



Communication of State Policies for Marketing of Sports

DR. SANGEETA SHARMA

Associate Professor,

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar College, University of Delhi.

SUSHANT SHARMA

MBA (Strategic Marketing) Student at MICA,

Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India.

Abstract:

The communication strategies for promotion of sports are somewhat similar to those followed in industry, technology, education, health and development of human resource. The present paper attempts to highlight how right government policies focusing effective sports related communication be instrumental in furthering cultural and economic development of the country. The National Institute for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) in 2015 has well recognised the need with its report titled "Let's Play" clearly suggesting sports as an area for potential to transform India from an emerging economy to an economic super power. This will require intense marketing and communication efforts. The desired results can be achieved through policy awareness through investments in content and media, bringing about behavioural changes at state and provincial levels and a sustained effort towards building up right communication mix facilitating an effective marketing of sports.

Keywords: *State Policies, Communication, Sports Marketing, Emerging Economies*

1. Introduction

In a democracy, the purpose of government communication is getting the communication to the right people and establishing the communication channel between those who implement policies and those for whom these policies are implemented (Van & McQuail, 2003; Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez, & Luna-Reyes, 2012)

On May 16th June 2015, Guam defeated India in a FIFA World Cup Qualifier game played in Guam National Football Stadium, Hagatna. The international media covered this extensively. One of the reasons was that the population of Guam - 1,65,124 that is distinctively less than the those in even Trans-Yamuna region of New Delhi - 14,48,770, (Television, 2015).

The issue that revolves around the failure of India to yield success at the Olympics is an open subject of international ignominy. The current programmes developed for the quest for prominence in the global sports events such as Olympics and Football are either poorly communicated to the right people or otherwise are incapable of yielding any productive results. Although there are a few programmes such as the Special Area Games that are well-planned, they lack the appropriate marketing foresight and planning. There are apparent loopholes in the current policy formation into sports that is unable to produce the desired results.

Although sports are an essential fabric of the national culture, it has so far received a relatively low priority on the national priority list. Emerging economies such as India have more critical issues to deal with other than sports. Naturally, for most of the time since her independence, there has been neglect to sports in public-policy, (Horsley, 2010).

India is moving into a phase that involves building an economic superpower. The process of nation-building is to supplement with the cultural – push, which can act as a juggernaut to former (K, 2009) (Television, 2015). People of the country aspire to raise their international outlook and perception; in such a case sport is a propitious via-medium.

Siddi or Sheedi is an African tribe and an ethnic group inhabiting India since 628 AD. Observing the genetically fit DNA of the Siddi Tribes, Government of India started with the programme (Special Area Games), which aimed at training the African race to improve the possibility of winning a medal in Olympics. The Siddi Tribe genetically resembled the Kalenjin and Kissi tribes, which accounted for most of the Kenyan Olympic Medals in track-field event. The rationale was comprehensible –“Talent is there, we just need to find it.” The scheme envisaged tapping of talent from regions and communities, which are either genetically or geographically advantageous for excellence in a particular sports discipline. The primary objective of the scheme is to train a meritorious sports person in the age group of 12-18 years, with age being relaxed in exceptional cases. The programme was initially started in 1988 when the scouts initiated the hunt for talent from rugged terrains of Ladakh, through jungles of Mizoram, to the tropical forests of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The initial results were impressive; the talent scouts hunted for Limba Ram and Shyam Lal, who within 13 months toppled Sanjeev Singh to claim the position of the ace Indian archers. Limba Ram was identified in Saradeet Village where he relied on hunting birds like sparrows and partridges.

However, the programme was discontinued in 1993 without sufficient justification. Olympic dreams and the ambitious programme were suppressed by the apathy of the government and incompetent marketing programmes that failed to communicate the idea of the programme sufficiently. Sports Authority of India (SAI), recently, relaunched the programme. However, there is no commitment to the perpetuity of the programme. For the programme to yield medals in international events, it is necessary to lay down the essential marketing mix for the policy. The policy can only accomplish its goal if it reaches correctly to the target population. The programme was banking heavily on hitherto unexplored but scientifically credible theories. For instance, the Siddis - the only black African ethnic group in the country - who live in Gujarat's Gir Forests. Karnataka's north Kanara district and Hyderabad are believed to be a "race" of super-runners. They genetically resemble the Kalenjin and Kisii tribes whose members have accounted for most of Kenya's international medals in track events since 1963.

