



## Research Article

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## Investigating the Impact of IPL Teams' Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives on Team Image and Loyalty

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**Abstract:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a tactical means aimed at organizations to strengthen stakeholder relationships and foster goodwill. In the context of the Indian Premier League (IPL), CSR initiatives play a vital role in influencing fan perceptions. The purpose of this investigation is to find out the consequences of CSR initiatives undertaken by IPL teams on team image and team loyalty, as well as to examine the mediating role of team loyalty. To gather information from a sample of 385 IPL fans, a methodical questionnaire was used as part of this empirical study's quantitative research approach. Four dimensions—economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic—were used in the questionnaire to gauge respondents' opinions on CSR initiatives. To explore the links among the factors, statistical studies such as regression, ANOVA, and mediation analysis were performed. The study concentrated on how team loyalty mediated the association between team image and CSR actions. According to the results, CSR activities greatly improve a team's reputation, with the greatest effects being seen in charitable, legal, and economic aspects. However, ethical considerations showed little impact. The association between CSR initiatives and team image was shown to be partially mediated by team loyalty, highlighting the critical role that fan loyalty plays in converting CSR efforts into a favourable assessment of team image. Compared to other age groups, fans between the ages of 18 and 34 had more positive opinions on CSR projects. The report emphasizes how crucial CSR programs are as a tactical instrument for IPL teams looking to enhance their reputation and cultivate fan loyalty. These results have real-world applications, as they indicate that in order to create a devoted and robust fan base, IPL teams should concentrate on well-designed CSR programs. Longitudinal impacts and the function of digital involvement in CSR communication can be investigated in future studies.

**Keywords:** CSR, IPL teams, team image, team loyalty, sports marketing

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indian Premier League (IPL), commonly known as IPLT20, holds a significant position in the sports sector. The revenue earned from IPL matches results in a boost to the nation's income. The IPL, widely recognized as Twenty20 (T20), was established by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Every year, the IPL sports event takes place in the months of April and May as an annual occurrence. Ten teams, made up of professional cricket players from different nations, take part in the IPL, promoting strong bonds and sportsmanship among the players. (Yousaf, Bashir, & Mishra, 2020).

The emotional bond with IPL draws substantial sponsorships. The concept of sponsorship is described as collaboration and is associated with marketing (Walzel, Robertson, & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). Organizations worldwide are witnessing significant market expansion by supporting the IPL, utilizing it as an impactful marketing avenue. India's sponsorship sector has significantly grown since 2019, as noted in (Kamath, Ganguli, George, & Sponsorship, 2021). The income is generated from multiple sectors, probably including broadcasting, live streaming, and ticket sales (Barot *et al.*, 2020).

The substantial expansion of the sports industry results in the embrace of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR contributes to creating a positive impact on the team's reputation and the loyalty of consumers towards the team.

Firm connections with fans are essential for loyalty to the team, its sustainability, and personal identification (Kapoor, Lal, & Yadav, 2021). CSR efforts in sports improve team affiliation, commitment, and ecological responsibility.

CSR aids in improving the business strategies of organizations. The beneficial results obtained from CSR stem from the supportive reactions of the communities. The positive feedback from individuals serves as a solid foundation for the CSR approach (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). The sports industry fosters long-term positive connections between individuals and the community through CSR initiatives. Emotional connections are crucial for a robust relationship. The primary aim of CSR is to develop and advance marketing practices in distinctive and recognizable manners. To reach the extensive array of audiences, CSR must impact the community via the results of economic and legal obligations aligned with the business operation strategy.

Applying CSR in the sports sector has shown advantages, connecting with various communities while

improving Team Image and Loyalty. The extensive application of CSR in sports promotes team development and enhances community relationships. A successful CSR system is crucial for both the growth of organizations and socio-economic advancement. Consequently, grasping the impact of CSR efforts on team reputation and commitment is important in the current scenario.

