Chennai Super Kings (CSK):
Growing and Leveraging Brand Equity

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CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (CSK): GROWING AND LEVERAGING BRAND EQUITY

Rakesh Singh, Vice President – Marketing, Chennai Super Kings and Joint President – Marketing, of India Cements[1], was watching the play-off of the Indian Premier League (IPL)between Delhi Daredevils (DD) and his team- Chennai Super Kings, on 25th May 2012. It was a crucial match for the team. The result would decide whether the team would progress to the finals or not.CSK, batting first posted a mammoth total of 222 runs for 5 wickets against DD.

50,000 spectators in the M. A. Chidambaram stadium, Chennai, erupted when the last DD wicket fell to the pressure bowling.CSK secured a comfortable 86 runs victory. CSK was going to play the finals of the Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 season five, and a chance of creating a record by winning the DLF IPL Cup three times in a row.

CSK had achieved a cult like status with 96% of Chennaites[2] supporting CSK, the highest for any franchise in their home city (Indiantelevision, 2012).CSK was the most consistent team of IPL, making it to the play-offs (first four teams from the league matches) in all five seasons and becoming the champions in 2010 and 2011. CSK's strong association with the masses and its fan engagement activities had made it a darling amongst the locals. Their online presence and fan following had been growing steadily over the years. They had been declared the most valuable team in IPL by Brand Finance, London (Sudarsan, Huffington Post, 2012) in 2011 (**Table 1**) and was among the two teams in 2011to make profits (Sheikh, 2012); the other team being Mumbai Indians.

Singh knew that this was just the beginning for CSK and there was no doubt a huge potential for growth in brand equity as well as annual revenues. Established in 2008, the annual revenue of CSK in 2011 was $26.5MM with an operating margin over 20%. Indian Cements, the parent company of CSK established in 1941 had a sales turnover of $670.95MM in 2011 with profit before tax over $72MM. He commented "Considering

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[1]India Cements, head quartered in Sankarnagar, Tamil Nadu, is a cement manufacturing company established in 1949, was the 4th lager cement company in India.

[2] Residents of Chennai, Tamil Nadu India are called Chennaites.

that intense business activity of CSK lasted only a quarter during the IPL season from March to May, CSK annual revenues for practical purposes could be treated as quarterly revenues and it only demonstrates the potential of this business."He came across the valuation of Manchester United, the most valuable team in the English Premier League which was formed in 1878. It was valued at US$853 million (Brandfinance, 2012)while CSK which was just four years old was valued by Brand Finance in 2011 at US$70.16 million. A Manchester United annual revenue in 2011 was $517.9 MM and pre-tax profits $46MM. The consultancy firm Deloitte it estimated to have 75 MM fans in 2008(Hamil, 2008). In contrast IPL viewership was estimated to have a cumulative reach of 162.93 million (Mitter, 2011)

Considering the tremendous business potential for CSK and increasing viewership of IPL matches through various channels, Singh felt it was time for him to formulate a business expansion plan for CSK to capitalize on the market opportunities. What kind efforts, time and investment would it take to grow CSK brand equity to match that of the top clubs in the English Premier league? What are the various possibilities to leverage brand equity and generate additional annual revenues in the short term as well as in the long term? Would it be realistic to set a target to grow its brand equity and attain a 20-25% CAGR in annual revenues till 2020? This would mean that CSK revenue would cross over Rs.1000 crores in seven to eight years time.

This would require CSK has to grow beyond its strong Chennai and Tamil association to become a prominent national brand and then an international brand. There had to be a clear plan to increase its fanbase and engage them during on and off season without compromising its key strengths- the huge fan association with MS Dhoni (CSK's and the Indian national team's captain), the team's consistent performance and the strong local connect. (Indian television, 2012).

The Gentleman's Game

Cricket is a bat-and-ball game played between two teams of 11 players on a circular field, at the center of which is a rectangular 22-yard long pitch. One team bats, trying to score as many run as possible. The other team bowls and fields, trying to dismiss the batsmen and thus limit the runs scored by the batting team. A run is scored by the striking batsman hitting the ball with his bat, running to the opposite end of the pitch and touching the crease there without being dismissed. The teams switch between

batting and fielding at the end of an inning. The team scoring the most runs after their batting innings wins the match. The *Laws of Cricket* are maintained by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC). (Lord's, 2012)

Cricket in India

The British East India Company had introduced the game in the Indian sub-continent in the latter half of the 18[th]century.The early 1900's saw the rise of players like Ranjit Singh[3] and Duleep Singh[4].India played its first test[5] match in 1932 and recorded its first test match win against England in 1952. The Indian national team secured the number one position in ICC's Test Rankings on 18th February 2010 under the leadership of MS Dhoni. (Sahota, 2010)

India played its first ODI[6] match in 1974 and won their first match against East Africa. In the 1983 Cricket World Cup (CWC)[7], India played the finals against the then two-time reigning world champion, West Indies, defeating them to become world champions. This victory helped popularize cricket in India. The team also reached the finals of the 2003 CWC, but lost to the then reigning champion, Australia. In 2011, under the captaincy of MS Dhoni, India[8] won its second CWC.

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[3]The Ranji Trophy is a domestic first-class cricket championship played in India between different city and state sides, equivalent to the County Championship in England and the Sheffield Shield in Australia, is named after him.

[4]The Duleep Trophy, a domestic first-class cricket competition played in India between teams representing geographical zones of India is named after him.

[5]Test cricket is the longest form of cricket played over five days with each side batting and bowling twice.

[6]A One Day International (ODI) is played between two teams with international status, in which each team faces fifty overs.

[7]Cricket World Cup is the premier cricketing event featuring the top countries, organized by ICC every four years.

[8]India also share the ICC Champions Trophy in 2002 with Sri Lanka after the final game was washed out, twice.

Today India, with a population of 1.24billion in 2011 (Census, 2011)[9] is the second most populous country in the world and cricket, its most popular sport. In the year 2010, the top 10 most watched sports events were all cricket events. The game has a huge fan following showing different kinds of behavior..

Cricketing content being broadcasted had increased three-fold, from 100 indexed programming hours in 2003 to 318in 2010. However, the indexed TSU[10] had steadily decreased from 100 in 2008 to 72 in 2010. On the other hand, absolute viewership had gone up from 57 million in 2003 CWC to 107 million in 2011CWC (TAM, 2011).

There were many factors that affected the viewership. One of the important factors was the Indian team's performance. This was evident in the viewership patterns of the two CWCs held in 2003 and 2007. The 2003 CWC where India reached to the finals showed a very high TRP[11] of 23 in the final. In contrast, in the 2007 CWC, where India had an early exit, the TRP of cricket matches took a substantial hit with the average TRPdropping from 1.23 when India was playing to 0.68 after India's exit.