Kenya and Jamaica participate in just two Olympic sports but have managed to get a total of 110 and 78 medals respectively. The recently prepared report by National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) titled “Let’s Play — Action Plan for Revitalising Sports in India” suggests focusing on ten sports and developing the outcome-oriented action plan for Sports in India. The report laid down various measures such as promoting the sports with a mix of superstars to setting up focused training centers and institutions for sports advocacy in India. The report suggested that best foreign coaches should be hired with the best pay packages in the industry. The report also hinted at rolling back the Special Area Games with complete dedication and supreme emphasis on delivery.

2. Literature Review

At present, there is a deficiency of research that is carried out in this area. Although there is an abundance of research that focuses on the government communication for the policies related to health, education, and foreign direct investment. The countries that have researched the related areas are mostly from western Europe and the USA. Lack of research in emerging economies reinforces the argument that sports remain a low critical priority area for such economies. In the following subsections, we will focus on the research done in selected areas are (1) Government policies, (2) Communication of government policies, (3) Role of government in promoting sports in India.

2.1 Government Policies

Communication for the policies related to sports is no different from those related to industry, technology, or even human resource development. The only factors that change in a government policy that addresses any issue are the set of the people for whom the policy is intended. A good policy is one that focuses on the right set of people, at the right time, and at the right place. The issues and challenges are also overlapping. Take for instance the communication for a policy related to industrial development in the economy. Many attempts have been made to develop a formal framework of criteria to assist governments in deciding where they should intervene in industrial innovation. They all run into the following difficulties: dealing with multiple policy objectives; assessing national costs and benefits; comparing with alternative policies, choosing appropriate policy instruments (Liu, 2010). Government policies have a set objective that it aims to achieve by utilizing the public resources and money which is entrusted to it at the behest of the people of India. The objective of the policy could be anything. For instance, one of the objectives of communication of Canadian government policy could be the increase of foreign direct investment in Canada. The purpose of such research could be to identify, using the framework of a statistical model, the extent of policy changes in Canada specifically directed to inward and outward foreign direct investment.

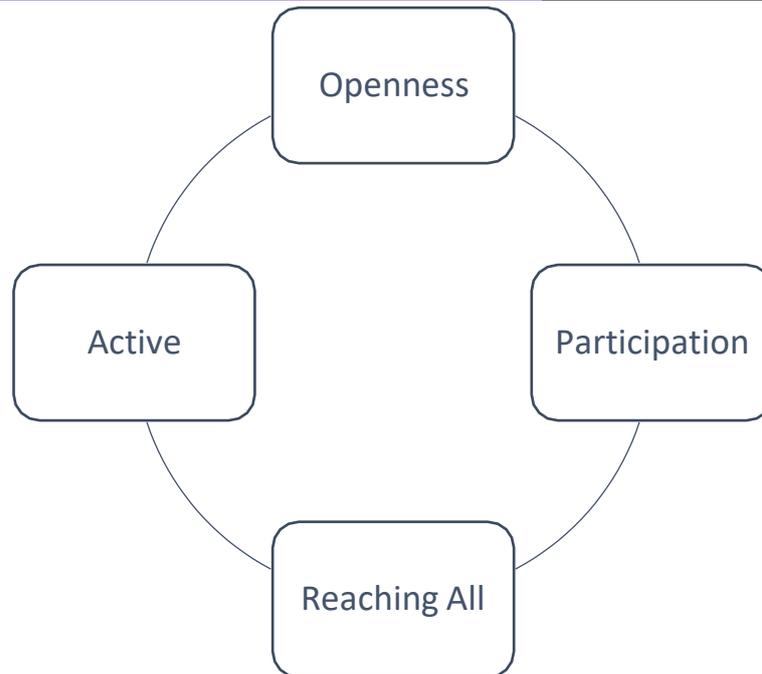
Harris, S., 2012 in his research review the role of UK government in sports development and found that only limited 16+ population is participating in the sports activities at school, community and at elite sport places. Further, government carrying an aim to increase the participation of adults in sport on three occasions per week for a minimum of 30 minutes per occasion. The development of elite sport systems in the West are because of many antecedents of the former Eastern Bloc's 'managed approach' to elite sport are increasingly apparent. These antecedents are delineated that point to increasing similarities between countries in the West and to the putative emergence of a uniform (global) model of elite sport development. Furthermore, another finding is that there remains a certain diversity to each country's elite sport development system: the United States – minimal government intervention; and France – sport as public service; are key examples of this phenomenon (Tinaz, Turco, & Salisbury, 2014). Girginov, & Hills, 2009, in their research proposed a framework by keeping an objective of engagement in process-oriented research and also highlighted some key essentials, research questions, and methodological issues. Their approach could be utilized to inform policy, practice, and research on sustainable Olympic sports development legacy.

