Digital Marketing and Social Media: The Growth of Sports Industry in India

Rattan Singh¹ and Nayana Nimkar²

¹Student, MBA, ²Professor, Symbiosis School of Sports Sciences, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, Maharashtra, India

*Corresponding author: director@ssss.edu.in (Nimkar)

Abstract

Background: India has been witnessing great evolution in the field of sports. A good number of teenagers are into sports. However, when it comes to participation at the professional level, there are very handful. One of the major reasons is the lack of information. This knowledge insufficiency gap should be resolved with viable ideas. Methods: This study is qualitative research. Simple Random sampling method has been used in this study. A survey was conducted on 180 participants who were sports players, sports officials, and digital marketing students from different schools and colleges, in which we received 142 responses. Conclusion: The result helps us to know that social media is providing a platform for fans and players to connect to their favourite sports. Sports companies today depend upon social media and digital marketing for their continuous growth and success.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Social media marketing, Sports marketing, Digital sports marketing, Social media

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1. Introduction:

Sports players represent the country and inspire young people. A good number of children are into sports since their childhood but, people still take sports as a hobby or treat as physical activity. When it comes to marketing in sports, traditional marketing (like - Television advertisements, banners, and newspaper advertisements) was the only way before Digital marketing. It has shaped the sports industry and helps the sports industry to reach out to a wide and targeted range of audience. Watching Sports content on Social media and in any Digital platform has transformed the experience of fans. Now you can experience live sports anywhere on any device which has internet.

It has become extremely convenient for sports companies to promote themselves, their products, their athletes with the help of social media. They create handles of their operator’s/ sports companies, so they know exactly who consume and absorb their content so that they can strategize similar advertising trends for the target audience. This database takes the marketing of sports companies to a whole new level. Chatbots are also an exciting form of sports marketing, which communicates with fans via Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, Skype, and Facebook Messenger. The use of Chatbots in sports marketing gives lots of advantages. A clever and entertaining chatbot can reach new target audiences and increase fan loyalty because it offers extraordinary content about their favorite team/ club and player. Chatbots collect data that can help to understand customer needs. Currently, India has more than 300 million online gamers in 2020 which will increase up to 450 million till 2022, and social media is going to a play very important role in this, no sports company can afford not to take e-Sports industry seriously.

The use of digital marketing has increased in the last decade and now has become an essential part of Indian sports as it is moving to the digital age since the past few years. As Indian people are now using social media in daily routine, social media helps to involve more audience to participate in sports by giving likes, shares & comments in sports content revolving on social media. Sports brands are also following this trend to keep clients hooked by creating social media content that engages their clients in the conversation on sports.

Social media has a large part of the globally active population. With almost 2500 million active users Facebook is on top, 2000 million users on YouTube, 1000 million users on Instagram and similar numbers on other social media offers a significant base of fans to engage with. Through social media sports rights, owners succeed to engage their fans, this also increases the brand devotion and attraction of the fans and customers. Moreover, a large number of sports professionals also use social media to connect with their fans and recommend their brand/club merchandise. There are more than 324 million people in India who actively using the internet. So, the future of the sports industry with digital marketing surely looks attractive. Digital marketing exploits a variety of online platforms to connect the advertisers with fans. The fans are seen as a collective influential mass with one common emotion – the love for the sport.

Professional teams and athletes have begun using social media as an important marketing strategy during recent years. Today, lot of sports companies can be seen branding and promoting themselves in different social media platforms, the most popular ones are Facebook and Twitter, but other platforms including YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are also used for marketing. This tool is being used by sports organizations and athletes to communicate with fans and exploit their potential fully. Those passionate sports lovers can be seen as a fan base plus consumer base and also future athletes.