Another factor was the presence of star players in the playing eleven, which had a positive impact on the viewership of matches in India. TRP ratings of cricket matches in which Sachin Tendulkar[12] played versus was 3.6, 3, and 3.9 compared to matches in which he was not part of the team was 1.8, 1.8 and 1.3 for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. (TAM India, 2012)

Venue of the match was another factor affecting the TRP. Matches played in the Indian subcontinent had a much higher viewership when compared to matches played outside the subcontinent. This was evident from the difference in TVR in the IPL editions played in India (TRP of 6.6 and 6.5 in seasons one and three respectively) and in South

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[9] In 2011, India recorded a growth of 17.6% in population over the last decade

[10] The average time spent by all audience watching a program

[11] TRP is an audience measurement criterion of rating points that indicates the popularity of a television channel or program in a particular channel. The TRP measure helps advertisers decide which TV channels and programs to place their advertising in.

[12] Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar is an Indian cricketer widely considered to be one of the greatest batsmen of all time, after Don Bradman. He is the leading run-scorer and century maker in Test and one-day international cricket.

Africa (TRP of 5.6 in season two). Also, the TRP ratings of matches involving India showed a significant increase when they are played in the Indian subcontinent versus when they are played outside.

Demographics also affected cricket viewership in the country. Cricket, viewed mainly by male fans over the age of 21 years (TAM India, 2012) was gaining steady popularity amongst females and kids in India. The average female TRP of GEC[13] fell by 6% during the 2007 Cricket World Cup (CWC) whereas the TRP for CWC by the female segment went up by 77% (from 0.94 to 1.66). The viewership amongst kids of kids' channels went down by 8% from 1.27 to 1.17 whereas the viewership by kids of the CWC increased by 64%, from 0.88 to 1.44. (TAM India, 2012). **Table 1** for description of cricket fan behavior in India and **Table 2**gives the segmentation of cricket fans based on age, gender and socio economic classification.

In 2012, TV penetration in India was 62% (~150MM households). The no of cable and satellite television subscribers have grown from 400,000 in 1992 to around 90 MM in 2012 a CAGR of 35%. (Assocham India, 2012) The media and entertainment (ME) is expected to grow at 15% CAGR while the TV industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 17% through 2015. The growth in the TV and ME industry is expected to increase the cricket audience. (FICCI-KMPG, 2012)

Cricket as Entertainment – Indian Premier League

Twenty20 (T20), a form of cricket introduced in England and Wales for professional inter-county competition by the England and Wales Cricket Board in 2003, typically involves two teams batting for a twenty over inning. India played its first T20 international match in 2006 against South Africa and won. It won the inaugural T20WC[14] in 2007 under the leadership of MS Dhoni, beating arch rival Pakistan, in a closely contested match. This created a lot of interest in T20 amongst the Indian audience. The victory gave rise to a new generation of young sport stars like MS Dhoni.

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[13] General Entertainment Channel

[14] T20 World Cup is the premier cricketing event featuring the top countries, organized by ICC every two years.

IPL, the brainchild of the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI[15]), was a professional league for T20 cricket championship in India based on the franchise structure. Each franchise played others on a home and away basis with half the matches at home. The top 4 franchises contested in the semi-finals and the victorious semi-finalists met in the final match of the league. The concept was conceived mainly to provide a new source of entertainment for the masses in Indian and to tap unexplored revenue generating potential of T20 cricket in India.

The first IPL season started off in 2008 with eight teams, which were auctioned off by BCCI. The total base price for auction was US$400 million for all teams, but the auction fetched US$723.59 million. Mumbai Indians (MI)was the most expensive franchise at US$111.9 million (Cricinfo, 2008)while CSK was bought for US$91 million by India Cements Ltd.

In 2010 the league was expanded to ten teams. Pune Warrior India (PWI) and Kochi Tuskers Kerala (KTK) were unveiled as the two new franchises. The base price for the auction of the two franchise was US$225 million. (The National, 2010) PWI was bought for US$370 million (That's Cricket, 2012), while KTK was bought for US$333.3 million. (Vivek & Ambwani, 2011) Refer Table 3 for the complete list of franchises, owner, year of purchase and brand value

CSK Business Model

Revenues

Central Pool: IPL central pool earned its revenue from (i) selling media rights to broadcasters, (ii) title sponsor and licensing to co-sponsors,(iii)bids and franchise fee from franchises and (iv)20% of gate collection from all matches and official umpire sponsors.54% of revenue in the central pool was to be equally distributed amongst the franchisees till 2017. Thereafter 45% of the share would be shared.

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[15]BCCI, headquartered at Mumbai, India was the national governing body for all cricket in India. As a member of the ICC, it has the authority to select players, umpires and officials to participate in international events and exercises total control over them. Without its recognition, no competitive cricket involving BCCI-contracted Indian players can be hosted within or outside the country.

The broadcasting rights were sold to the highest bidder. India's Sony Television network and the Singapore-based World Sports Group (WSG) has secured the rights of the IPL in 2008 for ten years at a cost of US$1.026 billion (ESPN Cricinfo, 2008) to be paid to BCCI in equal installments over the period of the deal. This amount was revised in 2009 to US$ 1.64 billion when the number of matches increased from 60 to 74 (Sharma, Economic Times, 2012). Times Internet had won the global media rights for the IPL cricket tournament for four years starting 2010 for streaming live matches on Indiatimes.com, having bid approximately US$ 58 million (The Business Standard, 2011).

DLF Group[16], had paid US$50 million to be the first title sponsor of the tournament for a period of five years. BCCI was in talks with its co-sponsors for title sponsorship and was eyeing anything between three to four times the amount paid by DLF (Economic Times, 2012). Co-sponsors include motorcycle maker Hero Honda (US$22.5million) and PepsiCo (US$12.5million). Kingfisher Airlines had signed a US$26.5 million deal for rights to be the official umpire partner for IPL and also sponsor third umpire decisions for five years (The Globe and Mail, 2011).

Gate Revenues: Gate collection on match day was another source of revenue for theteams.20% of the gate collection was shared with IPL while the rest went to the franchise. Ticket prices for CSK's home matches ranged from US$9.48 to US$474.11 in 2012 compared to US$ 5 to US$125 in 2008.

> *"Gate collection on match day is an important source of revenue since 80% goes to the franchise. Moreover the revenue is limited by the capacity of the stadium and any growth can only come in the form of increased ticket prices. We target about US$0.57 million in every match and we are currently overselling."* said Singh about gate collections.

KKR's chief executive Venky Mysore, claimed that the number of footfalls at Eden Gardens over the duration of the tournament had crossed half a million (ESPN Cricinfo, 2012). This indicated an increase in the viewership patterns of the fans. KIXP COO, Arvinder Singh, claimed that the number of family audiences visiting the stadium had gone up in the 2012 season (Engineer, ESPN Cricinfo, 2012).

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[16]DLF Limited (Delhi Land &Finance) is the largest commercial real estate developer in India.

In-stadium Advertising*:* It is very important source of revenue for the home teams. Innovative advertising had ensured that all the available spaces in the stadium are used for advertising. Advertisers preferred in-stadia advertising because not only did it give exposure to the audience in the stadium, it also gave a longer exposure to television audience.