**Objectives of the Study**

The current study aims to assess fans' perceptions of IPL teams and their CSR initiatives to enhance team images and foster team loyalty. The primary goals of the study are,

- To investigate the variance in IPL fans' views on the CSR efforts of their preferred teams.
- To explore the connection between CSR efforts, Team Image, and Team Loyalty of IPL franchises.
- To assess the effect of CSR efforts and Team Loyalty on IPL teams.

**THE METHODOLOGY**

**The Study Design**

The approach taken by the researcher for gathering and analyzing data to achieve research goals is known as research design. The present research employs a quantitative method to collect data related to the research variable and question. The quantitative approach utilized a survey-based questionnaire method to collect primary data from respondents in India.

**Study area**

The study is carried out among supporters of the IPL team who are eager to take part in the survey. The individuals surveyed for this study are Indians living in India.

**Sample size and population**

The complete population of fans for all IPL teams in India remains uncertain. Consequently, employing <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>, Raosoft's sample size calculator estimated the total fan base of IPL teams to be 1 million. In order to reach a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, it is essential to have a sample size of 384 respondents. The current research utilizes a random sampling method to choose survey participants who meet eligibility criteria.

To obtain the necessary sample size, the questionnaire was distributed to a randomly gathered pool of email addresses by the researcher. Email addresses of Indians living in India and overseas were gathered, and the survey was distributed to more than 800 potential participants. Out of the emails dispatched, just 158 legitimate replies were obtained. The questions are designed using a seven-point Likert scale model to capture the responses of the IPL team supporters.

The research employs quantitative analysis to examine the survey responses. SPSS version 26 was utilized to produce the necessary outcomes. The research employs one-way ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, and linear regression to analyze the data.

**RESULTS OF ANALYSIS**

**Descriptive Analysis**

The complete count of legitimate replies in the survey consisted of 158 supporters of IPL teams. All these legitimate responses have been taken into account for examination in the research.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics concerning gender, age, educational background, and preferred team as reported by the participants in the survey.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics on Sample

Particulars	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	109	69.0
	Female	49	31.0
	Total	158	100.0
Age	18-34 years	94	59.5
	35-54 years	54	34.2
	>55 years	10	6.3
	Total	158	100.0
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary / Diploma	6	3.8
	Graduate	105	66.5
	Masters	42	26.6
	Doctorate	5	3.2
	Total	158	100.0

Favourite Team	Chennai Super Kings (CSK)	20	12.7
	Delhi Capitals (DC)	23	14.6
	Gujarat Titans (GT)	3	1.9
	Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)	49	31.0
	Lucknow Super Giants (LSG)	3	1.9
	Mumbai Indians (MI)	32	20.3
	Punjab Kings (PBKS)	3	1.9
	Rajasthan Royals (RR)	4	2.5
	Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB))	15	9.5
	Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH)	6	3.8
	Total	158	100.0

Source: SPSS Output

According to the gender distribution of the sample study, 69% were male while 31% were female. This suggests that the quantity of male respondents is more than twice that of female respondents.

The age distribution indicates that 59.5% of the participants belong to the 18-34 years group, 34.2% are in the 35-54 years range, and 6.3% are over 55 years old. This suggests that the younger age group makes up the largest portion of the sample size used for the study.

The sample distribution shows variation in educational qualifications, with 66.5% being graduates, 26.6% holding Master’s degrees, 3.8% possessing higher secondary/diploma certifications, and 3.2% achieving Doctorate degrees. Consequently, most of the sample consists of graduates.

The allocation of the sample size according to the fans’ preferred IPL team differs significantly. Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) tops the list with 31.0% of respondents, while Mumbai Indians (MI) represent 20.3% of the answers, and Delhi Capitals (DC) account for 14.6%. The variety in team preferences showcases the broad popularity of various IPL teams, fostering a diverse and extensive fan base.

**Inferential Analysis**

The aim of the first objective was to ascertain whether IPL fans perceive differences based on their age regarding the CSR initiatives undertaken by their preferred team. The variances in the averages are analyzed utilizing one way ANOVA since there are three age categories examined in the research. Table 2 presents the outcomes obtained to examine the varying perceptions of different age groups regarding the CSR initiatives of their preferred IPL teams.