Sports companies come up with creative methods to attract sports fans. Even when social media is an important part of digital marketing the sports industry’s broadcasting is mainly dependent on television which is their main source of revenue. There is a need to reform the revenue generation method and widen the viewer base. Keeping which in mind today a lot of sports brand can be seen promoting themselves in different social media handle like Facebook, Instagram, etc. It will generate a lot of genuine traffic on the handles and can be used to promote products, merchandise. Blogging is one of the most used tools of social media for self-branding and to share the latest happenings of the club to the audiences and fans. Search engine optimization (SEO) generates additional traffic to the websites which help to improve the Google ranking of the website and increase their reach. Companies also use Brand management to manipulate the search listing so that only the positive listing appears in search results helping the sports companies to create its positive reputation on social media. Content and video marketing are also used to increase brand awareness and to make a digital bond with fans, and potential customers. Even during a game, real-time engagement of fans through Twitter as a live feed is being witnessed to entertain and engage a huge fan base. They make sure to update their fans/audience with relevant and engaging content.

Social media helps sports by building brand awareness, cost-effectively reaching a large target audience and engaging passionate sports fans. What’s interesting about social media is that it provides two-way communication which helps audiences, consumers, and fans to interact directly with their favorite players, clubs, brands, and celebrities. They can consume any sporting event either real-time or recorded form virtually anywhere. As a result, the opportunities for the promotion of sport, and the benefits for sport and its partners, are significant[3].

Social media has developed and helped sports organizations and brands to communicate with consumers and increase their revenue through interactive tools. This led to a distinct role of social media from traditional methods of marketing[4]. Social media has changed the communication habits of people. Social media has become such an inevitable of the sports marketing strategy that it cannot be ignored at any point. Social Media strategies are of help and prove to be beneficial for
entrepreneurs to plan, strategize, and execute. Social media is one way of marketing merchandise and products. With the help of different social media platforms, commercial messages can easily reach to the consumer/customers. Advertisers have to be there, where their customers are. Social media offers a way to follow and have a watch on your competitors. It also makes it easier to keep a check on the strategies executed by your competitors on the different digital platforms, thereby providing grounds to look through your plans and improve the same. Complete check on the activities performed in social media can be kept in check with records thereby preventing duplication of data missing. The sports club can analyze the different topics and strategies subjects which can be discussed and a permeable path of actions can be decided. This method essentially helps organizations to know the real choice and preference of their customers and target audience.

The digital footprint for any organization soars as they focus on social media platforms and networks. This also increases the worth and reach of the club, which is directly proportional to their digital footprint. Digital footprint in literal terms refers to an organization’s social media presence. For sports organizations it is mainly about the kind of content which it shares that determines the message it sends out to their potential customers and sponsors. One a brand or organization realizes it's worth and value, it can rightly use the resources allocated for the same purpose and make sure that it is used to its full potential. The social media content shared also aids in increasing the fanbase and customer base. Social media thereby is creating a mark as essential in today’s sports marketing industry. It is more of an essential as it is an extremely fast and user-friendly way of communicating with customers and stakeholders when compared with the age-old techniques of advertising. Visibility and audience base is a primary lookout for sponsors in this modern era. It has made it easier on both parts, for customers and sponsors as well as the organizations to promote and grow. Each person can put forward their opinion and help the industry and concerned company make a mark by their strategies and idea through social media platforms.

The consumer who share the same type of interests with the content of certain similar platforms, they intend to communicate with these organizations. This situation is completely profitable for organizations as this helps them expand on their audience base and also take feedback which will help them to progress, flourish, and realize the drawbacks of their strategies. It gives them a reality check of their reach as it is mostly the customer's experience that governs the conversation, rather than the organization controlling it. The companies that take negative feedback to improve flourish in the forthcoming years, whereas the companies that try hiding or covering up their negative feedback generally do not know their weak areas which in turn prevents them from rectifying their mistakes.