Revenue from own sponsorship and corporate sponsorship: Companies wanted to associate with IPL teams because of the exposure IPL provides to the advertisers. For example, when Gulf Oil sponsored KIXP in the second season, they reported a growth of 30-40% in Punjab and Haryana (Jagannathan, 2011). Similarly, Coromandel King Cement[17] increased its penetration in the north, where it had difficulty in finding distributors, after it associated with CSK. CSK had a diverse sponsors mix from businesses. **Table 4** lists sponsors of different IPL teams.

Merchandizing: Globally, for sports teams, 67 per cent of revenue comes from merchandise sales. But in India, it's still only a small fraction (Kannan, 2012).CSK had tied up with Reebok in 2008 for merchandising and sold its merchandise through its official website. Four different categories of merchandise were available – men's, women's kid's clothing and apparel and accessories. A variety of colors were available in V-neck, round neck, polo t-shirts which were in the price range of US$7.57 up to US$12.33. The variety for women's and kid's apparel was less compared to the men's section. Various accessories were also available at the store.

CSK made US$0.8 million through merchandise sales in 2011 but it received only 10-15 percent of the sales after excluding the costs. In the international market, the profit margins were as high as 60%. It was estimated that revenue from sale of merchandise could go up to US$ 15 million in the tenth year (Second Take, 2008). Singh said, *"In 2012 we had aimed to double our licensing and merchandising revenue."*

Expenses

CSK incurred costs that equated to around 80% of the total revenues. These costs could be categorized into four major heads: player fees (45%), franchise fee (30% - 34%), administration costs (15% to 20%) and adverting (5%) (Arora, 2012).

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[17] It is a brand used by India Cements to market their product.

Player Fees: Total spending cap for a franchisee in player auctions was US$5 million. Under-22 players were to be remunerated with a minimum annual salary of US$20,000 while for others it was US$50,000 while the maximum spending cap on a single player was US$2 million. CSK's most expensive buy was MS Dhoni in 2008 for US$1.8 million until 2012 when it bought Ravinder Jadeja for an amount in excess of US$2 million.

Franchise Fee : A franchise is required to pay BCCI 10% of the total franchise bid every year. This fee would be levied till 2017 following which the franchise would belong to the owner in perpetuity.

CSK was bought for a total price of US$91 million, there it has to pay US$9.1 million till 2017 as franchise fee. Thereafter the team's outlay would be directly linked to its revenue.

Rent on Stadium: The franchises do not own the stadiums at their home base. They rent the government owned stadiums at a nominal cost.

Promotional Cost: The franchise undertook once a season, heavy promotional activities, before the start of a season. CSK had effectively used its co-branded merchandising for promotion and allowed sponsors to use its name in their promotional activities. Using these strategies, CSK had limited its spending on advertising.

Administrative cost: CSK administration included brand management, sponsor support, fan support, etc. CSK spent 15-20% of the revenue on administration (**Image 1**). An indicative revenue - expense estimates of CSK is given in **Table 5**.[18]

IPL Viewership

Television: Sony Television network and the Singapore-based World Sports Group (WSG) had justified their bid because the companies were willing to pay the steep price of US$10,000 for 10 second slot in IPL in 2012. In 2011, marketers spent US$ 3.31 billion on advertising through different media. **Table 6**gives a detailed break up of advertising spends over five years. Of this, it was estimated that $US 370 million would be spend on cricket advertising of which IPL in 2011 took a lion's share of $US 185

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[18] The income expense figures are not the exact figures and are given for academic use only.

million (Mukherjee, 2010). This marked an increase of 54% in advertising spend in cricket in 2011 over 2010.

Companies relied heavily on cricket in India for advertising their product. Nadine Dias, COO of media-buying house Lodestar Universal justifies their spend in IPL by saying,

> "*No program will give the pan-India reach that IPL does for two months*" (Sharma, Economic Times, 2012)

The overall TRP for IPL in 2011 was 3.51 with a cumulative reach of 162.93 million compared to 4.2and 143.7million a year ago in 2010 (Mitter, Financial Express, 2011).Even though the ratings had gone down, the viewership in absolute numbers had increased. The fifth season was also telecasted on TV around the world[19].

According to Jai Lala, principal partner of Mindshare – a media and marketing agency, television ratings was not an accurate measurement of fans' perception towards IPL. He said that the current TVR was a reflection of the steady state of affairs and was unlikely to go down much further. The explanation given was that females had returned to their normal television viewing habits after five editions of IPL. The current population of women now watching IPL were said to have genuine interest and their number was unlikely to drop in subsequent years (Engineer, ESPN Cricinfo, 2012).

There was also evidence that IPL had a big mass appeal because Extra Innings showed a substantial increase in 2012's TRP compared to 2011 when they started their show in Hindi. The show recorded a TRP of 5.9,the second highest that was recorded in the tournament (Engineer, ESPN Cricinfo, 2012).

Commenting on the decreasing TRP ratings, Singh said,

> "*I think the way to look at it is that all the evening[20] matches are doing well. If you look at the stadiums, they are packed. So the interest is there. While the television viewership has gone down, the Internet viewership has gone up as many people are at their workplace during the afternoon match. If the match is*

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[19]Number of broadcaster region-wise: Asia Pacific (7 nos.), United States (2 nos.), Canada (1 nos.), UK (2 nos.), Africa (1 nos.), Caribbean Islands (1 nos.)

[20] On a given day, two IPL matches were played. The first match began at 4 pm IST while the second started at 8 pm IST.

tight, then the interest will be there throughout and the viewership will be high."

Internet: Indiatimes.com reported that the total number of video views on the internet rose from 72 million in 2011 to 113 million to 2012. In India alone, the video viewership grew from 43 million in 2011 to 80 million in 2012. As of December 2011, total Internet connections stood at 22.39 million with estimated users exceeding 121 million with an estimated CAGR for broadband at 117% from 2005-2020 (Bafna, 2012).

Mobile: India had 27 million used smart phones in 2012 and the segment was predicted to grow at a CAGR of 60% for 2012-16 (Sinha, 2012).According to Apalya Technologies, the official mobile video sponsor of IPL, the total mobile viewership was more than 13 million (Mitter, Indian Express, 2012).This was an increase of 0.3 million in the previous season. A Neilson Mobile Insight report stated,

> *"The combined usage of sports-related application and websites on smart phones increased from 16% during the pre-week of IPL between March 26 to April 4, to 20% in first week, 22% in second and 24% in the third week of IPL* (Mitter, Indian Express, 2012)

This growing trend showed the interest of SEC-A youth's interest towards the new form of viewership. The average duration of a watch lasted between 17 to 20 minutes that exceeded both television viewership as well as that of the web.

See **Image 2** for viewership growth for different media in IPL-5 compared to IPL-1.

