

Pros and Cons of Fantasy Games in the Era of Digital Media Literacy

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Abstract-Sports and games have been an integral part of humanity since ancient times. Researchers have revealed that there has been the existence of sports culture in one way or the other in the civilization era. Almost all the civilizations in the world had their distinctive means of recreation of which sports formed an important part. Horse race, Bullock cart race, chess, running, archery, fencing etc. have been in vogue since more than 5000 years. With the passage of time as man started living a settled life sports gradually took the centre stage and became an integral part of human life in all parts of the world. If we talk about the era of kings and emperors in India, we find a variety of sports which these kings and emperors used to play. Chess, horse races, fencing, archery etc were very common even during Vedic era in India. It is also true that common people who did not have much say during these times also developed their own sports for recreation. Many types of athletics, bullock cart races, tug of war, boating, Kabaddi, weight lifting, wrestling, Camel racing and Jallikattu were quite common among commoners in different parts of the country. This Paper tries to peep into the progress from traditional sports to fantasy Games which have taken the centre stage now-a-days.

Key Words: Sports and Games, Sports culture, Fantasy Games.

INTRODUCTION

The era of traditional games and sports continued for many centuries. But with the arrival of the British some more games were introduced in India. Shooting, playing cards, carom board, badminton, Boxing, lawn tennis, table tennis, football, volleyball, hockey, golf, swimming and cricket can easily be counted among them. Though Hockey has been prevalent in India in its crude form for about 2000 years but it was the foreign rulers, more precisely the British, gave this game the modern look. After the Industrial Revolution in England the sports and games got their different rules and regulations and universal set patterns. That is precisely the reason behind the inception and start

of Olympics and later on Commonwealth Games and Asian Games. Players represent their respective countries in these games and win laurels. Now-a-days, one finds World Cups in almost all major sports. Among these Soccer World Cup, Hockey World Cup, Cricket World Cup and Grand Slam tournaments in Lawn tennis are quite popular in the World and people all over the world visit the places of competition while others watch them on their television sets. Among the Grand Slam tournaments of Lawn Tennis the Australian Open, French Open, the Wimbledon and the U.S. Open are quite popular in the world. Events of swimming, Table Tennis, Fencing, and Gymnastics are very popular in China, Russia, Japan, Korea and some other parts of Europe and America. Boxing and Weightlifting are also very popular in constituents of USSR, Europe and Asian continent. While Cricket is popular among only very few countries but it is spreading rapidly in other parts of the world also. At present there is hardly any doubt that Soccer is the most widely played and quite popular game in the World. In Cricket Indian Premier League, Big Bash and Caribbean Premier League are quite popular among cricket lovers. Here one thing needs to be mentioned that though wrestling, boxing, archery and hockey have been popular sports in India since centuries but IPL has turned and transformed the country into a Cricket Maniac country.

Gone are the days when people used to listen to the running commentary of live matches on their radio sets which was later replaced by the audio-visual force of Television. Even in these days people visit Audis to watch India-Pakistan cricket matches. Even though the game of cricket has suffered the most due to the prevalence of Political distrust and strained relations between the two countries but whenever they play at neutral venues people keep stucked to their TV sets for watching cricket rivalry between the two nations.

The turn of the century blessed the world with a new type of media which is named as Digital Media. This is a wonderful media which allows the consumers excess in any nook and corner of the world 24x7. According to Wikipedia, 'Digital media is any communication media that operate in conjugation with various encoded machine-reliable data formats. Digital content can be created, viewed, distributed, modified, listened to and preserved on a digital electronics device.' It further says, 'Digital media has

a broad and complex impact on society and culture. Combined with the internet and personal computing, digital media has caused disruptive innovation in publishing, journalism, public relations, entertainment, education, commerce and politics.' Thus it is paid, owned and earned media. On Digital Media you can have access to TV, Radio, Websites, Podcasts, Mobile Apps, Blog, Social Media, SMS and e mail.



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With the growth of technology human dependence on machines has increased manifold. We depend more on machines for interaction with people living near or far from us. These machines have transcended all political and geographical boundaries. Every passing minute adds to the information available on digital sources. Digital media has revolutionized human communication and changed the modes of communication. Now one can get connected with virtually anybody from anywhere in the world. Gone are the days when people used to write letters and wait for their reply for a long period of time. Digital media has equipped man with technical innovations which facilitate the exchange of written message, textual messages, voice messages, snaps sharing, voice

calling, video calling and call conferencing virtually at a very low cost. Virtually any information about anything is available in abundance on digital platforms. The world of business has gained the most by virtue of digital media in the last one decade. It is because digital media provides very important and substantial customer base for the marketers. The required or sent information reaches its destination in a few seconds. Apart from Online Shopping Sites there are Social Media sites which give enough scope and space to advertisers to advertise their products. E mail marketing and SMS services are yet other platforms which serve as medium for promoting marketing contents to people.