India has huge potential and talent to grow in the sports market but there is big a gap between the fan/ consumer and the sports companies, there are very limited resources that provide information and connect fans to their favorite team or player. Sports companies have to implement a lot of changes to reach more people and to get the target audience for their merchandise. All previous researches have provided very valuable insights about the role of digital marketing in the sports industry, but what they have missed out is the aspect I will focus on, how social media is beneficial for players, fans and for the sports industries/companies to grow their business and increase their revenue. What makes my search unique is I focused on how fans can be involved and not only engaged (two-way communication), how Social media can be used in revenue generation for sports companies, how it will be beneficial for amateur players and by considering and improving by Negative feedback.
The significance of this study is that it will show us the impact of social media on sports industries and why it is a high time to take social media as a serious marketing platform and why no sports marketer affords to neglect social media in today’s world. This research helps to identify the key factor which plays an important role to grow the sports industry and connect the sports companies with fans. Fans will be benefited by connecting with their favorite team or player and get all important updates by social media. The gap which is created because of the less knowledge and information between a normal individual and sports can be filled and more such people will now easily get connected and be a part of the sports industry as a consumer or might as a producer. Sports companies produce a good revenue but when it came to profit the figures are not that great so Digital marketing help to find the target audience, to increase the ticketing revenue as well as the revenue from the sales of merchandise.

There are three objectives of this study- A) To find out the impact of Social Media and digital marketing on the sports industry in India. B) How Social Media and digital marketing fills the gap between sports players, official and sports team with their Fans. C) How Social media and Digital marketing help to increase the revenue of sports industries/ companies in India.

2. Material & methods:

The study is qualitative research. This research is done to find out the impact and advantages of digital marketing and social media marketing on sports players, fans, and sports companies.

One hundred and eighty residents of India are chosen by random sampling techniques from all over India for this survey in which 142 responded. Analyses were conducted to produce a wide snapshot of views on this important topic. An online survey was conducted. A set of 16 questions were asked including the consumption, nature of consumption of sports through different platforms of social media and digital marketing.

2.1. Selection of subjects

The selection has been done by keeping the objective of the research in mind, we choose the age category which varies between fifteen to sixty years of age and then applied simple random sampling technique and got 142 responses from the total 180 participants for this research. All genders have been taken into account for this survey who were selected by a simple random sampling method which is a part of probability sampling. Participants are chosen from different states of India so we get a wide look at our survey.

2.2. Data collection

The primary method of data collection has been used in this research – An online survey was conducted among 140+ people which consisted of related questions, in which people participated with their knowledge. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions asking about the impact, importance of social media in the sports industry. Some data also have been driven from the secondary source of data collection which is collected from the published journals, books, Research paper, etc. The response rate of data collected from the primary source for the survey is: 78.8 %

2.3. Statistical analysis

In this research, Graphs and pie charts were plotted which shows the percentage of people who participated in research agree or disagree with the questions asked to them, and some graphs also showing the percentage of people use which platform. The Likert scale used (5) represents highly agree and (1) represents highly disagree.

3. Results and Discussion:
These are some graphical representations of the results-driven from questions asked to participates of the survey, which is done electronically. These graphs showing how social media impacting sports marketing, and why it is so necessary in today’s world.

**Fig. 1** Digital marketing helps the consumer to discover new sporting events.

**Fig. 2** Digital marketing is more efficient in reaching a target audience than old traditional methods.

**Fig. 3** Digital marketing and social media help in increasing fan engagement with their favorite player, team, or club.
Fig. 4 Best digital platform for sports advertising and sports content.

Fig. 5 Digital marketing and social media help the sports industry in revenue generation in India.

Fig. 6 Social media has increased sports consumption in India.

The key finding of this research and according to the survey respondents it can be concluded that more than 80% of the population believes that social media is the best way to consume the sports content. More than 70% of people believe that digital marketing helps amateur players to be more informed and assist them in getting new opportunities in sports events. More than 87% of people say that digital marketing and social media help in increasing fan engagement with their favorite team, player, club, and brand. Half of the population believes that social media helps them to provide new sporting events which were non-existent to them before. More than 70% of people agree that digital marketing helps in reaching a specific target audience more efficiently than the old traditional marketing method. And more than 88% of the people chose social media as the best platform for marketing. The majority of people believe that digital marketing helps to increase the reach of the sports industry to advertise their events and merchandise. Three-fourth of the population believes that social media help the sports industry to grow their revenue. And more than 80% believe that social media increase sports consumption in India.

