

The Legacy Continues: A Look at IPL's Title Sponsors from DLF to TATA

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Abstract

This comprehensive case study delves into the evolution of sponsorship fees in the Indian Premier League (IPL) from its inception in 2008 to the present day. It examines the shifting trends in sponsorship investments and their profound impact on the league's financial landscape. Furthermore, the study explores the strategic decisions and marketing strategies adopted by IPL sponsors, analyzing their effectiveness in enhancing brand engagement and achieving marketing objectives. Through a detailed analysis of key partnerships and their significance, this case study offers valuable insights into the rationale behind IPL sponsorship, success stories, challenges faced, and future trends. By providing in-depth analysis and practical recommendations, this study serves as a valuable resource for brands aiming to maximize their ROI through IPL sponsorship.

**Keywords :- IPL ,Sponsorship, Strategies, Management*

Introduction:-

The Indian Premier League (IPL) has emerged as a global sporting phenomenon, offering high-stakes cricket and lucrative sponsorship opportunities. From its inception, IPL has been fueled by the support of title sponsors, who play a crucial role in shaping the league's identity and trajectory. This section provides an overview of IPL's journey, highlighting the pivotal role of sponsors in driving its growth and commercial success.

DLF Era (2008-2012):DLF, a leading real estate developer, made history by becoming IPL's inaugural title sponsor in 2008. The DLF IPL partnership was instrumental in establishing the league as a premier cricketing event, leveraging extensive branding and marketing initiatives. DLF's support enabled IPL to attract top talent, gain global viewership, and secure lucrative

broadcasting deals. This era marked a period of rapid expansion and consolidation for IPL, setting the stage for future sponsorships.**Transition Phase:**

Following the conclusion of DLF's sponsorship, PepsiCo stepped in as the title sponsor for the next three seasons (2013-2015). The Pepsi IPL era witnessed innovative marketing campaigns and increased brand visibility. However, it also faced challenges, including controversies surrounding spot-fixing scandals, which impacted the league's reputation and led to the termination of Pepsi's contract.

Vivo Reign (2016-2020):In 2016, Vivo, a leading Chinese smartphone manufacturer, took over as IPL's title sponsor, ushering in a new era of growth and commercial success. Vivo's significant investment bolstered the league's financial stability and facilitated grassroots cricket development. The Vivo IPL partnership witnessed unprecedented viewership, digital engagement, and brand activations. However, geopolitical tensions eventually led to Vivo's suspension as IPL's title sponsor in 2020.

TATA's Involvement and 2021 Dream11 Sponsored IPL:Amidst the sponsorship upheaval caused by Vivo's exit, TATA Group emerged as IPL's title sponsor in 2021, symbolizing a blend of tradition, innovation, and corporate responsibility. TATA's association with IPL focused on sustainability, community engagement, and technological advancements.