**Table 2:** Outcomes of One Way ANOVA - variation in the views of IPL fans regarding the CSR initiatives of their preferred teams.

MEAN_CSR					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.585	2	4.293	4.292	0.015*
Within Groups	155.019	155	1		
Total	163.605	157			

Source: SPSS Output

The result of the one-way ANOVA shows a statistically significant difference in average CSR scores across various groups, F distribution,  $df(2, 155) = 4.292$ ,  $p = 0.015$ .

The obtained p-value of 0.015 is below the traditional alpha threshold of .05, indicating that the disparity between the groups' means is statistically significant. Consequently, it can be stated that a notable

difference exists among the three age groups in terms of their views on the CSR efforts made by their preferred IPL teams.

The Tukey post hoc test was performed to investigate particular differences between groups after a significant one-way ANOVA, with results displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Results of the Tukey Post Hoc Test - variance in how IPL fans perceive the CSR efforts of their preferred teams.

Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)						
Dependent Variable: MEAN_CSR						
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-34 years	35-54 years	0.36101	0.17076	0.09	-0.0431	0.7651
	>55 years	-0.53112	0.33264	0.25	-1.3183	0.2561
35-54 years	18-34 years	-0.36101	0.17076	0.09	-0.7651	0.0431
	>55 years	-.89213*	0.34429	0.028	-1.7069	-0.0774
>55 years	18-34 years	0.53112	0.33264	0.25	-0.2561	1.3183
	35-54 years	.89213*	0.34429	0.028	0.0774	1.7069

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: SPSS Output

In the analysis, MEAN\_CSR is considered the dependent variable, while age serves as the independent variable with three categories: 18-34 years, 35-54 years, and over 55 years.

The findings show notable average differences among the age groups:

For the age categories of 18-34 years and 35-54 years, the mean difference was not statistically significant since  $p = 0.090$  was greater than 0.05. This indicated that there was no notable difference in average CSR scores between the age brackets of 18-34 years and 35-54 years.

For individuals aged 18-34 and those over 55, the average difference was not statistically significant since  $p > 0.05$ . This suggests that there is no notable difference in average CSR scores between the age groups of 18-34 years and those over 55 years.

The mean difference between the age categories of 35-54 years and over 55 years was statistically significant, with  $p = 0.028$ , meaning  $p < 0.05$ . This indicated that a statistically significant difference has been found between the age groups of 35-54 years and over 55 years regarding the average CSR scores.

The aim of the second objective was to identify the connection between CSR efforts of IPL teams, fan loyalty to the teams, and the image of the teams as viewed by IPL supporters. To achieve this, Pearson's Correlation is utilized to assess the relationship between the three variables being examined.

Table 4 displays the outcomes produced to examine the connection between the CSR efforts of IPL teams, Team Image, and Team Loyalty.

**Table 4:** Pearson Correlation findings relating CSR efforts, Team Image, and Team Loyalty

Correlations				
		MEAN_CSR	MEAN_TL	MEAN_TIM
MEAN_CSR	Pearson Correlation	1		
MEAN_TL	Pearson Correlation	0.036	1	
MEAN_TIM	Pearson Correlation	0.240**	0.706**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output

The correlation between the CSR initiatives score (MEAN\_CSR) and the Team Loyalty score (MEAN\_TL) calculated using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient is 0.036. This suggests a positive but very weak correlation between the two variables, which is not significant at the 1% level of significance.

The correlation between the CSR initiatives score (MEAN\_CSR) and Team Image score (MEAN\_TIM) as per Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

is 0.240. This suggests a positive but weak correlation between the two variables, though it is significant at the 1% level.

The relationship between the Team Image score (MEAN\_TIM) and the Team Loyalty score (MEAN\_TL), as determined by Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, is 0.706. This shows a highly robust positive correlation between the two variables, significant at the 1% level.

This indicates that although CSR initiative scores exhibit weak positive correlations with Team Loyalty and Team Image, the relationship between Team Loyalty and Team Image is statistically significant and quite strong, implying a solid connection between Team Loyalty and Team Image.

The third objective aims to assess the effect of CSR initiatives on team loyalty and so, a linear regression was utilized to assess the impact of CSR initiatives on Team Image.