2.2 Communication of Government policies

It is the responsibility of the authorities of the government to create conditions that facilitate open discourse in the state (Constitution of Kingdom of Norway, Article 100).

The aim of the central government communication policy is to secure that the citizen shall - 1. Get clear information about their rights and responsibilities, and opportunities. 2. Have access to information about the government activities. 3. Be active and participate in the formulation of policies, arrangement, and services (Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration). Principles of good communication of government policies include - openness, participation, reaching all, and active.

- i) Openness - The citizen shall meet a government that is open, clear, and accessible
- ii) Participation- The government shall consult the affected citizen and involve them in the formulation of its policies.
- iii) Reaching all - The government must ensure that relevant information reaches everyone concerned.
- iv) Active - The government must act and in due time inform about rights obligations and opportunities.



2.3 Recent role of government in promoting sports in India

The recently prepared report by National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) titled “Let’s Play-Action Plan for Revitalising Sports in India” suggests focusing on 10 sports and developing an outcome-oriented action plan for Sports in India. The report laid down various measures such as promoting the sports with a mix of superstars to setting up focused training centers and institutions for sports advocacy in India. The report suggested that best foreign coaches should be hired with the best pay packages in the industry. The report also hinted at rolling back the Special Area Games with complete dedication and supreme emphasis on delivery.

Some of the highlights from the NITI Aayog report are;

1. Concentrate on Ten Priority Sports
2. Host at least 100 major International Events by 2026
3. Individual academies and IPL-style sports league should be encouraged in the 10 identified Olympic Sports.
4. Hire the best national and international coaches; grade them periodically to maintain quality.
5. All Sportsmen to be divided into three categories based on their past performances and world rankings.
6. Identify talent at the young age.
7. Have a normal sports inquiry insurance schemes to cover all the sportsmen between the age of 5 and 35.
8. Implement Draft National Sports Development Bill, 2014 to bring transparency and accountability to Sports Bodies.

Talent is there in India; it just needs to be discovered with the correct mix of policies. The Policymakers must recruit marketers and communication managers who can think creatively and target the market segment with efficiency and effectiveness.

3. Research Methodology

The best method to proceed with the research of such a niche topic of communication of government policies related to sports it was necessary to conduct interviews with government officials working with the policy making related to sports and others in-charge of ensuring that the communication is delivered to the right people at right time. The sampling of the research will be based on the judgmental sampling method and will be dependent largely on the prerogative of the researcher. However, the criterion on which the judgement will be based in mentioned below.

3.1 In-depth personal interviews

- 3.1.1 The best way to proceed with research on such a topic that requires domain specific information and knowledge is to organize in-depth interviews. The interviewee can be any of the following.
- 3.1.2 Someone who has either been in the governing team of sports administration body or currently is
- 3.1.3 or; Someone who has either represented the Indian team in any of the international sport or currently is
- 3.1.4 or; Someone who has either carried research in topics directly related to communication of government policies or is a professor with a university of national importance.