Digital media helps the sports industry to reach out to a wide and targeted range of audience. It assists fans to connect with his/her favorite player, team, or club. It helps a professional player increases their brand value and finally an organization or company increase their reach which helps them to increase their revenue, tickets sale, merchandise, etc. Digital marketing and social media marketing (SMM) are slowly turning the Indian sports industry from a single sport nation to a multi-sports centric country.

3.1. Benefits to fans, young talents through Digital Marketing

Every sports organization and companies put all their efforts into retaining their huge fan base and extend the boundaries further as and when opportunities knock their doors. It is done by engaging the fans’ emotions into purchasing merchandise and products that they could connect with their idols. Fans are benefitted in various ways from digital marketing.

They are updated with the sports and sporting events with just a single click thereby creating awareness among the people. They can go through their idol’s histories, records, and tactical methods that they use in sports. Social media influencers are now cultural icons, with their shows and product lines\(^{(11)}\). Furthermore, using these influencers allows the brand via first-person narration, which is considered personal, and was shown to be more effective in engaging consumers\(^{(12)}\). They can interact with their idols in promotional events in an intimate and personal manner which helps them to channelize their emotions they have accumulated all this time. All these help to inspire many people to opt for sports as a career which helps in raising the participation strength in sports among viewers\(^{(13)}\).

3.2. Fans as Consumers in Sport Marketing

Fans are psychologically connected to a sport and its related products which results in them becoming consumers of those products. They are attracted to sports equipment, sports clothing of the team, the tactics players use among other things. Gradually they get attached to these and constantly prove their allegiance by using the products to express their love for sports and their idols or team. So being fans they are not just limited to cheering up the team or sportsperson but deeply engage with them psychologically. That’s how consumers from a huge fan base are created\(^{(14)}\). Here the mutual connection between the product marketers and fans of sports leads to the growth of the sports industry\(^{(15)}\). Given the nature of social media of being ground for the expression of interest and freedom of thoughts and emotions large scale consumers are attracted and connected globally. The sports industry in India is proving its efficiency by adapting to all the challenges and changes on its way. This helps any field to sustain and fair competing spirit\(^{(16)}\).

Likewise, the concept of digital marketing of sports and its products through social media through a novel method is undergoing a rapid change now and then. It is important to consider the future of social media in the context of consumer behaviour and market\(^{(17)}\).

Social media provides its user with the experience of multiple platforms. The continuous growth keeps soaring high for social media marketing\(^{(18)}\). This provides companies to publish worth-while content that will link them to their customers. Social media links one platform to the other thus providing a high amount of interlinking information and data for the viewers. Social media not only gives companies or users to contact the organizations but also allows them to exchange ideas with the organizations\(^{,}\) presents a cost-effective medium that provides opportunities for customization, distribution channels, and delivers speed to the delivery of information, communication, and feedback\(^{(19)}\). Social media also plays a very vital role in sports journalism to connect with the targeted audience\(^{(20)}\).

### 3.3. Growth of the sports industry

Mutual connection between the product marketers and fans of sports leads to the growth of the sports industry. Social media provides huge opportunities for sponsorships. It helps the sports industry by building brand awareness. Cost-effectively reaching a large target audience and engaging passionate sports fans. Social media offers a way to follow and have a watch on your competitors. Social media provide a specific sports-oriented audience to sell their merchandise and help increase their revenues.

### 4. Conclusion:

The result of this research gives an optimistic view that the sports industry’s growth lies in the wise use of social media platforms and digital marketing by the sports companies of India. It helps to increase participation of young athletes shortly by efficiently using the information technology that will be made available to them. Fans will be more contented with their favourite teams and sports companies will be benefited by getting more loyal fans and viewers and will increase their revenue by converting their viewers and fans into consumers. This will be a symbiotic relationship between the Social media, audience/fans, and the sports industry. They all will be benefited if they can use each other with their right potential.

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