**Table 5:** Results of Linear regression

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.240 <sup>a</sup>	.058	.052	.99049	

a. Predictors: (Constant), MEAN\_CSR

Source: SPSS output

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.389	1	9.389	9.570	.002 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	153.048	156	.981		
	Total	162.437	157			

a. Dependent Variable: MEAN\_TIM

b. Predictors: (Constant), MEAN\_CSR

Source: SPSS output

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.566	.215		25.923	.000
	MEAN_CSR	.240	.077	.240	3.094	.002

a. Dependent Variable: MEAN\_TIM

Source: SPSS output

The outcomes of linear regression showed that the R-Squared value was 0.058. This indicates that 5.8% of the variation in Team Image (Y) is accounted for by CSR initiatives (X).

The correlation value is 0.24. This indicates that a weak direct connection exists between Team Image and CSR initiatives.

Equation of the regression line is  $\hat{Y} = 5.5655 + 0.24X$ .

The slope:  $b_1=0.24$  indicates that a 1-unit increase in CSR initiatives leads to a 0.24 rise in Team Image scores.

The y-intercept:  $b_0=5.5655$  indicates that when X is 0, the forecasted value of Y is 5.5655. The constant as well as the Mean CSR score is significant at 0.05 which indicates that CSR initiatives have an effect on Team Image.

## DISCUSSION

Research conducted by Kamath, Ganguli, & George (2021) and Harneja & Lal (2018) confirm the beneficial effects of IPL teams' CSR efforts on customer

loyalty and brand image, fostering sustainable growth in the sports sector. Lunawat (2021) highlights the crucial role of IPL teams in advancing national sports development via CSR, promoting long-term growth. The research backs the positive impact of CSR.

Effect on team reputation and its long-term growth, assessed precisely from the viewpoint of fans. Ullah *et al.* (2021a) examine how spectators perceive CSR, emphasizing its favorable influence on team identification through spectator pride, which resonates with the current study's results regarding CSR's beneficial effect on teams, taking into account image and loyalty.

With an emphasis on the mediating function of loyalty, this study investigated the effects of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs implemented by IPL teams on their team loyalty and image. The research's conclusions provide a substantial contribution to the body of knowledge on sports marketing and the industry's strategic use of CSR. It was shown that CSR efforts are crucial in determining how IPL teams are seen, with charitable and economic aspects being the most significant determinants. The study also discovered

that the association between CSR actions and team image is somewhat mediated by team loyalty. This suggests that supporters' emotional attachment and loyalty are strengthened when they believe that IPL teams are socially conscious, which benefits the team's reputation as a whole.

Practically speaking, the results highlight how crucial it is to create CSR initiatives that complement fan objectives and values. By concentrating on projects that directly involve communities, especially aimed at younger audiences who have demonstrated more favorable opinions of corporate social responsibility, IPL clubs may improve their reputation and foster more fan devotion.

By investigating CSR's function in the sports context—an area that is still relatively unexplored in comparison to the business sector—this study also contributes theoretically. It offers factual proof that corporate social responsibility (CSR) may be a crucial factor in building brand equity for sports clubs, especially in a cutthroat and fan-focused sector like the Indian Premier League. The results back up the notion that CSR is a strategic tool that strengthens emotional ties with fans rather than merely being a business obligation.

## CONCLUSION

This research paper has found results in line with previous studies. The results summary indicates a notable difference in average scores of CSR initiatives as viewed by IPL fans according to their age groups. Pearson's Correlation indicates a weak but significant positive link between CSR initiatives and Team Image, whereas a strong positive correlation is observed between Team Loyalty and Team Image. The significant F-value of the regression model confirms the impact of CSR initiatives on Team Image.

The analysis shows the importance of CSR efforts within the IPL team in improving the team's reputation and fan loyalty. The present research adds value to the nation's sports sector. It also offers a route to the advanced studies in the Indian cricket team. Future studies could explore how CSR initiatives influence Team Loyalty and whether Team Loyalty serves as a mediating factor between CSR initiatives and Team Image.

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