It is difficult to find the interviewees that qualify criteria 1,2,3 in the same geographical location. Therefore, the better strategy would be to conduct interviews over a platform such as skype or google hangouts.

The interview has to be unstructured as the interviewees with the background persona matching as mentioned above would not be comfortable with a structured interview that follows a rigid order of questions. The sample will be better if the respondents are equally represented from north, east, south and west zones of the country. A good size of the sample (n) would be anything between 20-25.

3.2 Focused Group Discussion

FGDs will be an extremely good methodology as it will collect the views of all the respondents together in a controlled environment. The group can include all the interviewees that qualify the criteria as mentioned for that of personal interview or else;

- i. Or; Someone who is a journalist who is either an anchor of a news segment related to sports or else has published minimum of 5 sports articles in national print daily, magazine, or on an online website with an Alexa rank of minimum 10,000 and less.

The best suited platform to organize such an FGD will be over skype, google hangouts or another software that fulfills the functions similar to that of skype or google hangouts. The FGDs can be conducted over the weekend when most of the respondents are likely to have time for the discussion. There can be 3 FGDs with minimum of 5 respondents in one group.

The research will produce evident service gaps which will be needed to be addressed in the course of the research. The following table will explain more about the service gaps that are most likely to arise in the course of the research.

Service Gap	What is the gap about?	How to address?
Listening Gap	The gap between expectations from the policies and the reality	Revisiting the policies and if the modification is insufficient then discontinuing the policy
Service Performance Gap	The gap that exists due to lack of standardization of the government policies	Ensuring that there are standard procedures followed with implementation of the policies with minimum amount of modification on the judgment of the administrator

Communication Gap	The gap that exists when there is a loss of vital information as the policy flows from one level to another	Ensuring that the communication from the highest levels to the lowest levels have unity in communication
Service Design Gap	The gap that exists when there is inherent issue with the planning of the policy	Ensure that a thorough research is conducted before putting the final draft of the policy or scheme.

3.3 Plan of Action

In order to approach the research methodologies as mentioned in stage 1 and 2, it is necessary to carry exploratory research by dividing the study into following stages.

i) Stage 1- Understanding the local problems

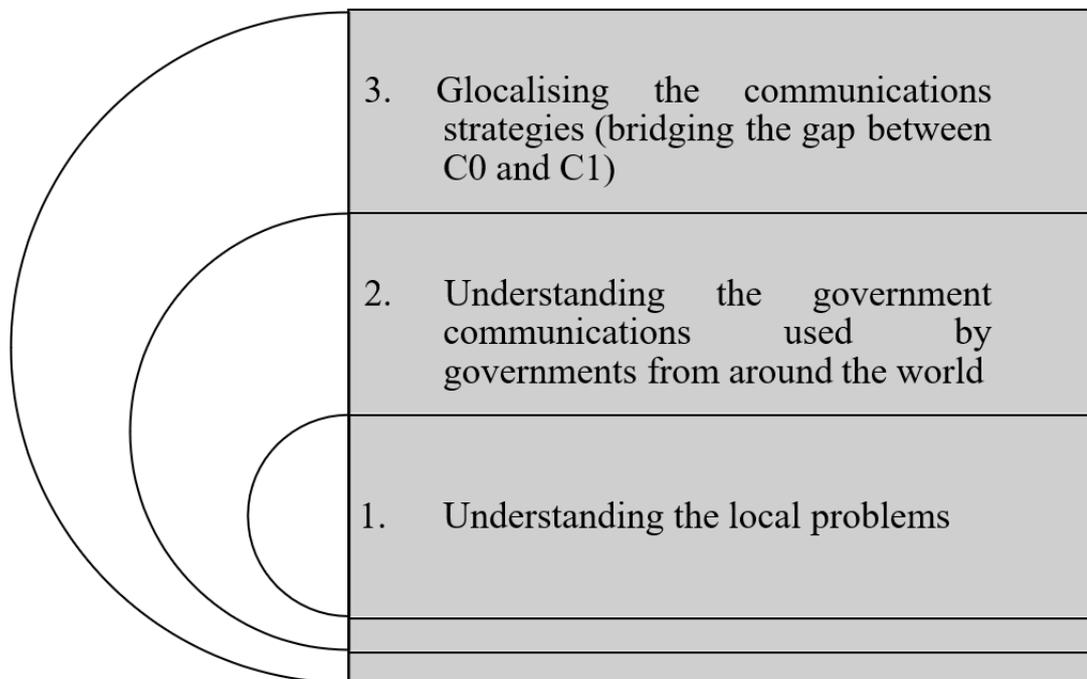
- a. Thorough review of the existing government policies and schemes as available on public sources.
- b. To understand the communication strategy followed by the government to achieve intended goals
- c. Identify the challenges faced in the communication of the current schemes