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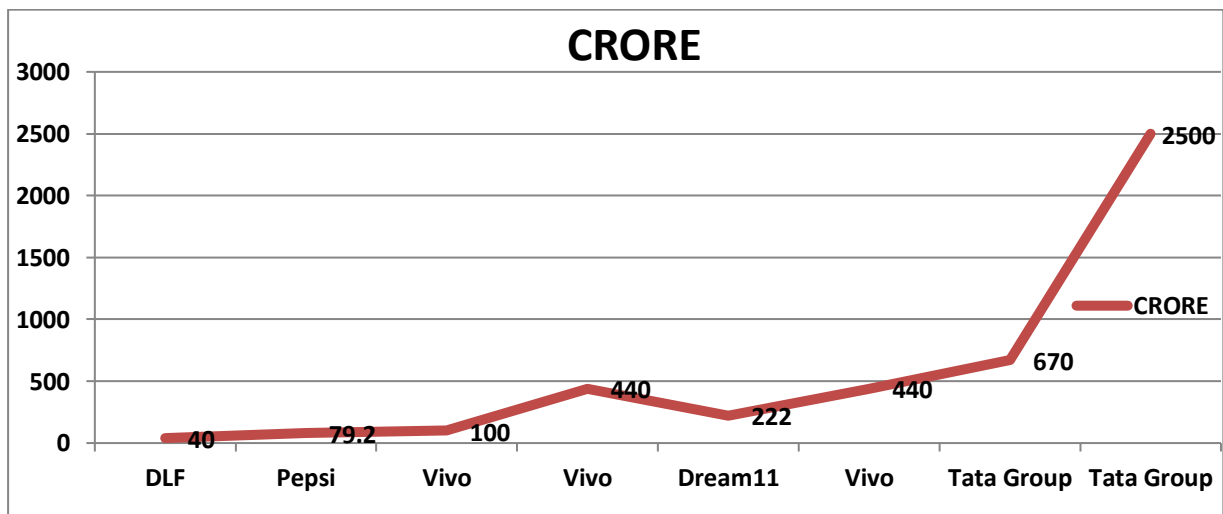
Additionally, the 2021 IPL season was sponsored by Dream11, emphasizing digital innovation and fan participation.

Table 1: Tata Group's Groundbreaking Entry: Charting a New Trajectory

Table 1: IPL Sponsorship Fees (2008-2024)

Year	Sponsors	Fees (in crore)
2008-2012	DLF	40
2013-2015	Pepsi	79.2
2016-2017	Vivo	100
2018-2019	Vivo	440
2020	Dream11	222
2021	Vivo	440
2022-2023	Tata Group	670
2024-2028	Tata Group	2500

Figure 1: Growth Trajectory of IPL Sponsorship Investments



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Impact on Brand Engagement:

IPL sponsorship provides brands with a unique platform to not only enhance their visibility but also to deeply engage with consumers, ultimately strengthening brand equity. Through a variety of marketing channels and tactics, sponsors can create impactful brand experiences that resonate with fans and forge lasting connections. Targeted advertising campaigns allow sponsors to reach a diverse audience both within stadiums and through television broadcasts, digital platforms, and social media channels. Product placements during matches and endorsements by players further integrate brands into the fabric of the IPL experience, associating them with the excitement and energy of the tournament. Activation events such as fan zones, contests, and interactive experiences provide opportunities for sponsors to directly engage with fans, creating memorable moments and fostering brand loyalty. Successful IPL sponsorships have been shown to significantly increase brand awareness, recall, and consumer loyalty, as fans develop positive associations with sponsoring brands through their participation in the IPL ecosystem.

Success Stories and Challenges:

While IPL sponsorships offer significant opportunities for brands, they also present challenges that must be navigated effectively. Intense competition from other sponsors requires brands to differentiate themselves and stand out amidst the clutter of advertisements and promotions. Ensuring ROI from IPL sponsorships can be challenging, as sponsors must carefully measure the impact of their investments on key performance metrics such as brand awareness, recall, and consumer engagement. Navigating controversies, such as match-fixing scandals or governance issues, can also pose risks to brand reputation and require careful management. Successful IPL sponsorships often involve creative activation campaigns that capture the attention of fans and align with the values and interests of the target audience. Strategic brand integration within the IPL ecosystem is essential for maximizing the impact of sponsorships and achieving marketing objectives. Case studies of successful sponsorships highlight the importance of aligning sponsorship objectives with overall marketing goals and leveraging the unique opportunities offered by IPL to create meaningful brand experiences for fans.