The CSK Story

India Cements had a 30 year long history of hard core cricketing experience (Chennai Super Kings, 2008) and it was natural for N. Srinivasan[21], Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Cements Ltd., to buy CSK. He formally announced the name of their team as *Chennai Super Kings* on 18th February 2008 (Chennai Super Kings, 2008).He also unveiled the team's logo and introduced the brand ambassador for the team, Krisnamachari Srikkant, a member of the 1983 CWC winning Indian national

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[21] He was also the President of the BCCI

team (Chennai Super Kings, 2008).T. S. Raghupathy, Executive President, India Cements Ltd (Chennai Super Kings, 2008) Said:

> "*We are confident about our abilities to build a winning team that will participate in the IPL Championships with confidence and commitment*"

Singh had 27 years of experience in the Indian cement industry. However, when he was handed over the charge of Vice-President marketing of CSK, he had no guideline to follow. The post was new and no one in the world had held it before. Singh said,

> "*We had modeled to grow the CSK brand like those of the English Premier League clubs'. With this approach in mind, we had had a short term plan of increasing brand awareness and recognition and a long term plan of growing and leveraging the brand.*"

Five years had passed since the launch and CSK was now a widely recognized brand. Singh now thought taking CSK into overdrive for greater brand revenue and long term sustainability. He sat back and assessed CSK's marketing efforts made thus far.

Post Launch

The team wanted to connect with the grass root before the start of the season and came up with the novel promotional contest of naming the team. This team was the first and only team to have crowd sourced its name (Chennai Super Kings, 2008). The contest saw 25,000 entries from which the name was selected (Chennai Super Kings, 2008).

The brand personality of CSK, as defined by their founders was "*fearless entertainers, who play to win*" (Facebook, 2012). This conveyed the idea of the founders wanting to position the team as a completely sports oriented team who had no intention of roping in film celebrities to draw crowds. Their brand character was defined as "*self-esteem, honor, fire in the belly*" which again showed the fire for performing exceedingly well and winning to attract audience. In contrast competing many competing have film stars as their brand ambassador. (Shah Rukh Khan for Kolkota KinghtXI, Deepika Padukone for Royal Challengers Bangalore, Preeti Zinta for Kings XI Punjab

CSK's logo featured the head of a lion in orange/gold color with the team name typeset in the whitespace available at the side of the lion's head (see **Image 3**). A roaring lion

was used as a visual symbol, and Chepauk, the home base of CSK, is colloquially referred to as the lion's den.CSK had a lion as its mascot (see **Image 3**)which was very popular amongst the fans, especially amongst young children. According to its logo designers,

> *"The inspiration behind it is the belief that the lion is the king of the jungle. The minimalist approach (thin lines, sharp corners) signifies youth and vibrancy. On the other hand, the heavy lettering signifies a solid performance orientation. The yellow and orange colors signify a fiery spirit resident inside every team member and infinity respectively."* (Logo Design Next, 2008)

CSK chose a bright yellow color for their jersey (see **Image 4**) which was refreshing to the eyes since most teams had opted for conventional colors. The yellow color became commonly associated with CSK in India. Public places such as local trains and pubs in Chennai were painted yellow for promoting the brand (Ayyappan, 2012).

CSK had bid US$1.5 million (Rediff Sport, 2008) for its captain MS Dhoni, and had retained him as the captain since. MS Dhoni was considered the biggest asset of the franchise. He had led the Indian national team to win the first T20WC, in a match against arch rival, Pakistan. This had boosted his popularity in the country immensely which led to him receiving the highest bid of the season.

CSK also bid for international players like Muttaih Murlitharan, Jacab Oram, Mathew Hayden, Stephen Flemming, Albei Morkel and Micheal Hussey, who were very popular amongst the Indian audience. Amongst Indian players, CSK had bid for Suresh Raina, Joginder Sharma and local talents like Ravichandran Ashwin, Murli Vijay, etc.

IPL Season – 1 (2008)

Promotional activities for the team started once the team was finalized. Print advertisements were inspired by IPL's the "*Cricket ka Mahayudh*" campaign. CSK used illustrations of iconic team members, like Mathew Hayden and MS Dhoni in battle gears and calling out to the fans (Television, 2012).

The season started on 18th April 2008 with 59 matches scheduled over 46 days. The competition started with a double round robin[22] group stage, in which each of the 8 teams played a home match and an away match against every other team. These matches were followed by two semi-finals and a final.

CSK made it to the finals but eventually lost to the Rajasthan Royals (RR). Sivamani, a famous percussionist based in India was affiliated to the Chennai Super Kings team who performed drumming in the sidelines alongside the CSK cheerleaders it was quite popular that Sivamani got strongly associated with CSK. CSK also won the *Fair Play* award in 2008. Fair Play award was decided based on the points earned by the team given by umpires judging fair play, respect for the laws of the game and respect to their opponents. The award involves a league-table running over the course of the season

Post Season - 1

After the successful launch of the team, the team wanted to strengthen its connection with its fans. On 24th November 2008, Mr. T. S. Raghupathy, Executive President, India Cements Ltd. launched the Kings Club. The Kings Club is CSK's official club membership program for adults and children. The aim of the club was to build on the popularity of the team and also give their fans an opportunity to be part of an exclusive community that would be closely associated with CSK. The club offers two types membership – King's Club Junior and King's Club Senior. The membership fee for the same was US$11.39 and US$22.76respectively.

Aimed at making it an alternate revenue generating source, they enabled fans to enjoy goodies that ranged from discounts on tickets to autographed memorabilia, access to premium tickets and parking space, mobile downloads, exclusive content and, in some cases, even a chance to attend the official team party. **Table 7** highlights the benefits available to the different *Kings Club* members.

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[22]A competition in which each contestant meets all other contestants turn-wise

CSK realized that it lacked engagement activity for its female audience. It was also looking for cheerleaders, a relatively new concept in India introduced by IPL. CSK collaborated with STAR Vijay[23] to launch a ten episode series on 27th February named *CSK Cheerleaders* (Chennai Super Kings, 2009) for their female audience. The show tested a number of boys and girls on their dancing skills and cheering routines over a series of competitive rounds. The selected team will be given the honor of cheering the Chennai Super Kings in every IPL match and also recognized as the official cheerleaders. However, the show did not become popular and was discontinued. The audience did not appreciate the show because of their culture, which was conservative in nature.

Another show conceptualized was the hunt for a *CSK Junior* team commenced on February 28. The show spanned over 20 episodes and auditions were held at Chennai, Coimbatore and Trichy. Kids between 8-12 years of age were eligible to audition. The winning 11 were recognized as the Chennai Super Kings Juniors; and got to watch all the matches of the team in Chennai sitting at the Pavilion. Uday Shankar, CEO, STAR India said,

"This is the first time that a General Entertainment Channel (GEC) has tie-up with a sporting event like the IPL; a great strategy to capitalize on the brand and generate viewership" (Chennai Super Kings, 2009)

IPLSeason – 2 (2009)

The second IPL season was played in South Africa[24], 18th April 2009 onwards. CSK launched the *Whistle Podu* campaign for compensating for the lack of in-stadia experience for the Indian fans. The strategic intent behind the *Whistle Podu* campaign was to empower the fans by giving them a highly unique cheer which was derived from the local region. The song calls all the fans for backing their team during IPL. This

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[23] STAR Vijay is an Indian entertainment channel broadcasting in Tamil.

