

Chapter 11

Congruence Across Sport Celebrities and Sport Events

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ABSTRACT

In the vibrant and dynamic landscape of Indian sports, the connection between sport celebrities and major sporting events is a topic of significant interest and strategic importance. This study investigates the concept of congruence—the alignment between sport celebrities and sporting events—by analyzing data collected from 363 respondents across India. The research explores how perceived fit, endorsement effectiveness, and audience engagement influence the success of sporting events and associated brands. The findings underscore the importance of strategic alignment in

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sports marketing, providing valuable implications for event organizers, marketers, and brands. Future directions for research include broadening the scope to emerging athletes, diverse sports, and digital engagement, as well as exploring the long-term impact of congruence. This study illuminates the powerful impact of congruence in driving audience engagement and event success, offering a comprehensive understanding of its role in the evolving narrative of sports marketing in India.

INTRODUCTION

In the vibrant world of Indian sports, the connection between sport celebrities and major sporting events has always been a topic of great interest (Kwon et al., 2016; Lee & Koo, 2015; Zhang et al., 2021). Imagine a cricket match where Virat Kohli, one of India's most revered cricket players, endorses the event. The excitement is palpable, the stadiums fill up faster, and the TV viewership soars. This magical alignment between sport celebrities and events, known as congruence, is explored through the lens of a study conducted with 363 Indian respondents.

The journey begins on a warm evening in Mumbai, where the air is thick with anticipation. The streets buzz with activity as fans don their favorite team jerseys, faces painted in vibrant colors, ready to witness a thrilling cricket match. Billboards featuring Virat Kohli's intense gaze tower over the city, his endorsement sparking a frenzy among fans and media alike. In every corner, conversations hum with excitement as people discuss the upcoming game and Kohli's influence on it.

In the heart of the city, a group of researchers set out to understand this phenomenon. They gathered a diverse group of 363 individuals, each with their unique stories and perspectives, yet all united by their passion for sports. These respondents came from bustling metropolises and quiet villages, representing the rich tapestry of Indian society. The researchers' goal was clear: to uncover the intricate dance between sport celebrities and sporting events, and to understand how this congruence shapes audience perception and event success.

As the researchers delved into their study, they discovered that the influence of sport celebrities extended far beyond the confines of the stadium. It reached into the living rooms of fans, influencing their perceptions and experiences of the event. For instance, a young college student from Delhi recalled the electrifying atmosphere when MS Dhoni endorsed a major cricket tournament. "It was like he brought a piece of his magic to the event," she said, her eyes sparkling with excitement. Her words painted a vivid picture of how a celebrity's endorsement could elevate an event's status in the eyes of its audience.

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