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Virtually every sort of information and entertainment is available on Digital Media. All you need to have is a computerized internet supported gadget and accessibility to internet. In the beginning Digital Media was available on Computers and Lap Tops but as the markets got flooded with Smart Mobile Phone sets its reach and number of consumers have increased manifold. This phenomenon is quite common and prevalent throughout the world. After the arrival of E Newspapers and News Apps, the number of people depending on the hard copy of newspapers for information has shrunk a lot. These E news sites keep on updating the latest information in the nick of time. Hence, one needs not to wait for early morning for the newspaper for getting information about various incidents of the world. More and more people are turning to e newspapers and News Apps. Even TV News Channels are finding it hard to keep pace with Digital Media. That's why the element of Yellow Journalism and trend of sensational news items is on the increase on TV but one has to admit that this sensational element in TV news has marred its quality content and people are turning to Digital Medium. In India, most of the TV news channels have lost their credibility. TV in India has now become a means of entertainment only. A huge variety of soap operas and

reality shows are vying with each other in order to keep their viewership intact. But even here the Digital Media has competed with television and Cinema. Since the arrival of OTT platforms, Web Series has become very popular among people of all generations. Youth is particularly turning to Web Series. Many TV channels have also turned to OTT platforms. While almost all the previously telecasted serials are easily available on the OTT platform even the new and presently running serials and soap operas are available on OTT platforms. Hence, the dependence of viewers of industrial Mass Media has greatly decreased and the viewership of OTT platforms is increasing with every passing hour. The same is true about hardy copy lovers of newspapers and book readers as e newspapers and e books are available on Digital Media.

Most of the people possess Smart Mobile phones these days and the service provider companies are offering unlimited data at a very nominal cost. Sights of people sitting or standing at public places or travelling in cars, buses or railways, with their fingers dancing on the screens of their Smart Mobile phones are quite common these days. One may even stand as witness that a group of friends sitting at a tuck shop or anywhere else hardly talk to each other. Rather they keep themselves busy on Social Media Networking

sites. Even the family members don't have time to talk among themselves as they are always busy on their respective Mobile phones. This media mostly thrives on user generated content without any censorship. That's why misinformation and disinformation is found in plenty on Social Media.

There were 692 million Internet users in India and Internet penetration stood at 48.7%. The report further states that there were 1.10 billion active cellular connections in India which is equivalent to more than 77% population of India. According to another report there are 4.8 Billion Social Media users in the World. Average time spent by users on Social Media stands at 2:29 hours a day but you must not get surprised if you find people who spend more than 6 hours daily on Social Media only in India. It is projected that there will be 795.67 Whatsapp users in India at the start of 2025. The latest available data published in the month of January 2023 the number of Social Media users in India is as under:

Social Media Site	No. of Users in Millions
Whatsapp	487.5
Facebook	448.8
Instagram	252.41
YouTube	467.0
Facebook Messenger	117.6
Snapchat	172.5
Twitter	27.25
LinkedIn	99.0

The arrival of Smart Phone gave a telling death blow to keypad mobile phones. Smart phone has endowed people with almost everything. One may perform a huge variety of tasks by sitting in his chair, sofa or lying in his bed through numerous apps available in the Smart Phones. It will not be exaggeration to say that Digital Media has become a part and parcel of human life in 21st century. There used to be times when one would see playgrounds full of players playing different sports in urban as well as rural India. The sight has drastically changed in India now. Play grounds in India now wear a deserted looks. Very few people go to playgrounds. Majority of youth is now getting more and more interested in Fantasy games on Internet. It needs to be mentioned that before the arrival of Fantasy Games in India people used to be passive spectators of TV entertainment and sports programs. These passive spectators have now become active Fantasy Game participants which keep at the

edge of seats. As India is a Cricket maniac country so it has taken the lead among Fantasy Sports also. Football, Kabaddi, Wrestling and Basketball are among other popular Fantasy Games in India.

The arrival and unforeseen emergence of Fantasy sports has to be credited to the instant popularity of IPL in 2008. After inaugural IPL season in 2008, the Fantasy sports has taken India by storm because in India sports is not just sports, it is culture and a sort of religion here where sports celebrities are regarded as 'Gods'. Dream 11 was the first one to cash the unheard Fantasy sports market in India.