[24] Because the second season of the IPL coincided with multi-phase 2009 Indian general elections, the Government of India refused to commit security. As a result, the BCCI decided to host the second season of the league in South Africa.

campaign was extremely helpful for CSK in increasing its awareness with over 115,000 hits on YouTube (YouTube, 2010).

When it came to team selection, CSK did not follow a hire-and-fire policy for its players. It decided to continue with the same team as in the first season with some mirror changes due to injuries and unavailability of players. The preference for local talent and the decision to nurture them went down well with the fans (Sudarsan, Wordpress, 2012). CSK once again made it to the play-offs of the tournament, but was not able to reach the final.

IPL Season – 3 (2010)

The year saw the Indian national team claim the top spot in the ICC Test Championship on 18th February 2010 under the leadership of MS Dhoni (Sahota, 2010). This increased Dhoni's popularity which in turn helped CSK in its branding efforts.

The season was played between 12th March and 25th April. It was the first ever cricket tournament to be broadcasted on YouTube. The rules and format for the season remained unchanged except for the addition of strategic timeout[25].

CSK had continued with their regular team although 53 foreign players and 18 Indian players were available for bidding. Sivamani, performed drumming during CSK's matches with the winners of *CSK Cheerleaders* motivating their team and entertaining the audience. CSK had been dominant throughout the tournament and reached the final to face MI. CSK claimed their first IPL title by defeating MI by 22 runs. CSK also won the Fair Play award and subsequently won the Champions League T20[26], the first Indian team to do so.

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[25] Strategic timeout - Each innings had two mandatory timeouts of two-and-a-half minutes each. The fielding captain must take one at the end of over six, seven, eight or nine, and the batsmen at the end of over 13, 14, 15 or 16.

[26]Champions League Twenty20 involved the best T20 teams from across the world and was a clash between the top teams of the India, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, the West Indies, Sri Lanka and England domestic T20 tournaments. This was jointly owned by BCCI, Cricket Australia and Cricket South Africa. The 2009 and 2011 editions were held in India whereas the 2010 and 2012 editions in South Africa.

Post Season - 3

This season witnessed an increase inco-branding agreements between the team and firms, to leverage their brand assets and create revenue generating sources. CSK had brand licensing agreements with Peter England (Madura Garments, 2008) and Reebok (Franchise Plus) forco-branded casuals and sporting apparel respectively. BILT, Camlin, Wrigley's, 7UP, J&J (The Hindu Business Line, 2012) and Cool Maal (The Business Standard, 2012) (see **Image 5** for co-branded advertisements) were some of the other brand licensing deals of CSK also securing sponsorships with international brands like Washington Apples (The Telegraph, 2012).CSK formed an alliance with a Hindi entertainment channel, Life OK (Kulkarni, 2012) to reach a greater audience. Singh said.

"For somebody who wants make a Hindi general entertainment channel popular, it is a nice way of riding on the popularity of CSK."

IPL Season – 4 (2011)

CSK started the *Chennai Super Komics* to engage young fans in the age group 8-10 years in the off-season of IPL. Paandi, an 8-year old boy was the protagonist of the *Komics* the stories revolved around his obsession with cricket and his dream to play for CSK. It was launched at an exhibition and was available in all leading book stores in Chennai. 40,000 copies of the first 32-page multi-color book edition, costing US$0.75was printed in April 2011 (Tamil Comic Sulagam, 2011).

On 2nd April, MS Dhoni led the Indian national team to its second CWC victory after 28 years. This had made Dhoni's popularity in the country unparalleled. Moreover, the victory came just before the start of the season, which further helped CSK to promote itself through its biggest brand asset.

The season kicked off on 8th April and ended on 28thMay.With the inclusion of two new teams Pune Warriors and Kochi Tuskers, the format was changed such that each team played 5 teams twice in a round robin manner and once with the remaining four, twice on their home ground and twice on the rival team's home ground, thus a total of 14 matches per team. Dhoni led CSK to its second consecutive title. They once again bagged the *Fair Play* award, making it their third award.

Post Season - 4

The CSK mascot had become very popular among the masses by now but had remained unnamed up to the fifth season. CSK, in an endeavor to engage its fans had come up with a crowd sourcing campaign wherein fans, aged 4 -15 years, had been asked to suggest names for the mascot (Sportz Power, 2012). CSK was also planning to organize a painting competition for the same age group post the season.

In an effort to increase fan engagement and fan loyalty, CSK launched jerseys for US$3.7, making it affordable amongst the masses. They had also increased the merchandise portfolio beyond apparel which included mugs, napkins, caps and friendship bands and gift items like ties and cuff links. The *Kings Club* launched a new 'Yellow Card' membership for just US$1.85, once again to make it affordable amongst the masses. This special offer was available till the 31st January. The fan had to just log on to www.chennaisuperkings.com, fill up the registration coupon and send it to the specified address.

CSK had set up exclusive store at the Chennai airport, and with Café Coffee Day they set up '*CSK zones'* in major cities. Talking further about such alliances Singh said,

"Similarly Park Sheraton has converted their lounge into a CSK Bar and it was hugely successful. So we want to see how these deals work and whether we can make it a yearlong thing. We are working on a fixed fee basis wherein licensees can use our name and do certain things."

IPL Season – 5 (2012)

In the fifth edition also the team composition remained almost unchanged. The season was marked with ups and down in the team's fortune. However, they just qualified for the play-offs, making it their fifth consecutive appearance.

CSK was planning to change the format of the *CSK Junior* competition in order to increase fan engagement and reach. It would be an inter-school competition rather than an audition based competition. The best players from the top teams would comprise the CSK Junior team.

CSK started to focus extensively on social media strategy this year. The Facebook page greeted visitors with a warm message to raise their hands and had interactive activities such as "Spot the Super King" wherein fans were asked to identify a CSK player from a picture of low clarity. Content of the page included "*Fan of the Day*" photo and "*Behind the Scenes*", showing cricketers activities off the field (Singh, 2012). On Twitter, most of the posts were text based and lacked picture or video content (Singh, 2012).

Seeing the overseas fan response to the Super Kings, some special initiatives had been undertaken to reach out to these audiences and to forge a stronger bond with them. The fifth season of IPL (2012) saw the launch of an exclusive range of CSK merchandise in association with Ingene marketing. The range was launched with a bang with a flash mob organized in San Francisco which saw enormous on-ground participation as well as generated several online hits. Plans were underway to host some exhibition matches in the US with the Super Kings team playing the local leagues in American cities which boast a strong Indian population. (Company sources, 2012)

The CSK YouTube channel did not give fans enough reason to actively visit the website. The number of subscribers was only 130,011 (YouTube, 2010). Videos available were match highlights which were easily available on third party websites as well.

The CSK website gave fans access to all latest information, their merchandise, videos and blogs (see **Image 6** for the screenshot of the official CSK website). They had started a *Super Blog Contest* to actively involve fans and invite them to write blogs on CSK. Players too wrote blogs to create greater interest in the website.