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Future Trends and Recommendations:

As IPL sponsorship continues to evolve, brands must adapt to emerging trends and consumer preferences to stay relevant and maximize ROI. Key future trends include a greater emphasis on digital engagement, with sponsors leveraging social media, augmented reality, and other digital technologies to connect with fans in innovative ways. Sustainability initiatives are also becoming increasingly important, with brands aligning their sponsorships with environmental and social responsibility goals to resonate with socially-conscious consumers. Personalized fan experiences, such as exclusive access to players or behind-the-scenes content, are another emerging trend that sponsors can leverage to deepen fan engagement and loyalty. To maximize ROI from IPL sponsorships, brands should invest in innovative marketing strategies that leverage the latest technologies and trends, while also leveraging data analytics to measure and optimize campaign performance. Long-term partnerships with IPL stakeholders can also be beneficial, allowing brands to build brand equity and loyalty over time.

PARTNERS OF THE IPL (COMMERCIAL AND BROADCAST)

Title Sponsors: Table 1 main sponsors whose brand name becomes part of the event's official title. In the case of IPL, title sponsors have included:

Official Broadcaster: The official broadcaster holds the rights to telecast IPL matches live across various platforms. In India, Star Sports has been the official broadcaster of the IPL since 2018. They showcase IPL matches on their network of sports channels, including Star Sports 1, Star Sports 1 HD, Star Sports Select, and others.

Digital Streaming Partners: With the rise of digital platforms, IPL also partners with digital streaming services to reach a wider audience online. Hotstar (now rebranded as Disney+ Hotstar) has been the official digital streaming partner for IPL in India. Hotstar provides live streaming of matches, highlights, and additional content related to the IPL.

Team Sponsors: Each IPL team has its own set of sponsors, including jersey sponsors, associate sponsors, and official partners. These sponsors get visibility through team merchandise, on-field branding, and digital promotions associated with the respective teams.

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Umpire Partners: Companies may sponsor the umpires' kits or equipment used during matches. These partnerships offer brand exposure through on-field branding and televised close-ups of the umpires during the matches.

Official Partnerships: IPL often collaborates with various brands and companies as official partners across different categories. These partnerships can include associations with airlines, hospitality brands, food and beverage companies, technology firms, and more. For example, companies like Vodafone, Paytm, and Jio have been official partners of IPL in the past, offering services and promotions related to the tournament.

Broadcast Technology Partners: These are companies that provide technology solutions for broadcasting, streaming, and enhancing the viewing experience of IPL matches. They may offer services such as graphics, augmented reality, data analytics, and viewer engagement tools to the official broadcaster.

Event Management Partners: IPL works with event management companies to organize and execute various aspects of the tournament, including venue management, logistics, ticketing, security, and fan engagement activities.

Official Suppliers: These are companies that supply equipment, merchandise, and other essentials required for conducting IPL matches and related events. They may include sports equipment manufacturers, apparel brands, beverage suppliers, and others.

CSR Partners: IPL also engages in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, partnering with organizations and NGOs to support various social causes such as education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and youth development.

Title Sponsor			
Official Sponsor			
			
			
Official Broadcast Partner		Orange Cap and Purple Cap Partner	
Official Digital Streaming Partner		Official Umpire Partner	
Strategic Timeout Partner			

Challenges faced by sponsors and their strategies for reputation management:-

Spot-fixing Scandals (PepsiCo Era):

Extent of Controversy: The spot-fixing scandals during the PepsiCo era rocked the very foundation of the IPL, raising serious questions about the integrity of the sport and the league's governance. The involvement of players, team officials, and bookies in illegal betting activities tarnished the image of cricket as a fair and transparent sport. The scandal unfolded publicly, with arrests made and investigations launched, creating widespread negative publicity for the IPL and its sponsors.

Impact on Brand Image: PepsiCo, as the title sponsor during this period, faced immense scrutiny and backlash from fans and stakeholders. The association with a tainted sporting event threatened PepsiCo's reputation as a responsible corporate entity. The brand was viewed through the lens of the scandal, leading to concerns among consumers about its ethical standards and integrity. This negative perception could potentially damage PepsiCo's long-standing image as a trusted and reputable brand.

Reputation Management Strategies:

Transparent Communication: PepsiCo responded to the crisis with transparency and accountability, acknowledging the seriousness of the situation and expressing its disappointment. The company emphasized its commitment to ethical business practices and fair play in sports, aligning its messaging with broader corporate values.