Fantasy sports is a type of skill based online sports which allows a fan to create his/her own team of real-life players. These teams play against each other to accumulate points during real life match. The winners are decided and declared on the basis of these points only. It is predominantly an online prediction game. It refers to online games where people make virtual sports teams and take part in contests and other leagues that imitate the actual world games. There are virtual teams picked from a pool of real players. People exhibit their knowledge, perception and experience of actual players and it is only after accumulating thorough knowledge that they pick their teams. As per a recent report published about Fantasy Sports by Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports and KPMG, the gross revenue generated from these sports stood at Rs. 2400 Crore (US \$ 340.47 million in 2020 which is expected to rise upto US \$ 3.7 billion by 2024. Thus Fantasy Sports has become a big Industry in India with an increase of 2500% in the number of Fantasy sports users during last decade. More and more multiple operators are emerging with their novel ideas and offerings. But it is imperative to have a government to look after and monitor this multi billion industry.

It needs to be mentioned that complete market of this Fantasy sports stands in a grey area so far as regulatory concerns are concerned. There is absolutely no concrete legislation for its legality. Questions were raised whether Fantasy sports are gambling or Game of Skill. As per 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India gambling is a State issue and only the states can form any regulatory body regarding this. Presently, there is no centralized legislation to look after Fantasy sports in India. States of Goa and Sikkim don't prohibit gambling. Odisha, Assam, Tamilnadu, Telengana, Nagaland and Andhra Pradesh have put restrictions on Games of Skill also. Therefore, people

of these states cannot participate in Fantasy sports like Dream 11 and others. In fact there have been a lot of decisions by different courts that Fantasy sports are Game of Skills. The matter was first taken up by Punjab and Haryana High Court that ruled that Dream 11 like games are primarily based on skill. The court cited a number of reasons for the same. The Supreme Court in 2020 gave a stay against the order of Bombay High Court saying that Fantasy sports are Games of Skill. But in August 2021, Supreme Court of India upheld the legality of Fantasy sports. It was against the decision of Rajasthan High Court. Come what may, there is no doubt that there is an urgent need of central legislative framework to remove ambiguity. However Advertising Standards Council of India has come up with some guidelines with regard to the advertisements of Fantasy sports and online gaming. The FIFS safeguards consumer interests. Actually, the growth and sudden spurt in Fantasy Sports in India owes its origin in the growth of Internet in India. High speed Internet service is required for these fantasy sports which are going to take much needed boost with the arrival of 5G Internet facility in India. Though these sports fall just short of money betting but they need skills also.

Just like financial, shopping, banking, food, travel and news apps there are so many Fantasy sports apps available to the people. Game of War, Clash of Clans, 8 Ball Pool, PUBG, FIFA Football, My11Circle, Dream League Soccer, My Team11, Idle Minor Tycoon, Howzat and Ludo Club etc. are some of the popular Fantasy sports. These games have the capacity to captivate people for longer periods of time. Let us have a look at some interesting and most rewarding sports platforms which will help earn money while playing and having fun.

Dream 11:

It is the most popular fantasy sports app. It is trending and it has more than 9+crore people who regularly play this game. You can play Cricket and Football on this app. It is said to be cent –per-cent secure and your earnings are safe. Even the staunch critics have rated it very high and written good reviews.

Playerzpot:

If you are a passionate sports lover then this is the best app for you. It has over 2 million users and there are daily prizes. All you need is to pick players and teams of your own choice. Apart from Cricket, you can play

Hockey, Football, Basketball, Kabaddi and Baseball here. This gateway is also 100% safe.

A23(Funfight):

For die hard and dedicated cricket fans it is one of the best fantasy sports app. As it is a member of FIFS, your money is entirely safe. Apart from Cricket, you can play Rummy, Carrom, Poker and Call Break here. It has over 6 million users in the world.

Mobile Premier League:

MPL is one of the best Fantasy gaming app in India. Promoted by Virat Kohli, it is the title sponsor of KKR for last three seasons. Daily spin wheel can give you Bonus Cash. There is the facility of withdrawal of winning cash from your bank or Paytm etc.

MyTeam11:

It has the tagline of ‘India ki Apni Fantasy App’. Most of the users choose it for T20 cricket. Its interface is user friendly. You can play Football, basketball, Volleyball and Baseball on this app. Founded in 2016, it has more than 15 million user base.

11Wickets:

It is the app for those strategists who can apply the best strategy. They stand outstanding chances of winning the game. With a user base of over 3 million people, it hosts more than 50 matches daily. Like Dream11, your money is also safe here. Football, Basketball, Kabaddi and Baseball can also be played on this app.

Halaplay:

It is a Fantasy sports platform where one can win 1 crore prize daily. You can enter the league or create your own league. It is devoted to Cricket and Football. You can withdraw your prize money anytime you want.

Premier League:

It is the best Fantasy game for Football lovers. You can be a part of any team and any team. You need to choose the country and play the match you wish to play.

ESPN Fantasy Sports:

On this app you can play Football, Baseball, Basketball and Hockey. This platform gives rankings of all Fantasy games you have played on this app.

Apart from this you can have apps like RealFevr, 8 Ball Pool and Ludo Club etc.