Fan Engagement and Brand Development: Approach and Outcomes

CSK had strived hard to live their brand character to position themselves in the audience's mind. It had scored well in parameters like awareness, familiarity, loyalty etc. **Table 8** gives a comparative analysis of such parameters with other teams. Fans perceived CSK as a stylish, talented and aggressive team. **Image 7**shows the perceptual map of the IPL teams. Singh commented;

> "*Our unique selling point is that we always focus on cricket, unlike other teams who are focused on glamour and parties*".

CSK had become one of the most popular teams in terms of viewership amongst fans. A MEC, a media and marketing company, report showed that CSK, MI and KKR have the most popular fan bases irrespective of the teams' performances. The total viewership percentage for Mumbai and Chennai taken together stands at 48% followed by Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at 12% and KKR at 11% (Sharan & Gurtoo, 2012).

CSK was the first team to launch a fan loyal program in the form of Kings Club in 2008. They were followed by Delhi Daredevils, Rajasthan Royals, Deccan Chargers and Kolkata Knight Riders to start a fan engagement club. Kings Club had 4 lakh registered fans, only 4,000 were paid members because of the high entry level set at $USD 22.2. Later this was lowered following a suggestion that came from IIM Kozhikode during a management festival (Kannan, 2012). The latest Kings Club drive had ended on 15th February and CSK managed to capture 10,000 paid members across Tamil Nadu in just a month. There were plans to link the membership to small local businesses in Tamil Nadu where the yellow card could be used for discounts (Kannan, 2012).

CSK had the second largest fan base on Facebook with approximately 1.5 million fans, second only to MI (2.8 million). CSK used their website and social networking page not only to spread information to fans but also to get them involved. They were also the second most searched IPL team on the web as per a survey conducted by Google (Shuchi, 2012). A leading newspaper article stated,

> "*In the past five years since IPL's inception, CSK has about 1.5 million fans on Facebook; the New York Yankees have about 5 million. However, the Yankees were established back in 1901, CSK only in 2008*".

However, there were still some avenues of fan engagement and revenue generation yet to be explored by CSK. For example, Deccan Chargers had leveraged the mobile platform developed by Mojostreet as a fan engagement tool. Fans used the application and in turn got a chance to visit the stadium for live match experience (Hindu Business Line).

RCB had purchased Dirk Nannes of Netherland for the fourth season. He was later transferred to KXIP for IPL-5. Another Dutch player to play the IPL was Ryan ten

Doeschate who was purchased by KKR for IPL-4. Recruiting players from countries where cricket is gaining interest had dual advantage: they were less costly and the same time attracts an international audience. This was a strategy yet to be employed by CSK.

The brand value of CSK was the highest amongst all teams in the league with an approximate brand value of US$70.16 million 2012 followed by MI at US$57.6 million(Finance, 2012). *CSK saw increased merchandising deals and* had also managed to retain its sponsors over the five years of IPL (Indiantelevision, 2012). CSK's approach to team management as well as sponsors was also unique. Singh mentioned:

> "*We don't change our management and we don't believe in changing sponsors. That has clicked because that does not confuse the fans. We treat our sponsors well and we give them a value for their money for at the end of the day sponsors look at return on investment*".

Its approach in managing the players was also quite similar. CSK did not view trading player as a revenue generating opportunity. Singh commented:

> "*Although we want to be a strong team and win matches, we do not want to treat our players as products. When we hire a players, a lot of consideration goes in. Certainly sale of a players for higher price is not one of them. CSK would sell a player only if it is absolutely necessary*"

CSK: Challenges in Growing the Brand

Singh elaborated the challenges in growing the CSK brand - "It seems CSK now needs to grow beyond itself; beyond just winning games, beyond geographical borders to develop into an international brand, beyond the attraction of star players and even beyond IPL itself. The key questions are – what should CSK be to its fans? And how should it expand its fanbase. We need to ensure that the strategies to build and leverage the brand should never be at the expense of the experience that fans derive from its association with CSK but should only be accentuating it."

The financial performance of a team was directly related to the team's performance on field. Mumbai Indians (MI) and CSK had been the only two franchises to record profits in 2011. Their consistent performance ensured that there was a large audience for their matches, which translated into improved financial performance. However as in any

sport there is also "a luck factor" in winning. How could CSK develop strong loyalty, especially with fans who tended to shift loyalty to teams based on their performance in IPL? The task is, Singh mentioned "to build strong relationship with its fanbase which would go beyond just team performance"

The fanbase of CSK was mainly Tamilians and this was quite natural as IPL itself was conceived as franchises for different regions. However the opportunity for CSK lied in expanding its fanbase beyond Chennai and Tamilnadu and attracting fans from across the country and outside. How will CSK retain its existing fans who were attracted by its local identity and further attract fans beyond geographical borders?

One of the key strengths of CSK's asset was its captain, MS Dhoni. Each year during player auctions, the management had to ensure that a rival would not outbid CSK for MS Dhoni. Apart from this, there was the possibility that Dhoni might want to leave CSK for another team. This could adversely affect its fanbase if stars are the sole reason for their association with CSK. Although performing stars are key attractions how can a CSK grow bigger than its star players?

Another issue that confronted Singh was about engaging the fans after the IPL season for the rest nine months. In fact this was important in building as well as leveraging the brand equity to enhance annual revenues. Is it possible to plan activities which would create value for the fans and the firm at the same time during this period? Given the growing IPL viewers exceeding 162MM (Mitter, 2001) in 2012 should CSK develop action programs targeting different groups of fans? He very well knew that they weren't a homogenous lot.

In fact he was well aware that CSK had more than one way to build its brand. CSK could possibly get into other popular sports like football, boxing, badminton etc and become a strong sports brand. This way it could possibly diversify its risk of non-performance in any one game. It may help build fanbase or engage fans through multiple sports.

It could possibly capitalize on its brand personality and image and position itself as a lifestyle brand? This could open up many opportunities to leverage the brand equity in various lifestyle and fashion categories

Being a brand representing sports, physical fitness and health was another option. It can then associate itself in fitness, health and sports categories in building as well as leveraging the brand.

Yet another option was to be different things for different segments of fans.. However it could also possibly confuse the fans about what CSK is about. The European premier League club, Real Madrid had made fans investors in the club by providing stock options. This way fans get involved in the management of the club too.

CSK: The way forward?

Although CSK has been successful in building a fanbase as well as growing its revenues during the initial phase it now needs to formulate an integrated strategy to build brand equity and attain its objectives of growing its revenue at a CAGR of 20% till 2020. It needed to decide programs to increase fan base, enhance fan engagement and loyalty and at the same time leverage existing brand assets and create relevant brand assets to engage fans and generate revenues in the short term as well as the long term. Singh wanted to script the way forward for CSK by clearly articulating a Brand Vision for CSK and evolving a business plan to implement it.

