

Chapter 15

Bollywood Sporting Spectacles: Indian Premier League Cricket as a Bollywoodized Media Event

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ABSTRACT

Indian Premier League (IPL) has evolved as a popular event for the large entertainment savvy middle class as well as sports enthusiasts who equally enjoy the new live spectacle on television. Most of the franchised team is owned by Bollywood stars or at least branded or heralded by film star. This made cricket match an extremely glamorized event with all the mix of a Bollywood film. This revolutionized the entertainment culture of public where they are now witnessing the merging of the most popular entertainment outlet – film and sports. The chapter argues that the concept of IPL as a media event is identified by the public as a glorified Bollywood film where it set an ideology that every second should be enjoyed with a similar enthusiasm of a masala Bollywood film. This chapter situates IPL with the larger framework provided by Dayan and Katz (1992) in defining a media event.

INTRODUCTION

India, aiming to become one of the super powers of the world (Follath, 2012), 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 during any prestigious sports events like Olympics or Asian Games (Shetty, 2014; Lal, 2008). However, all these disregards has been positively contemplated to the popularity of cricket, a game of spirit and entertainment that the Indians vie and die for. Even when India's failure in the global athletic events has always been highlighted, India is known for the craziest

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audience for cricket. Cricket is enthusiastically appreciated by the Indian population irrespective of age gender or religious differences. Brought by the British colonists in India, cricket remains as an incomparable trade mark left by the colonial rule. This gradually evolved into a mania in India, where the dream of an average kid is to become a cricketer. Lezard (2003), while reviewing the book *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British* commented that cricket would be the major factor that undermined the caste system in India. Apart from cricket, an equally popular entertainment medium in India is Bollywood, which is now a global entity. Bollywood has been always receptive to changing social and political scenarios in their thematic adaptations (Dudrah, 2006). In Bollywood, though sports films seized the interest among the filmmakers only recently, it is rapidly becoming the favourite genre as they try to plot the films over popular games and sports in India. By the beginning of 1980s onwards, Bollywood films began to give prior consideration to sport movies, which gradually evolved into a particular genre in Bollywood. It has already become a globalized cultural industry and a cinema of attractions packaged with romance, melodrama, action, costumes, songs and dance extravaganzas. While establishing a devoted fan base around the world, Bollywood entered into a lucrative area of cross-media entertainment by stepping into the world of sports entertainment. Bollywood stretches its long business tentacles with the 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 of 200 billion dollars in the beginning year. As IPL reached the sixth season of its triumphs and tribulations, it has become a prototype of a new age business entity which has been adopted in different parts of the world. This chapter identifies IPL as a 'media event' and, equates and evaluates the ways in which this qualifies as a media event by juxtaposing it with the the major aspects provided by Dayan and Katz (1992).

CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bollywood actors' 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. Entertainment is the core of most of the popular television programs. Previously, the presence of any celebrity in the pavilion excited both the live audience and the television audience equally. On the contrary, now cricket turned out to be star-studded event bedecked with cheer-girls that made the televised world to compete for the telecast rights. This revolutionized the entertainment culture of public by merging two of the most popular entertainment media– film and sports. This not only merged two big industries, but brought together their audiences to the same platform. 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

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