So far as market players in Fantasy sports are concerned, this market has grown swifter than any other industry in Post-Covid era. Surprisingly while most of the economies and industries worldwide have

witnessed slump, this industry has grown in leaps and bounds. There are presently more than 150 Fantasy sports operators in the country. Major members of FIFS are as under:

- My Team 11
- Fancode

- Fancy 11
- My 11 Circle
- Faboom
- Fanfight
- Guru 11
- Mobile Premium League (MPL)



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Paytm has announced 'Paytm Cricket League' which gives opportunity to users to win cash rewards on the basis of their team's performance. Dream 11 provides its users to select their teams before the start of the match and the one whose team does well can accumulate more points and earn more money. Prominent Fantasy sports platform Dream11 immensely contributes to the Indian sport's ecosystem by being the official sponsor of the Indian Football League (IFL). It is also the sponsor of India's national football team. Paytm was also the sponsor of Indian

Premier League in the 2020s. The immense popularity of Fantasy sports has attracted the youth the most. As India is a country dominated by young people, it clearly demonstrates the potential of India as an attractive and lucrative Fantasy sports market in the World particularly in Cricket and Football.

Following is the list of Top FIVE Fantasy Game Apps and their Brand Ambassadors:

Sr. No	Fantasy App	Brand Ambassador
1	Dream 11	Mohinder Singh Dhoni
2	Mobile Premier League	Virat Kohli
3	Ballebaazi	Divyendu Sharma
4	Gamezy	K.L.Rahul
5	Halaplay	Hardik Pandya, Krunal Pandya

There was a time when PUBG was the most sought after Fantasy sport in India. Youth used to spend 8-10 hours playing PUBG which was a Chinese fantasy sport.

Though it was banned by Government of India but it surely opened gated of new sports ventures in India. The unprecedented success of Indian domestic stake holders and exceptional growth of Fantasy sports industry in India is all set to grab the interest of sports industrialists from abroad.

Here is the list of most revenue earning by Indian companies:

- Dream 11
- Nazara Technologies
- Paytm First Games
- Games2win
- Moonfrog Labs
- 99 Games
- Octro
- JetSynthesys
- Hashcube
- Mech Moc



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One may rue the fact that actual playgrounds are becoming barren but it is a harsh reality which has to be accepted by one and all that we are living in the era of Fantasy sports. They have become the fashion and order of the day. They try to bridge the gap between the on field and off field game. There is no denying the fact that Fantasy sports have become very popular among youth and adolescents throughout the world. Indian youth has gone amuck for these Fantasy sports. Above discussion stands as witness that there are plenty of Fantasy sports apps available for sports lovers. We have also discussed that the fan following of such apps is in millions and there are lucrative cash prizes to be won. The ASCI has put some disclaimers mandatory for the advertisements of Fantasy sports apps. But it is also a fact that money-hungry people rarely pay heed to such disclaimers. Moreover these disclaimers are given in very small font and read out at a speed that our ears cannot decode. It meets the same fate as the statutory warning printed in small fonts on the bottles of whiskey that drinking is injurious to health. The same stands true about tobacco products.

One finds the same thing in the case of Fantasy sports advertisements. IT is true that a lot of money is there to be won on every Fantasy sports app daily. There are people who have won such prizes. But when one wins a prize, it tends to become his habit of spending in Fantasy sports. Winning and losing may be the part and parcel of life but playing a Fantasy game just for the sake of winning money does not fall short of gambling. There are many cricket lovers who don't miss any opportunity to play such games.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it can be emphasized that the youth needs to be brought back to actual playing fields so that they may dream of and try hard to emulate their heroes who have become stars in sports. There is the need to provide basic infrastructure and coaching facilities in the playgrounds in urban as well as rural areas. Physical exercises in actual playgrounds will make them fit, fine and healthy. While playing virtual games will only cause worry, stress, tension

and depression in them. Concentrating regularly for longer periods on mobile phone screens and or laptops or personal computers can cause back aches, faulty sitting posture, defects in back bone and cervical pains. Psychiatrists and physiotherapists suggest that one should desist from the habit of gazing at the screens of these gadgets as they may also result in diminishing eye sight and mental disorders. There have been examples where teenagers have become totally blind as the result of excessive use of smart phones and there is no therapy that can bring their eyesight back. There is an urgent need to spread digital literacy among youth with regard to playing Fantasy games. Playing these games demand hours of concentration which may cause many ailments. The lust for money may take one to the path of bankruptcy. Hence, Fantasy sports need to be played with care. It must be noted that fantasy games does not become your habit because habits die hard. In an endeavor of winning some petty amounts one may ruin one's life. Proper care needs to be taken to nourishment. Eating habits must be refined and there needs to be more salad and seasonal fruits in your plate than food grains. In the same way the youth must develop the habit of exercising in the actual playfields and desist from the habit of over indulgence in virtual world.

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