentage (67\%) of consumers follow the sports after forming their teams in a fantasy platform, resulting in an indirect increase in the consumption of a particular sports content on TV and thereby increase the viewership of sports in general\(^\text{(12)}\). The participation in fantasy sports and TV viewership imposed an impact upon other factors like sponsorship, fan engagement, internet usage, virtual sports, and digital payment platforms to grow abundantly. It also helped the companies create new formats of different games and engaging consumers towards their favouritesports\(^\text{(15)}\).

Again the study concentrated on the concepts of the consumers preferring a particular game to play fantasy sports. Using chi-square a statistical analysis was conducted to conclude that there existed a significant relation behind choosing a particular game by the consumers, however, there found no such relation on the overall population including males and females. In continuance with ongoing analysis, a difference in preferring the games to play fantasy sports between males and females was observed. For example, choosing cricket by males and females, the percentage differed\(^\text{(18)}\). Further, it was found that when there were several options for choosing a single game the liking of males and females differed. The huge no of male participants in fantasy sports compared to female participants indicated that male participants were more involved and thus dominated the playing of fantasy sports in India\(^\text{(12)}\). The knowledge in sports has an important role in playing fantasy sports as it requires a basic understanding of the game and it motivates the participants to play fantasy sports. The current research revealed that the maximum (67\%)
participants played fantasy sports who possessed knowledge of sports, which included males (43%) and females (24%). This confirmed that participants who had a higher knowledge in the sports were imbued to play fantasy sports. The fantasy sports participants need minute observations of the technicality of the players and understanding their skill in the game based on which participants select the players for fantasy sports. So fantasy sports was considered a skill-based and not just on luck. If in some states of India the legal hindrance be lifted which would make fantasy sports to evolve as sports ecosystem in India. Another effulgent finding from the research was that people were interested in introducing new games such as Volleyball, Handball, and Baseball for playing fantasy sports. It made clear that people wanted introducing of new leagues in India. So, this would certainly increase the number of viewers on TV, participation for fantasy sports, match predictions, sponsorship, etc. Fantasy sports increased the interest of the participants to follow the sports content on different social media platforms like Yahoo sports, dream11, myTeam11, news app. Fantasy sports further to open doors for sports marketers having their business expanded through promotions and advertisements. Thus they could create propenseness of non-fantasy sports participants towards fantasy sports. This was evident from this finding that fantasy sports, a propagator, and created an impact on the Indian sports market.

The market analysts confirmed fantasy sports as a growing industry in India. Fantasy sports enhanced the number of internet users, boosted revenue generation, and soon, it would be able to capture the whole sports market. There was a prognostication that the market would grow and reach $118.8 billion by Financial Year 2023. The outcome of different earlier analysis also disclosed the above-stated facts. For example, a potential increase of internet subscribers in India (52% to 86%) during 2016 to 2018, increase in numbers of fantasy sports operators in India, increase of fantasy sports companies, increase of online gaming industry revenue, increase multiple sporting leagues in India and advancements of sports technology. In days to come further study may reveal that the interest prevailing over younger people may overpower the older generation also to enable fantasy sports to gain invincible advancement. In future fantasy sports may prove to be conducive to grow professional careers like a manager, head coach as the same tendency was found in people of the US and Canada who used fantasy sports for their carrier growth. Further, the present limitation of playing fantasy sports in few states of India as the permission was granted so, maybe reviewed and the sports may get the required permission to spread throughout India, and thereby fantasy sports may reach a transcendental position and gain a reputation throughout India.

4. Conclusion:

The objective of the study was to have an idea of the influences created by fantasy sports in India. It was observed that the motives, attitude, and reasons which influenced the consumers to play fantasy sports were the main elements for the development of fantasy sports in India. The present research conducted taking samples from the general mass of people, reveals that people of lower age groups (18 to 25 years) are most interested in fantasy sports and love for sports is their main point of attraction supersedes other reasons such as financial gain, entertainment, game interest, knowledge gaining. It has been found that fantasy sports have increased the number of TV viewers resulting in impacts on TV rights, sponsorship, and the number of spectators. The increase in spectators also opens the doors for developments in sports infrastructure and small ventures. It has an impact on increasing the numbers of sports companies, internet providers and fantasy sports is used as a tool for fan engagements. The research also reveals that the popularity in fantasy sports has several beneficial impacts which include financial growth, modernization of Indian society, and the attraction towards other sports as for cricket. Finally, fantasy sports will bring forth a revolution in Indian sports.

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