ii) Stage 2- Understanding the communication strategies followed by the governments from around the world

- a. Identifying the model countries in the western Europe, the USA, and the other parts of the world who have been successful at developing the best sporting talent
- b. Thorough research on the public available data on the communication strategy followed by international governments.

iii) Stage 3- Localizing (with Indian perspective) the successful plan of communication followed by international governments

- a. The prior research conducted in understanding the various schemes under the government of India (stage 1), and the international governments (stage 2) is to be used to connect the bridge between what is the current situation (C 0) and what is the ideal situation (C 1).



4. Discussion and Findings

4.1 Investing in content and media

To create policy awareness, the government needs to find the appropriate creative partners or advertising agencies. To reach the right people at the right time, the government should also invest in

media and advertising. Scouting for the most suitable advertising agency should start at least 12 months before the creative process begins. Advertising agencies create narratives based on market research to influence consumer behaviour.

4.2 Incorporating behavioural nudges

Ideally, policies should reward and gratify those who take the desired action. If a policy is implemented by state or provincial authorities, there should be a gratification and reward system for those in charge. Government officials would be incentivized to implement policies efficiently with a variable bonus attached to their salary component. Furthermore, the government should recognize and provide additional autonomy to the authorities that engage in such policies.

4.3 Sustained efforts toward building communication

The government or authorities should aim to sustain the policy narrative over time instead of sending transient messages. This allows the policies to stick for longer in the minds of people. In India, for instance, the government has taken many steps to protect consumers, including launching the 'Jago Grahak Jago (Wake Up Consumer)' campaign in 2005. It is an empowered consumer who is enlightened.

As part of the 'Jago Grahak Jago' awareness campaign, the government of India launched a public awareness campaign.

Various channels were used by the Indian government to create consumer awareness. Here is a list of the channels used by the government to meet the objectives of the "Jago Grahak Jago" awareness program:

1. Media advertisements
2. Video campaigns
3. Printings
4. Posters
5. Audio campaigns

4.4 Cultural transformation toward treating sports as a national image builder

Nation-building requires a strong sense of nationalism. Sport is the only common thread that binds people together and helps to foster a sense of patriotism and unity that can counter regional factionalism and sinister designs of various separatist forces, other than religion (which Marx has called "opium of the masses").

International sporting events like the Olympics and World Cup promote universal brotherhood and give one a sense of belonging.

Sportspeople have always been goodwill ambassadors for any country, and they have admirers across borders. When we hear the words 'Brazil' or 'Argentina'. Football and its legends "Pele" and "Maradona" are the first things that come to mind. Any country that plays cricket has heard of Kapil, Sachin, Ganguly, or Virat. In a very meaningful way, Nelson Mandela's quote sums it up. Mandela once said, "Sport has the power to change the world." Sports inspire people. In a way that few other things can, it unites people. Youth can relate to it because it speaks their language. Where there was once only despair, sport can create hope. In breaking down racial barriers, it is more powerful than government."

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The development and implementation of the perfect communication mix in sports promotion can contribute hugely to nation's economy. Marketing results even entail a rise in FDI flows within the

country. For an effective marketing effort of sports, governments must focus on communication through proper media channels as media and advertising is one such area with reach to right people at right time. The entire related components including state level machinery should be adequately encouraged and rewarded to carry out initiatives of the central government. These consistent actions, for a trickledown effect must be accompanied by sustained narratives. This will allow policies make a long-lasting impact on people's mind.

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