Table 1: A Typology of Cricket Fans[*]

Typology	Description
The Sports Fan	• Interested in a number of sports in general and cricket is *"one of the sports"* that he follows. • Does not associate with the game emotionally or with any particular team and is interested in the news of the happenings of the game as with any other game that he follows.
The Cricket Fan	• Enjoys cricket as a game • Appreciates good cricket from any team • Knows the rules and the players of the game.
The Winning Fan	• Takes the winners side; Not a loyal fan • Supports different teams at different occasions • May watch their team's matches and support it as the team reaches finals or semifinals
The Ultimate Statistician	• Has statistics for every single ball with analysis ready for every possible event on the field • Ready to provide stats and enter into arguments
The Loyal Fan / The Angry Fan	• Loyal fans of a particular player/team and are ready to fight for him/them • Fiercely emotional about the team and its players' conducts • May blindly support their teams; may not accept any logical reasoning. Could be very emotional and sometimes get violent too.
The Critical Fan	• Very knowledgeable about different aspects of the game • Very critical and sometimes cynical about different aspects of games (including not very significant issues)
The Hollow Fan	• Watches cricket just because everyone around him is watching • Watches it with great effort memorizes a few names for the post match discussions but never enjoys the game • Will not engage in discussions which slowly move to history of the game or requires generating own insights.
A Star's Fan	• May watch a match just to follow his/her favorite star's performance • The game is over for them when their star is out • For some it is Sachin, some Sehwag or Gayle etc.

[*] This typology is adapted from http://www.sportskeeda.com/2011/05/19/classifying-indian-cricket-fans/ by Rahul Unnikrishnan, last accessed on 1st October 2012

Table 2: Segmentation of cricket fans in India

Age-wise		SEC-wise		Gender-wise	
Age Group	**Percentage**	**SEC**	**Percentage**	**Gender**	**Percentage**
4-14	12	A	21	Male	66
15-24	29	B	27		
25-34	14	C	24	Female	34
>34	45	D & E	28		

Source: *TAM Report, 2011*

Table3: List of IPL franchisee in IPL, Franchise Fee and Brand Value

IPL Team	Year of Purchase	Franchisee Fee	Brand Value 2011
Mumbai Indians	2008	$111.9 mn	$57 mn
Royal Challengers Bangalore	2008	$111.6 mn	$47.58 mn
Pune Warriors India	2011	$370 mn	$28.88 mn
Deccan Chargers *	2008	$107 mn	$30.8 mn
Chennai Super Kings	2008	$91 mn	$70.16 mn
Delhi Daredevils	2008	$84 mn	$40.85 mn
Kolkata Knight Riders	2008	$75.09 mn	$46 mn
Kings XI Punjab	2008	$76 mn	$35.75 mn
Rajasthan Royals	2008	$67 mn	$33.78 mn
Kochi Tuskers Kerala **	2011	$333.3 mn	-

- Deccan Chargers were expelled from the IPL on Oct 13, 2012 after its owners failed to meet a deadline to submit $19 million as guarantee money to the Bombay High Court
- Kochi Tuskers Kerala was terminated by the BCCI due to a breach in their contract terms on September 19, 2011.

Source: *http://www.cricinfo.com,* http://www.brandfinance.com*, last accessed on 25th September, 2012*

Table 4: List of IPL Franchisees and their key Sponsors

Team	Sponsors
Royal Challengers Bangalore	Royal Challenge and UB brands like Bagpiper and McDowells
Kings XI Punjab	Spice Telecom, Provogue, 9X, Foster's Coco Cola and Kotak
Kolkata Knight Rider	Nokia, HDIL, Belmonte, Tag Heauer, Sprite, and The Telegraph
Chennai Super Kings	Gulf Oil, Aircel, Coromandel, Peter England, Reebok, Nivea, Big Bazaar, 7UP and 9Cloud
Delhi Daredevils	Hero Honda, Royal Challenge, Kingfisher Airlines, Adidas, Coca Cola, Wrigley's Orbit and 104 FM
Rajasthan Royals	Puma, Boost, Kingfisher and Ultratech Cement

Table 5: CSK Revenue – Expense Representative Figures
(in Rs. Crores)

	2008 (IPL1)	2011 (IPL4)
Income		
a) IPLCentral Pool	30	54
b) Gate Revenue	12	25
c) In-stadia Advertising		
d) Franshisee Sponsors	22	60
e) Merchandizing	---	1
Total	**64**	**140**
Expenditure		
a) Franchise Fee	36	36
b) Player Cost	25	50
c) Advt and Publicity	10	5
d) Administrative Cost	10	20
Total	**81**	**111**
Operating profit	**(17)**	**29**

Source: Company Document

Table 6: Advertising Spend Per Medium by All Industries in India

Advertising Spend by All Industries per Medium (in $USD billion)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Television	1.27	1.47	1.58	1.85	2.09
Print	1.80	1.94	1.99	2.27	2.51
Radio	0.13	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.21
Out of Home (OOH) TVs	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.29	0.32
Digital Advertising	0.072	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.28
Total	2.25	2.49	2.53	2.93	3.31

Source: FICCI KPMG Report, 2012

Table 7: Privileges available to different members of King's Club

	Kings Club Junior	Kings Club Senior
Discounts on Kings Club Stand Ticket & priority booking (home matched only)	Yes	Yes
Spl. Offers and discounts on official merchandise	Yes	Yes
Opportunities to interact with players at Kings Club	Yes	Yes
Discounts and offers from Super Kings Sponsors	Yes	Yes
Welcome Kit	Chennai Super Kings branded Waist pouch, wrist band & stickers	Chennai Super Kings branded exclusive Mascot Mug & wrist band

Source: *http://www.chennaisuperkings.com/kingsclub/KingsClubHome.aspx, last accessed on 1st October, 2012*

Table 8: Brand Survey: Comparative Analysis, 2011

Metric	MI	KKR	CSK	RCB	RR	DD	KXIP	DC	PWI
Awareness	H	H	H	L	L	L	L	M	M
Familiarity	H	L	H	L	M	M	M	M	M
Likeability	H	L	H	L	M	M	M	M	M
Loyalty	H	L	H	L	M	M	L	M	M
Performance	H	L	H	H	L	M	L	M	M