Community Engagement: To rebuild trust and repair its damaged reputation, PepsiCo focused on community engagement initiatives and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. By emphasizing its contributions to society beyond sports sponsorship, PepsiCo sought to demonstrate its positive impact and commitment to making a difference in people's lives.

Geopolitical Tensions (Vivo's Sponsorship):

Context of Controversy: Vivo's sponsorship of the IPL coincided with escalating geopolitical tensions between India and China, fueled by border disputes and nationalist sentiments. Anti-China sentiments gained traction among Indian consumers, leading to calls for boycotting

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Chinese products and brands. Vivo found itself caught in the crossfire of these tensions, facing criticism and backlash despite its significant investment in Indian cricket and the IPL.

Impact on Brand Image: Vivo's brand image in India suffered as a result of the geopolitical tensions, with consumers associating the brand with its Chinese origins and viewing it through a nationalist lens. The negative sentiment towards Chinese brands created a challenging environment for Vivo to operate in, threatening its market position and consumer acceptance. The brand faced pressure to address concerns about its allegiance and demonstrate its commitment to Indian interests and values.

Low-Profile Approach: Vivo adopted a cautious and low-profile approach in response to the geopolitical tensions, avoiding overt displays of marketing and branding activities. The brand minimized its visibility in IPL promotions and events to mitigate potential backlash from consumers and stakeholders.

Local Engagement: To alleviate concerns about its Chinese identity, Vivo focused on local engagement initiatives and partnerships with Indian entities. The brand sought to showcase its contributions to Indian cricket and the local economy, emphasizing its long-term commitment to the Indian market beyond IPL sponsorship. By aligning itself with Indian interests and values, Vivo aimed to rebuild trust and acceptance among Indian consumers.

Long-Term Impact and Lessons Learned:

PepsiCo: The spot-fixing scandals during PepsiCo's sponsorship highlighted the risks associated with sports sponsorship and the importance of proactive reputation management. PepsiCo's response emphasized the need for transparency, accountability, and community engagement to mitigate the fallout from a crisis and safeguard brand reputation in the long term.

Vivo:

The geopolitical tensions affecting Vivo's sponsorship underscored the complexities of operating in a politically charged environment and the need for brands to navigate sensitive issues with caution and sensitivity. Vivo's experience highlighted the importance of local

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engagement, cultural understanding, and brand alignment with societal values to overcome geopolitical challenges and maintain consumer trust and acceptance.

Conclusion:-

The legacy of IPL's title sponsorships is a testament to the league's unparalleled success and enduring appeal. From DLF's pioneering efforts to TATA's legacy and the 2021 Dream11 sponsorship, each partnership has played a pivotal role in shaping the IPL's identity and trajectory. By understanding the dynamics of IPL sponsorship and adopting effective marketing strategies, brands can maximize their ROI and achieve their marketing objectives in this dynamic and competitive landscape. As IPL sponsorship continues to evolve, brands must remain agile and adaptive, embracing emerging trends and leveraging innovative technologies to connect with fans and drive brand engagement. These partnerships contribute to the overall success and commercial viability of the IPL, enabling the league to attract top talent, secure broadcasting deals, and offer engaging experiences to fans both on and off the field. By comparing these controversies and the strategies adopted by sponsors to manage their reputation, we gain valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of sports sponsorship and the imperative for brands to adapt to changing circumstances while upholding their brand integrity and values.

Question:

Discuss the significance of strategic decisions made by IPL title sponsors in navigating challenges and maximizing opportunities for brand engagement and ROI?

Analyze the approaches taken by sponsors such as PepsiCo during the spot-fixing scandals and Vivo amidst geopolitical tensions?

How did these sponsors manage their reputation effectively?

What lessons can other brands learn from their experiences in the context of sports sponsorship?

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