(H: High; M: Medium; L: Low)
Source: Company Documents

Image 1: Organizational Structure
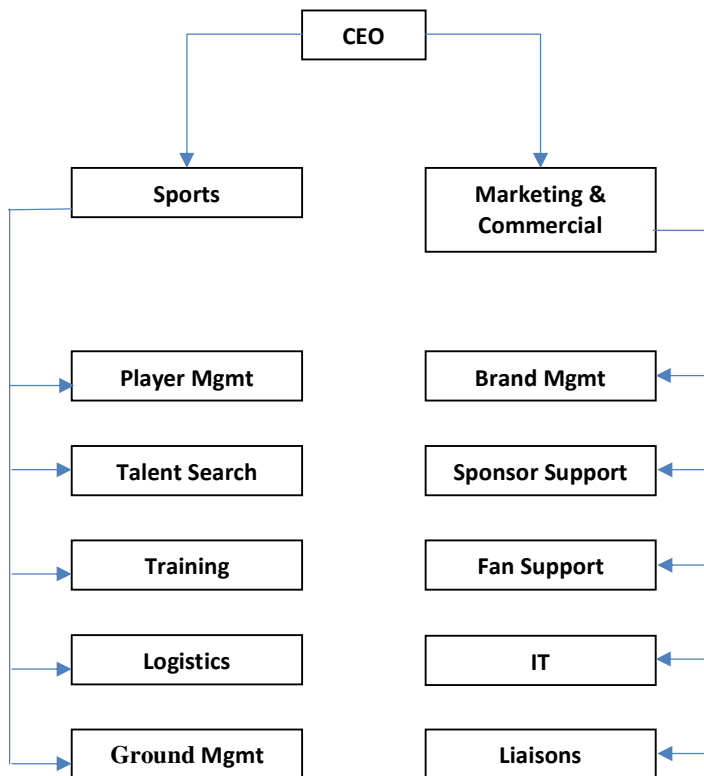
Image 2: IPL Viewership growth across different media
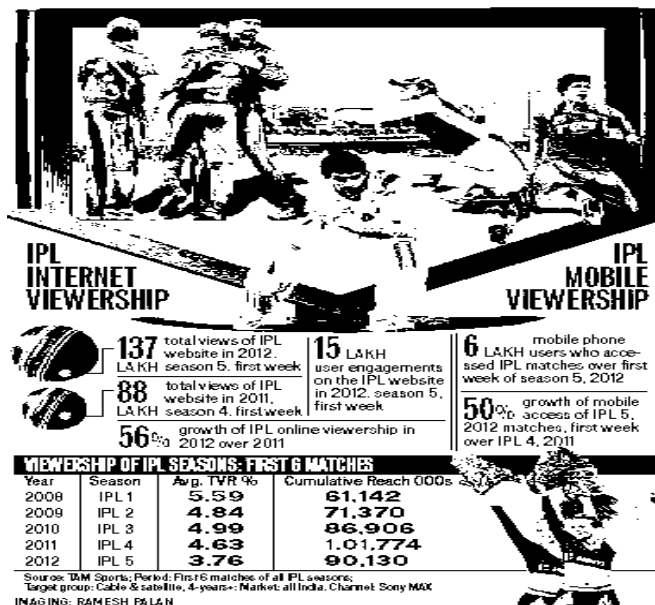
Source:*http://www.hindustantimes.com, last accessed on 1ˢᵗ September, 2012*

Image 3

Chennai Super Kings logo and Mascot

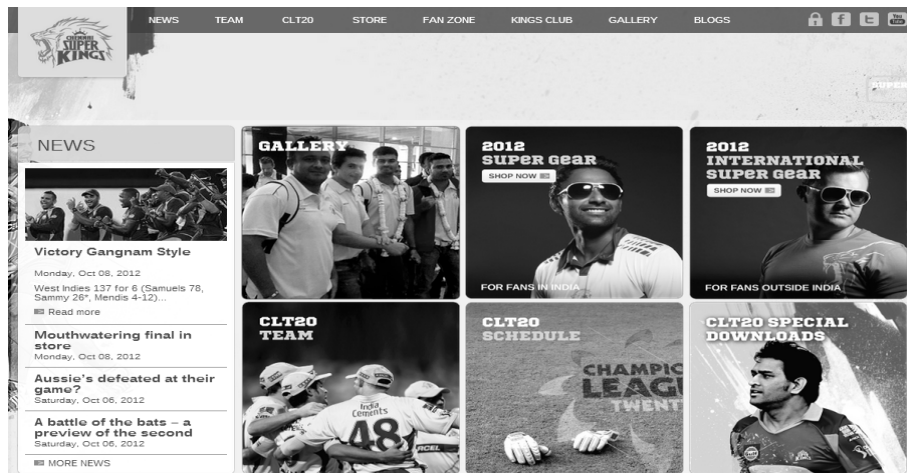Logo   Mascot

Image 4

Chennai Super Kings Jersey

Jersey   Jersey (Back)

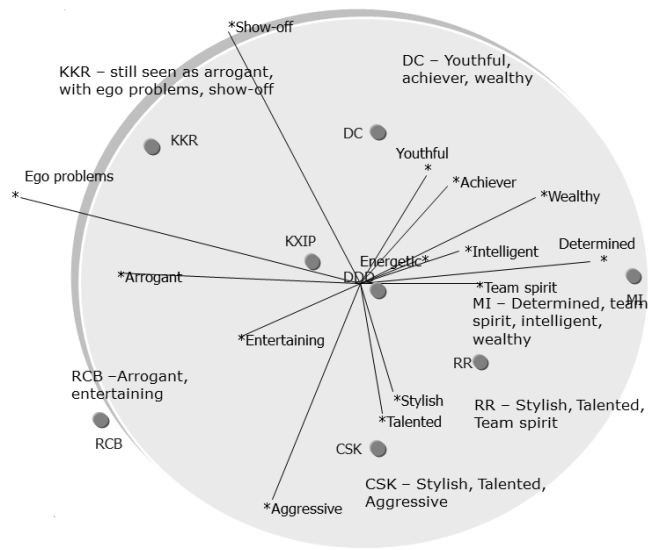**Image 5: Co-branded advertisements of Chennai Super Kings and its sponsor**

Image 6: Screen shot of Chennai Super Kings' official website

Source: *http://www.chennaisuperkings.com/index/index.aspx, last accessed on 8th October, 2012*

Image 7: Brand Positioning of IPL Teams, 2012

*Show-off

KKR – still seen as arrogant,
with ego problems, show-off

DC – Youthful,
achiever, wealthy

KKR

DC

Youthful
*

Ego problems

*Achiever

*Wealthy

KXIP

*Intelligent

Determined
*

Energetic*
DDA

*Arrogant

*Team spirit
MI – Determined, team
spirit, intelligent,
wealthy

MI

*Entertaining

RR

RCB –Arrogant,
entertaining

*Stylish

RR – Stylish, Talented,
Team spirit

*Talented

RCB

CSK

CSK – Stylish, Talented,
Aggressive

*Aggressive

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Abstract:

The case is about evaluating the brand building efforts and formulating a strategy to further grow and leverage the brand equity of Chennai Super Kings (CSK), a cricket franchise of Indian Premier League (IPL) owned by India Cements. Founded in 2008, CSK has been one of the most successful teams among the IPL franchisees. They were winners in 2010 and 2011, runners-up in 2008 and 2012 and was among the top four teams in 2009. Rakesh Singh, Vice President of Chennai Super Kings Franchise and Joint President Marketing of India Cements wanted to enhance CSK brand equity (valued at $70.16MM in 2011-Exhibit4) comparable to major international sporting clubs in the world like the Manchester United with a valuation of $853MM and LA Lakers the NBA team valued $900MM in 2011. The case provides an opportunity for readers to understand branding- namely growing brand equity and leveraging brand assets, in an interesting context.